Practicing the three pillars of the Lenten season of fasting, prayer and almsgiving may involve planning and creativity that can revitalize people’s faith as they prepare to celebrate the great Paschal Mystery at Easter, said clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

For some, Lent, which generally lasts six weeks, is an endless test of endurance, causing them to ask, “Can we end our Lent sacrifices on Holy Thursday?” However, the practices of Lent should be part of a daily walk with God, according to Father Phil Spano, pastor of Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge.

“In (Saint) Luke’s Gospel (Lk 9:23-24) Jesus says to all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me,’” said Father Spano. “Luke includes a word not in Matthew and Mark – ‘daily.’

The early church thought that Jesus was returning for his second coming soon. The apostles, first disciples and early witnesses were being martyred or dying off. This seemed to discourage many believers as the church had to adjust expectations. To ‘take up one’s cross’ might be a little easier if Jesus’ second coming was soon. Delay changes things, so it seems Luke includes ‘take up one’s cross daily.’

Father Spano emphasized regardless of “when,” discipleship is a day-to-day walk with Christ. Lent is a time of renewal and repentance as a liturgical season. But every day, before and after Lent, is also, “the day the Lord has made.”

There are many opportunities for that daily discipleship walk during Lent, according to Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, and Becky Eldredge, spiritual director and retreat facilitator.

Eldredge said one should have a sacred place, such as a room or chair in a spot where they can “pause in wonder and awe.” But people can pray any time they are in a “waiting mode,” such as standing in the grocery store checkout line, sitting in a car or in the waiting room of the doctor’s office or taking a lunch break at work.

“Discipleship is about showing up every day,” Eldredge said. “Just those few minutes of prayer can make a big difference and bring peace.”

The ashes used on Ash Wednesday are made from the burning of palms blessed in the previous year during the Palm Sunday celebration, when Christians carried palms to recognize the Gospels’ reference to Jesus’ path being covered in palm fronds on the day he entered Jerusalem. Easter Sunday is April 12.

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File Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Learning curve for new lawmakers

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

New faces and old partisanship will intersect on March 9 to open what could be a compelling session of the Louisiana Legislature.

Because of term limits or decisions to not seek office again, the Legislature will welcome 45 new members in the House and 20 new members in the Senate, although some are familiar faces merely swapping addresses, with two former House members going to the House and 10 former House members to the Senate.

Adding to the intrigue and how that will affect key pieces of legislation is that Senate Republicans hold a two-thirds supermajority, sitting in 27 of 39 seats.

During the fall election, the House GOP fell just two votes short of a supermajority, and hold 68 of 105 seats. However, even before the gavel bangs to convene the new session, House GOP members had already splintered during the tumultuous election for Speaker of the House.
Monthly donations

In south Louisiana residents love their seasons along with their seasonings! There is the Christmas season, Mardi Gras season, Lenten season and Easter season, not to mention our sports and hunting seasons. And in our rich Catholic tradition there are even more areas to show our devotion, beyond king cakes and Joe Burrow jerseys—monthly devotions.

According to the website aquinamore.com, each month of the year is dedicated to a specific devotion. The dedication of each month is based on either historical events or the liturgical calendar and sometimes it includes both. Some countries have developed monthly dedications to devotions more specific to their area.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), devotional practices help foster “ceaseless prayer.” The USCCB states on its website, “The faithful have always used a variety of practices as a means of permeating everyday life with prayer to God. Examples include pilgrimages, novenas, processions and celebrations in honor of Mary and the other saints, the rosary, the Angelus, the Stations of the Cross, the veneration of relics and the use of sacramentals. Properly used, popular devotional practices do not replace the liturgical life of the church; rather, they extend it into daily life.”

Traditional monthly devotions are: January, the Holy Name of Jesus; February, the Holy Family; March, St. Joseph; April, the Holy Eucharist; May, Our Lady; June, the Sacred Heart; July, the Most Precious Blood; August, the Immaculate Heart of Mary; September, Our Lady of Sorrows; October, the Rosary; November, Holy Souls; December, the Divine Infancy, according to “Encyclopedia of Catholic Devotions and Practices.”

Meanwhile, the USCCB noted Pope Francis annually asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. For 2020, the prayer intentions are: January, World Peace; February, Listen to the Migrants’ Cries; March, Catholicks in China; April, Freedom from Addiction; May, For Deacons; June, The Way of the Heart; July, Our Families; August, The Maritime World; September, Respect for the Planet’s Resources; October, the Laity’s Mission in the Church; November, Artificial Intelligence; December, For a Life of Prayer.

By Dina Dow

Into the desert

Where can one go and be utterly free from distraction? Imagine a place without access to cellular service, television, internet, Wi-Fi, electricity, running water, paved streets and a convenience store right around the corner? What if you open your front door tomorrow morning, take one step outside and find yourself in the middle of a desert? You turn around, and the house, the car and all you know are out of sight. Noiseless, little movement and quiet. Just you, surrounded by the desert, with just your thoughts and the Holy Spirit.

Welcome to the season of Lent, a time of prayer, purification and presence. A time of renewal, reversion and revitalization. A time of acknowledgment, accountability and action. A time to pray, to fast and to give alms. We begin in the garden, move into the desert and climb the mountain to witness a glimpse of the glory of Jesus.

The garden

The glory of God shone in Eden. We read in the Book of Genesis of how God formed man, places him in a garden in Eden, provides water, trees with good food, together with two trees in the interior (central) area of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of which man shall avoid its fruit lest he die (Gn 2:7-17). God’s genuine love for man is known. God told Adam to care for the garden. God also gave him a “command” to eat freely of every tree except the latter. A seemingly easy commandment was twisted by the subtleness of the serpent who placed doubt in the hearts of our first parents. Is not the attack of the devil presents looks attractive but, in the end, has no ultimate good? Adam and Eve are caught up in the lure (temptation) of limited pleasure then act with self-love rather than love of God. Immediately they realize the mistake of self-denial and be with God. What is my purpose? To know him is to know his mercy. Into the desert Jesus’ mission of redemption begins in the desert. Aerial photos of such a desert reveals vast emptiness and isolation. It is remote, dry and barren; a perfect place to empty oneself, detach from distraction and listen to God in the silence. Bishop Robert Barron gives an inspiring Lenten homily about Jesus’ experience of temptations in the desert. Bishop Barron says, “Lent is the time where we are able to come to terms with the meaning and purpose of our lives. It is a time of purification, a time to detach, to go to a deserted place, free from distraction in order to ask, ‘Who am I? What is my purpose?’ During Lent we fast. Why? To ultimately create a desert experience of self-denial and be with God.”

Bishop Barron offers three levels of temptation by the devil and placed before Jesus, who, having fasted for 40 days in the desert, was exhausted and hungry. The first (basic) temptation was to lure Jesus and his use of power to turn stones into food to satisfy a sensual pleasure. It is not to say food is evil
St. Michael announces new president

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge is getting ready for “the next level,” according to principal Ellen Lee.

And that includes expanding the school’s leadership with its first president, Jack Nelson, the current principal at St. George School in Baton Rouge.

“It kind of separates the fundraising and the finances into the job of the president so that he’s looking at the big picture while I am too, but I’m looking more at the day-to-day running of the school,” said Lee.

Jeff Larson, chair of the Diocesan Advisory Board for Catholic Schools, joined superintendent Dr. Melanie Palmisano to make the announcement during an assembly in the gym. Students applauded and cheered when Nelson was introduced. After thanking students and faculty for the warm welcome, Nelson said it’s “great to be a Warrior.”

“A consultant was hired to undertake a search, which resulted in several candidates,” Palmisano said in a statement. “Following a series of interviews and the recommendation of the SMHS Advisory Board, Bishop (Michael G.) Duca gratefully accepted the board’s recommendation and approved the appointment.”

Nelson has served as principal of Catholic schools for 20 years and has been in Catholic education for 25 years. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in communication studies at Eastern Washington University and a master of education from City University in Renton, Washington. He was chosen a 2019 National Principal of the Year and the 2019 Distinguished Educator for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. He also won the 2019 National Catholic Educational Association’s Lead. Learn. Proclaim. Award.

Nelson said he will be working with Lee on growing programs, enrollment management and development.

Nelson, who starts his new job in July, said he spent time praying and discerning about the position and talking with parents, students and others about St. Michael.

“It was unanimous and enthusiastic,” Nelson told the students and faculty. “This place, this school is very special, and it was home.”

He added that he looked forward to meeting students, teachers, parents, coaches and supporters.

“Together we’re going to continue to build on the strengths and traditions we share, building the kingdom of God,” he said. “My goal will always be to create an environment that brings you together in faith, makes your dreams come true and creates opportunities for your future.

“There are many challenges ahead for everyone here today. Together let’s embrace those challenges and listen to where God is leading us.”
Save Haven Sunday equips parishioners

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Pornography continues to spread its venom at an alarming rate, infiltrating homes, tearing apart families and fueling a burgeoning human trafficking industry targeting young girls.

National averages show that children are first exposed to pornography at the age of 11, and some mental health professionals are referring to porn as the new drug.

Recognizing the need to provide guidance not only to families but also to clergy members to the dangers of what has become a multi-billion dollar industry, the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Baton Rouge has declared the weekend of March 7-8 as Safe Haven Sunday. During weekend Masses, clergy members will be delivering a homily touching on the dangers of pornography, and the Prayers of the Faithful will include petitions around that issue, said Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

Booklets will also be distributed to families with children as they leave church. The booklet, titled “Equipped,” is designed to help parents keep their children from becoming addicted to pornography.

Bulletin announcements are being published in advance alerting parishioners as to what will be presented that particular weekend.

“The goal is to empower parents to address this issue in the home,” Ducote said. “I think many parents are afraid to go near it or try and ignore it as even an issue. What I think parents don’t realize is their kids will be exposed to it even if they are not seeking it because of their access to technology.

“Parents need to be aware and be equipped.”

The diocese formed a task force and members addressed clergy members during deanery meetings. Ducote said the response was “mostly positive” because it’s an issue priests deal with every week in confession.

“It’s a constant theme so they are looking for help as well as how to deal with this,” he said. “We’ve had a few pastors who are a little uneasy talking about this from the pulpit but even they realize the need and how to figure how to say it or present it in such a way it doesn’t offend people or create issues for parents who are concerned about how they are going to address it.”

He said his office alerted parishes to available resources and that 20,000 copies of “Equipped” were ordered. Ducote said nearly every parish responded and some ordered the booklets to be distributed at Mass and at schools, where applicable.

“On that booklet there is a code parents can go to and receive daily emails for seven days with additional suggestions on how to address this issue in the home,” Ducote said, adding that a link to the diocesan website (diocesanwebsite.com) will also be included for additional resources for parents, ministers and even those struggling with pornography.

A video promoting Safe Haven Sunday will also be posted on the diocesan website.

Ducote said Bishop Michael G. Duca has asked clergy to preach on the issue on Safe Haven Sunday, making parents aware of available resources and also encouraging parents to trust that God will help guide them to address the issue based on the Scripture readings.

Clergy members have been sent suggested homilies, and the Office of Marriage and Family Life has also distributed homily hints to priests.

Ducote said the three readings for the Second Sunday in Lent that weekend focus on trusting God to lead people, that “we are being called to a holy life and God will assist us and Jesus’s reassurance there is a life for us beyond whatever we are struggling with.”

Ducote said this is the first year of a three-year campaign, with new booklets being distributed each year. He added the Second Sunday of Lent will likely be designated Safe Haven Sunday.

Ducote recommended visiting cleanheart.online, click on partnering dioceses and click on Baton Rouge for additional resources.

“What is available on this website is tremendous,” he said.

For additional resources, visit covenanteyes.com/resources/parish-resources-year-1.

Social media can be a great tool during Lent because of the apps and websites that provide The Liturgy of the Hours, other prayers and meditations. People can also set the alarm on their smartphones to remind themselves to pray for someone or to pray the Angelus (6 a.m., noon and 6 p.m.).

However, if social media is a distraction, people should fast from it. Instead, they could use that time to write a thank you note to a person or visit an adoration chapel.

“Any time you can spend in front of the Blessed Sacrament is a good time,” said Dow, who encouraged people to intentionally schedule a visit.

If one is absorbed in busyness, Lent may also be the perfect time to look at what’s occupying their time and do some purging to simplify their lives.

Catholics are urged to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation and to do an examination of conscience before going into the confessional. Dow recommended when people do an examination of conscience they should also do an “examination of calendar.”

Eldredge noted God speaks through the sacraments, Scripture, the community of faith and “burning bush moments” like Moses experienced, through a sunset, birds or flowers. Lent challenges people to pay attention to the way God speaks to them. She encouraged people not to give up because God draws people close to him and people’s desire to draw close to him is a form of prayer.

“Ask the Holy Spirit, ‘How do I get there?’ ‘How do I show up?’ Part of getting close to God is just showing up in prayer,” said Eldredge.

Mark your calendars for our March Open House Events!

March 5 at 2 p.m.
Rocky Mountaineer
March 10 at 2 p.m.
Hurtigruten – Antarctica & Norway
Meet Rolf Logan, our own Polar Explorer
March 16 at 2 p.m.
Globus & Avalon
March 26 at 2 p.m.
Celebrity Cruise Lines – Galapagos
For more information contact Tootie.

Pearson’s Travel World
7949 Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge • 225-926-3752

“A prayer can be as simple as ‘thank you Jesus,’ ‘I love you Jesus,’ an intentional rosary, an intentional Our Father … moments of gratitude, thinking what I am grateful for,” Dow said.

Families that spend a lot of time “on the go” may set a day or two of the week to have dinner together and ask each other what they are thankful for that day, the highs and lows of that day and where they found God.

The practice of fasting, particularly for those living in south Louisiana, may be the most difficult. But there are many different ways one can fast other than from food, according to Dow.

Dow said fasting is sacrificing for someone else the way Christ did for us. It helps eliminate things that distract people from their relationship with God.

They key to fasting is to add a dimension of prayer, almsgiving and service, according to Dow.

“Instead of hitting the snooze alarm (on the alarm clock) maybe we can fast from snoozing and get up a few minutes earlier and dedicate that time to prayer,” Dow said.

Instead of indulging on chocolate or that Friday night sumptuous seafood plate at a favorite restaurant people can eat a simple meal of baked fish and salad.

“You can pray, ‘Lord I’m offering this food, according to Dow.

Someone who patrons a coffee shop on a Saturday morning and reads a book may forgo the cup of java and donate that money to charity or donate the time they would have spent there in service.

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Consecrated Life Mass celebrates years of service

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Baton Rouge honored 10 women religious who devoted a total of 580 years of service to the church at a Jubilee and Consecrated Life Mass on Feb. 14 at St. Joseph Chapel at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge.

The Mass, which was celebrated on Valentine's Day as well as the memorial of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who evangelized the Slavic nations, highlighted the jubilarians' stories of responding to God's love and carrying out his mission as evangelists.

“Tonight the country is celebrating Valentine's Day – a romantic feast but still one we can appreciate because we are celebrating the great love of God, who out of love has called us and been faithful to us forever,” said Sister Lucy Silvio in her welcoming comments.

In his homily, Bishop Michael G. Duca noted that when the religious present were called to serve the Lord they were called into community.

He said Jesus called the disciples together and gave them a rule of life then sent them out in pairs on a mission.

Likewise, while religious may have been drawn by the community they entered by their charism, they are called to an apostolic life.

“Ultimately we have to realize we have a mission to spread the good news,” Bishop Duca said. “Once you get the mission, the rule of life is just your joy,” said Bishop Duca.

He said through grace and humility, older religious become a source of strength and grace to the church.

“Let us celebrate your vocation to the church just as we celebrate the gift to the church you are,” said Bishop Duca.

While the honorees entered the congregation at a young age, they said their love for God and his people has grown through the years.

The face of Sister Anne Meridier CSJ glowed as she said the biggest joy of her vocation is “the beauty of community life itself.”

For Sister Kathleen Babin CSJ, the Mass was one of thanksgiving.

“I thank God every day for calling me to this way of life. I’ve never regretting answering the call,” Sister Kathleen said.

The beauty of vocation for Sister Esther Hulin CSJ is God “met her where she was at.”

“He found me in the public schools setting. He knew where to look,” smiled Sister Esther.

Working in the healthcare industry has been the highlight of Sister Uyen Vu FMOL in her vocational life.

“We are engaged not only in physical, but spiritual and emotional healing,” said Sister Uyen.

This is also the case for Sister Edna Oraca SOM, who works with victims of human trafficking at Metanoia Manor.

“You are there to support them. They open up in some profound ways,” said Sister Edna. “They never knew they are loved by God and they never had a chance to see what love really is.”

Those honored for: 75 years: Sister Kathleen Babin CSJ and Sister Anna Schellhaas CSJ; 70 years: Sister Joan Hartlaub CSJ, Sister Esther Hulin CSJ and Sister Barbara Richter MSC; 60 years: Sister Dianne Fanguy CSJ and Sister Anne Meridier CSJ; 50 years: Sister Martha Ann Abshire FMOL; and 25 years: Sister Edna Oraca SOM and Sister Uyen Vu FMOL.

Sister Martha Ann Abshire FMOL, who made her first vows on Valentine's Day, has worked in many leadership roles, including internationally, for her community. She said she has been blessed by those she works with and serves.

“I have met so many wonderful religious and lay people in all types of ministries that I never would have met otherwise,” said Sister Martha Ann.

Renewing their vows at a Jubilee and Consecrated Life Mass Feb. 14, are, from left, Sister Esther Hulin CSJ, Sister Joan Hartlaub CSJ, Sister Barbara Richter MSC, Sister Martha Ann Abshire FMOL, Sister Anna Schellhaas CSJ, Sister Kathleen Babin CSJ, Sister Anne Meridier CSJ, Sister Edna Oraca SOM and Sister Uyen Vu FMOL. Not pictured is Sister Dianne Fanguy CSJ. Photos by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca blesses the religious celebrating jubilees.
Q We just celebrated the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, but in our parish there was no blessing of candles. I am aware that in some other parishes, the faithful are permitted to bring their own candles to be blessed along with the candles that the parish is going to use for the year. A young priest in our parish said that the blessing was designed to be a communal event where everyone carries a small candle in procession; he said that since our parish struggles financially, we could not afford to do this and so the blessing was omitted. Please clarify what is proper. (Richmond, Virginia)

A The feast of the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated 40 days after Christmas and marks the time when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to the Lord, as was the Jewish custom for the firstborn male. Since at least the 11th century, the blessing of candles has been a regular part of this feast. The solemnity of that blessing may vary, and it may or may not include a procession of the faithful. More often, in my experience, worshippers simply hold lighted candles in their pews while the priest pronounces the blessing.

Sometimes parishes provide the candles; sometimes parishioners are encouraged to bring their own. Everyone is invited to bring their candles home, ideally to be used at times of family prayer.

In explaining this long-standing custom, Pope Benedict XVI, writing then as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, explained in his book “Seek That Which Is Above” that “the warm candlelight is meant to be a tangible reminder of that greater light that, for and beyond all time, radiates from the figure of Jesus.”

One of the prayers of blessing offered for the priest’s use has, I think, a particular beauty. It says: “O God, source and origin of all light, who on this day showed to the just man Simeon the Light for revelation to the gentiles, we humbly ask that, in answer to your people’s prayers, you may be pleased to sanctify with your blessing these candles, which we are eager to carry in praise of your name, so that, treading the path of virtue, we may reach that light which never fails.”

A Priests are permitted to celebrate Mass in the Latin language. In fact, the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy said: “The use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites. But since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended” (No. 36).

In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a “motu proprio” letter, “Summorum Pontificum,” which said that any priest of the Latin-rite church may, without any further permission from the Vatican or from his bishop, celebrate the extraordinary form of the Mass. The first missal containing the extraordinary form, which is also known as the Tridentine rite, was published by St. Pius V in 1570. The rite was revised occasionally, the final revised version being published in 1962. The extraordinary form was replaced by the Novus Ordo or New Order of Mass beginning in 1969.

Virtually every diocese in the United States now has at least one regularly scheduled Mass each Sunday in the extraordinary form; in addition, some dioceses also offer the ordinary form of Mass celebrated in Latin. Catholics desiring to participate in Latin Masses are best off contacting their local diocese to find out when those Masses are scheduled.

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.
Parishioners learn social justice

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Parishioners of St. George Church in Baton Rouge are being invited this Lent to reflect, pray and act on Catholic social justice teachings through a seven-week educational program.

“St. George is blessed in so many ways ... We have over 100 ministries all of which touch on Catholic social justice teachings in some way, but we haven’t had any focus on (the teachings of) the principals themselves.

“Through the teachings, we want to teach others how to be better disciples,” said Ann Bertsch, a member of the CST committee.

Cherry Riggs, also on the CST committee, said, “I have heard that the Catholic social justice teachings are ‘the best kept secret of the Catholic Church.’ People so quietly live out the beatitudes but they don’t realize they are living out the foundation principles taught by the church.”

Through April 5, the front page of the St. George bulletins will feature one of the seven CSTs of the church: life and dignity of the human person; call to family community and participation; rights and responsibility; preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work; and the rights of workers, solidarity and care for God’s creation.

Rob Tasman, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, will present “Disciples in Action” April 23 at 7 p.m. in the Kleinpeter Activity Center.

The materials being used come through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services.

The teachings can be used by families, small groups, ministries and individuals, according to Bertsch. St. George School and parish school of religion have also been invited to participate.

According to Joe Perry, who serves on the St. George Council of Ministers, the teachings begin with an opening and prayer, web link to a YouTube video on the teaching, praying with Scripture, quote from a pope or saint, discussion questions, reflection and a “go forth prayer.”

Bersch said St. George, like many church parishes in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, generously helps those in need in their church and surrounding community. Through the social teachings, St. George hopes to step beyond serving people’s immediate needs.

“We hope to create more awareness of what the underlying cause (creating the need) is,” said Bertsch.

Perry said, “We have to know where (the breakdown) is at. We need to know the reason.”

Riggs said by learning the underlying reasons that create need, people can become advocates for those in need. This may include attending meetings in which an issue will be addressed that impacts the vulnerable of the community or writing congressmen and urging them to introduce laws to help eliminate unjust laws and practices of public institutions that keep people in need.

Believing the “Holy Spirit is guiding us” in the CST endeavor, Bertsch said, “We hope people will see the connection of the sacrifice Jesus made for us and extend that to make sacrifices for people who need us.”

Riggs agreed that Jesus is the ultimate teacher of social justice.

“Jesus walked with the socially unacceptable and the ‘unclean.’ He invited everyone to his table,” said Riggs.
Feeding minds and bodies

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

For one week in the month of February, government officials visit Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. But their mission takes them past the principal’s office, past math class, past the gym and beyond the playground. They head straight to the cafeteria where workers are loading up trays, handing out milk and squeezing ketchup on fish sandwiches.

Eddie Longoria with the U.S. Department of Agriculture regional office in Dallas said the week allows representatives to “see the great meals the schools are serving.”

According to Longoria, the USDA works closely with the Louisiana Department of Education, which administers the programs for the federal government.

“It gives me an opportunity to ensure they’re following the rules but also to see the innovative ways the school districts are able to take the meal pattern and create some phenomenal meals that are so healthy, that even meals that most people on the street don’t realize are being served in schools,” he said.

St. George cafeteria manager Sue Wiggins said nearly 650 students are served meals each school day. She said even with following federal guidelines on salt and calories, her team is able to provide a good variety of choices for the children. During this visit, students were served fish sandwiches, french fries, a cup of salad, an orange and milk.

“We make homestyle lasagna, we make rolls here, gumbo … we’re just keeping it traditional, and I think it’s important for kids to get to eat those meals because a lot of times, after holidays, kids are really hungry. They didn’t get their regularly scheduled meals because people are on the go and stuff like that,” said Wiggins.

Five days a week, students at almost every Catholic school throughout the diocese can eat three meals a day during the school year. Breakfast, lunch and afterschool meals are offered from August to May and more than half of that funding, 55 percent, comes from the government.

That’s why the Legislative Shadow Week at Catholic schools, highlighting child nutrition, is so important for government officials to visit schools in the diocese and see what’s cooking.

“We want people to be aware how much good is being done with taxpayer dollars and in terms of serving children to make sure they get the optimum nutrition in a wholesome environment that supports the educational process,” said John Dupre, director of Food Nutrition for the state education department.

Last school year, more than 1.3 million breakfasts and lunches were served in Catholic schools in the diocese. Also, 258,716 afterschool meals were served.

Recently, Catholic of Pointe Coupee High School in New Roads added the afterschool meal to its lineup of offerings for students. Dupre said it’s also important to offer a variety of choices to students. He noted that diversity in food choices could lead to a better diet down the road.

“So these programs not only nourish our basic needs but also provide students the opportunity to learn and grow and experience some things that you might not get at home and expand your horizons as they grow into adulthood,” he said.

Child Nutrition Program director Lynda Carville said the official visits bring about a sense of community involvement “to open the doors and let people understand what we do as nutritionists in providing a healthy meal for our students.” She said the visits go beyond nutritional education, something she noticed when Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Weston Broome visited the cafeteria at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge.

“It’s kind of the girls were asking the mayor, ‘Why did you want to be mayor?’ And, ‘What did you do to get there?’ It was very engaging so I think it was a very valuable lesson for teachers to help engage their students by telling them state and federal officials were going to be at their school so it became a learning tool for them as well as educating them about what we’re doing,” said Carville.

THE 2020 BATON ROUGE DIOCESE DIRECTORY IS PRINTED!

The new directory has all of the current listings and information on churches, clergy, schools, diocesan departments and personnel of the diocese, religious, retreat centers, deaneries, institutions and organizations and more!

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A student at St. George School in Baton Rouge loads his lunch tray with healthy items as representatives from the USDA and Louisiana Department of Education visit schools to see how they are meeting guidelines for the school lunch program.
GOSPEL ▼
From page 2

for the necessity to fulfill a definite hunger. But evil does exist in overindulgences of physical pleasure which can dominate a person. Jesus proclaims the need for more than bread; that we rely completely on God’s word to guide us in temperance, sustenance and nourishment.

The second (mid) temptation is the promise of power to rule the world. Bishop Barron states this is “deeply alluring” but does this truly lead to ultimate good? Jesus proclaims that we are to only pay homage to God and God alone. The final (highest) temptation is glory and honor. Here is the temptation of seeking esteemed reputation for all the world to see rooted in pride. Jesus proclaims that all glory and honor are due to God and God alone.

Temptations Today
Jesus experienced these temptations because he knew we experience the exact same. Overindulgence in and addictions to sensual pleasures, those which temporarily satisfy the body, can lure one’s mind and heart away from that which is good and destroy our relationship with others and God. This does not only pertain to food, but many other physical activities which can lead one into darkness. Power, glory and honor are good, but are they distracting us away from God? Are we creating idols of ourselves or others in hope of earthly esteem? What are my temptations? How can I resist the lure of the devil and turn to God for all I need? How can I follow Jesus’ footsteps in the desert?

Mountaintop
Let us go to the mountain and see the face of God. The reality of Jesus’ divinity is unveiled in the Transfiguration of our Lord. Blessed are Peter, James and John to witness such a miracle. Little did they know how much this moment would prepare them for the resurrection and what to follow. They are transformed by the light of Jesus, as Jesus unveiled a glimpse of his divinity. The glory of the God enveloped all into the Holy Spirit, seen as a misty cloud. Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus. Law and prophecy come to the Messiah, who fulfilled what was written and spoken. The promise had come and was about to make all things new. Jesus’ mercy rises above and conquers sin. His face shines on our faces every moment, strengthening our battle against temptations that come from nowhere and weigh upon our soul. We must trust in his example and ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to choose good over evil. And when we chose evil and do fall, we must know to turn back to God, substantially in the sacrament of reconciliation, with contrite hearts, acknowledge our sinfulness, ask for forgiveness, receive his healing and pray for the grace to overcome the temptation the next time.

From the garden to the desert to the mountain, Lent is the prime season to kneel before the Lord, palms open and pray Psalm 51, “Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned. Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned. A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me.” Psalm 35, “Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. Our soul waits for the Lord, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you.” Amen.

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

ST. JOSEPH ALTAR DAY
March 13 & 14
Immaculate Conception Church
Main Hall (administration building)
865 Hatchell Lane, Denham Springs
March 13 Mass 7 p.m. followed by Blessing of the Altar
March 14 Viewing and feeding of the saints 11 a.m.; noon viewing and meal, open to the public
Church office 225-665-5359

March 14
Holy Family Church
Parish Hall
368 N. Jefferson Ave., Port Allen
2:30 p.m. Blessing of the Altar followed by the rosary and the feeding of the saints; 4:30 p.m. feeding of the public, all are welcome
Church office 225-383-1838

March 15
Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center
17560 George O’Neal Road, Baton Rouge
Noon – 4 p.m.
1:30 – 2:30 p.m. fig cookie demonstration
Debi Grymes 225-505-8153

March 19
St. Joseph Cathedral
401 Main Street, Baton Rouge
After noon Mass, free lunch
Lorie Watson 225-387-5928

March 21
St. Gerard Majella Church
Parish Hall
5249 Maple Drive, Baton Rouge
(across St. Gerard Ave. from the church)
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
11 a.m. Blessing of the Altar
Church office 225-355-2553

March 22
Our Lady of Pompeii Church
14450 Hwy. 442 W, Tickfaw
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Loretta Bergeron 985-345-8957

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MILITARY SUPPORT – Fifth-grade students at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge created Valentine cards for military servicemen and women overseas to be included in care packages put together by Baton Rouge Soldier Outreach. Photo provided by Claire Delaune | St. Jean Vianney School

HAVE A HEART – Students at Catholic Elementary School of Pointe Coupee in New Roads participate in Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser for the American Heart Association. The event raised more than $11,000. Photo provided by Megan Girlinghouse | Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupee

CITY TOUR – Eighth graders at Holy Ghost School in Hammond spent a week touring the city of Hammond and the surrounding area. Pictured, front row from left, are Jude Delatte, Connor Dauterive, Maggie Elkins and Ben Lucas; back row are Kate Lucas, Emily Wagner, Melissa Borello, Stephanie Newman, Mayor Pete Panepinto, Charles Ragan, Samuel Yenni, Noah Slaton and Lacy Landrum. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

BUILDING
Our Mission to the Missions

The Black and Indian Mission Collection (BIMC) exists to help diocesan communities to build up the Church and preach the Gospel of Jesus among the African American, Native American, and Alaska Native people of God.

Every year, it is the amazing generosity of Catholic faithful just like you who enable the Black and Indian Mission Office to support the following important priorities:

Enlivening Parish Life & Catechesis

Grant funds from the BIMC enable us to support parish-based catechetical programs. We help form and train catechists who will form children to be disciples of Jesus in the world and get bibles and catechisms in kids’ hands so they can learn the ways of the Lord and take their place around His altar.

Empowering Evangelizers

BIMC grant funds help African American and Native American ministries to sponsor events and formation that encourage living the Christian life in culturally appropriate ways. Religious sisters shown here, serve Native American Catholics spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Helping Educators Reach Kids

With your contribution to the BIMC, you will help to support good teachers to help African American and Native American children learn. In 2018, your generous donations reached over 5,000 students in more than 400 schools and parishes across the United States.

Encouraging Vocations

We need men and women to answer the call to the consecrated life and offer their witness as radical disciples of Jesus Christ. We need priests in order to have the Eucharist! Supporting the BIMC enables us to help encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life in diocesan communities across the country.

Please give generously in the collection March 8 and 9.

BLACK AND INDIAN MISSION COLLECTION
www.blackandindianmission.org/nationalcollection

TOP OF THE CLASS – Mater Dolorosa School in Independence recognized their Students of the Year, pictured from left, eighth-grader Braylyn Wright and fifth-grader Chloe Hebert. Photo provided by Erin Mendez | Mater Dolorosa School
**MOVIE REVIEWS**

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications:
- A-I – General patronage
- A-II – Adults and adolescents
- A-III – Adults
- A-IV – Adults, with reservations
- L – Limited adult audience
- O – Morally offensive

**Downhill**

Fox Searchlight

Awkward moments abound in this comedy about a husband and father (Will Ferrell) whose momentary act of cowardice suddenly alters how his spouse (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) and two sons (Julian Grey and Ammon Ford) view him. In adapting Ruben Ostlund's 2014 film “Force Majeure,” directors and co-writers (with Jesse Armstrong) Nat Faxon and Jim Rash quietly uphold marital fidelity, though a minor dalliance on the part of the wife and its aftermath are among the elements that restrict the appropriate audience for their largely unsatisfying remake. Considerable sexual content, including a brief scene of masturbation and numerous sexual jokes, off-screen marital sensuality, drug references, fleeting irreverence, about a dozen rough terms, occasional crude language. L; R

**Les Miserables**

Amazon

Set in a rundown Paris suburb with a large community of Muslim immigrants, this drama traces the slow breakdown of its public order. Director Ladj Ly, who co-wrote the screenplay with Giordano Gederlin and Alexis Manenti, uses the outline of a police procedural - the film mostly takes place over a single day in the work of a three-man street crime unit (Damien Bonnard, Djebril Zonga and Manenti) – to form a powerful message about bigotry, suspicion and the abuse of authority. After a boy (Issa Perica) with a talent for theft is accidentally shot by the cops, they have to keep him out of sight while they hunt for his parents. A-II – General patronage

**Gretel and Hansel**

Orion

Bread and butter, and hunger are the backbones of this horror-film framing of the Grimm Brothers fairy tale. Gretel (Sophia Lillis), who is 16 in this version, has to decide whether her hunches with a talent for theft are accidentally shot by the the woman is determined to hunt before she can retrieve a diamond purloined from her top henchman (Chris Messina) by a young pickpocket (Ella Jay Basco). Her pursuit of the gem puts her at cross purposes with the police detective (Rosie Perez) investigating the kingpin and a mysterious assassin (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) whose weapon of choice is a crossbow.

**The Photograph**

Universal

Intended as a tart treat, this DC Comics adaptation instead comes across as a sour exercise in random mayhem. Margot Robbie plays Harley Quinn, the psychiatrist who fell for Batman's nemesis, the Joker, while treating him at an asylum. After the two split, she finds herself vulnerable without his protection and is targeted by a gangster (Ewan McGregor) who agrees to let her live if she can retrieve a diamond purloined from his top henchman (Chuma Missanya) by a young pickpocket (Ella Jay Basco). Her pursuit of the gem puts her at cross purposes with the police detective (Rosie Perez) investigating the kingpin and a mysterious assassin (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) whose weapon of choice is a crossbow.

**The Rhythm Section**

Paramount

An ordinary woman (Blake Lively) becomes an unlikely assassin to hunt down the killers of her family in this revenge thriller, directed by Reed Morano and based on the novel by Mark Burnell. When a journalist (Razaa Jaffrey) reveals that the airplane disaster which killed her parents and siblings was not an accident but an act of terrorism, the woman is determined to hunt down the bomb maker (Taweek Barhom). A former special agent (Jude Law) agrees to train her into a first rate-killer, and the quest begins. She is assisted by another former agent and potential love interest (Sterling K. Brown), who may be the reddest of herrings. While the heroine's fight against evil is laudatory, viewers of faith cannot condone the film's endorsement of revenge and the ensuing violence. Bloody violence, brief nudity, implied nonmarital sex, a prostitution theme, drug use, pervasive crude language. A-III; R

Motion Picture Association of America ratings:
- G – General audiences; all ages admitted
- PG – Parental guidance suggested; some material may not be suitable for children
- PG-13 – Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13; some material may be inappropriate for young children
- R – Restricted; under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian
- NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

Solution on page 18

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Beatitudes are a way to happiness

In his weekly general audiences Pope Francis is now concentrating on the beatitudes found in the Gospels of St. Matthew (Ch. 5) and St. Luke (Ch. 6). The pope has a gift for metaphors and analogies. I wonder if he ever wrote any poetry. His imagery is very poetic. Of the beatitudes he says, “They contain the ‘identity card’ of a Christian because they outline the face of Jesus himself, his way of life.”

That might seem strange to some, since the blessed are in St. Luke’s Gospel are the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the hated and insulted followers of Jesus. They will have to wait for the next life in heaven to get their reward. It will, however, be “great,” Jesus promises.

In a column distributed by Junno Arocho Esteves in Catholic News Service and published in National Catholic Reporter, Pope Francis notes, “There’s a difference between pleasure and happiness. The former does not ensure the latter and sometimes puts it at risk, while happiness can also live with suffering.”

That is Jesus’ unique way to happiness even when life is painful and challenging. Those who suffer with the challenges that life gives them can also be happy here and now. That is why Jesus repeats the word blessed.

Pope Francis says, “The original Greek word ‘makarios’ does not mean someone who has a full belly or is doing well butrather a person who is in a condition of grace, who progresses in the grace of God and who progresses on the path of God”... In order to give himself to us, God often chooses unthinkable paths, perhaps those (paths) of our limitations, our tears, our defeats.”

This is a theme often stressed also by Father Richard Rohr OFM.

St. Matthew, in his Gospel, expanded the beatitudes to those who, like most of us, are fortunate enough not to live lives of real want and even of persecution. His first beatitude is “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” He adds also the meek, the merciful and the clean of heart to Jesus’ list of blessed. While the insulted and persecuted may have to wait for their heavenly reward, St. Matthew (and Pope Francis) see that these virtues have their own rewards in this life too.

Those who practice poverty of spirit put their trust in God and not the comforts of this world. In his next weekly audience, this time reported by Crux, Pope Francis noted how often those who trust in the comforts that money brings lose that wealth. “Our elders would teach us that our burial shroud doesn’t have pockets. It’s true.” He adds, “I’ve never seen a moving van behind a burial procession. Nobody can take anything with them. Those riches remain here.”

Pope Francis is a Jesuit. He took a vow of poverty at the beginning of his religious life. That must have given him a very personal view of poverty of spirit. Of all the beatitudes, he dwelt most on this one. Poverty of spirit would include those who feel they “are beggars to the depths of their being.” And now he becomes the poet psychologist: “How many times have we been told otherwise! ‘You have to be something; you have to be somebody, you have to make a name for yourself.”’

This is what gives rise to loneliness and unhappiness. If I must be someone, I am in competition with others and I live in obsessive concern for my ego.”

Too many people in the world today strive after fame and fortune only to remain “radically incomplete and vulnerable.” Pride drives them. Pride won’t allow them to admit their mistakes or ask another for forgiveness. “And yet,” says Pope Francis, “to live trying to hide one’s shortcomings is exhausting and distressing.”

And so this first beatitude of poverty of spirit is a way out of stress and fatigue. “We are given the right to be poor in spirit, because this is the way of the kingdom of God... This is true power: The power of brotherhood, the power of charity, the power of love, the power of humility. This is what Christ did; in this lies true freedom. The one who has the power of humility, of service, of brotherhood is free. At the service of this freedom lies the poverty praised by the beatitudes.”

There is a lot to be unpacked in “blessed are the poor in spirit.” Thanks to all of these news outlets that gave us the thoughts of Pope Francis.

Another Perspective

Father John Carville

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.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

Mar. 5
Rev. Charles R. Landry
Dcn. Daniel S. Borne
Br. Malcolm Melcher SC

Mar. 6
Rev. Hai Van Le ICM
Sr. Anna Schellhaas CSJ

Mar. 7
Rev. Keun-Soo Lee
Dcn. Jerry W. Braud
Br. Michael Migacz SC

Mar. 8
Rev. C. Todd Lloyd
Dcn. Stephen Brunet
Sr. Janelle Sevier SNDdeN

Mar. 9
Rev. Matthew P. Lorrain
Dcn. Barry G. Campeaux
Br. Paul Montero SC

Mar. 10
Rev. Donald Mackinnon CSsR
Dcn. Michael T. Chiappetta
Sr. Lucy Silvio CSJ

Mar. 11
Rev. P. Brent Maher
Dcn. Randall A. Clement
Br. Vuong Dinh Nguyen ICM

Mar. 12
Rev. Cayet N. Mangiaracina OP
Dcn. Samuel C. Collura
Sr. Ines de Jesue Soto-Gomez HMSS

Mar. 13
Rev. Samuel C. Maranto CSsR
Dcn. William Corbett
Br. Marcus Tucotte SC

Mar. 14
Rev. Robert G. Marcell
Dcn. David L. Dawson III
Sr. Mary Lucille Stelly SSF
We are growing ever more distrustful of words. Everywhere we hear people say: “That’s just talk! That’s nothing but empty words!”

And empty words are all around us. Our world is full of lies, of false promises, of glittering advertising that doesn’t deliver, of words never backed up by anything. We trust less and less in what we hear. We’ve been lied to and betrayed far too often, now we’re cautious about what we believe.

But distrust in the words we hear is only one way in which our spoken word is weak. Our words can be truthful and still have little power. Why? Because, to use Gospel terms, we may not be speaking with much authority. Our words may not have what they need to back them up. What’s meant by this?

The Gospels tell us that one of the things that distinguished Jesus from the other religious preachers of his time was that he spoke with authority, while they didn’t. What gives words authority? What gives them transformative power?

There are, as we know, different kinds of power. There’s a power that flows from strength and energy. We see this, for example, in the body of a gifted athlete who moves with authority. There’s power too in charisma, in a gifted speaker or a rock star. They too speak with a certain authority and power. But there’s still another kind of power and authority, one very different in kind from that of the athlete and the rock star. There’s the power of a baby, the paradoxical power of vulnerability, innocence and helplessness. Powerlessness is sometimes the real power. If you put an athlete, a rock star and a baby into the same room, who among them is the most powerful? Who has the most authority? Whatever the power of the athlete or the rock star, the baby has more power to change hearts.

The Gospel texts which tell us that Jesus spoke with “authority” never suggest that he spoke with “great energy” or “powerful charisma.” In describing Jesus’ authority they use the word “exousia,” a Greek word for which we don’t have an English equivalent. What’s “exousia”? We don’t have a term for it, but we have a concept: “Exousia” might be described as the combination of vulnerability, innocence and helplessness that a baby brings into a room. Its very helplessness, innocence and vulnerability have a unique authority and power to touch your conscience. It’s for good reason that people watch their language around a baby. Its very presence is cleansing. But there are a couple of other elements too undergirding the authority with which Jesus spoke. His vulnerability and innocence gave his words a special power, yes; but two other elements also made his words powerful: His words were always grounded in the integrity of his life and people recognized that his authority was not coming from him but from something (someone) higher whom he was serving. There was no discrepancy between his words and his life. Moreover, his words were powerful because they weren’t just coming from him, they were coming through him from someone above him, someone whose authority couldn’t be challenged, God.

You see this kind of authority; for example, in persons like Mother Teresa and Jean Vanier. Their words had a special authority. Mother Teresa could meet someone for the first time and ask him or her to come to India and work with her. Jean Vanier could do the same. A friend of mine shares how on meeting Vanier for the first time, in their very first conversation, Vanier invited him to become a missionary priest. That thought had never before crossed his mind. Today he’s a missionary.

What gives some people that special power? “Exousia,” a selfless life, and a grounding in an authority that comes from above. What you see in persons like Mother Teresa and Jean Vanier is the powerlessness of a baby, combined with a selfless life, grounded in an authority beyond them. When such persons speak, like Jesus’, their words have real power to calm hearts, heal them, change them and, metaphorically and really, cast out demons from them.

But we don’t always have to look to spiritual giants like St. Teresa of Calcutta and Jean Vanier to see this. Most of us have not been so personally influenced by St. Teresa or Jean Vanier, but have been spoken to with authority by people around us. In my case, it was my father and mother who spoke to me with that kind of authority. As well some of the Ursuline nuns who taught me in school and some of my uncles and aunts had the power to ask sacrifice of me because they spoke with “exousia” and with an integrity and a faith that I could not question or deny. They asked me to consider becoming a priest and I became one.

What moves the world is often the powerful energy and charisma of the highly talented; but the heart is moved by a different kind of authority.

In Exile
Father Ron Rolheiser

In Exile
Father Ron Rolheiser

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.

Sacrifice and giving

Richard Meek

Wandering Catholic

Richard Meek

Sacrifice and giving

oubloons have been carefully marked and filed, trash bags full of beads hauled up to an attic already groaning from the weight of previous Carnival seasons and adult libations stowed away for the next 40 days, out of sight from any potential temptation.

Carnival has always been my favorite time of year, even more so than the Christmas season. After all, it’s the one time of the year where my daily zaniness is considered normal rather than attracting disapproving scowls. And who can ever criticize a time of year when getting together with friends for frolicking and sharing mists and hops is actually encouraged?

And then the solemnity of Lent hits us like a dracoonian hangover. For some bizarre reason, I have always embraced the dichotomy of Carnival’s giddiness being immediately followed by the abruptness of the church’s most solemn season. Lent, a time of year when south Louisianaans devour shrimp po’boys at noon on Friday and crawfish later that night and call it a sacrifice.

Of course, we all have our Lenten “sacrifices,” which may range from giving up chocolate to abstaining from soft drinks, resolutions that are often discarded by Laetare Sunday. You know who you are because I am a charter member. But what about flip-flopping those unrealistic Lenten expectations and participating in alms-giving, which does not necessarily mean opening your wallet? Why not use Lent as a time to reach out to the needy, bring comfort to those who are perhaps not as fortunate or as comfortable as we are in our own lives?

The cost is zero and the opportunities plentiful. Helping serve the homeless at the St. Vincent de Paul Society offers an opportunity not only for the entire family to bond but also appreciate their own good fortune.

Even closer to home, surprise an ailing family member or friend with an unexpected visit, taking time to just talk, listen, offer encouragement and pray together.

Perhaps there is a long lost friend who, for whatever reason, you have lost contact with through the years. Consider contacting that individual and extend an olive branch.

Even just the simple gesture of purchasing a fast food meal to a person living on the street is living out the Gospel message, bringing brief solace to those living their own desert of despair.

We live in an era of political and social discordance, where morality and values are under siege if not even being rewritten by some. It’s an age where for many social media has become their deity, and electronic devices their houses of worship to engage the new deity. But Lent offers a time to turn off the craziness, to mute the noise. Lent is a season not of giving up chocolate but one of spiritual reflection, 40 days of walking in the desert with Jesus, listening to his voice through our own prayerful silence, paying heed to his words and not being distracted by outside influences.

And on Easter morning, we can have our spiritual resurrection. Plus, the candy is sure to taste a whole lot better. Happy Lent!

Meek is the editor of The Catholic Commentator.
COMING EVENTS

February 28, 2020

Scout Counselor Training – Counselor training for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and American Heritage Girls’ leaders will be held Sunday, March 1, 1 – 5 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center, 445 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. Registration is available online at info.ceosbr.net. For additional information, call 225-266-9001.

Third Order of Mary – The St. Agnes Confraternity of the Third Order of Mary will meet Sunday, March 8, 3 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. Call Karen Mollere at 225-272-3915 for more information.

Displaced Carmelites – On Sunday, March 8, 1:30 p.m., the Secular Order of Displaced Carmelites will meet in the St. Gabriel Room at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center, 445 Marquette St., Baton Rouge. Call Ethlyn White at 225-803-3391 or email robert-white456@att.net to find out more.

Pro-Life Mass – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will celebrate a pro-life Mass Tuesday, March 10, 5:30 p.m. Call 225-383-4127 to learn more.

Spring Retreat – Father Jamin David, pastor of St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany, will present a retreat, “Reconciliation – Reflect, Repent and Rejoice,” Saturday, March 14 from 8 a.m. to noon at St. Alphonsus Church, 1440 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs. Cost is $8. For more information, call Tammy McGuire at 225-935-7727.

Diocesan Scout Mass – Bishop Michael G. Duca will celebrate the Diocesan Scout Mass Sunday, March 15, 10:30 a.m., at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. The Mass will be followed by lunch with the bishop at the Parish hall. RSVP and get more information by visiting info.ceosbr.net and clicking on Bishop Mass and Luncheon.

Public Square Rosary – An America Needs Fatima public rosary honoring St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother will be held Saturday, March 21, noon, at the corner of Bluebonnet Road and Picardy Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, call Keith Horcacitas at 225-715-3878.

Men’s Day of Healing – The Diocese of Baton Rouge Office of Marriage and Family Life will host a day of healing and prayer for men who have lost a child through abortion on Saturday, March 21. To make a confidential reservation and find out more, call Daniel Van Haute at 225-325-3459 or email enteringcanaan@diobr.org.

The Catholic Commentator
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Help Wanted

St. George Catholic School invites applicants for a Elementary School Counselor

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WASHINGTON (CNS) — When it comes to the three pillars of Lent, almsgiving is a little bit like the middle child, not always getting the attention that prayer and fasting do.

The word hardly rolls off the tongue and people don’t talk about it as they might discuss what they are giving up for Lent or how they might be praying or reading spiritual books during the 40 days before Easter.

Christians might have good reason not to talk about their almsgiving practices since biblical warnings are pretty clear on guidelines of keeping this practice quiet.

For example, in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus says, “When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others.”

Jesuit Father Bruce Morrill, the Edward A. Malloy professor of Catholic studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee, said so much of the religious practice of Lent is shaped by images that represent what people are trying to do with their faith — ashes, for example, or fish on Fridays.

“Almsgiving is not easily recognizable, nor does it necessarily demonstrate religious devotion as prayer and fasting do with their focus on personal holiness,” he said.

Since the Second Vatican Council, Father Morrill said, the church has made more of an effort to connect worship and prayer to moral activity, and many Catholics have made the connection that fasting is not just to be pious but should have practical measures: taking the money that would have been spent on food or drink, for example, and setting that aside to give to the poor.

Father Morrill stressed that when rooted in faith, the practice of caring and providing for those in need is a way of “knowing this is how you encounter and know God.”

Classifieds

Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge

Director of Stewardship

Full-Time Benefits Eligible Position

General Statement of Duties

The Director of Stewardship serves as the chief fund raiser for the diocese, overseeing the Stewardship Office, parish and school stewardship training, the Bishop’s Annual Appeal, fund raising by the diocese and the Catholic Foundation and assists parishes in selecting vendors for their fund raising campaigns.

Education and Experience Requirements

• Bachelor’s degree required, preferably in Business, Communications, Marketing, Non-Profit Management or Philanthropy and five years specifically related experience.
• Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) certification preferred.
• Valid, current driver’s license and own, reliable transportation.
• Due to the nature of this position, it is required that the incumbent be a practicing Roman Catholic in good standing, who is registered and active in a parish.

Must Be Able to Demonstrate

• Ability to develop and cultivate diverse relationships, including peers, staff, pastors, principals and potential donors.
• Administrative and fund development expertise and ability in program and business development; working knowledge of fund raising software.
• Excellent managerial skills including the ability to appropriately supervise staff and vendors.
• Must have a working knowledge of fund raising software and social media and able to innovatively promote the use of technology to further the goals of the office.
• The ability to travel to parishes and schools and work outside of office hours.

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LEGISLATURE ▲
From page 1

“It’s going to be an interesting year,” said Rob Tasman, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops. “A lot of that is the fact there are a large number of newly elected officials at the Capitol. What you normally see when that occurs is ambitious ideas and proposals and a sense of excitement among the newly elected when they now occupy a position where they affect some change.”

Tasman admitted some of the legislative novices will encounter a learning curve, including gaining a full understanding of the process of how to walk a bill from beginning to end.

He said the new wave of legislators can be viewed in two ways. The positive is that they recognize their time is limited so they want to quickly see what legislation they can get passed that will benefit people.

“The other way to look at it is a bit of caution,” Tasman said. “You have to keep a keen eye on what bills were filed and what type of impact, even unintentional, consequences that might result.”

Tasman said his task will be more demanding because he has to reach out to so many new individuals and help them understand, first and foremost, what the LCCB is and what kind of issues it takes on and potential positions they might take as a result.

“It’s always important for the legislators to understand we are operating from a place of principles and not politics,” he said, adding that the LCCB is one of the most fascinating associations in the Capitol.

He said new legislators might find it confusing how the LCCB might have a majority Democrat support during the morning and majority Republicans support in the afternoon on separate issues.

“One of the challenges is education and why we have the position we have and where that position comes from,” he said.

The one unknown is how will changes in both chambers affect legislation. Perhaps an early harbingers was the Speaker of the House, when Clay Schexnayder was ultimately elected, but not before more than a few egos were bruised.

“I would argue there are more politics internally than I’ve seen in 10 years of occupying this position,” Tasman said. “What I worry about is if meaningful conversations can still be held. In order to have those meaningful conversations, we need to approach it from a standpoint that people are willing to listen, people are willing to dialogue and not just about where they might fall on the party line.”

He said Gov. John Bel Edwards might also encounter challenges in advancing his own agenda items, adding that the governor, working with the legislature will be tantamount.

Tasman said the governor will certainly not be able to pass issues with just the support of his party.

“If you want to look at it from a place of optimism, people will have to work together to get good reforms passed,” Tasman said.

“It holds everybody accountable in a different way.

“If we do have to work together, I think that is when the best legislation comes, coming together and hashing it out.”

There are several issues Tasman will be birddogging, including potential attempts to roll back advancements of the state’s acclaimed criminal justice reform, which LCCB played a major role in pushing through the Legislature during the past few years.

Perhaps one item of concern for Catholic schools is Edwards, in his “aspirational budget,” proposed a $475,000 cut in required services, which could mean thousands of dollars of reduced funding for schools. Required services funding topped out at $14 million annually, but last year fell to $11.3 million and this year would drop to $10.5 million under Edwards’ proposal.

“The reality is that will completely upset the way schools planned with their upcoming budgets (for the 2020-21 school year),” Tasman said. “It depends on the school but they would have to either make up the funding or make cuts.”

On another critical issue, a bill has already been filed that would outlaw capital punishment, and Tasman said he will see what kind of traction it generates. He did say LCCB will likely lend its voice to the effort.

Of course, with $103 million included in Edwards’ budget that Republican leaders have refused to recognize, cuts might still pepper the spring session.

For now, however, Tasman is focused on learning and introducing himself to a bevy of new faces.

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The Catholic Commentator  February 28, 2020
Retreat centers located in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

BISHOP ROBERT E. TRACY CENTER
BATON ROUGE

The Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center is available for spiritual renewal, professional training and adult or youth formation. As part of the Catholic Life Center, the Tracy Center can provide space for day and overnight retreats, and conferences.

The three-story overnight facility has a total of thirty sleeping rooms which can accommodate up to 120 people. Twenty four of the rooms can accommodate four persons. Five of our suites provide a bedroom with two single beds and a sitting room with two sofa sleepers. One smaller suite has one bedroom with two single beds and a love seat and chair in the sitting area. All rooms have a private bath.

The Westerfield Conference Center, adjacent to the overnight facility, is a state-of-the-art meeting facility with audio/visual technology. The conference center provides space for 120 people or can be divided into three separate meeting areas for smaller groups.

The Tracy Center Education Building has eight rooms available for day retreats, workshops or breakout sessions. Also available are two chapels, a theatre with fixed-style seating for 196, a ballroom that can seat up to 500 people, and three dining rooms. A full-time kitchen staff provides all meals and snacks; outside catering is not allowed.

The Tracy Center welcomes private groups, prayer groups, small Christian communities and Bible-study groups. We do not have a retreat director on staff; retreats provide their own director.

Our office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and tours of the facilities are available by appointment. Please visit us at tracycenter.org or on Facebook under The Tracy Center.

Phone 225-242-0222; website: tracycenter.org; email tracycenter@diobr.org; mailing address P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028.

Directions: I-10 to Acadian Thruway exit; go north 3/4 of a mile. The Catholic Life Center and Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center are on the left.

CYPRUS SPRINGS MERCEDARIAN PRAYER CENTER
BATON ROUGE

Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center (CSMPC), Sister Dulce Maria Flores’ ministry, is a Catholic ministry center hosting meetings, in-door and out-door events, and day retreats.

Cypress Springs is situated in the heart of Baton Rouge on

SEE DIOCESE PAGE 2B
**Manresa House of Retreats**

Manresa House of Retreats opened in 1929 as a retreat center for men. Since then, the Jesuit-run center has become a favorite retreat facility for men in the south. Manresa sits on 130 wooded acres along the Mississippi River.

Manresa offers sleeping accommodations for 111, all having private bath facilities, a main chapel and four reflection chapels, a library, gardens and shrines.

All retreats are in the manner of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

While most of the retreats are preached retreats for men, some spaces are available for individually directed retreats for men and women.

For more information, call between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Phone 985-402-3955; website ourladyoftheway.org; mailing address 5932 Antioch Road, Tickfaw, LA 70466.

Directions: I-12 east to Hammond; take Exit 36 Tickfaw/LA 44; turn left on Hwy 442 west; proceed 0.8 miles to Antioch Road; take right and go 0.7 miles; the center is on the right.

**Rosaryville Spirit Life Center**

Rosaryville Spirit Life Center is located approximately 45 miles east of Baton Rouge off of LA Hwy. 22 in Ponchatoula. Situated on 500-manicured acres of a 1,700-acre tract, it is a place for renewal of spirit, mind and body. Visitors can stroll the beautiful grounds, tour the facilities and see the picnic area complete with tables, pool and bathhouse. Beyond a canopy of trees along the meditation path stand outdoor shrines, grottos and stations of the cross. There is also a covered dock on the two-acre pond, a perfect place for reflection.

Rosaryville is staffed by the Dominican Sisters of Peace, formerly the Congregation of St. Mary, and their lay colleagues. Rosaryville Spirit Life Center opened in 1981, when the community of professed sisters in residence returned to a newly renovated motherhouse in New Orleans. It was at this time the congregation began its ministry of hosting and/or sponsoring retreats, days of prayer, workshops and other activities for religious, clergy and laity.

Rosary Hall, erected in 1955, is a three-story building. On the first floor are offices, an informal gathering area, three dining rooms and two kitchens. On the second floor are a library, an audio-visual center, a small conference room, a suite for visiting retreat directors, the Holy DIOCESE▼

approximately 57 acres of land filled with pristine Louisiana forests, beautiful nature and meditation trails, and overlooking serene bird-sanctuary lakes. Located on the CSMPC campus is the Chapel of Divine Providence with a seating capacity of 30. The Dolphin Room in the Ministry Building can accommodate seating of 390 in a meeting room/classroom seating, and seat 250 for dinner or up to 350 when utilizing the terrace overlooking the trails and lake.

The Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament are in residence at their convent which is also located on the campus.

CSMPC is available for retreats such as Catholic speakers, staff and/or pastoral council meetings, etc. Located at 17560 George O’Neal Rd. Travel two miles turning left on George O’Neal Rd. Travel two miles to end of the road and enter through CSMPC gates.

**Manresa House of Retreats**

Manresa House of Retreats

Our Lady of the Way Spiritual Life Center

Tickfaw

Our Lady of the Way Spiritual Life Center in Tickfaw, which opened Aug. 15, 2015, offers overnight facilities.

The facility is able to accommodate 40 people in semi-private rooms, as well as two private apartments that can sleep from six to eight people.

The center also offers a chapel, library, conference room that accommodates 50-plus people, a dining area with catering and two outdoor patios.

Our Lady of the Way is situated on 10 acres that offer a pleasant retreat facility located in a tranquil setting of pine trees and manicured grounds. It offers an escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Phone 985-402-3955; website ourladyoftheway.org; mailing address 5932 Antioch Road, Tickfaw, LA 70466.

Directions: I-12 east to Hammond; take Exit 36 Tickfaw/LA 44; turn left on Hwy 442 west; proceed 0.8 miles to Antioch Road; take right and go 0.7 miles; the center is on the right.

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**Rosaryville Spirit Life Center**

Ponchatoula

Rosaryville Spirit Life Center is located approximately 45 miles east of Baton Rouge off of LA Hwy. 22 in Ponchatoula. Situated on 500-manicured acres of a 1,700-acre tract, it is a place for renewal of spirit, mind and body. Visitors can stroll the beautiful grounds, tour the facilities and see the picnic area complete with tables, pool and bathhouse. Beyond a canopy of trees along the meditation path stand outdoor shrines, grottos and stations of the cross. There is also a covered dock on the two-acre pond, a perfect place for reflection.

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NEW Resources for a Lenten Retreat

Manresa House of Retreats
5858 L. A. Highway 44
Convent, Louisiana 70723
1-800-782-9431 • www.manresa.org

Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center
Metaire

The Retreat Center has been a part of the fabric of life in New Orleans for over 50 years, and is regarded as holy ground by all those who have been coming here on retreat. Since 1958, the Retreat Center has remained a “hidden gem” in the heart of Metairie, nestled on the banks of Lake Pontchartrain, offering a spiritual sanctuary for those who want to spend quiet time in prayer and deepen their relationship with God.

We offer a full schedule of weekend and day retreats. We are also available as a venue for faith-based groups to host a variety of events including: retreats, meetings, luncheons and much more.

Located about an hour east of Baton Rouge, the Retreat Center has a chapel, dining room, a meeting hall, a library, a large parlor and several breakout rooms. The 11 landscaped acres offer grounds conducive to prayer and reflection that nurture our souls.

For more information, please contact us at 504-887-1420 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please visit our website at neworleansretreats.org to register for a retreat and the latest news and events.

We invite you to come to the quiet and encounter the Sacred.

Directions: From Baton Rouge, take I-10 east to Williams Blvd. exit; go north to West Esplanade Avenue, turn right; travel on West Esplanade Avenue to the U-turn before Transcontinental Blvd.; make the U-turn; travel four blocks to St. Mary St.; turn right. The center’s driveway is at the end of St. Mary Street.

JESUIT Spirituality Center
Grand Coteau

The Jesuit Spirituality Center located in the heart of Acadia, 11 miles north of Lafayette on I-49, is open to men and women of all faiths.

The former St. Charles College became the Jesuit Novitiate in 1922 and a retreat center in 1972, providing a quiet and restful environment for those seeking to listen and respond to God with generosity and openness through the experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

The century-old building, located on 900 acres of farm-land, provides 33 rooms with private baths and individual air control.

Year-round offerings of three, five, eight- and 30-day individually directed retreats, and a variety of weekend programs and retreats, are scheduled through the center.

An individually directed retreat differs from the more common group or preached retreat in that the retreatant meets privately each day with a spiritual director. In these sessions, the director listens to the retreatant’s description of what has happened in prayer since the day before and then selects additional exercises and Scripture passages to assist the retreatant in the journey of faith as a companion of Jesus.

The center has bicycle and walking paths and roads, several chapels, a bookstore and a large meeting room that can accommodate up to 50 people.

Phone 337-662-5251 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information or to request a brochure detailing upcoming events; website jesuitspiritualitycenter.org; email office@jesuitspiritualitycenter.org; mailing address St. Charles College, P.O. Box C, Grand Coteau, LA 70541-1003.

Directions: I-10 west to I-49 north at Lafayette; about 10 miles to the Sunset/Grand Coteau Exit 11 (LA Hwy. 93); turn right and follow Martin Luther King Drive (LA Hwy. 93). The center is on the left, at 315 M. L. K. Dr.
FROM PAGE 3B

REVEREND WILLIAM KELLEY RETREAT CENTER
BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

The Rev. William Kelley Retreat Center in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi features 55 acres for peaceful reflection, located a block off the Bay of St. Louis.

The center, which is operated by the Divine Word Missionaries, is available for lay people, clergy, religious, singles and married persons.

The center offers 30 rooms with two beds in each room with private bathrooms. Some additional housing is available if needed.

The center has a conference center, smaller rooms for break-out sessions, library, chapel, hanging swings and a path through the woods. Specific retreats, such as Retrouvaille, can be requested although the majority of groups bring their own leadership. Also, private or directed retreats are available.

A kitchen and retreat staff is available. Divine Word Missionaries can be available for Mass.

Phone 228-467-2032; website svdsouth.com; mailing address 510 North Second St., Bay St. Louis, MS 39520-4626.

FROM PAGE 28

Rosary Chapel and a smaller area, the Upper Room that may be used for workshops and/or conferences for groups from 35 to 50 people. On the third floor are eight semi-private rooms and semi-private baths.

St. John Hall, erected in 1966, is adjacent to Rosary Hall and houses a large conference room, a small parlor, the gift shop, the massage therapy room and 34 private and semi-private bedrooms.

Kateri Hall has eight dormitory rooms with bunk beds. Five rooms can sleep eight each, two rooms can sleep 10 each, and the one remaining room can sleep four. The hall has a spacious recreation/conference room and separate renovated bathrooms with showers for boys and girls. It is ideal for youth groups and Rosaryville’s Camp Kateri for boys and girls each summer.

There is also a chapel named Queen of the Most Holy Rosary that can hold about 80 retreatants. There is also a sports court adjacent to Kateri Hall as well as ample space for outdoor games.

Shalom House is a one-story, self-contained hermitage. It has sleeping capacity for six or more, a fully equipped kitchen, two bathrooms, washer/dryer and large worktable. It is ideal for those seeking an extended private retreat or for small groups needing a meeting facility.

The Rev. William Kelley Retreat Center offers a new Memorial Cemetery to serve all families with both mausoleum and in ground availability.

For more information on specific areas of Rosaryville Spirit Life Center visit our web based app Rosaryville.oncell.com.

Phone 225-294-5039; email scallais@oppeace.org; website www.rosaryville.org; address 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, LA 70454.

Directions: I-12 to Pumpkin Center exit 35; turn south; at Hwy. 22 turn left; go two miles to Rosaryville Road; turn right, go one mile to the Rosaryville gate.