RUNNING TOWARD FAITH

Conversion is LSU star’s greatest feat

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

LSU running-back Clyde Edwards-Helaire was considered the “heart and soul” of the LSU offense during the Tiger’s run to the national championship at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans on Jan. 13.

Edwards-Helaire was a spark in the Tiger’s 42-25 title victory over Clemson, rushing 16 times for 110 yards and catching five passes for 54 yards. He has entered the NFL draft and is considered one of its top running back prospects.

But what Edwards-Helaire considers his best move is not entering the endzone for a touchdown but entering the Catholic faith with a goal of heaven in mind. Seminarian Deacon David Dawson helped usher the star running back in for that victory through the RCIA program at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge.

Deacon Dawson was deacon assistant at Sacred Heart when he first came to know Edwards-Helaire during his sophomore year at LSU as he attended Mass with his girlfriend’s family.

“Clyde would come regularly,” said Deacon Dawson. “What I noticed is that he would come up during Communion with his arms crossed over his chest. Even when she (the girlfriend) and the family wouldn’t come he came by himself.

Reflecting about what drew him to Mass and the Catholic faith, Edwards-Helaire said it was an “escape from everyday life so I could pray.”

“When I was at Mass, it was as if the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. It eased my burdens and I was able to reflect on my life,” he said.

“One day after Mass,” Deacon Dawson said “he walked out and I asked, ‘Clyde, you’re not Catholic?’ He said, ‘No sir.’ I said, ‘Do you want to be become Catholic?’”

Edwards-Helaire said he did but explained that his football practice schedule conflicted with the RCIA class schedule.

Deacon Dawson received permission from pastor Father Miles Walsh to privately instruct Edwards-Helaire in his home.

Having graduated from Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, Edwards-Helaire entered the Catholic faith.

Deacon Dawson, left, and Clyde Edwards-Helaire at the 2018 Easter Vigil Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge, where Edwards-Helaire entered the Catholic faith. Photo provided by Deacon David Dawson

Glow restored to historic church

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Historic Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Plattenville is shining a bit brighter, courtesy of a recently concluded makeover.

Bishop Michael G. Duca celebrated Mass on Dec. 15 to commemorate the renovation, blessing the sanctuary and the walls.

Work included tearing up the gritty old sanctuary carpet and replacing it with a marble floor. Additionally, a platform was constructed to raise the high altar, making it visible for the entire congregation. Previously, the view of the high altar was obstructed by the altar facing the congregation.

Hardwood floors were replaced throughout the church, giving it a fresh, welcoming decor. A fresh coat of paint has also given the sanctuary a much more radiant look.

“The sanctuary is definitely much, much brighter,” said parishioner Cathy Landry of the remodeling.

Renovations at Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Plattenville including replacing the worn carpet in the sanctuary and replacing hardwood floors throughout the church. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

The church and the work they did is beautiful,” said parochial administrator Father Eddie Martin, who was appointed to the parish in early December.

Landry said the work was spearheaded by

Deacon David Dawson, left, and Clyde Edwards-Helaire at the 2018 Easter Vigil Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge, where Edwards-Helaire entered the Catholic faith.
Messiah: priest, prophet & king

The term “messiah” comes from the Hebrew word meaning “anointed one.” This term was applied to priests, prophets and kings in the Old Testament. The people given these titles were first anointed with water or oil to consecrate them for their specific mission. Sometimes even the Spirit of God anointed someone to their role.

According to the Catholic Bible Dictionary, kings were most frequently called “messiahs” or “anointed ones.” There are several instances throughout the Old Testament where men are anointed as kings. These kings are even referred to as “anointed ones” or “messiahs.”

Prophets were occasionally called “messiahs” or “anointed ones,” but those are rare. One instance, though, recounts how Elijah anoints Elisha to be a prophet.

Anointing was a critical aspect in the consecration of priests. There are several instances where the Book of Leviticus refers to “anointed priests.”

Hard times fell upon the Israelites after the death of their beloved King David and his son, Solomon. Their once united nation broke apart into two kingdoms followed by a stream of invasions. Several other powerful nations left the Israelites’ temple destroyed, and their people scattered and in exile.

During this tumultuous time, there arose prophecies and a new hope that God would send one great messiah to deliver them from sin, exile and death. Our Christian faith teaches us this was fulfilled in the person of Jesus, who is the true priest, prophet and king.

The most famous biblical prophecies of the future Messiah referred to the kingship aspect of his dominion. The Messiah would be like the once-great King David and would even descend from his lineage. Both evangelists Matthew (Mt 1:1-17) and Luke (Lk 3:23-38) make a great effort to trace Jesus’ lineage back to King David to show that he fulfills that part of the prophecy.

The greatest prophet of the Old Testament was considered to be Moses. Moses even promised that God would send a prophet like him one day in the future, and this became part of the prophecy of Jesus, the great Messiah. Jesus became the “new Moses” in many ways. He gave a new law and brought all people to a new promised land when he opened the gates of heaven. Jesus even gave us new manna in the form of the Eucharist.

Finally, the Messiah who would become Jesus was occasionally called a priest. One noteworthy example of this is in the Book of Samuel when a prophet foretells of a “faithful priest” to come who will have authority over all the other priests and their descendants. The priests in the temple were the ones who performed the animal sacrifices to God. Jesus fulfilled this in the most significant way by sacrificing himself for our sins.

While there were lesser “messiahs” in the forms of priests, prophets, and kings throughout the Old Testament, Jesus came to fulfill all the prophecies. He became the true Messiah: priest, prophet, and king.

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Your light must shine

By Dina Dow

The Readings for the 4th and 5th Sundays in Ordinary Time reveal the importance of presenting ourselves to God, as well as answering the call to holiness while being salt and light to the world through sacrifice and praise.

Presented to God

The Gospel of St. Luke describes Mary and Joseph’s lawful visit to the temple approximately 40 days after Jesus’ birth. The Mosaic Law required the first-born son of each Jewish family to be presented in the Jerusalem temple and consecrated to God. They also offered a sacrifice, in this case a pair of turtle doves, indicating their commitment and sheer poverty. Much to their surprise while presenting Jesus they received a message from Simeon, who, filled with the Holy Spirit, would not die until he saw the Christ (Lk 2:26). Immediately taking Jesus into his arms, Simeon proclaimed the good news, stating this child (Jesus) is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel” (Lk 2:32).

Simeon added that Jesus’ life would not be without strife, and the heart of his mother would also experience suffering for the revelation that was to come for the glory of God (Lk 2:34–35). Affirming the fulfillment was the prophetess, Anna, a devout worshipper in the temple who also recognized Jesus as the one who will bring “redemption to Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38). Imagine for a moment what Joseph and Mary might have pondered as they left the temple that day.

Presenting ourselves to God

As Christians we are called to present our families to God. Upon conception there is gratitude for the gift of new life. This is a perfect time to consecrate the infant to God as he or she grows in the womb. Upon birth the family offers their newborn to God in prayer and through the sacrament of baptism, when the entire family and extended faith community embrace the child who is set apart for God, as all are through our baptismal promises.

Acknowledgement of the sacrifices which accompany the gift of being family (most especially while raising the child in faith centered on Jesus) is part of life in Christ as we strive for holiness, setting aside self-love for love of other. It is when God and others are placed before oneself that we present ourselves to God freely and without reservation, embracing faith with trust in the “power of the Holy Spirit and reliance on God’s power and not human wisdom” (1 Cor 2:5). From this time forward, we can present our children and ourselves to God each day. Our extended hands of trust are crucial for growth in holiness and faithfulness to God. How can I present myself to the Lord each day? What am I asking of God? How am I offering sacrifice for the glory of God and the sake of another?

Salt and light

Salt and light are two of the fundamental elements for life. Salt contains sodium which supports the function of various systems and adds flavor to food. Here in south Louisiana, salt is a noted staple. Guamo without salt is like ice cream without sugar. Light is a source of heat, necessary for growth of vegetation and crucial for the movement of weather patterns. Think for a moment of life on earth without salt and light. Tasteless and dark. Unimaginable.

Jesus uses these two words to describe how we are to share his message of salvation. We read in the Gospel of St. Mark, “You are the salt of the earth … You are the light of the world” (Mk 5:13-14). How are we salt and light of the world in our mission as disciples of Christ? The prophet Isaiah details how “light shall rise for you in the darkness” (Is 58:10) as we serve others through works of mercy, such as feeding, clothing and caring for the down trodden. “Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly father” (Mk 5:16).

In addition, the “flavor” of life is boosted when we decide to turn away from oppression, lies, maliciousness of speech (Is 58:9) and turn to the origin of the light, Christ Jesus. In other words, in our relationships we are to share God’s love and mercy in the same way light impacts the earth: beaming with warmth, teeming with growth and inspiring a journey from darkness to conversion. Our
Cafe earns Father Johnson international recognition

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Perched in the tiny hamlet of St. Amant, a meandering bayou lapping at its doorstep, the Full of Grace Café, located on the Holy Rosary Church campus, is rapidly gaining international acclaim.

The unique café, which opened at the beginning of Advent in 2018, is a sanctuary of sustenance for the less privileged and includes a coffee house, food bank, dining room, a place to receive legal advice, a hair salon and if necessary even take a shower. Best of all, the services come free of charge.

And only steps away is the quite spacious and well-stocked gift shop, where the revenue is generated so that café services will remain free.

In recognition of his role in developing and launching the café, Holy Rosary pastor Father Josh Johnson was recently chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics worldwide by the Christian website Aleteia who will be chosen as one of 12 Catholics 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Singing to the Lord through the walls of Angola

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

In a corner of Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel on the grounds of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, a half dozen men stand in front of an upright piano, belting out hymns before the start of Mass. This is the Our Lady of Guadalupe's Celestial Men's Choir, directed by Lester Williams.

Williams, who began serving a life sentence in 2009, said not long after he arrived at Angola he was asked by Father Todd Lloyd to lead the choir, replacing the former choir director.

"I've been a musician all my life but I never thought I would be allowed to do the work of the Lord," said Williams. "My career has been that of band director but I never thought I'd do this work. I prayed to do this work after I retired but I never thought I'd be doing it in prison, so we have to watch what we pray for. Because sometimes when we pray for it, even though it's good, be aware, this is what you prayed for, this is what you got."

Williams, a cradle Catholic, was an altar server as a young boy. The former high school band director said his primary instrument was the trombone. Now, he plays the piano for the Masses at Angola, something he had to get used to in his new gig.

"I seriously started playing the piano when I got here," recalled Williams. "I was placed in a position where I really had to step up so that's what I did. These guys are fantastic. They're my motivation other than the Lord himself. They're nice guys to work with. We just make a joyful noise that's all."

From hymns to Christmas carols, the Celestial Men's Choir is ready with song. Choir practice is typically on Thursday nights and Saturdays and choir members are only required to attend one weekly practice session. However, according to Williams, the men make most of the practices and are available for all Masses.

"We make ourselves available for all times because we're not doing this for ourselves, we're doing this for the Lord and for the people," said Williams.

Williams said the vocal group follows the guidelines set out by the priest celebrating the Mass. He added the choir is there to "motivate and to help the people engage in the Mass because in the singing is the word of God."

Williams said leading the choir has also deepened his faith. He said he prayed God would rely on him during retirement to do God's work.

"I thought about doing it in church as a ministry but never in prison. So this is where he has placed me and I've accepted that. It made me realize that he does hear prayers. We may not understand but that's what happens," said Williams.

Bryant relied on Catholic faith

CALABASAS, Calif. (CNS) – As the world mourned the loss of basketball great Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others killed in a tragic helicopter crash Jan. 26, many recalled how Bryant gave much credit to his Catholic faith for seeing him through the bad times and strengthening his marriage and family.

A shooting guard, Bryant was drafted into the NBA at age 17 and played his entire 20-season career with the Los Angeles Lakers. He entered the NBA directly from high school and won five NBA championships. He retired at the end of the 2015-2016 season.

News of Bryant's death quickly prompted tributes on social media. On Twitter, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles said "he was sad to hear the news" and offered prayers for him and his family.

In Rome for his region's "ad limina" visit with Pope Francis, Archbishop Gomez told Catholic News Service Jan. 27 that Bryant "was a very good Catholic, a faithful Catholic."

Born in Philadelphia Aug. 23, 1978, Bryant was raised a Catholic and as a youth lived for a while in Italy. He and his wife, Vanessa, married at St. Edward Catholic Church in Dana Point, California, and raised their children Catholic. Bryant is survived by his wife and three other daughters. Gianna, also known as "GiGi," was the couple's second oldest daughter.

One of the darkest periods in his personal life happened in 2003 — when he was accused of raping a young woman while he was staying at a mountain resort hotel in Colorado; he was in the state for knee surgery and was staying near Vail in Eagle, Colorado. He was arrested on a rape charge.

He denied he had raped her but admitted that the two had consensual sex. The charges were eventually dropped. In 2004, his accuser filed a civil suit against him and in 2005 Bryant settled with her out of court for an undisclosed sum.

His marriage almost ended over it. In a Q&Q interview in 2015, he said he relied on his Catholic faith to get him through and talking to a priest was "the turning point."

"The one thing that really helped me during that process — I’m Catholic, I grew up Catholic, my kids are Catholic — was talking to a priest. It was actually kind of funny: He looks at me and says, ‘Did you do it?’ And I say, ‘Of course not!’ Then he asks, ‘Do you have a good lawyer?’ And I’m like, ‘Uh, yeah, he’s phenomenal.’ So then he just said, ‘Let it go. Move on. God’s not going to give you anything you can’t handle, and it’s in his hands now. This is something you can’t control. So let it go.’ And that was the turning point."
LeDuff building his own legacy at St. Agnes

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge celebrates its Year of the Eucharist, long-time facility manager Eric LeDuff offers the work of hands, especially the beautifully remodeled adoration chapel, as prayer in unison with those who will come to pray.

There are touches of his creative work throughout the St. Agnes campus.

LeDuff comes from a legacy of contractors and working craftsmen that built and maintained many churches in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. His grandfather, Joseph Leak Patin, served as general contractor for the expansion of St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge and other major projects on its grounds, including building the former St. Francis Xavier High School.

LeDuff, 71, who has been involved in construction work since he was in his teens, started working at St. Agnes in the early 1980s when his uncle, Leo Patin, asked for help in remodeling the two-story rectory. Father Jerry Spriggs CSSP, a Holy Ghost priest from Ireland, was pastor at the time.

Later on, LeDuff’s uncle became ill and St. Agnes called LeDuff to work on projects.

“I began doing repairs for Father Spriggs — painting, door repairs, locks, opening walls, building cabinets. Whatever he needed me to do, I did it,” LeDuff said.

When Father Spriggs became ill and returned to Ireland, he told LeDuff, “A new man is coming to take my place (Msgr. Robert Berggreen), and I will ask him to let you stay and take care of St. Agnes.”

“When Msgr. Berggreen came he talked with me and said ‘I want you to stay and take care of St. Agnes and all of the buildings small for me, I’ve done them all,’” said LeDuff, who has built concrete walkways, wheelchair ramps to the church, changed the priest’s parking garage from a two to three-door garage, projects in the rectory, which among other things included the remodeling of a stairway and installing a wall. He’s also worked on projects for the Missionaries of Charity in their convent.

When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita severely damaged the St. Agnes Church roof in 2005, LeDuff took care of everything, from securing the grounds, choosing the contractor, to selecting the type and color of the new roof.

When St. Agnes installed a new HVAC unit in 2008, LeDuff worked with the engineers and “made sure it fit in with the designs and specifications needed for the church.”

Additionally, LeDuff created a safety and emergency disaster plan for the campus.

Parking at the church is improved with a new parking lot, which LeDuff played a big role in building.

Walking to and entering the church is also much easier with walkways and handicap ramps.

But the work LeDuff revels in most is spiritual.

Take a walk on the memorial garden deck built by LeDuff, which is in the form of a rosary, and one is able to meditate on the mysteries surrounding the life, passion and resurrection of Jesus.

A St. Charbel statue that is used during the St. Charbel healing Mass is easily moved from a chapel next to the altar to the sanctuary because LeDuff made a platform with wheels where it stands.

He’s made holy water fonts, crowns for the Blessed Mother and baby Jesus statues. No more “squeaks” interrupt the quiet atmosphere of the church as people rotate racks of church announcements and faith literature because LeDuff created shelves along the church walls.

Many kneelers around St. Agnes have also been made by LeDuff.

When St. Agnes needed more room for its special education, LeDuff transformed a kitchen into a PSR room.

And when Sister Mary Prema Pierick MC, superior of the Missionaries of Charity in India, visited St. Agnes in July, a statue was unveiled of the order’s founder, St. Teresa of Calcutta. The statue now stands outside the convent on a concrete platform and is enclosed in a protective glass casing designed by LeDuff as a reminder of the order’s mission to serve the poor.

The project that LeDuff is most proud of is the restoration of the church’s adoration room.

See LeDuff Page 15
End of Christmas season?/Distributing to extraordinary ministers?

At my previous parish, we said that the end of the Christmas season was the feast of the Epiphany (the three Wise Men). My current parish, though, says that the Christmas season closes with that feast. But liturgically, your current parish is correct.

The Christmas 2019 website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops says this: “The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. During this season, we celebrate the birth of Christ into our world and into our hearts, and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with him ... including the fact that he was born to die for us.”

The baptism of Jesus marks a sharp line of demarcation: Previous to that, he was viewed simply as a carpenter from Nazareth. But with his baptism, his public life begins as he proclaims with his words and actions the arrival of the reign of God; with the baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit begins to lead Jesus in a new way.

The second part of your question, though, is a bit more difficult: What does Christ’s baptism have to do with Christmas? Here, it’s helpful to consider something Pope Benedict XVI said in a homily on the feast of the baptism in 2013.

He explained that both the nativity of Jesus and his baptism show the savior’s solidarity with us, the humble immersion in our human condition that allowed Christ to understand our weakness and frailty. Even though Jesus had no need for baptism as a sign of repentance, he allowed it to happen. In the words of Pope Benedict, “He was moved to compassion, he chose to ‘suffer with’ men and women, to become a penitent with us.”

Our new pastor is very focused on making sure that everything at Sunday Mass is done strictly according to the rubrics. For example, when it is time for Communion he gives the host to each of the extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, who must stand back from the altar; then the deacon gives the cup to each one.

Then the pastor passes out the ciboria one by one and he and the deacon hand out the cups one by one. No extraordinary minister is allowed to pick up anything off the altar, so there is a lot of walking back and forth. All this, of course, takes time; sometimes we are almost finished singing the Communion hymn before anyone in the pews has received Communion. Is there some way to speed things up without violating the rubrics?

Also, if people come up to receive Communion without holding their hands in the right way, the pastor stops and tells them what to do. That can be embarrassing; is there a better way to do that?

Actually, your pastor is following what is the prescribed procedure. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in its liturgy guide says: “After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of holy Communion to the people.”

In a further explanation of that, the guidelines for the Archdiocese of Washington state that “extraordinary ministers should not take the sacred vessels from the altar themselves, but should be handed them by the priest or deacon.”

All of this, of course, is to assure that the Eucharist is treated with the utmost reverence, and it doesn’t concern me that this “takes time.” But why not wait to start the Communion hymn until the people in the pews have begun to receive?

As for those who “grab” the host instead of receiving it in their open palm, I agree with you that there’s a better way to prevent that. Why not have the priest explain the proper manner from the pulpit occasionally, rather than single out any individual for attention?

A book on lives of the saints which I am reading lists a St. Olympias in the fourth and fifth centuries and says that she was a deaconess of the church, “an office which existed at that time.” When did the church stop ordaining women as deacons and why? (Dunnsville, Virginia)

Clearly there were women in the early church who were called “deaconesses.” What is not clear is what, exactly, their role was and whether their ordination was a sacramental one. St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans (16:1) refers to a certain Phoebe, whom he calls (in some translations) “a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.”

And the saint you mention, Olympias, was, according to the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, “consecrated (a) deaconess” by the bishop of Constantinople in the fourth century. She had been widowed at an early age and chose to remain unmarried, dedicating her considerable fortune to helping the poor.

In the early centuries, deaconesses seem to have played a major role in the baptism of women. Christians then were baptized naked, many of them as adult converts; since the clergy were male, modesty demanded that deaconesses take women converts into the water.

Catholic scholars have divided opinions as to whether these ancient deaconesses were actually ordained to a degree of holy orders or were simply blessed for service, like lectors or acolytes today.

In 2016, Pope Francis, with the encouragement of the International Union of Superiors General, created a study commission to examine the matter of women serving as deacons. Since then, members of that commission have arrived at varying points of view.

Pope Francis spoke about this with journalists in May 2019 on the papal plane returning to Rome from North Macedonia. As to whether women in the early centuries Christianity had been ordained sacramentally, the pope said that the church has yet to give a “definitive response.”

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.
St. Agnes to celebrate Year of the Eucharist

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Shock overwhelmed Father Charbel Jamhoury when he read a report in September revealing that approximately 30-31 percent of Catholics do not believe the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ.

His disappointment was understandable, as the Eucharist is personal to the St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge pastor for several reasons, including a random encounter with a fellow priest in Italy in 2010. So Father Jamhoury went to the pulpit over the course of several weeks in late September and October to deliver powerful messages regarding the Eucharist.

His bulletin messages during that time also focused on the body and blood of Christ being present during the Mass, and that theme spilled over into Advent.

Wanting to go “deeper and deeper,” Father Jamhoury decided to focus this year’s Lenten reflections on eucharistic miracles.

But Bishop Michael G. Duca encouraged Father Jamhoury to go even further, advising him not to go straight to the eucharistic miracles but first develop the concept of the Eucharist from the Bible, and the fathers of the church.

“The image became clearer and clearer,” said Father Jamhoury, and born out of his prayers was a declaration of 2020 as “Adoremus! The Year of the Eucharist” at St. Agnes.

“By renewing our focus on, and increasing reverence for and devotion to the Holy Eucharist, St. Agnes Church hopes and prays that its members, friends, visitors and the entire community will be inspired to worship God more reverently by actively and purposefully allowing Jesus in the holy Eucharist to speak intimately and personally to each in our own hearts,” he said. “I think the Eucharist will only help us to understand our true identity as consecrated people called to consecrate in holiness and love the people of God especially (in) our daily prayers.”

Father Jamhoury outlined several goals for the year, including studying Scripture and papal documents through prayer; asking Mary and saints to instruct parishioners for active participation in the Mass; meditating on the intimate link between the Eucharist and the cross; receiving Jesus in Communion with great desire; and adoring Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament.

“Jesus is not an idea or a feeling or a memory,” Father Jamhoury said. “Jesus is a living person, always present among us.”

Ten monthly evenings are scheduled, with the first held in January, that include adoration from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the church, followed by refreshments in the cafeteria. Beginning at 7 p.m. and scheduled to last one hour, a video of a Dr. Brant Petri lecture will be shown and discussed, with each week offering a particular theme.

Some of the topics include introducing the Eucharist, the Garden of Eden and sacrifice, the sacrifice of Isaac and the Passover Lamb.

No presentations are scheduled in March and April because of Lent.

“My intention is to gather our parish community, one heart and body, and read and hear about the Eucharist from Dr. Petri,” Father Jamhoury said.

Additionally, an hour of adoration specifically dedicated to praying for vocations, especially in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, is scheduled on the first Saturday of every month from 9-10 a.m.

Lenten reflections are scheduled each Wednesday of Lent after the 5:30 p.m. Mass. Included in the reflections are prayers the Divine Mercy chaplet and reading one of the recent eucharistic miracles.

“This year presents for our parish an opportunity to meditate, pray and listen to the Lord and also to preach the Gospel and evangelize, bringing people back to a relationship with the eucharistic Lord,” Father Jamhoury said.

A personal encounter while on pilgrimage a decade ago in Italy inspired Father Jamhoury’s thirst for a greater knowledge of eucharistic miracles. He said while visiting St. Legontian Church in Lanciano, the site of the first eucharistic miracle, a priest that was a stranger to Father Jamhoury walked up to him and said, “You trust.”

“I was shocked and curious to know why,” he said. “In my mind this guy does not know I’m a priest. I followed him to his office.”

The priest handed Father Jamhoury brochures regarding eucharistic miracles which piqued his interest.

“I started to read more and more about eucharistic miracles,” he said, which has ultimately led to a special 2020 for his parishioners.

“This is (God’s) plan for St. Agnes: a place where we are invited to discover our wickedness and to confess our illness and wait to be touched by his healing hands,” he said.
By Richard Meek  
The Catholic Commentator

Grants totaling a combined $350,000 will allow Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge to offer an early child education program for the first time in St. Helena Civil Parish and expand the existing program in Pointe Coupee Civil Parish.

During a news conference Jan. 22 at St. Augustine Church in New Roads, CCDBR officials announced grants from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation and from the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation.

The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is designed to improve school readiness by using age specific curricula through home visits and by increasing parental involvement in their children’s education. HIPPY, which CCDBR first rolled out in Pointe Coupee Parish in 2016, has been internationally recognized and proven to improve school readiness.

The grants will offer the HIPPY program in St. Helena for children up to five years old, and in Pointe Coupee adding children zero to one-year old. Previously, the program was open to children two to five years old.

“(HIPPY) helps parents to be their children’s first teacher, to encourage them, to be an advocate for them,” said Stephanie Sterling, director of CCDBR’s Maternity, Adoption & Behavioral Health Department. “Now with funding from these foundations, we can grow the program to prepare families to be more resilient and prepare more children to enter school ready to learn.”

David Aguillard, CCDBR executive director, said the agency serves a large and geographically diverse area. He noted that occasionally there arises difficulty identifying organizations willing to reach certain areas, especially in the rural community.

“We believe what makes this grant is the investment in (CCDBR),” said David Beach of the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation. “There is a need to reach children early, to educate them and to help them reach their full potential.”

He said the partnership with CCDBR is ideal because the foundation is often looking to offer assistance in the rural areas but organizations serving those can be difficult to locate.

“We can’t do it alone; we need the local support to be successful,” he said.

“CCDBR has shown that this program is especially effective in serving high-needs families in rural areas where resources are scarce. Through this grant we believe we can support more parents as they prepare their children to be successful in school,” said Michael Tipton, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation.

“The (foundation) is excited to fund a program that not only helps individual children but supports families by showing parents how to engage in their children’s learning beyond the preschool years.”

Emily Oliver, a member of the HIPPY advisory board, recalled a story of one parent who enrolled her four children in the program.

“Working with their children does a lot for parents,” she said.

With a grant from the Wilson Foundation and Capital Area United Way, CCDBR began offering HIPPY in Pointe Coupee Parish in 2016 after the Pointe Coupee School Board lost its funding for the program.
Serving People of All Faiths

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St. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung Church in Baton Rouge celebrated the Vietnamese New Year with a Mass and a festival that followed in the parish yard. Bishop Michael G. Duca celebrated the Mass, assisted by pastor Father Tan Viet Nguyen OFM. During the Mass, Bishop Duca wished the standing-room-only crowd a Happy New Year and urged them “to hand on your faith to the younger generation. Let the joy of the Gospel shine through your heart.” The St. Anthony choir, renowned in the community for their immense talent, delivered its usual stunning and inspiring rendition of Vietnamese music. The outdoor festival included musical performances by youth groups as well as an adult group. Much to the delight of Bishop Duca, the traditional Vietnamese dragon dancers enthralled the crowd. The aromatic smell of Vietnamese filled the area, with smoke from the stoves and pots floating against the backdrop of a sparkling blue sky. The afternoon was filled with friends reuniting and families sharing the day together.

Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
EDWARDS-HELAIRE

Helaire had a better knowledge of the faith than many “pew Catholics,” according to Deacon Dawson.

“I asked, ‘Do you know what the seven sacraments are?’ and he said, ‘Yes, sir,’ and he named them all,” Deacon Dawson said.

He and Edwards-Helaire had many good theological discussions, some at LSU baseball games. Edwards-Helaire picked Jared Small, who was his teammate at CHS and LSU, as his RCIA sponsor.

Deacon Dawson keeps in touch with Edwards-Helaire and brims with pride about him as an athlete and Christian.

“I said ‘Look man, everywhere you go, people are going to be looking at you, not only in football, but as a faith leader. And I am so proud of you right now, how much your faith is extremely important in your life. Usually, when you get into (that level of outward success) your faith gets put on the back burner ... I know God had great plans for you,’” Deacon Dawson said.

But even as Edwards-Helaire, who is described as a player short in stature but plays like a giant, eyes the likelihood of more leaping up and spinning over the goal line in the NFL, he believes his faith will keep his feet on solid ground. Edwards-Helaire, who visited CHS to speak to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, is vocal about his faith.

He called his faith the gateway to comfort in his life.

“...I realized through my faith that football is not the center of my life, my faith is ... I know that football will not last for the rest of my life, but my faith will,” Edwards-Helaire said.
SPREADING CHEER – Students in the Beta Club at Mater Dolorosa School in Independence visits residents of the Amite Nursing Home on Dec. 14. The students sang a variety of Christmas songs, distributed gifts and shared homemade Christmas cards with each resident.

Photo provided by Erin Mendez | Mater Dolorosa School

CARING CUBS – Students at St. Elizabeth School in Paincourtville are recognized for their kindness with an award as Caring Cubs. Caring Cubs for the month of November are Aubrey Mabile, pre-K 3; Avery Hahn, pre-K-4; Fisher Daigle, kindergarten; Lylah Ory, first grade; Liam Dupré, second grade; Easton Chiasson, third grade; Naomi Naquin, fourth grade; Ella Hahn, fifth grade; Isabella George, sixth grade; Renee Ryland, seventh grade; and, Luke Viator, eighth grade.

Photo provided by Sister Maria Alphonse CMC | St. Elizabeth School

GIVING BACK – The National Junior Honor Society at Holy Ghost School in Hammond purchased toys to donate to Louisiana’s toy drive for children in foster homes. Pictured, front row from left, are Aubrey Dufrene, Therese Adams, Katelyn Hemel, Reese Fitzhugh and, back row, Charles Ragan, Noah Slaton and Jude Delatte.

Photo provided by Cindy Wager | Holy Ghost School

SWEATER WEATHER – Students at Holy Family School in Port Allen participated in “Ugly Christmas Sweater Day” and raised more than $1,000 for Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital in Baton Rouge.

Photo provided by Annette Fitzgerald | Holy Family School

GIVING BACK – The National Junior Honor Society at Holy Ghost School in Hammond purchased toys to donate to Louisiana’s toy drive for children in foster homes. Pictured, front row from left, are Aubrey Dufrene, Therese Adams, Katelyn Hemel, Reese Fitzhugh and, back row, Charles Ragan, Noah Slaton and Jude Delatte. Photo provided by Cindy Wager | Holy Ghost School
The Catholic Commentator

ENTERTAINMENT

January 31, 2020

14

The Catholic Commentator

14

Luminous in its affirmation of civilized values and the triumph of faith, broadly considered, over cynicism. Much combat violence with gore, numerous gruesome sights, slightly irreverent humor, a fleeting sexual reference, about a half-dozen uses of profanity, several rough terms, occasional crude and crass language. A-II; R

Jojo Rabbit

Fox Searchlight

Writer-director Taika Waititi's thoroughly offbeat satire, adapted from Christine Leunens' 2004 novel "Caging Skies," pretty much exemplifies the expression "not to all tastes" since it sees Waititi also playing a young German boy's vision of Adolf Hitler as his imaginary friend during the final year of World War II. Roman Griffin Davis is Jojo, a 10-year-old seduced by what he's learned in the Hitler Youth, at least until a teenage Jewish girl (Thomasin McKenzie) hidden in his closet challenges his blind nationalism. Waititi shows, often in a deadpan way, the deadly consequences of surrendering to ideologies that marginalize entire groups of people. Mature themes, images of execution, anti-Semitic dialogue, a single rough term, fleeting crude language. A-III; PG-13

Marriage Story

Netlix

Engrossing study of the divorce process as an avant-garde New York theater director (Adam Driver) and his actress wife (Scarlett Johansson) split, their shared impulse to behave decently toward each other and to shield their young son (Azhy Robertson) being swiftly undermined by the legal system and the aggressive stance of some of the attorneys involved (Laura Dern and Ray Liotta). Writer-director Noah Baumbach's hard-hitting drama, which also features Alan Alda as a more sympathetic lawyer, covers a broad range of emotions, from gentle affection to blind rage, each mood carefully calibrated by the script and skillfully evoked in remarkably fine performances. Viewers guided by Gospel values will find an implicit but unmistakable affirmation of marriage since the loss of the bond between the principals is limned in starkly tragic hues. Though the dialogue is steadily studded with terms that would normally preclude endorsement for any but grown-ups, some parents may consider that the underlying value of the picture overrides such considerations where older teens are concerned. Mature references, including to adultery and sexual acts, brief irreverent talk, about a half-dozen uses of profanity, a couple of milder oaths, frequent rough and much crude language. A; R

Just Mercy

Warner Bros.

A Harvard educated lawyer (Michael B. Jordan) strives, with the help of a local activist (Brie Larson), to save the life of an Alabama death-row prisoner (Jamie Foxx) convicted on feeble evidence of the murder of a 18-year-old white woman. As the attorney tries to convince the key witness in the case (Tim Blake Nelson) to admit he perjured himself, the prosecutor (Rafe Spall) stands by the original verdict and the oilman's lawyer and a naive client make turns ugly. Director and co-writer Destin Daniel Cretton's adaptation of a 2014 memoir by Bryan Stevenson reaches back to events in the 1980s but also vividly demonstrates the ongoing dangers posed by the application of capital punishment in a society still burdened by widespread racism. Yet this is much more than a message movie since Cretton and his script collaborator Andrew Lanham avoid caricature, showing that even some of their most misguided characters are capable of conversion. As a humane and winning study of a subject with immense real-world significance, it's possibly acceptable for older adolescents. Mature themes, a disturbing scene of execution, offscreen nudity in a strip search, a couple of mild oaths, a few crude and crass terms. A-III; PG-13

Dolittle

Universal

Chaotic comic adventure, loosely based on Hugh Lofting's "Doctor Dolittle" books for children, about a physician-turned-veterinarian (Robert Downey Jr.) who has acquired the ability to communicate with the critters he treats. Having become a recluse after the death of his wife, he's drawn out of seclusion when an attendant from Buckingham Palace (Carey Mulligan) learns that Queen Victoria (Jessie Buckley) is gravely ill. Since the monarch's death would mean the loss of the animal sanctuary she granted him for her lifetime, he hurries off to London, then sets off on a quest to find the mystical tree whose fruit is the only antidote to the poison the sovereign has surreptitiously been given. He's accompanied by the good-hearted lad (Harry Collett) who's out to become his apprentice and by his chief assistant, a wise parrot (voice of Emma Thompson) who doubles as the story's narrator. Director and co-writer Stephen Gaghan's adaptation is an amiable mess well-intentioned, but silly and disorganized. Some potentially frightening interludes and a bit of grown-up joking aside, though, worrisome elements are minimal. Stylized action and physical violence, character names in peril, a couple of mild oaths, brief scatological and anatomical humor. A-II; PG

Richard Jewell

Warner Bros.

Director Clint Eastwood's sympathetic profile of the titular security guard (Paul Walter Hauser) who quickly went from hero to villain in the public mind when he was accused of planting the three pipe bombs that he himself first discovered, and helped to save people from, during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. Dogged by an FBI agent (Jon Hamm) convinced of his guilt and a relentless mob of journalists led by a newspaper reporter (Olivia Wilde) who's out for a sensational story at any cost, he turns for help to his former boss, a maverick attorney (charismatic Sam Rockwell). The canny, hard-nosed lawyer and the plucky lawyer for an interesting odd couple and Kathy Bates is in fine form as Jewell's doting mother. But a seamy subplot and other factors make Eastwood's fairly gripping film, which draws on both a book and an article, best for grown-ups. An implied nonmarital encounter, brief violence, about a dozen uses of profanity, frequent rough and 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

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

1917

Universal

Gripping historical drama, set in the midst of World War I, in which two British soldiers (George MacKay and Dean-Charles Chapman) are dispatched across enemy territory to call off an attack by an officer (Benedict Cumberbatch) whose men are about to fall into a German trap, a mission made more urgent by the fact that the brother (Richard Madden) of Chapman's character is among those facing slaughter if they fail. By turns harrowing and lyrically beautiful, and deeply humane throughout, director and co-writer Sam Mendes' film displays both the horrors of trench combat and the endurance of fundamental decency and spiritual striving. Unsparring in its portrayal of misery and desperation, it's also spiritually striving. Unsparing in its portrayal of the horrors of trench combat and the endurance of fundamental decency and spiritual striving. Unsparring in its portrayal of misery and desperation, it's also spiritually striving.
actions are like salt, inspiring others with delightful goodness and accompaniment on this pilgrim journey.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in paragraph 782, describes the characteristics of the mission of the people of God. We read, “Its mission is to be salt of the earth and light of the world.” This people is “a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.”

May we grow in holiness as we live out our mission, being light and salt to all we meet, and share the hope of salvation with unity and joy. Amen.

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

The coffee shop at the Full of Grace Café at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant is a gathering place where people can not only enjoy a free cup of Java but also receive, at no charge, a haircut, legal advice, advice on writing resumes and finding a job and even take a shower if needed. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

consultation, for which the person is charged a small fee. “Yes (the café) was the fruit of my prayer, but it’s the body of Christ at Holy Rosary who are sustaining it,” he said. “They are the ones who are there early in the morning, during the day, and we even have families serving the poor.”

“All we have to do is say yes and give God the space,” Father Johnson added. “God has done something radical and turned it into something we could have never imagined. The fruit has been supernatural.”

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, up to 300 people, including some of the neediest in the area, drop in for a free meal. Also on Thursdays, volunteers deliver free meals to those who are homebound.

On Tuesdays, a local human resource specialist offers advice on writing resumes, completing job applications and job hunting. Free mental counseling is also available.

Once a month, a Widow of Mercy meets. Father Johnson noted the dinner is “done in Ruth’s Chris (Steak House) style,” with a menu and volunteer servers dressed in white button shirts and black ties, all in an effort to make the diners feel special.

“It’s phenomenal,” said parishioner Robin Anderson, as she prepared a pot of jambalaya to be served for dinner that night. “We all flooded, and we feel like we are giving back to the community that helped rebuild our homes. It’s very rewarding, I definitely feel like I’m living the Gospel message.”

“You don’t want to be prideful but you take pride in the work we do here,” she said. “It’s been a blessing for me.”

Father Johnson has received phone calls from other diocesan parishes as well as dioceses from around the country inquiring how something similar could be established. He also noted the café has given St. Amant a sense of community and has been a source of renewal and even evangelization.

“Because of the presence of the café and the work we do, a lot of people who have left the church have come back, which has been beautiful,” Father Johnson said. “It’s been a beacon of light and a great bridge to draw people back to Jesus which was the point of it all.” A bridge now spanning international waters.

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

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Cafe ▼

From page 3

LeDuff’s ▼

From page 5

The altar and the tabernacle containing the monstrance were also built by McDuff. The top of the tabernacle contains a glass pane so the light can shine through onto the Blessed Sacrament.

LeDuff also took two pieces of wood that came from Thailand and created a semi-circular wood backdrop for a statue of Mary that stands near the tabernacle.

“When I stood back and looked at it (the chapel) I felt good at what my hands had done,” LeDuff said.

Related to the chapel, LeDuff’s ever-growing “to do” list is build a sidewalk path and wheelchair ramps to make the chapel handicapped accessible.

LeDuff considers his “behind the scenes” work his way to enhance people’s experiences at St. Agnes.

“I take pride in my work,” said LeDuff, “just like my grandfather and father did. I don’t consider myself a handyman. I consider myself a skilled craftsman.”

The true work for LeDuff, who has a file full of commendations from engineering firms, insurance agencies, St. Agnes staff, the Diocese of Baton Rouge and the local Missionaries of Charity, begins with developing a plan.

“I design it first in my head and then I build it with these two hands,” said LeDuff with his palms up.

LEDDUFF ▼

From page 5

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LEDUFF ▼

From page 5

chapel. He repainted the walls, put in new carpeting, lighting, ceiling crown molding and trim.

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Do we see Christ in the poor, or even see the poor?

Most of us are familiar with Jesus’ words in the judgement scene of the 25th chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me … whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:34-40). For us who live in Louisiana, there are many opportunities to care for Jesus in the persons of the poor.

Louisiana is or near the bottom of every sociological and economic survey of personal wealth and well-being taken in our nation. Yet, as one letter to the editor in The Advocate recently asked, “With all the natural resources the state has and with our cancer alley booming, why is the state so poor?” I too, and I imagine also you, have asked the same question for a long time.

If one travels along I-10 from our state’s western border to Baton Rouge and continues on I-12 to Slidell at our eastern border, or turns south at Baton Rouge to follow I-10 as it parallels the Mississippi River down to New Orleans, the state of Louisiana would appear very prosperous with its sugar cane and rice fields interrupted quite frequently by oil refineries and petrochemical plants. Many of us who live in communities along these corridors benefit from well-paying jobs that are the envy of many other states. The top half of our state must be poor indeed, if the national rankings are accurate.

However, the apparent wealth of South Louisiana can blind us to the needs of the poor right around us. As Jesus said, “The poor you will always have with you.” Since Christmas I have been reminded of this in a well-known way. I do most of my grocery shopping at Albertson’s on College Drive. About twice a week during and since the Christmas holidays I have been stopped in the parking lot of the store by persons in need. One time it was a young man from Colorado who needed enough money to get his clothes cleaned so that he could continue his travels. What he was wearing was visible proof. Another was one of our own citizens who at 3 p.m. said he had not eaten that day and was just hungry. When you are emptying a cart full of groceries into your trunk, how can you refuse that plea?

And, after all, it wasn’t the economics of our state or any other state that concerned Jesus. It was our attitude and our personal response to the poor that Jesus addressed. He wanted us to recognize our human bond with them and recognize them as persons loved by him. Jesus made us Christians the continuation of his ministry to the hungry, the ill, the imprisoned and the homeless. His kingdom, which will last for eternity in heaven, begins through our efforts here on earth. What we contribute to that earthly kingdom will be part of our final judgment.

In my 57 years of priesthood in our Diocese of Baton Rouge I have experienced some very fine examples of continuing Jesus’ ministry to the poor. On a diocesan level we have grown Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge from a small, three-person office to an entire building of professional trained social workers. At times of crisis from storms and floods, or large influx of immigrants, as well as cases requiring professional counseling, personnel with a high degree of training are needed to assist those with meager resources. At a recent program for prison ministers, there were around 40 priests and deacons and spouses in attendance at the required training session. Many lay persons also help in prison ministry.

A layman, Jay Jackson, is retiring this March as Catholic chaplain at Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. A married man soon to be ordained a deacon, Billy Messenger, will replace him. The St. Vincent de Paul Society, a ministry to the poor, is in many of our parishes. Their thrift stores, pharmacies, soup kitchens and shelters for men, women and children are active in our diocese. Some Catholics devote their retirement years to this ministry. St. Teresa’s nuns run a soup kitchen and shelter for women and children in St. Agnes Church in downtown Baton Rouge. An Italian order of sisters in Zachary care for women seeking to escape human trafficking. What expressions of the kingdom of God are being built in our communities and church parishes?

Ministry to the poor is not only a wonderful imitation of Jesus, but it also can change our whole perspective on life and our common humanity. Serving as a campus minister at LSU, I found a ministry already begun to homeless men in the St. Vincent de Paul shelters. Together with some of the students and a few adult parishioners at Christ the King Church and Catholic Center on campus, we would cook an evening meal for an entire shelter of men. We always insisted that the students and adult ministers would serve and then eat with the men in the shelter. The stories shared by those homeless men were amazing. Many had once been quite successful and married. Tragedy of one kind or another had befallen them. But, with God’s help and support from people like us, they were trying to recover. That is what God’s kingdom here below is all about.

**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.**

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**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.
The little way

Most of us have heard of St. Therese of Lisieux, a French mystic who died at age 24 in 1897 and who is perhaps the most popular saint of the past two centuries. She's famous for many things, not least for a spirituality she called her "little way." What's her "little way"?

Popular thought has often eulogized both St. Therese and her "little way" within a simple piety which doesn't do justice to the depth of her person or her spirituality. Too often her "little way" is understood simply to mean that we do little, hidden, humble acts of charity for others in the name of Jesus, without expecting anything in return. In this popular interpretation we do the laundry, peel potatoes and smile at unpleasant people to please Jesus. In some ways, of course, this is true; however her "little way" merits a deeper understanding. Yes, it does ask us to do humble chores and be nice to each other in the name of Jesus but there are deeper dimensions to it. Her "little way" is a path to sanctity based on three things: littleness, anonymity and a particular motivation. Littleness: For St. Therese "littleness" does not refer first of all to the littleness of the act that we are doing, like the humble tasks of doing the laundry, peeling potatoes or giving a simple smile to someone who's unpleasant. It refers to our own littleness, to our own radical poverty before God. Before God, we are little. To accept and act out of that constitutes humility. We move towards God and others in her "little way" when we do small acts of charity for others, not out of our strength and the virtue we feel at that moment, but rather out of a poverty, powerlessness and emptiness that allows God's grace to work through us so that in doing what we're doing we're drawing others to God and not to ourselves.

As well, our littleness makes us aware that, for the most part, we cannot do the big things that shape world history. But we can change the world more humbly, by sowing a hidden seed, by being a hidden antibiotic of health inside the soul of humanity, and by splitting the atom of love inside our own selves. And yes, too, the "little way" is about doing little, humble, hidden things.

Anonymity: St. Therese's "little way" refers to what's hidden, to what's done in secret, so that what the father sees in secret will be rewarded in secret. And what's hidden is not our act of charity, but we, ourselves, who are doing the act. In St. Therese's "little way" our little acts of charity will go mostly unnoticed, we will seemingly have no real impact on world history, and won't bring us any recognition. They'll remain hidden and unnoticed. But inside the body of Christ what's hidden, selfless, unnoticed, self-effacing and seemingly insignificant and unimportant is the most vital vehicle of all for grace at a deeper level. Just as Jesus did not save us through sensational miracles and headline-making deeds but through selfless obedience to his father and quiet martyrdom, our deeds too can remain unknown so that our deaths and the spirit we leave behind can become our real fruitfulness.

Particular motivation: Finally, her "little way" is predicated on a particular motivation. We are invited to act out of our littleness and anonymity and do small acts of love and service to others for a particular reason, that is, to metaphorically wipe the face of the suffering Christ. How so?

St. Therese of Lisieux was an extremely blessed and gifted person. Despite a lot of tragedy in her early life, she was (by her own admission and testimony of others) loved in a way that was so pure, so deep and so wonderfully affectionate that it leaves most people in envy. She was also a very attractive child and was bathed in love and security inside an extended family within which her every smile and tear were noticed, honored and often photographed. But as she grew in maturity it didn't take her long to notice that what was true in her life wasn't true of most others. Their smiles and tears went mostly unnoticed and were not honored. Her "little way" is therefore predicated on this particular motivation. In her own words:

"One Sunday, looking at a picture of our Lord on the cross, I was struck by the blood flowing from one of his divine hands. I felt a pang of great sorrow when thinking this blood was falling on the ground without anyone's hastening to gather it up. I was resolved to remain in spirit at the foot of the cross and to receive its dew... Oh, I don't want this precious blood to be lost. I shall spend my life gathering it up for the good of souls. ... To live from love is to dry your face."

To live her "little way" is to notice and honor the unnoticed tears falling from the suffering faces of others.

World Day of the Sick 2020

In 1993, St. John Paul II received his Parkinson's disease diagnosis. One year later, he did something for the church and the world that he saw as necessary: he instituted the World Day of the Sick.

The late pope intended for this annual observance to be "a special occasion for growth, with an attitude of listening, reflection and effective commitment in the face of the great mystery of pain and illness." This day would be celebrated every year on the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes, Feb. 11. The theme of suffering, likely borne of the pope's experience of his own suffering and the suffering of others, was, in a way, central to the entire pontificate of St. John Paul II. This was reflected in his consistent defense of the most vulnerable. Earlier in his papacy, he wrote a letter on the Christian meaning of suffering, titled "Salvifici Doloris." This letter marked the conclusion of a holy year focused on the theme of redemption.

Pope Francis recently released his message for the 28th World Day of the Sick to be observed Feb. 11. As did Pope Benedict XVI before him, Pope Francis continues the work of St. John Paul II by reflecting upon the “great mystery of pain and illness” and what we are to do in the face of it.

In this message, the holy father notes that while there is so much emphasis on “curing” the sick and disabled, we must not neglect the need for “caring.” In the face of suffering, the appropriate response is loving compassion that touches the heart and soul of the other. It is particularly crucial considering how illness and disability can isolate people. Caring for the sick and disabled means being present in a way that inconveniences us, that makes us uncomfortable and recognizes what needs of body and soul are present.

Caring for the sick also means recognizing the limits of medicine in the face of serious illness, disability and death. The mystery of pain and suffering invites recognition of the transcendent dimension of every human person. The human person is made for communion with God, and this need is never more apparent than in the face of suffering.

The sick and disabled have a particular call to sacrifice and pray for the church. More than mere objects of pity, the sick and dying can build up the holiness of the church, strengthening her against the world, the flesh and the devil. Without the work of uniting their sufferings to Christ for the sake of the church and the world, the church's mission of evangelization cannot be effective.

The sick and dying have an integral role to play in the life and mission of the church through voluntarily accepting their sufferings to make up what is lacking in the body of Christ, the church. In our age, we are acutely aware of how much the church needs growth in holiness. Through uniting their sufferings in faith to Christ crucified, the sick and dying can strengthen the church in her mission as the sacrament of salvation to the world.

Schoedel is associate director of Evangelization & Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
COMING EVENTS

January 31, 2020

The Catholic Commentator

St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call Karen Mollere at 225-272-5915.

Discaled Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discaled Carmelites will meet Sunday, Feb. 9, 1:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Gabriel Room, 445 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For details, call Elyhine White at 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite458@att.net.

Taste and See Fair and Auction – St. Frances Cabrini Church in Livonia and St. Catherine of Siena Mission in Fordsouche will present its Taste and See Fair and Auction Saturday, Feb. 15, 5:30 p.m., at the Livonia Community Center, 3611 Lions Club Dr., Livonia. For more information and to purchase tickets, call the TriParishes Pastoral Center at 225-625-2438.

Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Celebration – Bishop Michael G. Duca will celebrate a Mass honoring couples celebrating their 25th, 50th, 65th or above anniversary Sunday, Feb. 23, 2 p.m., at St. Thomas More Church, 11441 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge. Families of the honored couples are also invited to attend the Mass and following reception in the STM Activity Center. Contact your parish office for more information.

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Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Christina Ann Bodenheimer is asked to contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 225-336-8755.

Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Lynn Ann Huff is asked to contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 225-336-8755.

Men of the Immaculata Conference – The Men of the Immaculata Men’s Conference, “What is Truth?” will take place Saturday, Feb. 29, 7:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge.Speakers will include EWTN host Father Wade Menezes, biblical scholar Jeff Cavins and Father Mark Beard, pastor of St. Helena Church in Amite. Bishop Michael G. Duca will celebrate the Mass. For tickets, visit menoftheimmaculata.com. For information, email Mark Hermann at markhermann23@gmail.com or call 985-377-9529.

Marriage Help – A Retrouvaille weekend for couples with a troubled marriage will be held in Baton Rouge Friday, March 6 – Sunday, March 8. For information or to register, call 985-232-5983, email retrouvivcomcoor@gmail.com or visit helpourmarriage.com.

Jeff Cavins Seminar – Biblical scholar Jeff Cavins will present a seminar, “The DNA of Sin” Saturday, March 7 at the Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center, 17560 George O’Neal Road, Baton Rouge. Registration is from 7 a.m. – 7:45 a.m., Mass will be at 8 a.m. at the Chapel of Divine Providence and the seminar will be from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Cost is $60 and includes continental breakfast and lunch. To register, visit csmpc.org or call 225-752-8480.

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from page 1

parishioners who said they saw the renovations as a great need and wanted to contribute their time and money to the project. Early in 2019 a committee was formed and through benefactors the work was completed shortly after Advent began. “It was an ugly carpet,” Landry said with a grin. “The parish really rallied around the project.”

Originally founded in 1793, Assumption is the oldest parish on Bayou Lafourche and the 11th oldest parish in Louisiana. The original church, which historic records describe as “little more than a shack,” was located at the current site of the church. The first baptism was recorded April 24, 1793, four days after the parish registers were opened. Three years later a bishop visited the church for the first time.

In 1817 the wardens of the church voted to build a larger church and on Dec. 20, 1819 the building was formally dedicated. But floodwaters from Bayou Lafourche would destroy that structure, paving the way for the current church to be built.

The bricks used for the church were made in Plattenville. Hurricane Betsy heavily damaged the structure in 1965 but workers were able to save the building.

The original seminary for the Archdiocese of New Orleans was built on the parish grounds in 1835 and staffed by the Vincentian Fathers. Twenty years later the seminary was dedicated. But floodwaters from Hurricane Betsy heavily damaged the structure in 1965 but workers were able to save the building.

Assumption also made history in November 1984, when the parish was clustered with St. Anne Church in Napoleonville, marking the inaugural clustering of parishes in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. St. Philomena Church in Labadieville is now also part of the cluster.

A platform was constructed to raise the high altar during renovations at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Plattenville. The high altar is now visible to the entire congregation. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

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Friday, March 6, 2020 at 7:00 PM - Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center

Bishop Michael Duca, Chef John Folse, Father Cleo Milano and John Pastorek are ready to Stir it Up! Come and Count Your Blessings with us. Join us for a simple Lenten supper of soup and bread – a meal that will nourish you physically and spiritually.

This year’s Count Your Blessings Supper is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Friday, March 6th, at Our Lady of Mercy’s Parish Activity Center. Order your tickets today online at svdpbr.org or by using the order form below or give us a call at (225) 383-7837, extension O. If you are unable to attend, please consider making a Count Your Blessings gift to St. Vincent de Paul to help in our work with God’s poor. Financial gifts can be mailed to: Count Your Blessings, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127, or made online at www.svdpbr.org.

LA LIFE MARCH – Bishop Michael C. Duca spoke with many young people during Louisiana Life March South Jan. 25. Photos by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Hundreds of people gathered to speak out for the life of the unborn during Louisiana Life March South in Baton Rouge on Jan. 25. Participants walked from the State Capitol to Galvez Plaza, where a pro-life rally program followed.