Diocesan officials weighing churches reopening

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca and diocesan officials are planning a return to public Mass celebration in response to a gradual loosening of the state's stay-at-home orders.

Governor John Bel Edwards has scheduled a press conference May 11 and is expected to announce a decision regarding implementation of Phase One of the reopening of the state.

The governor on April 27 extended the stay-at-home order, which was set to expire April 30, to May 15.

When implemented, Phase One will ease restrictions on houses of worship and restaurants and open other businesses such as barber shops and hair salons.

All of those businesses, including churches, will have strict social distancing restrictions and everyone must be masked.

Occupancy for those businesses will be limited to 25 percent of capacity.

As Louisiana prepares for its next phase of reopening, business owners and faith leaders are encouraged to plan as well, including understanding their building’s maximum occupancy limits based on state fire marshal standards.

“We'll pay close attention to the guidelines the governor announces (May 11),” Bishop Duca said in a statement. “We have over the past several weeks taken seriously his recommendations and orders.

“There are practical considerations that need to be addressed before an even modified return to sacramental life in our parishes. Once we have a good idea of what the health professionals are recommending, we'll be better prepared to plan and incrementally implement what will likely be a new normal for our worship gatherings and liturgical celebrations.”

If Phase One is enacted, weekend Masses could potentially be celebrated May 16-17 with certain directives that are currently being considered by diocesan officials, but a return to public liturgical celebrations will more likely be later than mid-May.

Louisiana has seen positive, improving trends statewide in terms of new case growth and new hospitalizations in several regions across the state. New cases and hospitalizations continue to increase or to plateau, according to data from the Louisiana Department of Health. But Edwards noted “we have a little work to do before we meet the criteria to safely move to the next phase of reopening.”

The governor added he is hopeful that Phase One can be implemented in mid-May and said he is eager to reopen all areas of the state’s economy.

On April 3, Bishop Duca extended the suspension of Masses in addition to other liturgies and devotions through April 30.

LOVE PERSEVERES

Couples go on with marriage plans despite restrictions

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Church pews were mostly empty as bride and groom met at the altar, but that's where God's presence filled any lack as they established their lifelong relationship, say couples in the Diocese of Baton Rouge who have married during the coronavirus pandemic.

According to Father Jamin David, pastor of St. Margaret Queen of Scotland in Albany, and Father Michael Alello, pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, as events surrounding the coronavirus unfolded, couples scheduled to get married had to make the difficult decision of whether to postpone the wedding until at least the summer or fall or marry on their scheduled wedding date and abide by the requirements of the Diocese of Baton Rouge that the gathering be limited to no more than 10 people in attendance.

But the smaller, more intimate weddings allowed the couples to concentrate on the sacrament of marriage and the Rite of Marriage.

“When you only have a few people you can really focus on what's going on,” said Father Alello.

And in Louisiana, people still find ways to celebrate milestones.

Father David noted that after one wedding, as the couple emerged from the church, people cheered and honked horns.

“It was a little rowdy, but all in keeping with the governor’s call for social distancing,” said Father David.

One of the couples he married was Sidney Guillory and Michael Batson, who “tied the knot.”

SEE WEDDINGS PAGE 9
Fearless, fruitful and fervent

By Dina Dow

We continue to celebrate Easter as the resurrected Lord remains by our side. The present-day quarantine may restrict our communal gatherings yet we, as a church, “step out” creatively and share faith, hope and love we have in our Lord, Jesus Christ. God is not bound by physical space, and neither are we as fearless, fruitful and fervent disciples on a mission. The apostles and early disciples witnessed such demeanor. The Mass readings for the Fifth and Sixth Sundays in Easter take us to incredible moments in the early church when these fearless, fruitful and fervent followers of Jesus set out to proclaim their joy.

Community needs

Chapter 6 in Acts of the Apostles begins with a need because of the preaching of the apostles, the number of disciples, that is to say “converts and believers” in Jesus Christ, grew rapidly. At the same time the needs of the larger community were under met. Thus, the apostles were presented seven men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom they ordained and tasked them with the mission to serve. These are our earliest deacons, ordained to serve the “table” and the works of mercy. Their mission was so fruitful that even more people converted to the faith, including some least expected, namely, priests in the Temple (Acts 6: 7).

Stephen stands out in this moment as “a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5). This early deacon’s fervent works done in the name of Jesus proved to be powerfully fruitful. Synagogue officials, disturbed by his works, falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy and had him stoned to death at the feet of Saul. Even during the stoning, Stephen asked God to forgive the accusers as he handed his spirit over to Jesus. Fearless. Fruitful. Fervent. Stephen answered the call, helped the community, shared the message of salvation in Jesus and died doing such. Reflect on this message: What is God calling to me to do for him and for the community? How am I witnessing faith, hope and love? Who is persecuting me?

Scattered & sown

After the martyrdom of Stephen, some of the disciples scattered into the neighboring as well as distant lands to share the message of Jesus. Philip fearlessly traveled to Samaria and caught the hope of the people who witnessed his wondrous deeds performed in the name of Jesus. They were filled with joy and came to believe. Peter and John joined Philip and together prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit as they laid their hands on them. A people once scattered by exile were sown with the seeds of hope in Jesus Christ by the apostles and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Fearless. Fruitful. Fervent. Who can I share the hope of Jesus with? What “distant land” is God calling me to go to? How am I sowing the seeds of faith?

Living stone

Peter describes Jesus as “a living stone” (1 Pt 2:4-9), the one whom we follow, the cornerstone of our life. Am I allowing Jesus to build me “into a spiritual house,” stone by stone, as to be a sacrifice for others, faithful in the Lord and, at times, rejected by others when we proclaim his goodness in who we are and what we do? Think about this. How am I “a spiritual house” of Jesus? Is my “structure” fortified by the living stone, Jesus Christ? Do I remain strong and unbreakable during times of strife? Or do I crumble when adversity tries to break me down? Am I built of living stone: a person filled with the Holy Spirit; a person of sacrifice for others; a person of humble prayer and praise for God; a person who welcomes a community with love; a shelter for the lost; a rock of faith; a proclaimer of truth; a witness of mercy, hope and peace? Fearless. Fruitful. Fervent. How can we know the way?

In the Gospel of John, Chapter 14, Jesus gives the Twelve Apostles strong assurance as they partake in their last meal with the Lord. The opening verse reveals Jesus’ halting compassion and care for his followers. He says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me” (Jn 14:1). Jesus prepares them for what is about to take place, while simultaneously expressing a full reliance on God and him. He tells them of the dwelling places he will prepare for them and all who are faithful. Thomas asked, “How
Grab N Go meals beginning May 11

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Baton Rouge Child Nutrition Program announced it will be offering Grab N Go meal services at four sites beginning May 11.

The program will be offering free breakfast and lunch curbside pickup service for all students in the Baton Rouge area. The service is available for all students 18 years of age and younger regardless of school enrollment.

Drive-thru meals will be provided on Mondays only from 10 a.m.-noon.

Each student will receive a package containing five breakfasts and five lunches. Walk-up service will also be available but all should maintain proper social distancing, according to program officials.

Packaged meals will be distributed first-come/first serve basis at the following schools in Baton Rouge: Our Lady of Mercy Church, St. Francis Xavier, Redemptorist St. Gerard and St. Jean Vianney.

Nutrition program staff members will be wearing face masks or face shields when appropriate. Also, the temperature of each staff member will be taken before entering the cafe.

They will also be cleaning and sanitizing their work areas when on the school campus.

Archdiocese of New Orleans files Chapter 11

NEW ORLEANS (CNS) – Citing mounting concerns over the financial impact of clergy sex abuse settlements and the coronavirus pandemic, the Archdiocese of New Orleans filed for Chapter 11 reorganization of the finances of its administrative offices May 1 in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

In a letter to Catholics of the archdiocese, Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond said the “difficult decision” to file for financial reorganization would allow the archdiocese to ensure that sex abuse victims have their claims resolved in “a fair and timely manner.”

“Very importantly, taking this action will allow us to address remaining clergy abuse claims, all of which stem from allegations dating back several decades ago, in a way that will allow funds to go directly to victims,” the archbishop wrote.

The archbishop said no parish funds would be used to resolve claims.

“Parish funds are separate from archdiocesan accounts and the pastor decides how those are used for parish ministry,” he said. “My daily prayer is that this independent process brings about healing for those who have been harmed as a result of abuse by members of the clergy. The healing of victims and survivors is most important to me and to the church.”

He wrote the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 have added more financial hardships to an already difficult situation.

In acknowledging that the bankruptcy court now controls the process, the archbishop said he hoped the reorganization would be completed “as soon as possible” without any interruption in ministry.

The Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis King of France and a statue of Andrew Jackson are seen in New Orleans June 3, 2019. The Archdiocese of New Orleans filed for Chapter 11 reorganization May 1, 2020. (CNS photo)
Trump meets with Catholic educators; promises aid

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Financial relief for parents of Catholic school students may be on the way in terms of tax credits and direct assistance, President Donald Trump said during a conference call with Catholic educators and leaders April 23.

Dr. Melanie Palmisano, superintendent of the Catholic Schools Office for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, and Rob Tasman, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, were among 600 Catholic leaders who joined in the nearly one-hour long call with the president.

“The point was made that Catholic schools in the United States save the government $24 billion each year by educating students that the government would otherwise have to educate,” Palmisano said in an interview with The Catholic Commentator. “President Trump said he did not realize (the amount) was that high. He was surprised.”

Palmisano said Trump mentioned the possibility of tax credits for parents who pay tuition to Catholic schools.

The president also mentioned the possibility of a Micro Grant, which would provide direct financial assistance to families who normally send their kids to Catholic schools but might not be able to afford it for the 2020-21 school year because of the financial fallout caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

“It was pointed out that Catholic schools do excellent work, charging one-half to one-third of what public schools spend to educate children,” Palmisano said. “It is low cost, high quality education.”

Trump also said he would continue to support issues vital to the Catholic Church, especially abortion, religious freedom and school choice.

CRUX, an online Catholic news organization, reported on the call after obtaining a recording of the event.

Trump repeatedly returned to his support of efforts to stop abortion and school choice.

Among those on the call were Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley of Boston, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, California, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Catholic Education.

Educators identified as being on the call were Paul Escala and Elias Moo, superintendents of Catholic education in the archdioceses of Los Angeles and Denver, respectively.

The Archdiocese of Denver emailed a statement from Moo on April 28 in which he said he explained to the president the ministry of Catholic schools in Colorado and the challenges Catholic education faces because of the pandemic.

“I spoke to the president about the long history of Catholic education in our country, and how our nation needs schools that provide an educational experience that forms the whole child and values the primacy of parents and of the soul of the human person,” Moo said.

He also said it was important for the church “to engage with public officials to discuss the issues that are central to our Catholic faith and mission,” regardless of an individual’s “political affiliation or preference.”

As he discussed his support of Catholic issues, Trump noted that Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson also were on the call.

Trump repeatedly stressed to the participants his commitment to the pro-life cause.

In January, Trump became the first sitting president to address the annual March for Life in Washington, which protests the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

The president also reiterated his support for the Mexico City policy, which bars federal funding for nongovernmental organizations that provide abortion and opposition to the Johnson Amendment, which prohibits tax exempt organizations, including churches, from supporting or opposing political candidates.

The president’s remarks lasted about 15 minutes before he fielded questions.

The topic of federal support to prop up Catholic schools was the primary concern expressed by participants. The need is particularly acute under the pandemic even though some schools have obtained forgivable Small Business Administration loans under the new Paycheck Protection Program.

Catholic school administrators nationwide face major questions as they prepare for the new academic year because of the potential loss of tuition from families whose wage-earners have suffered layoffs and the high expense of converting in-person classes to online learning.

Cardinal Dolan was the first participant to speak, according to the Crux account. He welcomed the support of DeVos, Carson and Kellyanne Conway, a senior adviser to Trump, calling them “cherished allies in our passion for our beloved schools.”

He stressed to Trump that the outlook for schools never “looked more bleak, but perhaps never has the outlook looked more promising given the energetic commitment that your administration has to our schools. We need you more than ever.”

Cardinal O’Malley continued the line of questioning related to schools, urging the president to support tuition assistance for families to enable them to send their children to Catholic schools.

“We need it now,” he said. “It has to be done in a quick way that helps them to pay tuition.”

Printing some 40,000 copies every other week for the Diocese of Baton Rouge

Televised Mass Schedule
with Bishop Michael Duca

Monday-Saturday
LIVE 8a
Replays 12p, 6p

Sunday
LIVE 1030a
Replays 1230p, 430p, 630p
Deacon Dunn anticipates “glorious” ordination

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

May 8, 2020

When April’s gentle breezes turned into May’s early peak of summer’s furnace, Deacon Matthew Dunn expected to be a bit busy, orchestrating the final weeks leading up to his May 23 ordination.

Guest lists would need to be determined, invitations mailed, his first Mass scheduled. And let’s not forget about the food at the reception.

Today, however, Deacon Dunn sits alone in the rectory at St. Stephen the Martyr Church in Maurepas, near French Settlement where he was raised.

The day eight years in the making has been delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“When I am no longer a seminarian anymore because I’m not in school but I’m ordained a priest so I’m kind of in this limbo,” said Deacon Dunn.

Father Matt Lorrain, director of the Office of Seminarians, said after consulting with Bishop Michael G. Duca, the decision was made to delay the ordination.

Father Lorrain said two options were weighed, the first being celebrating the ordination Mass on the original May 23 date with no more than 10 people in attendance. Some dioceses around the country have taken that route, and in fact five to six of Deacon Dunn’s 16 classmates have already been ordained.

Father Lorrain said that option raised its own unique challenges, specifically what would then Father Dunn be able to do during these days of quarantine and stay-at-home orders.

“Even if you saw the wisdom of ordaining now, could he move into a rectory, move into a residence with another priest, collaborate with the staff?” Father Lorrain said. “Until we can celebrate public Mass again, his ministry would be rather limited, and all of that went into our decision to postpone the ordination.”

So the second option, delaying the ordination until St. Joseph Cathedral could be filled with family, friends and clergy, was selected.

“I think (Deacon Dunn) is disappointed as anybody would be, but it passes rather quickly. As soon as we set a date, the excitement will begin to build again,” Father Lorrain said.

Deacon Dunn said he briefly experienced a twinge of disappointment when Bishop Duca called with the news, but said he was not surprised and those feelings quickly faded.

“It’s disappointing because I’ve waited for this particular day for eight years, and it’s not going to be May 23. I’m at peace with it,” Deacon Dunn said. “I know I am going to be ordained a priest in God’s time and in God’s providence. It’s going to happen. I say that with all authenticity and mean it very genuinely.”

He said he’s grateful to the bishop for the delay because it allows the opportunity for those who have supported him during the past eight years to be present.

“As far as the celebration goes, whether the church is packed or it’s just the bishop, I will walk away from it,” Deacon Dunn said. “To have the church (full) is not something we can replace. To have the priests and deacons (in attendance) makes all of the difference in the world.

“Ordination is a once in a lifetime thing. I think it will take on a completely different tone if it was crowded.”

Father Lorrain concurred, saying celebrating ordination in front of a large congregation is a beautiful, visual symbol of the church.

And the youthfulness of the church,” he added. “The church is constantly being renewed with every wedding and ordination. It’s a beautiful mixture of tradition but also new life coming back in the church, that God continues to call young people into the church for religious vocations, priesthood, diaconate or consecrated religious life.”

Disruption surrounding graduation is nothing new for Deacon Dunn, which is allowing him to accept this delay in stride. Four years ago, as he was completing his final semester at St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, flood waters inundated the campus, forcing an evacuation that lasted more than two weeks and forced graduation to be moved to a site off campus.

In August of that year, French Settlement was impacted by the flood of 2016 and Deacon Dunn responded by returning to help residents who had lost everything.

“This is not ideal, this is not how we imagine things being,” Deacon Dunn said. “We can’t discount the fact there is real disappointment and real loss experienced in those things. Just trust in God. On the other side there is joy.”

For now, Deacon Dunn is taking the extra time to continue to form his own heart. He called it a time of prayer, a time of trust and a time of uncertainty but said he has no feelings of anxiety.

“It’s been very clear to me the past few weeks I am at the church’s disposal and in a way it’s a beautiful thing,” he said. “It’s an opportunity for me to say I am not entitled to anything. (Ordination) is a gift the church is giving me.”

He also believes, “without a doubt,” ordination, when it does come, will be “much sweeter.”

“Just think of how much more of a celebration and how glorious that day is going to be when it finally gets here,” Deacon Dunn said. “It’s not about me but it’s about all of us celebrating together. I don’t see how it could possibly not be a bigger celebration.”

Deacon Matthew Dunn
Pope and bishops in China/ Is it too late to pray?

Q I was surprised to read in the Catholic press an article criticizing Pope Francis’ agreement to allow the Communist government to nominate candidates for bishops in China. So my question is this: Are those under the pope’s authority allowed to question publicly such an arrangement made by the Holy Father? (Newark, Ohio)

A The answer to your question is “Yes,” but first some important background.

The provisional agreement that you reference was made in September 2018 after years of careful negotiation. Previous to that, in a dispute going back for more than half a century, mainland China’s some 12 million Catholics were more or less equally divided between an underground organization that recognized the pope’s authority to name bishops and a state-sponsored Patriotic Association that named its own bishops.

Under the 2018 agreement, the excommunication of seven bishops who had been ordained with government approval was lifted, and new bishops are now proposed to the Vatican by the Chinese bishops’ conference and Catholics from the areas involved.

Then the pope makes the final decision as to whom to appoint, essentially giving the pontiff veto power.

As a result of the new agreement, all of the Catholic bishops in the world’s most populous country are now in communion with Rome, and Catholics will have more autonomy in the exercise of their beliefs. The Vatican’s secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, said at the time that the agreement helps to give the church “a greater freedom” so that it can dedicate itself to “the mission of announcing the Gospel.”

The church’s decision to enter the agreement was a prudent and pastoral one with which anyone is free to disagree. In fact, one of the strongest critics when the agreement was being considered was Cardinal Joseph Zen, the retired archbishop of Hong Kong.

Q I have a question that is personal. I haven’t been to church in a while, and I don’t usually pray, although recently I have begun to. Will God accept me still, if I start going to church at this point in my life? (I want to get close to him and I hope that it’s not too late.) (Anaheim, California)

A It is never too late. God’s love for us is deep and everlasting. The Second Letter of Peter (3:9) tells us that the Lord “is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Think of the criminal on the cross who turned to Christ only hours before his death and was promised that, that very day, he would be with Jesus in paradise. And think, too, of St. Augustine, who lived a dissolute life as a young man, fathering a child out of wedlock and who, for years, followed various philosophers only to become disillusioned with their teachings.

When he was in his 30s, Augustine was inspired to pick up a Bible and “chanced” upon these words from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (13:14): “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.” Soon after, he was baptized by St. Ambrose and became one of our greatest saints.

Later, reflecting on his experience, Augustine made this keen observation: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” Thank you for your question, and I will pray for you on your journey back to prayer and Catholic practice.

Q This year during Holy Week, I was particularly troubled by the traditional teaching that Christ had to die that painful death to atone for our sins. This seems to me to contradict Jesus’ identity as a loving savior. Upon Googling the topic, I came across a column you did several years ago that seemed to give a straightforward and common sense answer. (Murphy, North Carolina)

A I couldn’t agree more with your discomfort at the view of St. Anselm. Anselm believed that the sacrificial death of Jesus was necessary to restore humanity’s communion with the Father, that the blood of Jesus was “payment” to God for human sin.

This theory, though, has been challenged by other theologians over the centuries. In fact, one of St. Anselm’s contemporaries, the scholar Peter Abelard, insisted that Christ’s death on the cross had been an act of love, not payment.

See Doyle page 7
Our Lady’s Tigers fighting for CTK through prayer

By Debbie Shelley  The Catholic Commentator

Intercessory prayer is like the heart pumping blood to the rest of the body of Christ, the Catholic Church, so it can carry out its Gospel mission, according to Father Andrew Merrick, pastor of Christ the King Church and Student Center at LSU.

Our Lady’s Fighting Tigers provides such a lifeline of prayer support for CTK’s ministry.

In 2016, the Lord placed on Lisa Flood’s heart the need for an intercessory prayer group for the CTK student ministry. She and Ali Dazzio, CTK parish administrator and development director, approached Father Merrick and the OLFT ministry was born. Its members include family, friends and alumni of Christ the King.

“Moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles and godparents came out to pray for the ministry,” said Flood. “But as time went on it was clear that God was calling all of us to be deeper in our love, deeper in our faith, deeper in letting him love us so that we can pray (that the students) will become who God is calling them to be. It’s a call in conversion for all of us.”

In addition to praying over email requests, Our Lady’s Fighting Tigers gather for fellowship, prayer, a speaker presentation, eucharistic adoration and Mass.

Kay Kenney attended an OLFT meeting in early March, before Gov. John Bel Edwards issued a stay-at-home order because of the coronavirus pandemic, and connected with speaker Kevin McCall’s message about the value of taking a fresh look at one’s prayer life rather than always doing things “the same way.”

Kenney said she finds the approach especially helpful in praying for CTK and the extended LSU community during the pandemic.

She appreciates the messages of hope that come along with the prayer intentions in the emails.

“This time has brought everyone to their knees,” said Kenney, who believes people can use their time during the lockdown to focus on reaching out to others through prayer rather than themselves only.

Since Kenney reunited with some people she had not seen in some time at the March meeting, she looks forward to the time when OLFT will meet again.

Virginia Provosty, who graduated from LSU, as did her son, said there was not the dynamic Catholic presence during the times they attended college as there is now. She enjoys praying for needs of Christ the King and the extended campus.

“I am reminded that God lives beyond time. Our prayers affect present situations and bring about healing and wholesomeness from past events. Scripture says (God’s) gifts are irrevocable, thus my prayers and actions in witnessing to others have eternal consequences,” Provosty said.

She added, “We are given the authority through our baptism to call upon our father in heaven who loves to give his children good things. We have this time to affect things. It’s an essential aspect of our ministry as focusing on the salvation of souls.

“Prayer is essential to the work and ministry of our campus, to the churches throughout the diocese and the universal church,” said Dazzio.

She described OLFT’s mission as focusing on the salvation of souls.

“You have to have people praying at the foot of the cross for others,” Dazzio said.

Father Merrick said intercessory prayer is at the heart of the church’s mission.

“Our Lady’s Fighting Tigers is a group of people the Lord is raising up in the body of Christ to be the heart pumping his blood into our hands and feet, our eyes and our mouth so we can serve in the way the Lord wants us to serve. It’s an essential aspect of our ministry.”

Theologians in our own day have also found difficulty with Anselm’s view.

In the article you mention, Elizabeth Johnson speaks persuasively; she reminds us that, in the biblical story of the prodigal son, the father wouldn’t even let his son apologize, saying instead, “It doesn’t matter now. You’re home. Let’s have a party.”

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, wrote in his “Introduction to Christianity” that Anselm’s attempt to blend the divine and human legal system can “make the image of God appear in a sinister light.” And so thankfully none of us is compelled to believe that God deliberately willed the suffering of his Son.

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.
CCDBR provides $90,000 of relief services during pandemic

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Responding to natural disasters or human crisis with transcendent proficiency has been the standard for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

But the coronavirus pandemic has presented a unique gauntlet even for an agency that has handled crises from Hurricane Katrina to the flood of 2016 to immigrant and refugee resettlements.

"It's not the kind of crisis where you can rebuild somebody's house, or cut trees, and the work is done," CCDBR executive director David Aguillard said. "We are deprived of that by the very nature of this crisis. The need is greater than anything we have ever encountered."

Despite the unprecedented challenges, CCDBR quickly mobilized and, despite being in the middle of a transition in technology, has become the leader in offering relief to the most needy in the diocese.

The numbers are telling. Since the threat first appeared in Louisiana, CCDBR has opened 415 new cases, provided $90,000 worth of financial assistance, including $21,000 in emergency housing and $10,000 worth of gas cards for low-income health care workers.

Additionally grocery/gift cards were provided to residents, many distributed through Society of St. Vincent de Paul councils at local church parishes. "We are getting assistance into the front lines, into the hands of the priests and parish administrations, which is where people show up first," Aguillard said.

All told, the agency provided an estimated $90,000 worth of direct services during the first several weeks of response. "What is striking to me is the footprint of our services is spread even a little bit beyond diocesan boundaries," Aguillard said.

He said because of the growing immigration population and the agency's immigration legal services department, which is one of the largest along the Gulf Coast from Tampa to Texas, CCDBR has provided COVID services from Vermilion Bay to Cutoff to Covington and even to Lake Charles.

He said the burgeoning radius is reflective of the agency's commitment to reaching out to so many immigrants, noting that half of the cases pertaining strictly to COVID-19 are 50 percent Hispanic.

"This jump right now in the Hispanic community is reflective of the importance of our immigration services to the immigrant community, so money that would perhaps be donated from elsewhere is staying on the local levels. Aguillard did praise the local foundations, saying they have been "unexpectedly generous because you know they are hurting. Their investments are hurting."

He said the agency has received six grants totaling $60,000, adding that during a typical national disaster, usually within a couple of weeks of the event, at least "five times that amount has come in from all around the country, if not 10 times that amount."

"This is all local foundations but they are putting out as much money into the community as they possibly can," he added. "They realize now is not the time to sit on assets; now is the time to assist the community."

CCDBR officials are staying in touch with local and state officials tracking any additional federal funding, positioning the agency to distribute those new funds into the community as rapidly as possible.

Currently, the agency has dedicated five full-time employees to strictly working on COVID-19 relief and another five part-time employees. Aguillard said he is also working full-time on the response.

"What it shows is that when there is a need in the community, Catholic Charities has a mission-driven purpose to pivot immediately to address those needs in the most thorough way we can," he said. "What it means to me is it's a reflection on the meaning of the incarnation that we are supposed to be in this world and working through this world to show and bring compassion and mercy of God's love."

"That means we avail ourselves to technology, new ways of serving our customers, engage in funding streams that come from public sources because it then puts us in a position where we can fulfill that Gospel mandate that 'whatever you do to the least of these you are doing it to Jesus.' That is what motivates us."
WEDDINGS ▼  
from page 1

Irene and Christopher Lilly

"knot" on April 25 at St. Margaret. The couple originally met at a New Year’s Eve party and had a “Cajun courtship” for five years.

As events surrounding the coronavirus evolved, the couple discussed their wedding date.

“Each day was different,” said Sidney.

But they came back to the point where they wanted to marry on the day they had planned.

“We decided we would get married and be together and get through this together,” Michael said.

Sidney said she struggled with the thought of no wedding rehearsal, reception, a couchon de lait with family and friends and other social gatherings that usually surround that happy day.

But she expresses a deeper joy that she and Michael are husband and wife.

“We can postpone the party aspect, but we were ready to start our marriage,” Sidney said.

Batson said, “I’m excited to start our new life together.”

The couple plans a celebration with extended family and friends in August.

Michael Willis said he and Megan Voda met through friends at LSU and “the stars aligned.” He proposed to Voda at a waterfront park in her hometown of Miami and the two married on April 17 at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly.

Father Allelo, Willis’ long-time friend, married them. The couple drove through the neighborhood on a golf cart to celebrate the special day.

Willis believed going forward as planned with the wedding was a “precious gift.”

“What I thought would be a disaster was a blessing,” he said.

“It was the best day of my life.”

“lt was beautiful because she and I were in front of the Lord,” he added, pointing out there were no distractions or worries about “who was there or who wasn’t.”

Because of their schedules, the Willis’ had already planned a honeymoon trip in the fall to Colorado. They will also have a larger celebration with family and friends before leaving.

Newlyweds Irene and Christopher Lilly were married in March, also at St. Margaret by Father David.

Irene said the stay-at-home order was issued shortly before their wedding.

The Lilly’s went through plans “A, B and C” when the reception was cancelled at the St. Margaret parish hall. They ended up having a wedding “open house” at Irene’s mother’s house with social distancing in mind, and people stopped by to congratulate the newlyweds.

Irene said with a smile that without anyone asking her, her sister Helen, 12, cleaned outside and weeded the garden so the yard would look nice.

Likewise, her sister Emily had taken a cake decorating class as a young child and was happy to finally use those skills to bake a cake.

“We also had so many messages and calls from family and friends to say congratulations,” said Irene, who said people prayed for her and Chris and they prayed for each other.

“We were blessed to see how God brought things together on our behalf and it was a beautiful. We were satisfied,” she said.

Although the honeymoon plans were canceled, the romance wasn’t, said Irene.

The Lilly’s both like the movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” so when they arrived at their home, they felt a connection with main characters George and Mary Bailey, who had their own “staycation honeymoon.”

“Chris told me to put on a pretty dress, and he cooked a (candlelight) Italian dinner,” said Irene, noting that their honeymoon plans included dinner at an Italian restaurant.

“I said, ‘I don’t think George and Mary had it this good,’” Irene said.

UNIQUE GRADUATION – Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University in Baton Rouge staged a drive-thru diploma pick up for students graduating a month early on April 27 in the Student Services building parking lot. Students received their diplomas, transcripts, clinical pins and a new pair of tennis shoes, left, courtesy of BREAC through its Frontline Soles program. A total of 48 nursing and respiratory therapy students graduated early. “We wanted to do something special for the students; they put in double- and triple-overtime to get out and serve,” said FranU president Tina Holland, who clapped and cheered for students as they passed by, above. She said the students deserved “some type of recognition.” Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
St. Theresa drive-by briefly unites students, teachers

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

With pom-poms, posters, lawn chairs and even a bubble machine, teachers from St. Theresa of Avila School in Gonzales lined up their cars, trucks and SUVs in an empty parking lot across from the school for a special drive-by to wave at parents and students, whom they hadn’t seen face-to-face in more than a month.

“It’s been emotional, especially the last week, learning we would have to spend the rest of the year without them,” said fifth-grade teacher Sabrina Luke. “Prior to that we had a lot of hope that we would go back.”

One by one, from 6 to 7 p.m. on April 22, vehicles filled with family members and sometimes even the family dog, drove slowly through the makeshift parade ground. Happy sounds of laughter and greetings filled the air. Some curious drivers passing by rolled down their windows to ask what was happening.

“It’s been really hard, we miss them a lot,” said fifth-grade teacher Megan Johnson. “(There’s been) a lot of adjusting ... sad way to end the school year.”

One boisterous family honked their horn and threw candy from their pick-up truck as they drove through, delighting the teachers as they scrambled to pick it up – reminiscent of a favorite Louisiana holiday, Mardi Gras.

As teachers held up signs, waved and greeted students, some students held up their own homemade signs, showing their support and love for their teachers.

You don’t realize how much you miss each other ... and they made signs and we made signs,” said Johnson.

“I didn’t expect them to make signs,” said Luke with a smile.

Lizette Leader and her children Claire, who is in fifth grade, and Kade, an eighth-grader, were among the parade of families who came to see their teachers. Leader, who works from home, said her husband is considered an essential worker and trying to find the right balance between school work, job duties and home life has been difficult. But she credits teachers and school administrators with being a big part of making the transition easier.

“Anytime a parent has a question, anytime a student has a question, they immediately get back to us and they’ve been very available to our students,” said Leader. “They offered to provide training for the parents as well as the students, so everybody has made this the best situation possible in a very unfortunate time for us.”

Leader’s son had been very involved with extracurricular activities during his final year at St. Theresa, including student council, Beta Club and playing on the basketball and baseball teams. His class will still be able to hold its graduation ceremony albeit sometime this summer. Still, he was happy to see friendly faces, even if just for a few minutes.

“I’ve been missing my teachers,” said Kade Leader. “I’ve seen a couple of my friends so far, so even though we can’t interact with them because we have to practice social distancing, it still is nice to see them.”

St. Theresa principal Chris Musso said the idea for the drive-by visit came after a school staff member shared on social media a similar event for her birthday, with friends driving by her house holding signs and wishing her a happy birthday. Musso added that teaching through technology has been “surreal.” She noted that seeing students through various online platforms is not the same as seeing them face-to-face and connecting with them on a personal level.

“The teachers are as affected as the students are in missing one another,” said Musso. “It’s natural that kids miss their friends and so forth, but we as teachers are so used to seeing these children, interacting with these children, getting to know these children, it is a really big void in your life at the moment.”

Kim Naquin, principal of St. John Primary in Prairieville, agreed. With students ranging from prekindergarten to third grade, Naquin said there was a “major learning curve” for teachers, students and parents when the governor issued the stay-at-home order in mid March. She said up to that point students had computer class once a week and had worked on iPads but not one-to-one.

“I’m really proud of my teachers for how quickly they adjusted and how positive they were about doing this and I think that stems from how much they care about these kids and how much they care about their education,” said Naquin. “And so, they were willing to jump out of their comfort zones and learn how to do this technology.”

She said parents also had to jump on board because “a first-grader can’t sit down at the family computer and just figure it out.” So, the first couple of weeks dealt with a lot of technology issues but, she said, the hard work has paid off.

“These kids have learned so much technology in the last several weeks and that is definitely the silver lining for me, both the students and the teachers have learned a lot of technology and I’m really excited about it,” said Naquin.

As for seeing the kids and parents again for the drive-by event, Naquin said everyone was excited, from teachers to parents and students. Even anticipation of connecting with the students made for some happy moments in a world that has changed so much so quickly.

“I don’t think I’ve smiled this much since we’ve started working from home,” said Naquin.
¿Cómo encontraremos al Cristo resucitado?

En las últimas semanas, tuve la oportunidad de hablar con algunos de ustedes sobre las dificultades de quedarse en casa. Sé que las familias están luchando con preguntas difíciles: ¿Cómo pagaremos las facturas? ¿Cómo puedo ayudar a mis hijos a completar sus tareas escolares? ¿Cuándo volverá la vida a la normalidad?

En tiempos de dificultad, estamos acostumbrados a llevar nuestras preocupaciones y esperanzas con nosotros a la iglesia. Allí, podemos acompañarnos en oración y unirnos alrededor del altar. Nos encontramos con Jesucristo en la Eucaristía, escuchamos sus Buenas Nuevas, le ofrecemos nuestras oraciones y visitamos a nuestros amigos y vecinos. Pero hoy, no tenemos esta oportunidad de reunirnos. Como una persona me dijo: “Padre, ver la iglesia cerrada me hace sentir como si estuviera fuera de mi propia casa”.

Quedarse en casa es de hecho un sacrificio, pero es uno que no calla; No está ausente. Podemos ver las heces del sacrificio en nuestras familias, quienes luchan por pagar sus cuentas y alimentar a sus familias. ¿Pero también podemos ver la generosidad y amabilidad que las personas sacrifican sus vidas para cuidar a los enfermos.

Sé que las familias están luchando con preguntas acerca de cómo encontramos al Cristo resucitado entre nosotros en este tiempo de pandemia es entre Jesucristo y San Tomás, el episodio de nuestro Evangelio para este domingo (Juan 20: 19-31). Tomás no creía en el testimonio de los otros apóstoles, pero quería ver y tocar las heridas de Cristo. Solo cuando puede ver las marcas de la crucifixión en el cuerpo de Jesucristo, Tomás cree y proclama a Jesús como “Señor y Dios”.

Del encuentro de Tomás con Cristo, descubrimos que adoramos a un Señor herido. La Resurrección no borró las heridas que eran un signo de humillación y fracaso. En cambio, revelan que la gracia y la gloria de Dios pueden vencer a los mayores poderes de este mundo. Descubrimos que la Resurrección “hace nuevas todas las cosas” donde la vida está rota o herida.

Entonces, ¿cómo encontraremos al Cristo resucitado? Si miramos con los ojos de la fe, lo encontraremos caminando junto a nosotros, compartiendo nuestras ansiedades y bendiciendo nuestros sacrificios. Aunque no hay aún más pistas palpables en el cuerpo del Cristo resucitado, lo encontraremos en el Dios que vive el amor de Dios en el coraje de aquellos que han luchado por pagar sus cuentas y alimentar a sus familias. ¿Pero también podemos ver viva la gloria de Dios en este momento? Vemos vivo el amor de Dios en el coraje de aquellos que arriesgan sus vidas para cuidar a los enfermos. Vemos la obra del Espíritu Santo en las formas creativas en que las personas ofrecen apoyo y aliento. Vemos que el Evangelio cobra vida en la generosidad y amabilidad que las personas muestran a los vecinos necesitados.

Podemos ver las heridas de la pandemia. Pero con la luz de la Resurrección, también veremos la gloria de Dios creando nueva vida. Si busca a Cristo resucitado en su hogar, entre su familia, pronto descubrirá que él ya está allí. De hecho, te ha estado buscando.
Things learned in isolation

Father John Carville

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.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

May 14
Rev. Joseph M. Camilleri
Dcn. Daniel S. Borné
Br. Roger LeMoyne SC

May 15
Rev. John Carville
Sr. Mary Anne Hebert CSJ

May 16
Rev. Edward Chiffrier SJ
Dcn. Jerry W. Braud
Br. Malcolm Melcher SC

May 17
Rev. Thomas F. Clark SJ
Dcn. Stephen Brunet
Sr. Anne Hoang ICM

May 18
Rev. Paul D. Counce
Dcn. Barry G. Campeaux
Br. Michael Migacz SC

May 19
Rev. Randy M. Cuevas
Dcn. Michael T. Chiappetta
Sr. Esther Hulin CSJ

May 20
Rev. Gregory J. Daigle
Dcn. Randall A. Clement
Br. Paul Montero SC

May 21
Rev. Peter Aì Dang
Dcn. Samuel C. Collura
Sr. Anjia Jacob CMC

May 22
Rev. Jamin S. David
Dcn. William Corbett
Br. Vuong Dinh Nguyen ICM

May 23
Rev. Al M. Davidson
Dcn. David L. Dawson III
Sr. M. Jesusa MC

May 24
Rev. Christopher J. Decker
Dcn. Guy E. Decker
Br. Marcus Turcotte SC

May 25
Rev. Bradley A. Doyle
Dcn. Benjamin J. Dunbar Jr.
Sr. M. John Janet MC

May 26
Rev. Vincent J. Dufresne
Dcn. Matthew Dunn
Br. Edward Violet SM

May 27
Rev. Thomas J. Duhé
Dcn. Kirk Duplantis
Sr. Julie Kraemer CSJ

May 28
Rev. Mark J. Durr
Dcn. Peter P. Dugas
Sr. Margaret Lamond CSJ

May 29
Rev. John C. Dwyer
Dcn. Victor F. DiBartolo
Sr. Kathleen Lamond RSJ

May 30
Rev. Mark J. Durr
Dcn. Peter P. Dugas
Sr. Margaret Lamond CSJ

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.

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God and the principle of non-contradiction

It is funny where the lessons of our classrooms are sometimes understood. I studied philosophy when I was still a bit too young for it, a 19-year-old studying the metaphysics of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. But something from a metaphysics course remains indelibly stamped in my mind. We learned that there are four “transcendental” properties to God: Scholastic metaphysics tells us that God is one, true, good and beautiful. My young mind then had some grasp of what is meant by “true, good and beautiful” since we have some common sense notions of what these are; but what is “oneness”? What is divine about being undivided?

The answer to that didn’t come to me in a classroom or in an academic discussion, even though I have often tried to explain its meaning to students in a classroom. It came to me in a grocery store.

I had been buying groceries in the same store for 12 years when a trivial incident helped explain God’s oneness and its importance to me. The store, a large supermarket, has a fruit aisle where you pick up apples, oranges, grapefruits, bananas and the like and then bag them yourself in plastic bags the store supplies. Alongside the plastic bag dispensers there are small containers holding metal twisties you use to tie up the top of your bag. One day, I picked up some fruit, put it into a bag, but all the containers containing the twisties were empty, every one of them. As I checked out my groceries, suspecting that possibly someone had taken them as a prank, I mentioned to the cashier that all the twisties were gone. Her answer took me aback: “But, sir, we have never had them in this store!” Thinking she might be new on the job, I said, “I’ve been coming here for more than 10 years and you’ve always had them! You can even see their containers from here!” With an assurance that comes from absolute certitude, she replied, “I’ve been working here for a long time, and I can assure you we’ve never had them!”

I pushed things no further but, walking out of the store I thought this to myself: “If she’s right, then I’m certifiably insane! If she’s right then I’m completely out of touch with reality, have been for a long time, and I have no idea what sanity is!” I was certain that I had seen the twisties for 10 years! Well, they had reappeared by the next time I entered the store and they are there today, but that little episodic challenge to my sanity taught me something. I now know what it means that “God is one” and why that is important.

That God is one (and not divided) is the very foundation for all rationality and sanity. That God is undivided and consistent within assures you that two plus two will always be four and that you can anchor your sanity on that. That God is undivided assures you that if you saw package twisties in a store for 12 years, they were there ... and you are not insane. That God is one is the basis for our sanity. It undergirds the Principle of Non-contradiction: Something is or it is not, it cannot be both; and two plus two can never be five and that allows us to live rational, sane lives. Because God is undivided, we can trust our sanity.

The truth of this was never jeopardized by the great epistemological debates in history. Doubts about rationality and sanity do not come from Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Locke, Hume, Wittgenstein or Jacques Derrida; these philosophers merely argued about the structure of rationality, never about its existence. What jeopardizes our sanity (and is, no doubt, the greatest moral threat in our world today) is lying, the denial of facts, the changing of facts and the creation of fake facts. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is as dangerous and pernicious as lying, dishonesty. It is no accident that Christian names Satan the Prince of Lies and teaches that lying is at the root of the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit. When facts are no longer facts, then our very sanity is under siege because lying corrupts the basis for rationality.

God is one! That means that there is no internal contradiction within God and that assures us that there is no internal contradiction possible within the structure of reality and within a sane mind. What has happened, has forever happened, and cannot be denied. Two plus two will forever be four and because of that we can remain sane and trust reality enough to live coherent lives.

The single most dangerous thing in the whole world is lying, dishonesty, denying facts. To deny a fact is not only to play fast and loose with your own sanity and the very foundations of rationality; it is also to play fast and loose with God whose consistency undergirds all sanity and all meaning. God is one, undivided, consistent.

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.

In times of crisis, become godlike

My son was having trouble graphing an equation for his algebra class so he had to ask me for help. Poor kid. As I struggled to remember my eighth-grade algebra, he wondered aloud when he would ever use this stuff in “real life.”

At that moment, I couldn’t help but think of the dozens of graphs I have seen dotting news articles and social media feeds over the past several weeks.

Coronavirus case counts, death rates, regional breakdowns, demographic breakdowns. It seems everyone is an epidemiologist now as they interpret red and purple lines that seem to be always ascending and never descending. When’s the peak going to hit? How is my state doing?

As we near the frightening apex of the pandemic curve, the models and graphs that have dominated the national discussion reveal another feature of this unsettling moment: the age of algorithmic thinking is also reaching a peak of sorts.

Everything from public policy to stock prices to the individual behaviors of millions of people seems to follow the movement of mathematical models. When virus cases are down, perhaps restrictions are eased, investors gain confidence and people feel safer going to the grocery store.

If the line breaks the other way, the opposite occurs. This is certainly a prudent use of our scientific abilities, but it only provides a fleeting sense of control in the midst of so much chaos.

The belief that someone (or some computer) is crunching vast amounts of data to discern the behavior of a microscopic virus gives us a certain sense of security. It provides a small layer of cognitive protection between us and the reality that nature cannot be fully captured by graphs and algorithms.

Creation is an act of the divine Logos, not artificial intelligence. As such, God’s loving plan unfolds with a reasoning beyond human understanding that is both universal in scope and extremely specific in its attention to the particularities of each human person. We are not made in the image of statistics and demographics, rather, we are made in the image of God.

To put this theological truth in today’s mathematical language, suppose you tried to “graph” our “model” Jesus Christ. His passion, death and resurrection would be “V-shaped.” A descent into the depths of suffering and hell itself before a literal rising from the dead, ascension into heaven and life eternal. The V-shape stands for victory over death.

If there is a model we should follow as we navigate this uncertain time, it is derived from one simple equation: “The Son of God became man so that we might become God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 460). Take heart in the things that mathematical models fail to capture — the unseen acts of sacrifice, mercy and compassion, even in the face of grave danger, that make us human and make us all like unto God.

ROBINSON is director of communications and Catholic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.
Faith stronger during virus

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Two separate polls show that Americans are relying more on their faith to help persevere through the coronavirus pandemic.

The Pew Research Center, in a survey released April 30, showed that nearly one-fourth of all Americans say their faith has grown stronger during the pandemic, while only 2% said it had grown weaker.

Catholics, according to Pew, are very much in line with the overall survey results. Among Catholic respondents, 27% said their faith had grown stronger with 2% saying it had gotten weaker. In addition, 63% said their faith had not changed much at all, and another 7% said the question was not applicable because “I am not a religious person and this hasn’t changed.”

A poll by Fordham University released April 28 showed that Americans are being helped by their religious or spiritual faith during the pandemic, and the more often they go to church, the more they feel it has helped.

For those who go to church regularly, 68% said they have been “helped a lot,” and another 22% said they said they have been “helped somewhat.” For those who say they go the church frequently, 41% said they were helped a lot, with 45% reporting they had been helped somewhat. Even a majority of those who say they rarely go to church said faith has helped – 23% a lot and 32% somewhat.

Among all respondents, 35% said they have been helped a lot and 29% said they had been helped somewhat, while 34% said they had not been helped. In the Fordham poll, 62% of Catholics said they had been helped at least somewhat by their faith. By comparison, 95% of evangelicals reported they had been helped at least somewhat, and just over three-fourths of mainline Protestants reported the same.

Pew’s numbers found that African Americans reported the biggest increase in faith at 41%, compared to 40% for Hispanics and 20% for whites. Older Americans likewise found their faith increasing, as nearly 30% of all Americans ages 50-up reported increased faith. Women’s numbers were nearly twice as big as men’s, 30% compared to 18%.

For help placing your classified ad, call 225-387-0983. All classified ads are prepaid. Credit cards are now accepted.
St. Margaret donates meals to health workers

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

For a few precious, albeit rare, moments, 100 health care workers at North Oaks Hospital in Hammond had a chance back to the days before the coronavirus pandemic changed the world. Ditching their normal PB&J sandwiches on April 29, these behind-the-scenes health care workers that included lab techs and clinical workers were able to savor a delectable meatloaf lunch with all of the trimmings provided by The SteaKhouse in Hammond.

Restaurant owners Blake and Megan Kinchen partnered with St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany to provide 100 meatloaf lunches to the workers. By Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

For help placing your classified ad, call 225-387-0983. All classified ads are prepaid. Credit cards are now accepted.

St. Michael High School is now accepting applications for the position of Public Relations Coordinator. Working with the President and the Advancement office the Public Relations Coordinator will:

• Coordinate with the President’s Office
• Develop and implement public relations strategies for St. Michael High School.
• Work closely with Advancement Office on special events, such as Auction, Warrior Fund Golf Tournament, Annual Fund
• Collaborate with the Alumni Director to plan events or meetings with alumni and prospective donors.
• Attend school functions to establish relationships and photograph school events, presentations and publications to share with the community.
• Should have experience managing website, social media content, photography and publishing quarterly magazine.

Send your letter of interest and resume to jnelson@smhsbr.org

Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools Office
Principal Opening
St. Elizabeth Catholic School
Paincourtville, LA

St. Elizabeth Catholic School was founded in 1876 and currently serves approximately 210 students in Grades PK3 – 8. With 16 professional staff members, the school operates as a Catholic Christian family devoted to spiritual growth and academic excellence in a caring and safe environment. The school recently completed the self-study process for district reaccreditation.

St. Elizabeth Catholic School is part of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, which has thirty schools in eight civil parishes. There is a strong Catholic identity focus in all schools. The district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (AdvancED).

All schools work together to Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent, and Embrace the Future

Applicants who meet the following criteria will be considered:
• Practicing Catholic
• Minimum of 5 years of experience in education, preferably in Catholic schools
• Demonstrated Leadership Ability, preferably in Catholic schools
• Qualifications to meet the Non-public Certification Requirements for Louisiana

Mail resume, copies of all college transcript(s) showing degrees, and three letters of recommendation to St. Elizabeth Catholic School Principal Search Catholic Schools Office P.O. Box 2028 Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028 or email same to secretary@csobr.org

Deadline is May 15, 2020

The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany to provide the meals.

“The meals are definitely encouraging and lift our spirits a lot,” said Alexis Dominguez, a nurse practitioner at North Oaks Family Medicine. “It actually brings us into normalcy in the clinic when we are able to have food outside of the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches we bring for ourselves.

“We get to have a meal that is not only delicious but comes from somebody’s heart.”

Pastor Father Jamin David said reaching out to others in need is part of St. Margaret’s social outreach legacy but the stay-at-home order has forced the parish to reinvent how to serve others. He recalled how St. Margaret answered the call during the flood of 2016 when the church opened its doors to hundreds of motorists trapped on Interstate 12.

“Serving a hot meal to first responders seemed like a logical, tactile way that we could reach out to others in our community,” Father David said. “It brings joy to our hearts and smiles to our faces to see medical professionals feel the incarnational love of God through our small acts of kindness and charity.”

Mike Arnold, laboratory operations manager for North Oaks, said he was touched because donations such as meals show that he and his colleagues are making a difference in the community.

“It shows we are helping in a positive way trying to get through these trying times,” Arnold said. “And the amount of support we received from organizations is overwhelming to me.”

According to Melanie Zaffuto, public relations coordinator for North Oaks, community support has been overwhelming. She said the hospital has received more than 200 donations in the form of meals (that have fed every employee at some point), snacks, PPE supplies including masks, cards and post- ers.

“Every single one of those donations is very special to us,” Zaffuto said. “It comes from the heart and people who are giving support. It really makes us feel and know we are all in this together, that spirit of community.”

Need a job, provide a service or want to tutor, it all starts with the Classifieds.

Call 225-387-0983.
Tips for seniors during pandemic

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Keeping the body, mind, and soul engaged is an important step for the elderly to reduce their vulnerability to the coronavirus, said clergy and parish health nurses in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Senior citizens still living at home should heed the advice of staying home as much as possible, according to Stephanie Gaudin, parish nurse at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs. Before they go to the grocery store or run other errands, senior citizens should make lists so they can complete their tasks as quickly as possible.

But staying at home doesn’t mean one has to stay motionless, said Gaudin, who advised seniors to “move.”

“I encourage them to go outside. If they stay inside all the time they are likely to get depressed. Go outside and get some fresh air,” said Gaudin.

She said any form of movement, even if it is getting up and walking around the house, is helpful.

“Get the blood pumping,” said Gaudin.

ICC pastor Father Frank Uter also suggested the elderly could do the things they have been saving for “a rainy day” that could possibly be done from home.

“I find myself busy at a relaxed pace, but at the same time taking care of things I never had time to take care of,” said Father Uter.

Keeping their mind going also helps seniors to take their focus off their worries.

“If they like to do puzzles, encourage them to do puzzles, anything that keeps the mind active,” said Gaudin.

She added it’s important for seniors to keep their routines and enjoy their hobbies as much as possible. Seniors who like to cook should be encouraged to prepare healthy meals so they will get the nutrition they need.

One of the best ways to look after the health and welfare of the elderly is to call and see if they need anything or simply talk with them.

“One thing our parish is doing for the elderly and all is calling parishioners. It started out as a project for those 70 years or older but was so appreciated we have spread it to all,” said Father Uter.

“Our staff has divided up a printed copy of all the households and has been calling each household to see how they are doing.

“Some really good things have come from this. Perhaps some of the elderly may have someone they haven’t been in touch with for a while.”

Technology can be a friend in keeping in touch with and watching after seniors at this time, said Gaudin.

For those with loved ones in nursing homes or assisted living facilities, maintaining contact with the facilities and arranging to visit with loved ones through social media is helpful.

Parents can encourage their children to make cards for nursing home residents to let them know someone is thinking of them.

The practices developed to assure the safety and quality of life for seniors during the pandemic can be built upon once it is over, Gaudin emphasized.

“This is a good time to say, ‘I need to take better care of myself,’” she said.

Make Room in Your Garage or Yard by Donating That Old Car!

It’s springtime, and we can help with your spring cleaning. If you have been thinking about getting rid of your old car, now would be a great time to donate it to a great charity – St. Vincent de Paul.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul not only needs car donations, but also boats, campers and motor-homes. Proceeds benefit the Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter, St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, and our Community Pharmacy.

Make your car donation online at svdpbr.org or call (225) 383-7837, ext. O.

Free Towing!!!

Spring Cleaning!
Clothing, Household and Furniture Needed

St. Vincent de Paul Stores are leaders in distributing clothing and furniture to the needy at no charge, and we need your help.

Last year, we assisted over 10,000 people (free of charge) with their clothing needs. You may remember six-year-old Anna who was a guest at our Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter. She and her mother desperately needed clothing and other items, and we were able to help them in their time of need.

Help us give a hand-up to people in need. We accept clothing, household items, furnishings and appliances in good condition.

We have resumed pick-ups on a limited basis. Schedule your pick-up by calling us at (225)267-5447 on weekdays between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm.

Starting May 4th, we will open our Stores for drop offs of donations only Monday through Friday from 10 am to 4 pm. If you drop off a donation, we ask that you follow the social distancing safety procedures that our stores have in place.

Help us by making your donation today!