A weathered red and white pole stands sentry over a fading icon, a nostalgic peak into a tradition that seems to be eroding daily.

On an afternoon when an early summer heat was nudging aside spring’s last gasp, Charlie Tramonte was inside going about his business of cutting hair, just as he has done for nearly 55 years, including the past 40 inside a location that is filled with pictures and memorabilia that would be the envy of any collector.

Tramonte is a throwback to a time when the rite of passage included a father bringing his son to a barber shop for his first haircut, long before the days of upscale salons.

On this particular day Tramonte was cutting the hair of longtime customer Eric Maher, during Tramonte’s final days before retiring. Tramonte, who first started cutting hair nearly 55 years ago and spent the past 40 years at a location off of Florida Boulevard in Baton Rouge, retired June 26.

“The magic of this place is the man next to me (Tramonte),” Maher said. But those good times, in that same place where Saturday mornings meant spirited discussions on the previous night’s prep football scores that would inevitably pivot to LSU, are now nothing but treasured memories.

Tramonte locked the doors of Charlie Tramonte’s Goodwood Barber Shop for the final time June 26, five months shy of celebrating 55 years since cutting the hair of his first customer at his father’s old shop.

“I’ve been blessed, I’ve had a good run,” the 77-year-old Tramonte, a graduate of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, said. “I have so many memories, have met so many wonderful people, and I cherish the fact that they have helped me in so many ways.”

His was a career that was almost, well, snipped, in the beginning. He remembers with fondness a day when just starting out at his dad’s shop, the old Goodwood Barber Shop.

“I said, ‘Please Lord let somebody come in so I can cut their hair; I can’t even describe the feeling,” he said.

Soon after, a man whose hair Tramonte had previously cut, walked in and Tramonte asked if he could cut his hair. It turned out to be a question he wished he had never asked.

“You have to realize everything was quiet (at that moment) in the barber shop. The man said, ‘not if you cut my hair the way you did the last time,’” he said.

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The Diocese of Brooklyn has announced that our churches will be closed this Independence Day, known as Bastille Day, is July 14. File photo | The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Brooklyn has announced that our churches will be closed this Independence Day, known as Bastille Day, is July 14. File photo | The Catholic Commentator

By Dina Dow

The fertility of good soil in March produces the fruitful blossoms of July. So, too, is our life in Christ. The fertile ‘good soil’ of our heart provides bountiful fruit on this pilgrimage to everlasting life. The Mass readings for the 14th and 15th Sundays in Ordinary Time illuminate the abundant life in the Spirit of God as we strive to be fertile and fruitful disciples of Jesus.

Fertile rest

The prophet Zechariah shares a message from God to the Israelites. There is great rejoicing in the promise of a savior who will come to restore the land, the people and ultimately the temple, culminating in a land filled with peace. The savior will fight for what is morally right and fair (just), according to the law of God, while placing the good of others as precedence (meekness). He will come to destroy war and proclaim peace over all the world. This is the king of all kings, the one whom we praise his name, his life, his mercy. This Lord, as the psalmist writes, is “…gracious, merciful, slow to anger, great in kindness… good to all, compassionate, faithful, lifts those who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down” before him (Ps 145:1-4).

St. Paul reminds us in the Letter to the Romans, “We are dwelling places of the Spirit of the Lord, as we are body/soul beings. This is the same Holy Spirit who raised our savior from the dead” (Rom 8:9-13). The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we are united to in baptism, unites us with the father and the Holy Spirit, the giver of life. St. Paul pulls us into the reality that if we live according to the Spirit, we will have life. We rejoice in the sharing of life in Christ.

Thus, Jesus issues this invitation, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light” (Mt 11:25-30).

Jesus invites us to follow him with child-like trust, listen to his words, and share them with those we meet. The more we adhere to the word of God, the greater the rest we find in him. There is fertility in rest, praising the Lord, my king and God (Ps 145).

Fruitful

Openness to the word of God correlates with the fruitfulness of discipleship. First, we are called to realize the purposefulness and impact of God’s word, as testified by the prophet Isaiah (Is 55:10-11). There is intentionalness from every utterance of God that “waters” the earth with transforming power. The psalmist reiterates, “The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest” (Ps 65). The key phrases are “good ground” and “a fruitful harvest.” Is my heart “good ground” to receive the word of God and work for a “fruitful harvest” for the glory of God? Jesus is the word of God who waters the earth. St. John proclaims, “And the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

The seed is the word of God, and Christ is the sower (Lk 8:11). The human heart is where the seed is sown. The parable of the sower (Mt 13:1-23) explains scenarios of where seed landed and the result: seed on the path is bird food; seed on the rocky ground with little soil sprang up but was scorched by the hot sun; seed upon thorns became choked; and seed on the good soil produced abundant grain for a plentiful harvest.

As the word of God is “sown in my heart, what happens? Is my heart a flat place, where the word will be easily consumed by the distraction of evil? Does my heart fill with joy in coming to know Jesus, yet fails under the pressures, delights and temporary of what the world sows? Is my heart good soil, where the truth of Jesus Christ comes forth in abundance?

From the hearts of those who are open, obedient, rooted and responsive to the word of God pours forth the abundance of fertile and fruitful discipleship. Guided by the Holy Spirit may the eternal word of God take firm root in our hearts, and in, turn, through our call to missionary activity: bear abundant fruit of mercy, kindness, goodness, compassion, faithfulness, sacrifice and peace to all people.
Vacation Bible Schools go virtual during pandemic

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

During the summer Jesus is coming into homes and unpacking a suitcase filled with items from the tropics, Rocky Mountains... all over the world, as well as songs, fun activities and stories to let children and their families know that he loves them and is with them through virtual Vacation Bible Schools being offered in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

St. Joseph Church – Ponchatoula
Paige Bacile, parish school of religion coordinator at St. Joseph Church in Ponchatoula, said the theme of St. Joseph’s virtual VBS is “Jesus the Son, the Healer, the Warrior, the Helper, the Servant.”

“We enlisted volunteer parents, catechists, youth and young adults to create the videos in areas of Scripture, stories, music, snacks, crafts and games,” Bacile said.

In addition to these resources that are specified for fifth grade and younger campers, there’s a daily family challenge. There are also prayer resources for older siblings, young adults and parents.

According to Sarah Fox, St. Joseph youth minister who helped create the VBS, the program allows participants to experience the many different ways Jesus is present in their lives.

The families have responded enthusiastically, according to Fox.

“It’s been beautiful being part of people’s prayer lives. It’s been so humbling to see their openness,” Fox said.

It’s also been fun, as well as faith-building for volunteers.

Ian Waller, who plans to attend St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict this fall, enjoyed getting together with his friends to produce videos in which they acted out stories from the New Testament. Waller, who is accustomed to working with teens and young adults, said “reached into his heart” in order to present the stories in a way that children can understand.

“Sometimes you don’t remember the exact words that were said, but you remember the way people ‘acted’ with joy in the way they shared the Gospel,” said Waller.

He was also reminded to look at the heart of God the father with childlike wonder and trust.

“You have to remember ‘I’m a child of God’ – there’s so much confusion in the world,” said Waller.

People can access St. Joseph’s VBS at stjosephsonline.com/how-this-works.

St. Alphonsus Church – Greenwell Springs
When it became clear the coronavirus pandemic would impact the summer VBS at St. Alphonsus Church in Greenwell Springs, Elizabeth Norwood, director of adolescent formation, found an old VBS CD and with some creativity and updating of materials produced “Lava Lava Island: Where the Love of Jesus’ Flows.”

Participants can access a Google Docs folder containing daily local videos featuring traditional VBS décor of volcanoes, toucans, flamingos, a frog and parrot and Bible story beach house.

Children are also presented activities, challenges and reflections.

“I really wanted to give the children an experience of what they are used to when they are here,” said Norwood, who enjoyed presenting Bible stories when she was a VBS volunteer.

“I enjoy being my silly self with my kids.”

A former science teacher, Norwood said the VBS theme easily allowed her to introduce science-based activities. But most importantly, each theme allows children to see that Christ is with them during difficult times: “Jesus brings us joy; Jesus follows God’s word; Jesus gives us courage; Jesus saves us; and Jesus gives us a reason to celebrate.”

Norwood’s daughter, Clare, 14, said she also enjoyed making the videos.

“It was fun decorating and I liked being able to help give the kids a chance to have VBS. I enjoyed seeing how the videos came out after the filming,” she said.

To access St. Alphonsus’ VBS, visit drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Dir9TfKWwI1hNbaynDxzdRCi2bc-qr6.

St. Patrick Church – Baton Rouge
In July, St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge is allowing people to bring the island home in a “staycation Bible school” themed “Seeking a Savior.” Parishioners can obtain from the church office a kit filled with Vacation Bible School lessons, activities and, beginning July 6, access music and story time videos made at St. Patrick Church.

Clergy abuse list updated

As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, the following entry in the diocesan list of credible accusations of sexual abuse by clergy is hereby revised as shown below to reflect the recent receipt of additional allegations:

Fr. George Gensler
Date of Abuse: Late 1970s
Dates Reports Received: 2/6/1994, 10/26/2018, 2/5/2020 and 2/7/2020
All known or suspected sexual or other abuse of a child or vulnerable adult should be reported immediately to local law enforcement officials or to the Department of Children and Family Services at tel. (855) 452-5437. Allegations of such abuse involving clergy or other representatives of the Church should also be reported to Amy Cordon, the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, at tel. (225) 242-0250.

The updated list can be accessed on the diocesan website at http://diobr.org/about-our-diocese/acused-clergy-list.

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Evangelization directory focused ‘tool’

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis welcomed the Vatican’s updated “Directory for Catechesis,” saying it is exciting to have “a fresh and focused tool to enhance our evangelization efforts in catechesis.”

The new directory, released June 25, “highlights the centrality of the church's mission of bringing the world to an authentic encounter with Christ, an encounter that inspires and propels people as witnesses for the faith,” said Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron of Los Angeles.

“In an age marked by tremendous social and cultural challenges, as well as ever-expanding digital tools which have often left the field of catechesis behind, the timing of this updated resource is providential,” he added in a statement issued shortly after the Vatican released the directory.

The updated volume lists the goals and essential elements of catechesis and is meant to guide the drafting of national catechisms and catechetical directories that take into account the specific cultural contexts and needs of Catholics at different ages and stages of life.

Previous versions of the directory were approved in 1971 by St. Paul VI and in 1997 by St. John Paul II.

The directory was released in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and French; the English and other translations were still being prepared as of June 25.

Bishop Barron's statement noted the new directory builds on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, the Catechism of the Catholic Church "and the ongoing work of the new evangelization – particularly as called for in Pope Francis' 2013 apostolic exhortation 'Evangelii Gaudium' (‘The Joy of the Gospel’)."

"With a vision that brings the content of these beautiful resources alive in the context of contemporary society, the directory invites the Christian faithful to be courageous witnesses of Jesus Christ in the family," his statement said.

### Diocese of Baton Rouge Seminary Scholarship Funds

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

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

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

For information, call 225-336-8778.

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

### Fund Contributions November 2019 thru May 2020

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<td>In Memory of: James B. Firmin</td>
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### Additional Scholarship Funds

| Fathered Nacol | $15,862.30 |
| Monsignor John Naughton | $20,000.00 |
| Father Aubry Osborn | $11,254.35 |
| Bishop Stanley J. Ott | $28,444.50 |
| The Ott and Berthelot Families | $20,000.00 |
| Pioneering Fathers of Grosse Tete Ridge | $19,499.44 |
| George R. Reymond | $20,000.00 |
| Monsignor Leonard Robin | $21,774.16 |
| Father James Rodrigue | $20,605.00 |
| Alphonse and Edna B. Rodrigue | $20,000.00 |
| Michael Romano | $13,310.27 |
| William and Camilla Roszko | $20,000.00 |
| Russo Family | $2,000.00 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Joseph A. Sarradet, Sr. | $60,000.00 |
| Father Louis Savoure | $20,000.00 |
Justice movements need people united behind strategic goals, King says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The cause of greater justice for all will be best served when people unite with a focus on reaching strategic goals, Bernice King told Vatican News.

Racism can be defeated “first by refusing to turn a blind eye, by gathering information on the issues and by educating ourselves on the root causes and outcomes of racism,” she said. 

People have to start looking at what makes “systemic and institutional racism seem invisible. The more we want to see and the more we want to effectuate change, the more evident the destructive, dehumanizing nature of racism becomes,” she said in an interview published online June 20.

Education and information gathering are the first steps in bringing about nonviolent social change, she said. Next, people must be committed “to doing what my father describes as ‘our nettlesome task’ of organizing their strength into ‘compelling power’ so that government, institutions and other systems of power ‘cannot elude our demands,'” she said, quoting her father.

Asked what her father would do in the current situation unfolding in the United States, King said he would still be guided by his philosophy of nonviolence, “which corresponded with his following of Jesus Christ.”

The late-civil rights’ leader would remind people of the nation’s history of violence, racism and injustice, and he would help young people root their protests in strategies aimed at organized, active and sustainable nonviolent social change, she said.

“He would put a demand on influencers in the sectors of politics, arts, media, entertainment, criminal justice, health care and education to ensure racial equity and justice,” she added. “He would also put a demand on churches to align their professions of faith with works that create just and equitable circumstances for Black and brown people, as well as for economically marginalized communities, not only in the United States, but around the world.”

King said, “I do believe that the reactions and responses this time are more widespread and passionate, with more white people than ever before joining in protest. If we unite further with focus on strategic goals, we will prove to be more productive for the cause of justice.”

 Violence can never be remedied by more violence, she said.

“We are facing a choice between chaos or community,” King said. “If we embrace violence, we are thereby selecting chaos, which ultimately leads to self-destruction.” 

However, she said, “if we embrace nonviolence, we will advance in building a more just, equitable, humane and peaceful world,” which includes the eradication of the “triple evils of racism, poverty and militarism.”

King, who met with Pope Francis twice in 2018, said the pope’s “revolution of tenderness” requires people understand that revolutions involve lots of learning.

“We have to learn more about each other, learn more about the condition of humanity, learn how to, as my father said, ‘live together as brothers and sisters, so that we don’t perish together as fools,’ and learn a way of engaging and destroying injustice and inhumanity without destroying each other,” she said.

FranU funds well in Zimbabwe

Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University’s Campus Ministry in Baton Rouge raised $1,000 to help build a well for the new Sacred Heart College in Gweru, Zimbabwe run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

For the past five years, FranU’s Campus Ministry has focused on advocating and bringing awareness to global issues that also have a local impact. The ministry raises money for whichever cause they adopt and then donates the funds to an organization that supports that issue.

Director of Campus Ministry Tammy Vidrine said, “In our planning meetings, we determine which campaign we will focus on for the next academic year. We then begin advocating awareness through events such as Welcome Week, Finding Common Ground, Agape Dinners and other campus activities. This year, we sold FranU beanies and Jesus magnets to also help in raising funds.”

Vidrine spoke about the issue of clean water disparity throughout the world even in a first world country such as the U.S. “Making people aware that in most countries there are no water systems, and most young girls as young as five-years-old have to harvest the water from a nearby watering hole prompts us to discuss the negative effects: contaminated water, no education for girls, poor nutrition and disease.”

She continued, “In first world countries, contamination from industries cause unknown cancers and cause learning disabilities from lead and arsenic filled water systems. The infrastructure of the water systems in rural and marginalized areas are outdated.”

Vidrine recalled that she knew exactly where the money raised should go after talking with Brother Paul Montero SC. He informed her of the work the brothers were doing in Zimbabwe with the installation of wells at schools for the children to collect water while at school.

Provincial Brother Ronald Hingle SC stated, “Please know how grateful we are for the generous donation from the students of FranU for our well in Zimbabwe. Despite the best-laid plans and $2 million
Which day is the Sabbath?/ Mass obligation, emotional struggle

Q Is it true that the church changed the day of the Sabbath? I have always felt that the Sabbath occurred on Saturday, but I have learned that the early church decided to celebrate the breaking of bread on Sunday because that was the day of Christ’s resurrection. (Nigeria)

A Technically, it is not true that the Christian church changed the Sabbath day. The Sabbath is still on Saturday (or, more properly, from sundown on Friday), marking the fact that God rested from creation on the seventh day.

In the very earliest days of Christianity, believers who were mainly Jewish observed the seventh-day Sabbath with prayer and rest; but very quickly (as Col 2:16 shows) Christians began to see this as no more obligatory than Jewish rules on food and drink. The followers of Jesus gathered instead to break the bread of the Eucharist on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) – the day on which Jesus, completing a New Covenant, had the week (Acts 20:7) the day on which Jesus gathered instead to break the rules on food and drink. The followers of Jesus gathered instead to break the bread of the Eucharist on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) – the day on which Jesus, completing a New Covenant, had the week (Acts 20:7) the day on which Jesus gathered instead to break the rules on food and drink. The followers of Jesus gathered instead to break the bread of the Eucharist on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) – the day on which Jesus, completing a New Covenant, had the week (Acts 20:7) the day on which Jesus gathered instead to break the rules on food and drink. The followers of Jesus gathered instead to break the bread of the Eucharist on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) – the day on which Jesus, completing a New Covenant, had the week (Acts 20:7) the day on which Jesus gathered instead to break the rules on food and drink.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains the relationship between Sunday and the Sabbath: “Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath. In Christ’s Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man’s eternal rest in God” (No. 2175).

The Catechism’s following section goes on to say that “the celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public and regular worship” (No. 2176).

Q My beloved husband of 35 years passed away two years ago, and I have had great difficulty attending Mass since his death. It invariably causes me to feel light-headed and to cry. (I have usually had to sit down for the entire Mass, so as not to get dizzy.)

My husband and I (we had no children) always went to Mass together, and it was the highlight of our weekend. I am 68 years old, and I often watch Sunday Mass on television although even the television Mass fills me with memories and causes me to weep. Every day now, I listen to a sermon on my iPhone, and I read my Bible and pray to the saints daily. Each night, before I go to bed, I say one decade of the rosary. And my sister-in-law, who is an extraordinary minister of holy communion, often brings me holy communion.

My husband was a popular cantor at several different churches; being present at Mass reminds me of him in the hardest ways imaginable and seems more than I can handle. So my question is this: Is it still a sin if I do not attend Mass physically? (A friend told me it’s not a mortal sin to miss Mass after the age of 65.) (Cleveland)

A Please relax and be at peace. In your situation, you are not committing a mortal sin or any sin at all by not going to Mass. Your emotional condition, which is as real as any physical illness, exempts you from the obligation to attend. And your regular habit of personal prayer is surely pleasing to the Lord.

I do want to comment, though, on your friend’s contention that the obligation of Sunday Mass ceases at age 65; that is simply not true. If a person’s health enables him or her to be present, the responsibility of Sunday Mass attendance continues.

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.

Question Corner Father Kenneth Doyle
Oschwald measures success by heavenly standards

(Six new permanent deacons are scheduled to be ordained Aug. 8 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. This is the fourth of a series on each of the deacon candidates.)

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Ehren “Wheeler” Oschwald changed his measurement of success from earthly treasures to heavenly ones and now has a more enriched life that has also enriched his faith.

Bishop Michael G. Duca will ordain Oschwald a permanent deacon on Aug. 8 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

Oschwald, a member of St. Elizabeth Church in Donaldsonville in a family of six siblings across the street from Ascension of Our Lord Church. His parents invited into their home the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and the Daughters of Charity who served the church.

Oschwald recalls with a chuckle how he helped at his father's drug store as a delivery boy and brought medicine to people on his bicycle.

He is an alum of Ascension Catholic Schools, where he met his wife and childhood sweetheart, Annette.

With a successful sales career in the energy industry, Oschwald said his life was filled with work, leaving little time for his faith.

“I thought I had it all, but I wasn’t happy,” said Oschwald.

He had an inkling that he was called to serve but brushed it aside, thinking he was “going through a phase.”

But Father Andrew Merrick, then pastor of St. Elizabeth, drew Oschwald closer to God. Oschwald chuckled. “When I got there all the men had black rosaries. Father Andrew told me, ‘Don’t stress dude. Next time I will bring you a rosary made out of barbed wire.’”

Oschwald had only intended to attend one meeting to satisfy his penance requirements but “the Holy Spirit got hold” of him, and from there he continued to grow in his faith. He attended Bible study with Annette.

Other life events also called him to grow deeper in his faith. He started looking at his life and thinking, “there has to be more than this” when his brother Tommy died nine years ago.

Oschwald was at his brother’s bedside when he passed away.

Around that time, he also welcomed his first grandson, David Wargo, now 8.

“I look at his birthday as my birthday as well because that is when I turned around. It brought me to a new life,” said Oschwald.

As God called him to enter the faith formation program, Oschwald took a year to discern whether or not to take the next step.

“I was scared. I was wondering, ‘Is this for me?’ I wasn’t sure,” Oschwald said.

Completing the diaconate formation required a lot of time and mental toughness for Oschwald, who is dyslexic.

“I had to go to school on a Saturday morning, and I saw all the boats out there with people fishing,” Oschwald said. “I thought I sure would like to be doing that.”

He said by the grace of God and nudge from Annette he completed his studies.

“She never gave up on me,” Oschwald said of his wife, who went to class with him and studied with him. She also proofread his papers.

He said it was an opportunity for both of them to learn more about Catholic teachings.

He also received encouragement and support from his instructors and his classmates, whom he “formed a brotherhood with over the years.”

He is also grateful for the St. Elizabeth community.

“They have been on this journey with me,” said Oschwald.

He is looking forward to evangelizing and praying for the people he will serve in his assigned church parish.

“I am looking forward to talking to people about the Lord. The Lord changed my life, and I want them to know he can change theirs too,” said Oschwald.

Ehren Oschwald

FRANU ▼
From page 5

in donations for construction, the school didn’t factor in the digging of a well. It wouldn’t have been able to open without one. We gave them permission to drill the borehole in the hopes that we could raise the $6,000 to subsidize it.”

“In addition to the plumbing and drinking water this well will provide, it will also assist in a number of self-sustaining projects which are crucial to the success of any enterprise in Africa. I was able to see the temporary home for pigs, cows, chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs. I also saw the fields that have been planted to help feed the students. It’s a massive undertaking and a great sign of hope for the people there as well as for our Eastern and Southern Province of Brothers,” said Hingle.

The school is an independent, Catholic, co-educational, college preparatory high school located in Gweru, Midlands, Zimbabwe. It is an elite Catholic private school run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, registered with the ministry of primary and secondary education and offers a Cambridge Curriculum.

LPA ▼
From page 1

The paper also earned awards for Best Special Section and for the annual Diocesan Directory.

“I am extremely proud of my staff,” Meek said. “A religious publication winning such an award in a secular competition is not easy but all of the credit goes to the group of talented and dedicated people I am blessed to work with.

“I thank each and every one of them for their commitment to excellence.”
FOOD PANTRY
St. Alphonsus parishioners give back

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

On a hot, sunny June morning cars lined up in front of the St. Alphonsus food pantry off Front Street in Greenwell Springs.

Swaty volunteers descargar the cans and packed the vehicles with food supplies. The drivers pulled away with their cars carrying a heavier load but lighter hearts.

Volunteers were very busy that day. Before closing due to COVID, the food pantry served an average of 40-50 households per week. On their first day back, they served 82 households another sign that life is slowly returning.

On June 17 the St. Alphonsus chapter of St. Vincent de Paul re-opened its food pantry, allowing those in need to shop. The doors opened at 9 a.m.

Residents received boxes filled with fruits, meat, baked goods, fresh fruit and vegetables provided by Gleaners Beef Bank through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

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The story of this hijacking thriller exclusively from the viewpoint of the captured vessel's co-pilot (Joseph Gordon-Levitt). Confined within the cramped cockpit, he has only occasional glimpses of cabin violence via a small monitor and must weigh the need to preserve lives of the passengers and crew, including his flight-attendant girlfriend (Aylin Tezel), with whom he has a 2-year-old son. The drama is effective in showing how one man's series of decisions can affect the lives of others. But Islamist terrorists are such predictable villains that the plot gets drained of suspense after a while. Some physical violence, frequent rough language. A-III; R

**Artemis Fowl**

Disney

Spectacle trumps story in director Kenneth Branagh's crowded, off-key screen version of Eoin Colfer's 2001 fantasy novel for young adults. After his namesake dad (Colin Farrell), a wealthy, mysterious antiquities dealer based in Ireland, is kidnapped by a malevolent pixie (Hong Chau), the brilliant 12-year-old boy of the title (Ferdia Shaw) discovers that the world of Celtic mythology about which his father has been educating him is real. Teaming with Pop's butler (Nonso Anozie), an ex-cabinet security officer (Lara McDonnell), and the dwarf (Josh Gad) who serves as the film's narrator, he seeks out the priceless artifact Dad's abductor has demanded as a ransom. The fact that the protagonist is a brash and unruly 14-year-old may help to explain why viewers are unlikely to feel much investment in his quest, though screenwriters Conor McPherson and Hamish McColl also fail to lay the groundwork necessary for audience sympathy. Their predictable pro-tolerance theme is also put across feebly. While acceptable for all but easily frightened tots, the poorly structured proceedings never overcome the disconnect between the script's earnest tone and the inherent silliness of many of its non-human characters. Much bloodless combat, brief scatological humor. A-II; PG-13

**Saint Frances**

Oscilloscope

A grotesque treatment of abortion and a misguided view of faith are the most notable elements of this mix of comedy and drama charting the friendship between an adrift 14-year-old woman (Kelly O'Sullivan) and the little girl (Ra-mona Edith-Williams) she nannies for a summer. As written by O'Sullivan and directed by Alex Thompson, the would-be rich but harrowing film groans under the burden of its own amorality as the main character has emotionless sex (with Max Lipchitz) that leads to an unwanted pregnancy and her lesbian parents (Charin Alvarez and Lily Mojekwu) find their relationship strained by postpartum depression. The main character is seen teaching a Catholicism class on her own terms, is experiencing a strange preoccupation with the heroine's menstrual cycle is just one more jarring note in this discordant salute to off-kilter values. A benign view of abortion, casual sex and homosexual acts, graphic nonmarital sexual activity, irreverent humor, at least one use of profanity, considerable rough and crude language. O; Not rated by the Motion Picture Association.

**Irresistible**

Focus

After a video of his impassioned speech to a meeting of the town council in his small, cash-strapped Wisconsin farming community comes to the attention of a high-powered Democratic Party strategist (Steve Carell), a retired Marine colonel (Chris Cooper) agrees to run for mayor if the Wisconsin-based pol will stay in the Badger State and personally supervise his campaign. With the operative skillfully stirring things up, the race becomes the focus of a national media frenzy that only intensifies with the arrival of his lifetime Republican adversary (Rose Byrne). TV comedian Jon Stewart writes and directs a clever satire that lampoons both the cynicism underlying the current electoral system and the cultural divide separating the coasts from the heartland. He also works in some innocent romance as the adviser falls for his candidate's daughter (Mackenzie Davis). A couple of profanities, about a dozen milder oaths, frequent rough and crude language, sexual references, obscene gestures. A-III; R

**Da 5 Bloods**

Netflix

Rich but harrowing drama in which a quartet of veterans (Delroy Lindo, Clarke Peters, Norm Lewis and Isiah Whitlock Jr.) who formed a deep bond during their service in Vietnam return there, partly to retrieve the body of a fallen comrade (Chadwick Boseman) they revered as a mentor but also to recover a cache of CIA gold they discovered after coming across a downed American aircraft during the conflict. Their journey through the jungle coasts from the heartland. He also works in some innocent romance as the adviser falls for his candidate's daughter (Mackenzie Davis). A couple of profanities, about a dozen milder oaths, frequent rough and crude language, sexual references, obscene gestures. A-III; R
Declaración de Ncaddhm sobre George Floyd y las protestas

Nosotros, la Asociación Católica Nacional de Directores Diocesanos para el Ministerio Hispánico, nos unimos en solidaridad con nuestra comunidad y liderazgo católico, y personas de buena voluntad para expresar nuestro compromiso con el trabajo de justicia racial y reconciliación. El asesinato sin sentido y sin corazón de George Floyd nos vuelve a decir, una vez más, que el mal sistemático y el pecado del racismo todavía están muy vivos en nuestros corazones y comunidades. Del mismo modo, las protestas que tienen lugar en nuestros vecindarios y ciudades, y las expresiones de frustración y rabia son una cruda invitación al trabajo de justicia racial, curación y reconciliación que queda por hacer por cada uno de nosotros y por todos nosotros, juntos.

Como agentes pastorales, renovamos nuestro compromiso con el trabajo de justicia racial y reconciliación en nuestras respectivas diócesis y comunidades, atendiendo el llamado a la acción que se nos dio en la carta pastoral de los obispos de EE. UU. Sobre el racismo, Abra de par en par nuestros corazones: la llamada duradera al amor. Nuestros ministerios interculturales y nuestro acompañamiento pastoral y servicios con comunidades de color ya nos han enseñado la importancia de crear espacios seguros de confianza y escucha profunda. Continuaremos caminando juntos, confiando en que nuestros valores evangélicos de justicia, compasión, coraje, verdad y paz traerán la gracia necesaria para erradicar cualquier injusticia racial persistente que pueda enfrentarnos en el camino. Juntos, unimos nuestras oraciones de consuelo y esperanza a los que ya se expresaron y a los que seguirán aumentando: el amor nunca llega a su fin (4 Corintios 13:8).

VBS ▼

From page 3

St. Patrick. Parents will also have access to faith formation videos, such as FORMED.

With so many things being put “on hold” at this time, it was important to make sure children’s faith formation continues, according to Melissa Harshbarger, director of faith formation and technology.

She said the VBS will allow children and families to continue their connection with St. Patrick.

“I think it’s great that people can see and be comforted by familiar faces,” said Harshbarger. “It’s joyful to learn things in a new way. I think it will be helpful for our PSR program.”

St. Patrick normally does an intense, two-week PSR program during the summer. The parish is considering its options for this year’s program, said Harshbarger.

For more information, visit stpatrickbr.org/vbs.

St. Jude the Apostle Church – Baton Rouge

St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge had such a positive response to last year’s in-person Vacation Bible School it decided to forge ahead through the pandemic with its VBS “Rocky Railway: Jesus’ Power Pulls Us Through,” scheduled July 20-24.

According to Michaelyn McGinnis, director of Christian Formation and Sacramental Records at St. Jude, the on-line program urges parents to become involved in the age-appropriate lessons and activities as prime catechists in the home. But if they are unable, the children will be able to follow the program independently.

She said during a time when many children are confused and scared because the activities they are used to doing are being canceled, the message of the St. Jude VBS will help them find Jesus as the rock of their faith.

“He gave us his hope and his power and he wants us to be bold,” said McGinnis.

For more information, visit stjudecatholic.org.

Solution on page 14

ACROSS
1. Our ___ of Sorrow
5. “...and the rich he has sent ___ away” (Lk 1:53)
10. Catholic actor/comedian Murray ___.
14. Malarial fever
15. Employ agar
16. Apparatus for weaving
17. ___ Raton
18. Capital of Jordan
19. Soon
20. Muslim titles of honor
21. Obstructs
22. Ratio words
23. Remarkable
26. Advent through Ordinary Time
27. Pharaoh of the Exodus, perhaps
32. Lustrous
35. Relatives
36. Hellenic “H”
37. Damage by regular use
38. Son of Sarah
40. Fleming and McKellen
41. JFK datum
42. PBS funder
43. She gave birth to the prophet who anointed Saul
45. Ligature
47. Alphabet string
48. Excited
52. Brother of Ham and Japheth
55. What we are to do on Ash Wednesday
58. ___ to obey the gospel of God?” (1 Cor 15:31)
59. Detroit arena
60. ___ and Omega
62. Going well
63. Buck ender
64. “That is...”
65. “Sufficient for a day is its own ___.” (Mt 6:24)
66. Talissa cat
67. Yarbs
68. Actress Russo

DOWN
1. Father of Rachel
2. Disco era phrase
3. Gold coin
4. Sympathet
5. Period of history
6. “For the body does not consist of one ___ but of many...” (1 Cor 12:14)
7. Cougar
8. Former Russian ruler
9. Urge
10. Sain to sore throats
11. Charged particles
12. Spots or plunder
13. Alphabet string
14. “Son of” in Hebrew
15. ___ on of hands
16. Narrow inlet
17. Symbol of hope
18. Catholic actor Connery
19. Sicilian volcano
20. Scarf
21. Large mop
22. Daughter of Cronus
23. Pull down
25. Jurisdiction of a bishop
26. Person in the first stage of the process of Christian initiation
27. Armed ser. mail service
28. Nickname for Aquinas
29. Old Testament prophet
30. Kitchen top
31. Reddish dye
32. Catholic creator of Sherlock Holmes
33. Pyramid scheme, e.g.
34. Israeli round dance
35. Black
36. “How will it end for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet 4:17)
37. Soprano Gluck
38. Spit out
39. Ques. response

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**Life in lockdown**

Comonwael is an excellent Catholic magazine published monthly in New York City by Catholic laity. Its May issue was entitled “Life in Lockdown” and contained four letters, one from a Jewish woman and three from Catholics around the world describing their experiences of being quarantined in one form or another because of the coronavirus epidemic. Their experiences were sad, beautiful and spiritual.

The first letter was from a Jewish woman named Viva Hammer who is presently living in Sydney, Australia in one household with her parents and her adult daughter. She had lived in Washington, D.C. with a son and a daughter, but the son left to study at John Hopkins University in Baltimore and the daughter to live with her grandparents in Sidney.

Hammer wrote that “aloneness was like a migraine, a sickness that never left. No matter how hard I worked, how much I prayed, or how many deeds of kindness I did, the ache never lessened.”

So she joined her parents and daughter in Sidney just before the virus struck. The son called from John Hopkins to tell them they had to quarantine themselves to save their lives. They did. Hammer’s mother also called her friends who were alone to assure them that she would get help. Viva writes, “Our synagogue, notorious for its quarrels and lawsuits, has sprung such a large cadre of volunteers that there are more offering to help than there are those who know that they can get help. And through these weeks that are years, nothing is going on in Sidney. The disease lives among us, silent and invisible.”

“Do we have enough to do for a year-and-a-half like this?” I ask my mother.

“The second temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred, but this time we can be redeemed only by our own deeds of baseless love. Coronavirus love. Each of us alone, together,” she wrote.

The second letter is from B.D. McClay, a New York City resident and a contributor to Commonweal. She begins her letter with a description of what is probably the city’s biggest horror for COVID-19 infection, Rikers Island Jail. This is NYC’s biggest jail facility with more than 5,000 inmates, three-quarters of whom are pretrial detainees. The jail is described as filthy, lacking enough soap and crew to keep it clean. McClay writes, “I have spent my time in quarantine in a local Sainsbury’s grocery store with a clean and safe place to shelter.”

When you have worked for a while in prisons, you empathize with the plea of the virus, all volunteers were banned from our state prisons soon after the first reported cases.

If I were still able to preach to those ladies in prison, I would suggest that in their prayers they ask St. Roch to intercede for their protection. God might just owe him that favor. McClay notes that in her parish church there was a painting of St. Roch, a 14th century son of a wealthy Italian family who ministered to plague victims. He caught the plague himself but recovered. Later, traveling to Lombardy, he was arrested as a spy and thrown into prison. He died there five years later. Besides praying to St. Roch, McClay adds this beautiful thought: “We may not be heroes, but we can take care of each other. In the careful maintenance of gaps between one person and the next what stretches across is not just a virus; it’s love ... a perfect love that casts out fear with a distance that embraces rather than refuses responsibility.”

The third letter was from Nicole-Ann Lobo, an American student studying abroad at Cambridge University in England. She writes, “I have spent my time in quarantine like many ... reading, writing, watching movies. I leave my house once a day with the government’s permission for exercise. There are weekly trips to the local Sainsbury’s grocery store with hundreds-meter queues outside, people masked and separated six feet from one another. The pubs are boarded up and the town square is silent. I’ve noticed humanity at its best, in the form of small acts of kindness. Notes slipped under my door from faceless neighbors, offering groceries and help, no questions asked.”

She could have come home but stayed for two reasons: “I wouldn’t risk picking up the virus on the 10-hour journey and potentially transmitting it to others. And if I stayed and got sick, I’d still have free health care.”

Like the U.S., the U.K. is trying to mitigate the economic impact citizens are feeling. Lobo says “the government plans to pay 80% of salaries for workers kept on by their employers, up to a maximum of 2,500 pounds (about $3,100) but many self-employed workers are likely to slip through the cracks. The Uber driver who brought me (and my books) from the library to my home told me, ‘The government keeps telling me to work from home, but what am I bloody supposed to do? Drive in circles around my living room?’”

Also, as in the U.S., the pandemic has highlighted contradictions in British government policy. The Tory government has tended to discriminate against immigrants in the U.K.’s move to exit the European Union. However, Lobo points out that “a third of all doctors in the NHS are immigrants, as were the first eight U.K. doctors to die from the disease.” She ends by saying, “I pray that the crisis might result in better, more compassionate government policies. And on a very human level, I pray we remember that all are deserving of our empathy.”

The fourth letter is from a priests’ retirement home in New York State. The writer is Father Robert P. Imbelli, a priest in the Archdiocese of New York and Associate Professor Emeritus at Boston College. He writes: “It was March 10 and the sign read ‘No Visitors Until Further Notice.’ Of the approximately 30 residents, perhaps only six or seven get out with any frequency. But all follow the news closely and were aware of the increasing threat from the insidious virus that had made its way from China to Europe and was now reaching New York. A second sign was the decision to reduce the density at the evening meal. We changed from one sitting to two so that, instead of four men at a table, there would be only two. A third sign appeared on March 21, and this more foreboding. The sign posted on the chapel door declared ‘Mass Suspended.’ Of course, some continue to celebrate Mass in their rooms, but others have joined the dolorous eucharistic fast suffered by the immense majority of God’s people.”

Father Imbelli wrote well in many Catholic publications for many years. He was often upbeat and humorous. His conclusion is in a culture “in which death denial is so prevalent, any reminder of death’s inevitability can be salutary. It can help one appreciate the present moment, its grace and possibilities. It can focus attention on what is truly important.”

He ends his letter as, I think, we should too, with St. Paul’s words to the Romans 14:7-9: “None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.”

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.
Our deep failure in charity

St. Eugene de Mazenod, the founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the religious congregation to which I belong, left us with these last words as he lay dying: “Among yourselves, charity, charity, charity.” I don’t always live that, though I wish I could, especially today. We are in a bitter time. Everywhere there is anger, condemnation of others, and bitter disagreement; so much so that today we are simply unable to have a reasonable discussion on any sensitive political, moral, or doctrinal issue. We demonize each other to the point where any attempt to actually reason with each other (let alone to reach agreement or compromise) mostly just deepens the hostility. If you doubt this, simply watch the newscasts any evening, read any newspaper, or follow the discussion on most moral and religious questions.

The first thing that is evident is the naked hatred inside our energy and how we tend to justify it on moral and religious grounds. This is our protest: we’re fighting for truth, decency, justice, God, family, church, right dogma, right practice, for Christ himself, so our anger and hatred are justified. Anger is justified, but hatred is an infallible sign that we are acting in a manner contrary to truth, decency, justice, God, family, church, right dogma, right practice and Christ. It would be hard to argue that this kind of energy issues forth from God’s spirit and does not source itself elsewhere.

Looking at Jesus we see that all his energies were directed towards unity. Jesus never preached hatred, as is clear from the Sermon on the Mount, as is illustrated in his great priestly prayer for unity in St. John’s Gospel, and as is evident in his frequent warnings to us to be patient with each other, to not judge each other and to forgive each other.

But one might object: what about Jesus’ own (seemingly) bitter judgments? What about him speaking harshly of others? What about him losing his temper and using whips to drive the money-changers out of the temple? Indeed, what about his statement: I have come to bring fire to this earth?

These statements are perennially misinterpreted and used falsely to rationalize our lack of genuine Christian love. When Jesus says that he has come to bring fire to this earth and wishes it were already blazing, the fire he is referring to is not the fire of division but the fire of love. Jesus made a vow of love, not of alienation. His message provoked hateful opposition, but he did not self-define as a cultural or ecclesial warrior. He preached and incarnated only love, and that sometimes sparked its antithesis. (It still does.) He sometimes triggered hatred in people, but he never hated in return. Instead, he wept in empathy, understanding that sometimes the message of love and inclusivity triggers hatred inside of those who for whatever reason at that time cannot fully bear the word love. As well, the incident of him driving the money-changers out of the temple, forever falsely cited to justify our anger and judgment of others, has a very different emphasis and meaning. His action as he cleansed the temple of the people who were (legitimately) exchanging Jewish currency for foreign money in order to let foreigners buy what they needed to offer sacrifice, has to do with him clearing away an obstacle in the way of universal access to God, not with anger at some particular people.

We frequently ignore the Gospel. Factionalism, tribalism, racism, economic self-interest, historical difference, historical privilege and fear perennially cause bitter polarization and trigger a hatred that eats away at the very fabric of community; and that hatred perennially justifies itself by appealing to some high moral or religious ground. But the Gospel never allows for that. It never lets us bracket charity, and it refuses us permission to justify our bitterness on moral and religious grounds. It calls us to a love, an empathy and a forgiveness that reach across every divide so as to wish good and do good precisely to those who hate us. And it categorically forbids rationalizing hatred in its name or in the name of truth, justice, or right dogma.

The late Michael J. Buckley, looking at the bitter polarization in our churches, suggests that nothing justifies our current bitterness: “The sad fact stands, however, that it is frequently no great trick to get religious men and women to turn on one another in some terrible form of condemnation. Wars, even personal wars, are terrible realities, and the most horrible of these are often self-righteously religious. For deceived or split off under the guise of good, under the rubrics of orthodoxy or liberality, of community or of personal freedom, even of holiness itself, factions of men and women can slowly disintegrate into pettiness or cynicism or hostility or bitterness. In this way the Christian church becomes divided.”

We need to be careful inside our cultural and religious wars. There is never an excuse for lack of fundamental charity.

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.

How faith grows in quarantine

Families have never been closer. Families have never been farther apart.

Like many of you, I’ve been sheltering in place with my spouse and kids for three months. We’ve eaten every meal together, spent every day together, argued and laughed and fumed and forgiven together.

But we can’t visit with friends and relatives like we used to do. We don’t get to catch up with coworkers over lunch or hang out with classmates after school. We’re stuck with the seven of us which, I remind myself every day, could be a dream for the lonely.

Many families are separated under difficult or devastating circumstances: health care workers who have to quarantine from their spouse or children to keep them safe, older adults in nursing homes isolated without visitors and relatives with chronic conditions that make them too vulnerable for a social distancing backyard visit.

What place does faith have in family life right now?

I’ll be the first to admit we’re struggling. Online Mass is no substitute for the real thing – and our younger kids have as much trouble sitting still on the couch as in the pew. Faith formation classes were canceled. Vacation Bible school camps are over before they started.

I wish I had quick and easy answers for you. Ten ways to pray with your family during quarantine or six Scripture passages to inspire your Sundays at home together.

But all I have is solidarity for the struggle.

Now won’t last forever. I know this much is true. Someday our kids will be back in church, serving at the altar, running to hug their Sunday school teachers and squirming in the pews.

But what I wouldn’t give to wrangle a toddler in the gathering space or race to faith formation classes during rush hour or argue with kids about why we have to go to church.

Everyday hard never looked better than in the rearview mirror.

Yet God is here, too. Unlimited by time and space and social distancing. If anything, I’ve learned that grace pours out in strange and stronger ways during times of grief and loss.

While there’s no substitute for the sacraments and nothing can replace the support of in-person community, our faith lives do not have to dwindle during quarantine.

The work of faith formation is the work of the Holy Spirit. It does not depend on our programs, activities, curricula or camps. To dive deep into discipleship and learn what the Lord is asking from our lives, we must trust that God is already at work.

If we are the ones called to lead as parents, grandparents, volunteers, catechists or parish staff this does not mean we are the ones to do it all. Often it means quite the opposite: We let go of our plans and let the Spirit surprise us.

Families are struggling and suffering right now. We’re stuck together, and we’re flung apart. Neither is natural, and we’re aching for the end.

But in this hard moment, the tension between what was and what will be, God is here, too. Filling our hearts with grace and our lives with hope.

Before Jesus died, he left us with a promise: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always” (Jn 14:16).

The Spirit will remain with us (Jn 14:17), teach us (Jn 14:26) and guide us to truth (Jn 16:13).

No matter what happens where we go, what we lose or whom we miss the Holy Spirit abides with us. Together or apart, we are one in the Spirit as the family of God.
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Tramonte said with a laugh.

The man allowed Tramonte to cut his hair and figures he must have done a good job since the man became a regular customer.

Tramonte stayed at the Broadmoor location working alongside his dad for 15 years, before closing that shop and moving to the location off of Florida Boulevard, where he would stay for 40 years. In that time, he has seen thousands of customers go through his shop, including some celebrities, such as LSU baseball coach Paul Mainieri and even a one-off with former Louisiana Gov. Jimmy Davis.

He also established himself as sort of a de facto barber for priests and men religious. He estimates that through the years he cut the hair of at least 20 priests, not including several Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

Also included in that clergy number is Bishop Michael G. Duca, who discussed the credit Heart.

During his final days, Tramonte was “I reckon being Italian he came to me,” Tramonte joked.

During his final days, Tramonte was flooded with half a century of memories. He recalled with his ever-present smile those Saturday mornings when people would just drop in and talk sports.

Charlie Tramonte’s barber shop was filled with memorabilia, perhaps not surprising much of it surrounding LSU. But the shop also featured a large collection of hats, including many sporting hockey team logos, a sport his grandson loves. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

He would arrive at the shop at 6:30 a.m. on Saturdays after attending Mass. On some days up to five people were at his door waiting.

“It was fun on Saturday mornings,” he said. “We were a tight-knit group.

“We talked a lot about sports but no politics or religion. And there was not a lot of cussing.

“We fired a lot of coaches and hired a lot of coaches in that barber shop,” he added. "We had a lot of Saturday morning quarterbacks. Everybody knew what was best.”

He said many people believe the LSU information pipeline ran thought the heart of the shop but quickly added they were mistaken.

“You would be surprised how many people called me and asked me what’s going on with this coach, or the basketball team,” he said. "I would get lot of information but a lot of it was fake. If you want to start a rumor a good place to start one is right here."

Maher remembers the Saturday gatherings as an older crowd but that did not diminish his enthusiasm.

“Once my dad start bringing me around, I did not stop coming,” he said. “They had to chase me around the shop.”

Even through personal tragedies, Tramonte recalls the compassion of his customers. Tramonte’s wife died of pancreatic cancer four years ago and his daughter died at the age of 48 after suffering a heart attack nine months ago.

“This place saved me,” he said. “If not for the barber shop, I don’t think I could have made it. The customers were very good to me.”

Tramonte marvels at how the business has changed from his first customer on Dec. 7, 1965, to his last on June 26. Walk-ins were once a bedrock of his business but about seven years ago he changed to appointment only.

And people are much busier in their own lives.

“I think that is what they miss in a barber shop now,” he said. “You used to have a shop full of people with their young boys, with their daddy. People don’t have time for that now. They want to get in and out. Everybody is in a hurry. I think it takes away a lot.”

Even as the sun began to set on his long career, Tramonte could still hear the laughter, emanating from the walls. He said there were “a lot of big fish caught in here,” adding that the fish would get bigger with each retelling of the same story.

But it’s the customers he will miss most. After all, he admitted he “knew more about them than their wives do sometimes. They tell me stuff they won’t tell other people.”

“It’s like a confessional,” he added. “What you hear in a barber shop stays in the shop. People don’t have time to talk. It’s a good place to start a rumor if you know me.”

For many, the closing of Tramonte’s shop will be a void in their own lives, tempered by their love for the man they knew as family.

For Tramonte, they were all family.

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Supreme Court strikes down La. abortion law

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a 5-4 decision June 29, the Supreme Court ruled that a Louisiana law requiring that doctors who perform abortions have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals could not stand.

The opinion in June Medical Services v. Russo, written by Justice Stephen Breyer, said the case was “similar to, nearly identical with” a law in Texas that the court four years ago ruled to be a burden to women seeking abortion. Breyer was joined in the opinion by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

Breyer said the Louisiana law was unconstitutional because it posed a “substantial obstacle” for women seeking abortions while providing “no significant health-related benefits.”

“It’s very disappointing,” said Danielle Van Haute, Respect Life Coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “Far from being an ‘unnecessary health regulation,’ the proposed law would result in abortion providers being held to a higher standard of competency and patient care than they currently are.”

The Texas case, Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt, struck down the law with a different bench without Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. The court said the requirements imposed on abortion providers to have hospital admitting privileges put “a substantial burden” on women who were seeking abortions and the law wasn’t necessary to protect women’s health.

In the Louisiana case, Chief Justice John Roberts filed an opinion concurring in the judgment of the four justices voting to strike down this law even though four years ago he joined the dissenting opinion in the Texas decision. Last year, he sided with the justices who agreed to stop the Louisiana law from going into effect while its challengers pursued their appeal.

“While today’s decision is not what we wanted, we will never stop working to put the women of Louisiana above the interests of the abortion business.”

In his dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas said the court’s decision perpetuates its precedent of similar cases “required us, absent special circumstances, to treat like cases alike.”

Pro-life activists gather outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington on June 29. (CNS photo/Washington Post, Andrew Harnik)

Justice Elena Kagan. (CNS photo/Reuters, Paul Morigi)

Justice Stephen Breyer, said the court’s decision “perpetuates its 111-founted abortion jurisprudence by enjoining a perfectly legitimate state law and doing so without justiﬁcation.”

“Louisiana is right to prioritize the health and safety of women over abortion industry profits. All states, not only Louisiana, have a strong interest in regulating a procedure which is lethal to children and immensely damaging to women.”

In a statement after the oral arguments in March, Kat Talalas, with the USCCB’s Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, said: “Louisiana is right to prioritize women over abortion industry prof- its. All states, not only Louisiana, have a strong interest in regulating a procedure which is lethal to children and immensely damaging to women.”

And after the ruling, O. Cartner Sneed, law professor at the University of Notre Dame and director of the university’s Center for Ethics and Culture, said the court “has once again overstepped its constitutionally de- fined role and robbed the people of this country the authority to govern themselves even at the margins on this vital and deeply divisive matter.”

“The court has undermined the rule of law, done further violence to the Constitution, and has thus badly damaged its own legitimacy,” he said, adding: “This is a sad day for the court and the nation.”