The adoration chapel at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs has been “silenced” at times during its 24 years of existence, including the flood of 2016 when it took on more than five feet of water and now with the coronavirus pandemic.

But adorers and volunteers have a sense of ownership, assuring the chapel will remain an integral part of a quiet, yet vibrant prayer life at ICC.

“Everyone feels it is their chapel,” said Allison Renfrow, who is chapel co-coordinator along with Colleen Montgomery and Melinda Mayeaux. “I never changed out candles or added holy water to the fonts.”

She pointed out one person supplies the chapel with blessed rosaries for adorers, some will take out the trash when it is full instead of waiting for the cleaning service to remove it and that artwork, books and even a bookcase, “just appear around the chapel.”

Most recently, what began as an investigation into a crack in the ceiling led to volunteers remodeling the entire chapel.

Jody Ramagos said while repairing the home of a parishioner he asked to look at a crack in the chapel ceiling.

“When I turned on the light and pulled back the curtains it (the ceiling) looked like Frankenstein,” said Ramagos.

He and fellow volunteer Diana Banta re-plastered and re-reainted the entire ceiling. Then they went to repaint the front porch ceiling, which then led to the replacement of the light fixture, cleaning and painting the fascia boards around the building, which the led to replacing some of the boards that had rotted. Ramagos and Banta ended up painting the entire chapel.

“Fixing something that belongs to God, that’s the most satisfactory part,” said Banta. “Even though it belongs to the community, it’s all God’s.”

Mike Richard, who often receives “come and look at this” requests from parishioners concerning the church and their homes, replaced the door and installed a new keypad and replaced the chapel’s facia boards.

“God has given me the talent to fix things and if I can use that talent to help the church, that’s what I want to do,” said Richard, a member of the Knights of Columbus and Men’s Club.

He points out to the Men’s Club things that need to be done around the chapel.
Finding hope

People who are in lock-down mode, whether emotionally, spiritually or at home, because of the COVID-19 virus can find hope by celebrating a feast which reminds them of the time St. Peter broke out of prison with some heavenly help.

The feast of St. Peter in Chains was a feast day commemorated on Aug. 1 to recall St. Peter’s miraculous release from captivity from the jail in Jerusalem. The account is recorded in Acts 12:6-7: “On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison. Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying, ‘Get up quickly.’ The chains fell from his wrists.”

According to tradition, the chains that had bound St. Peter were given to Pope Leo by Empress Eudoxia, wife of Emperor Valentinian III, who had received them from her mother, who in turn had received them as a gift from a bishop in Jerusalem.

It is said when the pope held the chains next to the chains from St. Peter’s first imprisonment in the Mamertine prison in Rome, the two chains miraculously fused together. San Pietro in Vincoli (St. Peter in Chains), a minor basilica in Rome, was dedicated in 442 to house the two chains that bound St. Peter. They remain fused together and are kept in a reliquary under the main altar in the basilica. Michelangelo’s statue of Moses is also in the church.

The feast day is no longer on the current liturgical calendar but one many Catholics still recognize. The feast was also called “Lambmas Day” or “Loaf Mass Day” because the day was offered as thanksgiving for the wheat harvest, used for the bread that becomes the Eucharist.

Since bread should always be on the table when you have a feast, pull up a chair and pass the butter! Catholic Cuisine offers a recipe to unlock the fun on this feast day. Use any bread or pretzel recipe, or if in a hurry, pre-made refrigerated dough.

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 cups warm water
- 1 package yeast
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 4 cups flour
- 1 egg (optional)

Directions:
Dissolve the yeast in warm water. Add the sugar and salt. Mix in the flour and knead until the dough is smooth. Roll out dough and form into desired shape – in this case into chain links. Connect the links to form a chain. Brush the dough with a beaten egg for a golden finish if desired. Bake in a preheated oven at 425°F for 15 minutes.

By Dina Dow

The Scripture readings for the eighth and ninth Sundays in Ordinary Time enlighten the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ. We read two incredible miracles:

The feeding of the 5,000 and the walking on water, which give us cause to ponder the saving power of God and eternal life.

The life of God

The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, invites the Israelites to participate in his life; his grace. “Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. Grace is a participation in the life of God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Para. 1996-1999). Grace cannot be bought, rather it is freely given by God. This open invitation in the life of God moves us to come, receive, delight and listen. Listen to his word so as to have life ... life in God.

The shepherd feeds his flock

To feed is to “furnish something essential to the development, sustenance, maintain and operation of” (Merriam–Webster Dictionary). To feed fulfills an important need. The one who feeds another needs to know what is best for the one being fed. And the one being fed is to trust in the one feeding him or her so that what is given is good for life. Psalm 145 proclaims, “The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.” What are our needs? What does the Lord feed us which satisfies ALL our needs? As a shepherd who feeds his flock, so too, does the Lord feed his people. God feeds our needs (physical, spiritual and emotional) with the same source ... himself.

Nourishment

The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, written in all four Gospels, anticipates what is to come. Jesus, his heart moved with pity, spent the day curing the sick. As evening drew near, the disciples encouraged the crowd’s dismissal for them to find food. “Jesus said to them, ‘There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves’” (Mt 14:16). The disciples have only five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus took what they had, blessed, broke and gave them to the disciples. All 5,000 and more ate were satisfied. There were even leftovers “fragments filling 12 wicker baskets.”

Eucharist

“The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist” (Catechism Para. 1335). The next time we see Jesus taking bread, blessing bread, breaking bread and handing it to the disciples is the Last Supper. And again, during the meal with the two disciples who encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus. “And they recognized him in the breaking of the bread” (Lk 24:13-25).

“What material food produces in our bodily life; holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit, preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at baptism” (Catechism Para. 1392).

St. John Paul II expressed in a homily, “This bread, which we need, is first and foremost Christ, who gives himself to us in the sacramental signs of the Eucharist, and makes us heirs, at every Mass, the words of the Last Supper: ‘Take and eat, all of you: this is my body offered in sacrifice for you.’ In the sacrament of the eucharistic bread the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live and toward whom our journey leads us.”

The bread that we need is, moreover, the word of God, because “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). “The word of God is full of truth; it is upright; it is stable and remains forever. We must listen to the word; assume it as the criterion of our way of thinking and acting; get to know it, by means of assiduous reading and personal meditation; but especially, we must day after day, in all our behavior, make it ours, put it into practice.”

DID YOU KNOW

The chains that shackled St. Peter during two of his imprisonments, once in Jerusalem and once in Rome, are housed in the San Pietro in Vincoli Basilica in Rome. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

By Dina Dow

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The chains that shackled St. Peter during two of his imprisonments, once in Jerusalem and once in Rome, are housed in the San Pietro in Vincoli Basilica in Rome. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Angola chaplain finds ‘face of Christ’ in inmates

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The response was simple and direct. More than two decades ago, a co-worker of Jay Jackson approached Jackson about the idea of volunteering at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. The co-worker, Bill Gipson, did not have to wait long for an answer.

“I told him I was not interested,” Jackson, who at the time was involved in several other ministries at St. George Church in Baton Rouge, said. “It took me by surprise because it was the farthest thing from my mind.”

But Gipson persisted, and Jackson started thinking “maybe I’m being asked to be stretched a little bit.”

So he decided to accompany Gipson on three visits to Angola before making a final decision. It only took one.

And now, 21 years later, Jackson has retired after spending the past four-and-one-half years as the prison’s full-time chaplain.

“First of all, (the initial visit) knocked down any preconceived notions I might have had (about Angola),” he said. “It wasn’t like anything I expected.”

On a day that would forever change his life Jackson visited every area of the prison, with each cell block spinning its own tales.

“What touched me the most was the appreciation from inmates that someone (from the outside) was showing interest in them,” he said. “They were very appreciative.

“It was a plant that needs water and no one else is bringing water to the plant.”

Jackson returned home and told his wife he believed serving at Angola was his calling, and “it’s been that way ever since,” providing spiritual irrigation for the nearly 500 Catholic inmates at the prison, along with many others who were either non-denominational or “unchurched.”

What started out as monthly visits quickly doubled and tripled.

He first served alongside chaplains Father Joel Labauve, followed by Father “Tippy” Hurst and then worked together as a team with Father Bernie Papania, who was on loan to the Diocese of Baton Rouge from the Diocese of Biloxi, Mississippi. When Father Papania was called back to Biloxi, he called Jackson and asked, “Are you ready to come up full time?”

At the time, Jackson said he was planning on retiring from his job where he had spent the past 39 years in sales.

“It’s amazing how God works things out,” he said.

“Jay Jackson is a consummate man of faith, love and service,” said Bishop Emeritus Muench, who appointed Jackson full-time chaplain on an “inter-temporal basis,” a tag he carried until his June 30 retirement. “His tenure as chaplain at Angola has been marked by his infectious smile, pleasant disposition, brilliant intellect, endearing heart, impeccable professionalism, amazing talent and ultimate motivation to serve the entire Angola community.

“The Diocese of Baton Rouge owes Jay a great deal for his indispensible dedication and leadership in this multi-faceted assignment,” the bishop added. “I know both the residents (as I have always called them), the administrators and staff of this place have immeasurably benefitted from his generous sharing his gifts for the sake of Christ, the church and society. Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt. 25:23).

Rubbing elbows and showing compassion on a daily basis with some of society’s most hardened criminals can be one of the most taxing ministries the church offers. For Jackson, however, the ministry has been a gift.

“One of the things that really struck me the most was the application of what I had been teaching,” said Jackson, who had been volunteering as a catechist at St. George. “So often you talk about loving your neighbor and love others as the way Jesus loved them. But when you are confronted with that and you are talking to the people who victimized families and hurt people and some might be a serial killer, you are called to love that person.”

Jackson said ministering to inmates “was a conversion” and made him realize he was being called to love and reach out to those same people others might ignore.

“I realized I was seeing the face of Christ when I was face to face with those men,” he said. “It gave me a much deeper appreciation for my Catholic faith.

“I realized this is what it means, this is what I’ve been teaching, this is what I’ve been taught: looking at the face of people who are lost, hurt, fragile.”

Jackson has learned most of the men have hardened shells but internally are weak and vulnerable. He said they are all human beings with feelings.

“They have remorse for what they have done,” he said. “They can’t stand the person that they were themselves. They are looking for someone to pull them out of that water.”

He added that many inmates, some of whom have even shed tears in his office for myriad of reasons, have a genuine desire to be a better person but because of their own dysfunctional backgrounds, they don’t know how to change their lives.

“My feeling is society is only as strong as its weakest link,” Jackson said. “And if we keep suppressing people as a society will not get stronger and remain as weak as its weakest link.

“With the church’s involvement we can make society better. I feel like that is the richness of our faith.”

Linda Fjeldsjo, coordinator of Joseph Homes and Prison Ministry for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said she first met Jackson when he was a volunteer at Angola. She said years later Jackson’s enthusiasm and commitment to the ministry remains strong.

“His dedication to the inmate population is known not only with the inmate population but is also recognized by the prison administration,” she said. “He receives everyone, of all faiths, with the dignity and respect that our church teaches. Whether he is providing spiritual support to those confined in a cell or conducting aCommunion service at one of the many chapels at Angola, Jay provides the inmates an opportunity to learn more about their faith.”

Although only 500 of the 5,700 inmates at Angola are Catholic, Jackson said the ministry is the most active at the prison. Inmates have the opportunity to attend Mass on a weekly basis or at the minimum receive Communion once a week in their cells.

Jackson had instituted a Catholic Trivia Bowl in the chapel that included facts about the church that were presented in the chapel, with coffee and donuts offered. But just as it was gaining in popularity, the coronavirus pandemic shut it down.

Jackson said he wrote an individual letter to all of the Catholic inmates notifying them of his leaving because he has not had the opportunity to visit with them in several months. In the letter, he said he has met “some of the most incredible people” and thanked the inmates for helping him better understand who he is and showing him what God’s love truly means.

He thanked the inmates for showing him Christ and encouraged them to recognize the gifts they have in themselves.

Jackson did not say goodbye, however, because even in retirement he will continue to visit the prison as a volunteer.

“Every single day, without exception, I felt like I got closer to Christ because I saw the face of Christ through those men and I don’t want that to stop,” he said, emotion cracking in his voice.

“I’m going back up there not to serve but to be fed. And I want that to continue. I don’t want to starve to death.”
Bishop Duca, governor discuss pandemic

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca and Gov. John Bel Edwards discussed balancing fear with faith during the nationally syndicated radio program “Catholic Connection” on July 22 on Catholic Community Radio.

Host Teresa Tomeo said in regard to the coronavirus pandemic there is a sense of fear across the country that even “good Catholics” can succumb to. Noting that Edwards recently called for three days of lunch fasting and prayer, she asked the bishop and the governor how that can be an answer to the fear gripping the nation.

Edwards said he was pleased that many people of all denominations chose to participate in the prayer initiative. He said he believed that calling for the collective effort was “the right thing to do.”

“That (fasting and prayer) is a spiritual discipline we need. Sort of like dieting and exercise in a spiritual sense,” said the governor.

When Tomeo asked, “How are things going in the state?” the governor acknowledged Louisiana is having a “tough time.” He said, at the time of the broadcast, Louisiana was second, only behind New York state, in the number of per capita cases of people who are testing positive for the virus.

He further added that more than 3,200 people had died from the virus and that the vast majority of the state’s 64 civil parishes have experienced dramatic spikes in COVID-19 cases.

While the state made some progress in flattening the curve after the initial large spike following Mardi Gras, after the Memorial Day weekend there was another big spike in cases that the state still struggles to bring under control. He reiterated his call that if people “do not want to go backwards” and shut down the economy and get back to more of a sense of normalcy, they must wear masks, follow social distancing requirements and follow the other safety protocols.

Tomeo asked Bishop Duca about how people can balance fear with faith.

The bishop noted that fear is a good thing when people use it to have a healthy respect of current circumstances, be cautious and be aware of their surroundings and take actions to address the situation.

He noted fear becomes out of balance when it causes people to be paralyzed with a sense of panic. He emphasized that fear is taking things seriously, but also in moderation.

He said in addition to faith God has given us “the gift of knowledge and intellect” to face challenges, such as the virus. “Fear, guided in a good way, allows us to address the issue in a way that brings hope,” Bishop Duca said.

Edwards said the Catholic Church in Louisiana has done “extremely well” in addressing the challenges of the virus while meeting the spiritual needs of their communities. He especially thanked Bishop Duca for the efforts the Diocese of Baton Rouge has given in this matter.

“It’s been done faithfully and striking a sense of balance that I wish the rest of the state would strike,” Governor Edwards said.

He noted that Louisiana’s faith community comes together in any time of trials, such as hurricanes, floods and now the virus.

Bishop Duca said in times of trials and challenges, things often become politicized in “all kinds of different ways.” He said what needs to happen is that people “go back to the Gospel.”

“In the Gospel Jesus tells us to love one another,” said the bishop.

That means people should protect and do what’s best for “our brothers and sisters in Christ,” according to Bishop Duca.

He urged people to look at virus prevention measures not from a personal freedom aspect but a Gospel aspect.

He said he loves the communal aspect of people coming together in prayer, such as they did for the fasting and prayer for the end of the virus.

“Pray for a real miracle – God does that all the time,” Bishop Duca said.

Not all in same boat:
Some communities ‘sink more easily,’ archbishop says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted humanity’s vulnerability and interdependence, as well as serious social and economic inequalities, the Pontifical Academy for Life said in a new document.

The eight-page reflection, “Humana Communitas’ in the Age of Pandemic,” details a number of key and “untimely meditations on life’s rebirth” in the face of a global health, environmental and economic crisis. They are “untimely” or “old-fashioned,” Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, academy president, said in a written statement because such reflections do not seem to be a popular or “fashionable” part of the current debate.

“At a time when life seems suspended and we are struck by the death of loved ones and the loss of reference points for our society, we cannot limit ourselves to discussing the price of masks or the reopening date of schools,” he said.

“We will have to take the opportunity and find the courage to discuss better conditions to transform the market and education instead,” he added.

There has to be a recognition of the universal fragility of the human condition, a profound rethinking of humanity’s purpose in the world and a concerted ef-
Vatican: Laity have role, but most parishes must be led by priests

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican’s Congregation for Clergy issued a new instruction on pastoral care that specifies the role of lay men and women in the church’s mission of evangelization and offers guidance in parish reforms and restructuring.

The 22-page document, titled “The pastoral conversion of the parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the church,” was released by the Vatican July 20.

While it does not introduce new legislation on pastoral care, the Vatican press office said it was developed by the congregation as a guide related to “the various projects of reform of parish communities and diocesan restructuring, already underway or in the planning process.”

It also clarifies the role of the deacons, consecrated men and women, as well as the laity, in dioceses where there is a shortage or lack of priests.

Those entrusted with participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of the community, the document states, “will be directed by a priest with legitimate faculties, who will act as a moderator of pastoral care,” with the powers and functions of a parish priest, albeit without an office with its duties and rights.”

The document also instructs bishops to not designate deacons, consecrated and lay men and women who are given responsibilities in a priestless parish as “pastor, co-pastor, chaplain, moderator, parish manager,” which are typically reserved for priests “as they have a direct correlation to the ministerial profile of priests.”

Instead, those with responsibilities should be designated as “deacon cooperator, coordinator, pastoral cooperator or pastoral associate or assistant,” it said.

People, the document states, are called “to make a generous commitment to the service of the mission of evangelization,” first and foremost, through the “general witness of their daily lives.”

The Vatican press office said, “The text, fundamentally, recalls that ‘in the church there is room for all and everyone can find their place’ in the one family of God, respecting each person’s vocation.”

Msgr. Andrea Ripa, undersecretary of the Congregation for Clergy, said their office created the instruction as a way to help support and guide bishops and dioceses in parish reforms and diocesan restructuring.

The instruction was not a “one size fits all” approach, he wrote, but a concise overview of current support and guide bishops and dioceses in parish reforms and diocesan restructuring.

See LAITY PAGE 14

Special ed director cites teachers as program’s strength

Kristy Monsour, the new program administrator of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Special Education REACH program and Resource Lab Services, has spent the summer visiting schools and learning about their unique gifts.

She’s also been forming relationships with the administration and staff of the schools in order to help children with special needs obtain a quality education.

Monsour graduated from St. Scholastica Academy in Covington and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education and Master of Education degree from Louisiana State University. Additionally, she participated in dyslexia therapist training, and is certified as an Academic Language Practitioner.

With 18 years of experience in education, Monsour most recently served at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge as Lower School assistant principal and after school resource lab coordinator, which has allowed her to form relationships with many school administrators.

After visiting many of the multiple special education sites, she identified one of the strengths of the schools to be the teachers.

“We have wonderful teachers ... their knowledge is phenomenal and they love the children,” said Monsour.

She said the parents are also a source of strength because they “are willing to provide in any way they can.”

With challenges of the upcoming school year presented by the coronavirus pandemic, Monsour has been working with the principals and staff to make sure they are following safe practices and to get a better idea about their plans to make the transition easier for students.

She acknowledged that each school is unique and “does something a little different” to address such challenges.

“We (the Special Education Program) like to follow what our host sites does in order to make a seamless transition from home to school,” said Monsour.

She would like to expand the strong foundation of the Special Education Program “across the river” so that more schools outside of the Baton Rouge area can serve as special education sites.

Additionally, she would like to raise awareness concerning dyslexia.

“If children have early intervention they can succeed and do very well because they have the intelligence as well as the motivation to learn,” said Monsour.

She enjoys spending time with her children Johnny, 14, a student at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, and Matthew, 12, and Hayes, 7, both students at OLOM School.

As a Catholic school alumna and mother with children in Catholic schools, Monsour believes in the value of Catholic education in preparing children to succeed, spiritually as well as academically.

“I love beginning and ending the day in prayer, in taking what you have at the moment and knowing God will give you the rest,” she said. “I believe children are God’s hand on earth and I see that in every child I am called to serve.”
Do converts have to be “remarried”?/ Bowing at name of Jesus

Q A friend and his wife, along with their daughter, were recently confirmed into the Catholic Church after being Methodists their entire life, including getting married within the Methodist Church. They were told by some parish officials (laymen) that their marriage is not recognized by the Catholic Church and that they must be “remarried” within the Catholic Church.

That does not sound right to me, but I can’t find any specific ruling or teaching on this. (The same lay leaders also claimed that their Methodist baptism was not acceptable by the Catholic Church, but I have found letters from bishops stating specifically that baptisms in the United Methodist Church are recognized by the Catholic Church.) (Iloilo City, Philippines)

A Your instincts are right on target. A marriage between two Protestants, in a Protestant ceremony, is normally recognized by the Catholic Church as a valid marriage, and many Catholic dioceses state this explicitly in their written guidelines. The Diocese of Venice in Florida, for example, says this on its website:

“The Catholic Church recognizes and upholds the validity of marriages of a non-Catholic man and a non-Catholic woman who marry with no impediments such as the bond of a previous marriage ... and who enter marriage through a form accepted by their church or ecclesial community and the civil government.”

So your friend and his wife would certainly not have to be “remarried” upon their entrance into the Catholic Church. (You are correct, too, about baptism. The vast majority of Protestant baptisms, including those done in the Methodist religion, are recognized as valid by the Catholic Church, and that sacrament does not have to be repeated when a Protestant chooses to become a Catholic.)

Q I don’t understand why, over the last couple of years, I don’t see folks bowing at the name of Jesus. It doesn’t seem to matter whether they are parishioners, priests or monks. Is there some new rule on this, or am I just too old-school Catholic? (Lacey, Washington)

A The custom of bowing at the name of Jesus is a worthy one, and it has a long tradition in the church. It takes its origin from St. Paul, who wrote in his Letter to the Philippians (2:9-10): “God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

The practice was reinforced at the Second Council of Lyons, convened in 1274 by Pope Gregory X, which highlighted the special honor due the sacred name and noted that “whenever that glorious name is recalled, especially during the sacred mysteries of the Mass, everyone should bow the knees of his heart, which he can do even by a bow of his head.”

Pope Gregory followed up with a letter to the Dominican Order, which became the foremost promoters of devotion to the Holy Name. In that letter, Pope Gregory said, “We wish that at the pronouncing of that name, chiefly at the holy sacrifice (of Mass), everyone would bow his head in token that interiorly he bends the knee of his heart.”

I agree with our letter-writer that, over the past several decades, this practice is followed less widely. I also agree that more people should observe it; it serves as an important reminder of the reverence we owe the divine and reflects an interior desire to honor Jesus, who died on the cross to redeem us.

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.
Reynaud’s calling to diaconate formed at young age

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

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As Mark Reynaud prepares for his ordination as a permanent deacon, his mind goes back to his fourth-grade year as an altar server at St. Agnes Church in Jefferson.

“I remember always feeling at peace when I was up on the altar. I thought (in my young mind) ‘There must be something more’ I thought about the priest hood but I was not for him.” said Reynaud, who is scheduled to be ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Michael G. Duca at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

Back then there were a number of priests who were active within the parish,” Reynaud said. “Although they were countercultural in giving up their ability to marry, they seemed to be fulfilled in what they were doing. That attracted me to the priesthood.”

After Reynaud graduated from St. Agnes School and St. Jean Vianney Prep High School in New Orleans, which was a seminary preparation school, he attended St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict for three years. While there he discerned the call to the priesthood was not for him.

“I will never regret the time at St. Ben’s. It’s still a big part of who I am,” said Reynaud.

While attending St. Joseph, Reynaud met his wife, Sheila, at St. Mark Church in Gonzales, where she was a member. “I often joked that I worked to support my music habit,” mused Reynaud, who has an acoustic guitar in his office at St. Mark Church in Gonzales, where he serves as director of religious education, a position he started in May.

Long before the birth of his daughter, Emily, 18, the youngest of three siblings, including Ryan, 29, and Matthew, 26, Reynaud began thinking about entering the diaconate formation program. He talked to a friend’s father who was a deacon in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

“He encouraged me and discouraged me,” said Reynaud. “He said ‘It’s great that you are thinking about this, but now is not the best time, because your kids are still young and you need to think about that vocation (father).’ Knowing what I know now he was right.”

So Reynaud put thoughts about the diaconate “on the back burner” until about the time Emily started high school at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge. Reynaud began the application and discernment process when the diaconate formation program was part of the Religious Studies Institute. Two

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The church campus and works with them on the projects.

He, as well as other volunteers, prefers to remain “in the background” and let things quietly done. But their contributions don’t go unnoticed by the ICC family.

“We are blessed to have so many volunteers whom we can call on to take care of needs,” said ICC pastor Father Frank Uter, who is retiring. “As with the adoration chapel, fixing a seam in the ceiling ended up being a complete renovation of the interior and exterior of the chapel. We didn’t ask them to do it. They saw the need and both pointed it out and took care of it.

“Last week the Men’s Club was all out pressure washing the walks, cleaning the pool and fountains, even washing down the ceiling of the rectory front porch, so all would be looking really good for the arrival of Father Matthew Graham, our new pastor. I have found that I only have to mention there might be a need to do something, and parishioners are here and ready to take care of it. They’re wonderful.”

Adoration is currently being held in the church Monday - Friday. While many are taking advantage of this opportunity, adorers are eager to get back to the chapel.

“I have people who are really missing adoration and get calls and texts asking when it will open?” said Renfrow.

Some committed adorers will spend multiple hours a week in the chapel, sometimes two hours back to back, filling in when other scheduled adorers are not able to make their hour, according to Renfrow.

She, Mayeaux and Montgomery said being in the adoration chapel allows people to “withdraw from the world” and focus on God.

“Parishioners will tell me ‘I feel like I’m listening to God,’” said Montgomery. Some pray in the chapel to grieve the loss of a loved one, like she did after her husband died in 2018, or to say prayers of praise or thanksgiving.

Mayeaux noted that one family put flowers in front of the monstrance in thanksgiving for a baby being born.

For Mayeaux, the chapel holds memories as well as prayers.

“I miss being with the Lord there and the memories of my mom. She and I were prayer partners and when she couldn’t go I kept going and kept the same hours,” Mayeaux said.

It’s also a place for instruction. Religious education teachers bring their classes in, RCIA sponsors bring their candidates in and adorers are notified that “people will be going in and out and there will be whispering as things are being explained.”

It’s also a place of prayer for the church’s younger generations.

“I walked in one time at 3 a.m., (for adoration) and the youth group was there. All 10 chairs were full and some youth were sitting on the floor. They committed to an hour in the middle of the night,” said Renfrow.

As people anxiously await the re-opening of the adoration chapel at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, volunteers remodeled the interior and exterior of the chapel to provide a fresh look for adorers to enjoy while they pray. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

SCHOOLS ▼

From page 1

Department of Education. These include the maximum number of people in a classroom to assure proper space for social distancing.

The statement said school officials have been getting advice from consultants from Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, who are visiting each school and offering recommendations on things like classroom configurations, how to address recess and lunch and best practices for walking the hallway between classes.

School start and end times will be determined by each school, with an attempt to keep those times as normal as possible. Schools may have to stagger intake times to help parents with carpool traffic if public school bus service is not immediately available because of the pandemic.

Protocols for students entering school buildings will vary, but all schools will have a method verifying each student is entering a healthy space. Parents might have to log into the school’s app in the morning and answer a series of health-related questions. Some schools could possibly have daily temperature checks of all students.

Recess will also have a different look as students will not be allowed to play on the equipment or engage in any contact sports. Lunches will either be delivered to the classroom so students can eat at their desks, or lunches will be grab-and-go, with students either returning to the class to eat or perhaps eating outside in picnic style, depending on the weather.

Some Louisiana public school systems are offering online class options, but Catholic schools in our diocese will partner directly with parents on such requests. It is important for students to have social interaction at school for their holistic development, so the ideal is for students to return to classrooms and develop relationships with teachers and their peers. However, if a need arises that warrants online learning support, Catholic schools are ready to consider that as a solution for individual situations.

And because the chapel is an important place of prayer on the campus, “keeping the light on” practically helps people “keep the light on’ spiritually.

“It all matters when you walk in – it’s the atmosphere,” said Renfrow.

Jody Ramagos and Diana Banta repaired the adoration chapel ceiling and painted the entire adoration chapel at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs. Photo provided by Father Frank Uter

2020-2021 SCHOOL OPENING DATES

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**MOVIE REVIEWS**

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting

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

**Palm Springs**

Two guests (Andy Samberg and Cristin Milioti) at a wedding in the resort of the title become caught up in a time loop that becomes the universe that, writer Andy Si-rara's screenplay implies, is as meaningless outside the trap as the one the protagonists have fallen as within it. Skewed values, graphic sexual content, including aberrant acts, drug use, numerous mild oaths, pervasive rough and crude language, obscenities, G.

**First Cow**

Director Kelly Reichardt co-wrote the screenplay for this historical drama set in the Pacific Northwest of the 1820s with Jonathan Raymond, working from Raymond's 2012 novel “The Half-Life.” The specific setting is Oregon’s Umpqua River region, woodsy and wild, where the principal work consists of bear-}

**GOSPEL ▼**

From page 2

practice. The bread we need, fi-nally, is grace; and we must in-voke it, ask for it with sincere humility and tireless constancy, well aware that it is the most precious thing we can possess” (Homily St. John Paul II, Castel Gandolfo, July 29, 1979).

**Whispering sound**

The readings on the Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time re-veal the importance of keeping our gaze on God. We open with the prophet Elijah taking shel-ter from the storms of life. Atop Mount Horeb standing at the entrance of a cave he waits, as instructed, for the Lord to “pass by” (1 Kings 19:9-13). After ex-periencing strong wind, fire and earthquakes, Elijah hears a “tiny whispering sound.” Although the former awakens one to God's almighty power, the whispering sound of the presence of God, to the point of stillness, is some-thing to revere and behold, as did Elijah. It is there in the still-ness where we focus on and lis-ten to God.

**It is I**

Then we turn to the Gospel and read a somewhat similar experience. The disciples are com-ing to the sight of Jesus. The sea causes their boat to be tossed by the winds and waves. A few miles offshore at the height of their turmoil, they see Jesus walking on the sea toward them and they are “terrified.” “At once Jesus spoke to them, ‘Take cour-age, it is I; do not be afraid.’” Pe-ter takes the first step, wanting to know if it is Jesus. The one who commands the sea invited Pe-ter to “come,” offering the same invitation Peter received when Jesus first called him, “Come after me” (Mt 4:19). As Peter first followed, he did again in this moment and went to Jesus. With courage, he fixed his eyes on Jesus and stepped into the wind and onto the swells of the sea with confidence and walked towards Jesus. But as soon as Peter's focus shifted on the perils of the sea, he sank. He sank help-lessly into the stormy sea. He doubted, yet in the same instant realized Jesus had the power to save him. And so Peter cried out, as many have done since, “Lord, save me!” Without hesitation, Je-sus “caught” Peter and they safely made it back to the boat, as the sea calmed.

**FLOWERY RIVER**

The brief but remarkable life of Catholic author Flannery O’Connor (1925-1964) is re-counted and celebrated in this admiring documentary. Film-makers Elizabeth Coffman and Father Mark Bosco SJ marshal home movies, archival television footage and interviews with the writer’s friends and relatives to evoke her fiercely held faith and wickedly clever imagination. While their film, in which ac-tress Mary Steenburgen voices O’Connor, may lack the tang of her Southern Gothic novels and short stories, viewers unfamiliar with her work will be motivated to explore it while established fans will appreciate the chance to pay an extended visit to the picturesque farm near Milledgeville, Georgia, to which the illness that eventually caused her early death long confined her. Analysis of one of her tales involving a serial killer and an-other in which a hermaphrodite plays a central role suggests a mature audience. Probably ac-ceptable for older adolescents. Images of violence, references to sexuality, fleeting crass lan-guage. A-III; Not rated by the Motion Picture Association.
Declaración

Comisión de armonía racial

Diócesis de Baton Rouge

La Comisión de Armonía Racial de la Diócesis de Baton Rouge, la comisión bi-racial, que consta de 12 miembros e incluye clérigos, religiosos y laicos de la diócesis, continúa reuniéndose bajo la dirección del obispo Michael G. Duca para explorar formas de comprender mejor los efectos del racismo en nuestra sociedad y construir comunidad en torno a la necesidad de armonía racial.

Durante el último mes, manifestaciones y marchas se han convertido en acontecimientos frecuentes en nuestro país. El brutal asesinato público de George Floyd por parte de la policía ha sacudido a nuestra nación, y lamentamos su muerte.

La muerte del Señor Floyd y de tantos otros afroamericanos e hispanos: Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, Elijah McClain, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling de la Diócesis de Baton Rouge para el logro de armonía racial.

Además, nos comprometemos a reflexionar, rezar y examinar nuestras conciencias con respecto al pecado del racismo. Buscamos oportunidades para dialogar con otros cuya fe es profunda, viva e inclusiva para que pueda comenzar la verdadera escucha. Afirmamos que esto debe incluir una identificación y un rechazo de la injusticia racial sistémica en todas sus formas. Creemos que la violencia nunca es una respuesta justa o aceptable a ningún conflicto, y que el diálogo honesto es el único camino para promover la paz de Dios, la justicia social y el bien común.

Con la ayuda de Dios, y al reconocer honestamente los problemas fundamentales y escucharnos genuinamente, creemos que es posible un progreso real. Las vidas de los negros son importantes. Como el Dr. Martin Luther King declaró tan sabiamente: “La injusticia en cualquier lugar es una mancha en nuestra personalidad, en nuestra comunidad y nuestra nación permanecerán rotas.

Al recordar los acontecimientos de hace cuatro años en este año extraordinario de 2020, nos unimos con todas las familias y comunidades que han sufrido pérdidas a causa de la violencia. Valoramos mucho el servicio de los agentes del orden que se ponen en peligro para proteger y servir a nuestra comunidad, y honramos el compromiso de quienes trabajan para una sociedad justa. Pero con demasiada frecuencia se nos recuerda que nuestra comunidad y nuestro país necesitan una curación y transformación continuas.

Los asuntos de raza están entretejidos en nuestra historia como nación, que es una de las naciones más diversas del mundo. Si bien nuestra diversidad ha sido esencial para nuestra grandeza, también nos ha dado un legado de tensión y conflicto. Como comisión, renovamos nuestro compromiso de reformar las prácticas y políticas injustas que continúan acojinado a algunos miembros de nuestra sociedad y perjudicando a otros, perpetuando así la desigualdad, la inequidad y la injusticia racial dividida.

Dios nuestro Padre, nos llamamos a amarnos unos a otros como nos has amado. Oramos por la conversión de corazones en nuestra Diócesis de Baton Rouge para lograr la armonía racial arraigada en Tu Hijo, Jesucristo. A través del poder del Espíritu Santo, despojarnos de nuestro orgullo, desconfianza y prejuicios, para que podamos dialogar unos con otros para construir comunidades donde florezcan la justicia, la paz y el amor. Pedimos estas bendiciones confiando en la infinita misericordia de Jesús y la intercesión de María nuestra Madre. Amén.

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THE CATHOLIC COMMENTATOR

July 31, 2020
A prayer for our vulnerable earth, its creatures and people

A few weeks ago, my sister-in-law texted to my family the beautiful prayer you can read that accompanies this column. Its timing could not have been better. On June 18, the Catholic Church celebrated the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ social encyclical on the environment and human ecology, “Laudato Si’,” on Care for Our Common Home." Since then, there have been many articles in Catholic magazines and newspapers commenting on the effect of the pope’s urgent request that we care for the earth. In one way or another they ask the question boldly posed by Brian Roewe in National Catholic Reporter’s Earth Beat: “Have We Listened?”

Some have and some have not, at least to the “urgent” part. Even the head of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference was quoted as saying that the sense among American bishops was that global warming was important but not urgent. And my favorite U.S. bishop writer, Bishop Robert E. Barron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, commented that papal encyclicals usually take about 40 years to have their real effect. We haven’t got 40 years. Scientists are telling us that this decade is the crucial one, if we are to prevent serious harm to our planet and everything living on it.

Brian Roewe explains that, “Already, global temperatures have risen one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s. The planet is on pace to warm another 2 degrees Celsius by the end of this century, and to reach the critical 1.5-degree mark as soon as 2020.” The significance of 1.5 degrees Celsius is explained by a climate scientist at the University of California San Diego who also belongs to the Pontifical (Vatican) Academy of Sciences. His name is Veerabhadran Ramanathan, and he says, “When we pass that 1.5 degrees C threshold, climate change will move into all of our living rooms.”

There seems to be a consensus among Catholic ecological leaders that, while “Laudato Si’” was well received, practical responses have not been as good as Pope Francis sought. In January this year he told the Vatican diplomatic corps, “Sadly, the urgency of this ecological conversion seems not to have been grasped by international politics, where the response to the problems raised by global issues such as climate change remains very weak and a source of grave concern.”

And then the pandemic hit. Certainly, it has many worried that it may slow the momentum for addressing climate change. Nonetheless, there seems to be no time for inaction, according to Roewe, a hope that the tremendous economic reset demanded by the pandemic will cause rethinking of what is happening to us globally, and this will make us consider how we are using and abusing our natural resources. We will have to spend huge amounts of money on many things. Which will we choose? Will there be a shift to more sustainable resources that are less harmful to our environment, like more solar energy and wind energy and less fossil fuels?

I know that such a shift would not be good economic news for us who live in the petro-chemical corridor of Louisiana and depend on fossil fuels for the good jobs that our plants give us. Nonetheless, there are signs that a shift is happening in some places around the globe. The Catholic Church in the Philippines is one of the leaders. Bishops there are speaking out against the construction of coal-fired power plants and the damaging effect of mining on the land and the communities of people living nearby. The Irish bishops made a decision in 2018 to divest from fossil fuels. Washington Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, while he was archbishop in Atlanta, commissioned an action plan that has become a blueprint for other dioceses. This past April, Catholic Charities of Washington, D.C. completed construction of a two-megawatt solar array, the largest solar installation in the district.

A group called Catholic Energies has completed 10 solar projects in five states and will complete 12 more this year. Altogether they will generate 10 megawatts of solar energy annually, removing what would have been 5 million pounds of carbon emissions from the atmosphere. Sixteen U.S. congregations of Dominican Sisters have contributed more than $46 million to an initiative for financing solutions to climate change while assisting communities worldwide most at risk. “Laudato Si’” is having an effect.

What Pope Francis is calling for is that all countries cut down carbon emissions, which are the main thing we can do to fight climate change which will hurt us all, but especially the poor in countries that suffer from drought, storms, fires, deforestation and poisonings. Our planet is an ever-turning globe, and what blows off of Africa can end up in the Gulf of Mexico and the states that border it, including Louisiana. As the pandemic has taught us, we are all in this together, each country with a moral obligation to do what we can, whether the cause of human misery is the coronavirus or dangerous weather and rising seas caused by climate change.

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnnycarville@gmail.com.

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

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Prayer for Our Earth from “Laudato Si’”

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of our creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bringing healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may soothe beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

--From Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si’"
Teach us to fight racism

The Catholic Church never taught me how to fight racism.

As a cradle Catholic, the church taught me how to fight abortion, poverty, hunger, violence and even the degradation of the environment.

I learned about the power of prayer. I saw parishes raising money, volunteering locally and protesting publicly. I heard stirring homilies, read books denouncing these evils, and celebrated saints who gave their lives for what was right.

But when it comes to racism – how to form myself as a Catholic and how to raise my children – I have heard next to nothing.

A homily or two, maybe.

A mere mention in the prayers of the faithful.

Where have I learned about racism as a white woman in the United States? From friends who have lived with the evils of racism every single day of their lives. From teachers and professors who have studied the history of our country. From writers, artists and speakers who call people to learn, reflect and act.

Some of these friends, teachers, writers and speakers are Catholic. I have listened to their stories of hatred and discrimination in seminaries, schools and parishes. I have felt nausea and grief at hearing how they have not felt at home in the church.

No individual experience is monolithic. You may have been formed widely and deeply about fighting racism within your Catholic circles. Your parish may be active, and your pastor may be vocal.

But in countless conversations with Catholics, I have heard stories of lament.

Stories of Catholics of color ignored or insulted within their home parishes. Young Catholics discouraged by never seeing speakers, teachers or leaders like them – and deciding not to follow a calling into ministry. Theology students told to stay quiet about their experiences of racism and discrimination. Catholics whose presence in the pews at Sunday Mass was met with disgust by the people around them.

St. Paul wrote that “if (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” (1 Cor 12:26).

The body of Christ is suffering. We must do more.

We don’t have to stop doing what we have done, in urging Catholics to care about all that is evil and sinful in our society. But we have to do more to fight racism as a church. This truth is clear.

The work of faith formation begins in the home. I must do more as a parent: not just to name racism, but to teach my children to fight against it.

Through our conversations and prayers, the friends and visitors we welcome at home, the art on our walls and the books we read (to name a few examples), parents, grandparents and guardians have opportunities to teach this generation of Catholics about justice and mercy.

But I want bishops, priests, catechists and church leaders to do more, too.

Teach us how to pray about racism.

To speak out against prejudice and hatred in conversations with friends and neighbors. How to support Catholic organizations fighting systemic racism.

How to change what is broken in our society, to honor the vision of liberty and justice for all.

I want more for our children. I want them to know the history of the Catholic Church. I want them to learn about Black saints. I want them to understand how sin deforms souls and systems. I want them to embrace the beauty God has created.

More than anything, I want our children to say that they know racism is evil and they know how to fight it because their church taught them.

Teach us, church. Help us to teach our children.

FANUCCI is a writer, speaker, and author of several books including “Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting.” Her work can be found at laurakellyfanucci.com.
COMMUNITIES ▼
From page 4
fort to rebuild models of co-existence, health care and development, he said July 22.
“We are all in the same storm, but not on the same boat,” with many communities’ resources and infrastructures being so fragile or lacking that these communities “sink more easily,” Archbishop Paglia said.
“The archbishop’s remarks accompanied the academy’s second document this year on the consequences of the global health crisis and how the world, particularly Christians, should respond.
Published on its website academylorileva in five languages, including English, the document includes the following considerations:
— To see the current pandemic as a “symptom of our earth’s malaise and our failure to care” and as a “sign of our own spiritual malaise,” which should compel people to reconsider their relationship with creativity and each other, no longer seeing oneself as “masters and lords,” but as stewards.
— To understand that certain public policies and measures call for “the solidarity of the young and healthy with the most vulnerable” and for sacrifices from those who “depend on public interaction and economic activity for their living.”
— To recognize how the “common good of public health needs to be balanced against economic interests” and the need for international coordination and cooperation in finding and sharing remedies and vaccines.
— To recognize access to quality health care and essential medicine as a universal human right.
— To support and improve international cooperation through the World Health Organization.
— To address and transform the “oppressive and unjust” strivings in the global community, starting with a “real conversion of minds and hearts” that entails embracing one’s responsibility and no longer being unwilling to see the obvious wrongs in the world.
The document said “the narrow-mindedness of national self-interests has led many countries to venerate for themselves a policy of independence and isolation from the rest of the world,” which will not be effective in addressing the global pandemic, will only worsen inequalities and will make even more people vulnerable and marginalized.
“Everyone is called to do their part” in being responsible toward others in need, it said.
“A responsible community is one in which burdens of caution and reciprocal support are shared proactively with an eye to the well-being of all,” it said.

LAITY ▼
From page 5
norms and indications that can be utilized by the different dioceses and parishes according to their unique situations.
“Given that the church is mandated by Christ to be missionary, evangelizing and outward-looking, a reform of its structures is continuously required in order to respond to the challenges of the day,” the monsignor wrote.
“Naturally, this involves a certain reorganization in the way the pastoral care of the faithful is exercised, so as to foster a greater co-responsibility and collaboration among all the baptized,” he wrote.
The importance of the laity in the parish community was emphasized in the way bishops work on restructuring the diocese, particularly when it comes to closing or merging parishes.
In order for such restructur-

ing to succeed, the document said, many factors need to be taken into account by including all members of the parish.
“Dropping plans upon the people of God from above, without their involvement, should be avoided,” Msgr. Ripa said in his written presentation.
The instruction underlined that certain reasons were not sufficient for suppressing a parish, including “the scarcity of clergy, the general financial situation of a diocese” or other situations that are temporary or reversible.
Legitimate reasons for suppression had to be “directly and organically connected to the interested parish community, and not on general considerations or theories,” it added.
Similarly, legitimate reasons for the deconsecration and sale of places of worship could not include “the lack of clergy, demographic decline or the grave financial state of the diocese,” it said.

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July 31, 2020
Fairchild finds excitement, challenges in ‘dream job’

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Fund raising in an era when the Catholic Church has recently come under scrutiny and a historic pandemic is endangering the economy can admittedly appear daunting but Gwen Fairchild, freshly-minted director of stewardship for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, eagerly embraces those challenges.

Difficulties await, but Fairchild said her job is perhaps made a bit easier because of the multitude of services the diocese continues to provide, even in these uncertain times. She said spreading the word of those success stories, whether through video conference calls or webinars, is pivotal.

Fairchild, an Oklahoma native who moved to Sunshine in 1972 and converted to Catholicism in 1975, said not being able to meet donors face to face presents the most significant obstacle.

“You can’t sit in their homes and have a glass of tea and conversation,” said Fairchild, who spent 22 years steering the fundraising programs for the LSU Foundation. “People are at home and that’s the difficult part, not being able to be with them.

“It’s a sensitive time for people, and we need to be sensitive to their situation.”

She said the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in many people losing their jobs. In some cases, their children are without jobs, so what money potential donors do have is assisting their offspring.

“We miss the energy of people in their homes and we still miss the financial impact of that absence,” Fairchild said.

Fairchild acknowledges the potential of engaging in uncomfortable conversations with potential donors because of the recent developments in the church regarding sex abuse, saying “it’s an interesting challenge.”

“First of all, the church is our family and our family can disappoint us but we love our family,” she said. “And we will do what we can to support our family.”

Of course, many donors also attended Catholic schools. Fairchild said part of her job is to listen and allow people to share their own feelings, saying those feelings are “real and deep.”

She noted that if people are angry, they are still engaged. Her aim is to get to the heart of that person’s anger, specifically if that person is disappointed with the church but also still loves the faith in which he or she was raised.

“They might be mad at the church but are really angry at the local level, where works of mercy are being performed, where children are being educated, where some of the neediest members of our community are being aided?” she said. “And then we talk about the ministries and the people the church serves and where their heart is.”

Fairchild said donations are given from the heart and to what has meaning in a donor’s life, noting the challenge is listening and tapping into what has moved that person.

For example, people who support Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge might have at one point in their lives required the services of CCDBR. Or maybe a family member was assisted by the agency.

Of course, many donors also attended Catholic schools. Fairchild said plans to be creative in educating donors and potential donors on ways they can give in ways perhaps they had never considered.

“When people think about giving, they think about money,” Fairchild said. “They don’t always look around that perhaps they have inherited a family member’s sterling silver candlestick. Those kinds of donations we can take; we can sell those assets and your gift will go where your heart is.”

She also mentioned such areas as estate planning, or donating property or perhaps even big-game trophies, such as the 10-point deer hanging on the wall of a deceased relative.

“They are worth a lot of money,” she noted.

Along with 40 years of fundraising experience, she brings an unbridled enthusiasm to what she calls her “dream job.” She said the position has captured her attention for quite some time because of the opportunity to “serve your church and work with your family, which is the church. Church and your gift will it nourishes us, consoles us, taught us how to live.”

Fairchild said she plans to be creative in educating donors and potential donors on ways they can give in ways perhaps they had never considered.

“It’s a challenge but also a gift to the church,” she said. “And we will do what we can to support our family.”

She brought to the position 40 years of experience, including 18 years as the executive director of St. Jude Medical Foundation, a position she called “the best job I’ve ever had.”

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For now, however, her focus might be more on her GPS as she learns her way around a diocese that spans 5,513 square miles and 12 civil parishes, and proudly hails its diversity as one of many assets.

“The depth and breadth of the service that the diocese provides is big,” she said. “I need to wrap my arms around the vastness of the ministries, church parishes and people. I need to understand that.”

She also wants to be the person parishes reach out to when they are undertaking a fund-raising drive, adding she would be “delighted” to help strategize a successful plan.

Bishop Michael G. Duca, who Fairchild called “warm, personable, approachable and wise and has a wonderful reputation in the community,” is the “real fundraiser,” she said.

“People give to people they trust and they trust (Bishop Duca),” she said.

Plans will soon be announced for the annual Bishop’s Annual Appeal, which raised more than $1 million in 2019-20, a figure she is hoping to match or surpass.

“We would love to have everyone involved,” Fairchild said. “Fifteen dollars is a gift. It adds up.”

Gwen Fairchild

2020 Diocesan Directory Is Here

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

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Marriage Help – Married couples with trouble marriages are encouraged to attend an upcoming Retrouvaile weekend Friday, Sept. 11 – Sunday, Sept. 13. For more information, call 985-232-5963, email retrovbrcmcoor@gmail.com or visit HelpOurMarriage.com.

St. Agnes Masses – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will celebrate the following Masses during August: Pro-life Mass, Tuesday, Aug. 11, 5:30 p.m.; and St. Charbel healing Mass, Sunday, August 23, 6 p.m. For more information, call 225-385-4127.
weeks before classes were to begin Reynaud received a letter stating the diaconate program was being revamped. It took a couple of years before the program was re-opened through the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, and he will be part of the first diaconate class to graduate from it.

“Once I was told they had the program in place, I asked, ‘Where do you want me to sign up?’” said Reynaud.

He said the most formidable challenge was reacclimating to the college classroom setting and studying philosophy and theology.

“Philosophers tend to write in run-on sentences. You had to get use to that,” smiled Reynaud.

He also had to meet the needs of his family and private practice in Zachary. His Central home was flooded in 2016, but he was thankful that the damage was not as extensive as other homes.

Reynaud is looking forward to serving as deacon at Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge, a relationship that began years ago when he played bass guitar for the 8 a.m. Sunday Mass, and this past year through his diaconate internship. He also looks forward to serving St. Mark.

Reynaud believes his skills as a counselor and marriage and family life therapist will be beneficial at MBS and St. Mark.

But what he looks forward to most is coming full circle in his spiritual life.

“(I’m) going back to the fourth-grade sense of peace - assisting with the liturgy,” said Reynaud.

Juliette LeRay, a St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School in Hammond Class of 2020 graduate was selected as the overall Diocese of Baton Rouge Knights of Columbus Catholic Youth Leadership Award and Scholarship Winner.

LeRay initially was selected for the KC Hammond JFK Council #2952 CYLA and moved on to be selected as the diocesan winner.

The Catholic Youth Leadership Award and Scholarship is provided by the Knights of Columbus in recognition of service and leadership within the school, church and community.

LeRay graduated with a 4.0 grade point average and was in the top 10 of her graduating class. She has been selected to such leadership positions as Beta Club president, swim team captain, Pentrails editor, Key Club secretary, Student Council representative, STA ambassador, Silver Falcon and Tangipahoa Library Young Woman of Excellence.

She has volunteered hundreds of hours of community service through such organizations as North Oaks Rehabilitation Center, Fellom Ballet Community/Education Outreach Program, Tangi Food Pantry and St. Joseph Church in Ponchatoula and Mater Dolorosa Vacation Bible Schools. LeRay has also been a member of STAs campus ministry, Light Team, Micah 6:8 and Pro-Life Club. Additionally, she has served as an STAs eucharistic minister and an altar server, choir member and Mass lector at STA and Holy Ghost Church in Hammond.

LeRay plans to study kinesiology at Louisiana State University and hopes to pursue a doctorate in pediatric physical therapy.