PROTECTING THE UNBORN

Bible study group prays at 40 Days

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As they pray for and encounter women in crisis pregnancy situations at 40 Days for Life in Baton Rouge, the women's Scripture study group To Jesus Through Mary learn they are fulfilling their own divine missions as moms and disciples.

The annual 40 Days for Life campaign sets up outside of the Delta Women’s Clinic, where abortions are performed.

“To Jesus Through Mary group – we also refer to ourselves as ‘The Catholic Nuts’ – began very randomly. Yet, all of us who are still involved with the group today know that God’s divine hand is how we began and how we continue,” said Shelly Romero.

The group has its origins in women's Scripture study groups at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, which in the course of two years studied St. John Paul II’s exhortation “Familiaris Consortio” and apostolic letter “Multa-ris Dignitatem (Dignity and Vocation of Women),” said Romero, who led one of the groups.

After the second year the women of To Jesus Through Mary branched out on their own with the group comprised of women from the original study group and others. Women from several other church parishes in Baton Rouge, including Our Lady of Mercy, St. Jude and St. Aloysius joined them.

“Our goal has always remained the same from day one and that is working toward having holy marriages and raising holy children who will grow to know, love and serve the Lord. We are drawn together by our love for God and our Catholic faith, and we try to hold one another accountable at being as holy as we can be according to our state in life,” Romero said. “We have been together while raising our children, while educating our children through college, while marrying off some of our children, burying some of our parents, and now some are enjoying grandchildren so we have truly watched one another grow at every level.”

Each year the group prays for God to guide them to a Scripture-based book that will help them grow in holiness and also seek the input of a priest.

The 12-14 members take turns meeting.

Love Life Amendment on ballot

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Along with electing a president Louisiana voters will also go to the polls Nov. 3 to decide on a pro-life amendment to the state constitution that would protect unborn babies in the event the Supreme Court eventually overturns Roe vs. Wade, the court case legalizing abortion in 1973.

If Roe is indeed overturned, the legal question of the right to an abortion will be decided by state. The Love Life Amendment, according to Danielle Van Haute, pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, would put into the Louisiana constitution a guarantee that there “cannot be found a right to abortion.”

The state in 2006 passed a pro-life “trigger” law, meaning if Roe v. Wade is overturned and the question of legality reverts back to the states, the law will be activated and abortion in Louisiana will immediately be illegal.

The Love Life Amendment would also prohibit taxpayer funding of abortion.

“(The amendment) is a way to ensure in our constitution we can’t find a right to an abortion,” Van Haute said. “It is the final piece in the puzzle to ensure Louisiana is abortion free.”

“We have already seen that in some states they have amended their state constitutions to include the right to abortion, so they are also preparing for when Roe is overturned but they are making sure abortions will remain legal in those states,” she said.

Reportedly up to 13 states, including New York, Kansas and Tennessee have put laws in place to prohibit abortion if Roe v. Wade is overturned. Pro-life amendments similar to the one being proposed in Louisiana have passed in Alabama, West Virginia, Arkansas and Rhode Island.

“We are seeing a disturbing trend in other states where the state supreme courts are finding a ‘right to abortion’ in their state constitutions, thus taking the issue out of the hands of the people and leading toward having holy marriages and raising children who will grow to know, love and serve the Lord.”

Donations to the campaign benefit Project Rescue, which works to save babies from abortion.

See Election Page 19.
A 15-year old Italian tech wiz, Carlo Acutis, made Catholic Church history as the first millennial to be beatified on Oct. 10. The ceremony took place at St. Mary Major Basilica Assisi, Italy, home of St. Francis. While his family was celebrating changing times, although St. Francis wore donated peasant clothing of his time, at the veneration of Acutis’ body Oct. 9 he was dressed in jeans and a track suit jacket. The already dubbed “patron saint of the internet” reportedly has many devotees around the world.

The youth loved the Eucharist, saying “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.” The gamer and computer programer worked diligently to see that technology would be used for good purposes (he created a website listing eucharistic miracles around the world in the months before he died) and offered up his illness for the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and the universal church.

Acutis’ beatification leads to the wonder about the community of saints as we approach All Saints and All Souls Day.

In the West the feast of “All Holy Martyrs” was introduced when Pope Boniface IV was given the ancient Roman temple of the Pantheon by Emperor Phocas on May 13, 610 and dedicated it as a church to the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the martyrs. The date of this feast was observed annually in Rome. Two hundred years later Pope Gregory IV transferred the celebration to November. Some scholars have claimed the Church assigned All Saints to Nov. 1 to substitute a feast of Christian significance for the pagan Germanic celebrations of the demon cult at that time of the year. Others assert the reason for the transfer was that the many pilgrims who came to Rome for the “Feast of the Pantheon” could be fed more easily after the harvest than in the spring.

The purpose of the feast is twofold. As the prayer of the Mass states, “the merits of all the saints are venerated in common by this one celebration,” because a very large number of martyrs and other saints could not be accorded the honor of a special festival since the days of the year would not suffice for all these individual celebrations.

The second purpose was given by Pope Urban IV: Any negligence, omission and irreverence committed in the celebration of the saints’ feasts throughout the year is to be atoned for by the faithful, and thus due honor may still be offered to these saints.

All Saints Day, a holy day of obligation, is also a special time for families in Louisiana to visit their deceased loved ones in the blessing of the graves.

As the case for Acutis’ sainthood proceeds, it emphasizes all are called to be saints, canonized or not. One of Acutis’ most well-known quotes is, “We are all born original, but many die as photocopies.”

The 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time readings begin with Chapter 22 in the Book of Exodus. We hear details of guiding norms for social laws on how to treat foreigners, widows, orphans, as well as how to lend money without high demands and to return what was borrowed in good faith. Any compromise of good will provokes an outcry by the offended, who then turn to God. He responds with compassion and comfort to the mistreated, abused and marginalized. We are called to follow God’s compassionate lead by giving of ourselves for the good of the other. Am I aware of the social norms promoting the good of others? How familiar am I with the seven themes of the Social Teachings; themes that guide our actions in living holy lives and a just society? (For more go to USCCB.org)

**Be imitators**

In St. Paul’s Letter to the Thessalonians, he acknowledges their powerful conversion from idolatry to the one true God and thus “a model for all the believers” in their proclamation of the word of God and by bringing others to Christ. By our baptism, we become part of the mystical body of Christ, Christ is our model of faith; a faith handed on to us by others with their call to conversion. Realize that we are not alone but in a very large number of martyrs and other saints could not be accorded the honor of a special festival since the days of the year would not suffice for all these individual celebrations.

The Holy Spirit empowers us with gifts of wisdom, understanding, fortitude, counsel, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord which move us into action. Still further, the fruits of the Holy Spirit fill us with virtues to respond with love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, generosity, gentleness, modesty, chastity and self-control. Am I calling upon the Holy Spirit for assistance as I strive to imitate Christ?

Thomas A Kempis, in his book “The Imitation of Christ,” writes, “If you want to see clearly and avoid the blindness of heart, is it his (Jesus) virtues you must imitate. Make it your aim to meditate on the life of Christ … to this spiritual nourishment you must seek to have the spirit of Christ. It is because we lack in this Spirit that so often, we listen to the Gospel without really hearing it.” Am I truly listening and hearing the Gospel in order to share the joy with others?

**Greatest commandment in the law**

Once again, the Pharisees test Jesus by placing a scholar of the law in his presence to ask which of the commandments is the greatest, knowing fully that each commandment is held in equal esteem. Jesus says the first and greatest commandment is to love God with your entire being, followed closely with love for your neighbor as yourself. When love is centered on God and neighbor, we place ourselves at the humble service of both and fully imitate the mystery of Jesus’ fidelity to his chosen.

**Imitators of love**

There is a natural desire for happiness placed in the heart of every person by God. Why? For the simple reason to draw all to the one who “alone can fulfill this desire,” our heavenly father, creator (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1718). God is our source of life, our rock, defender, deliverer, shield, stronghold, protector, strength, to whom we profess our love. True happiness extends to our neighbor, whom we are called to witness God’s love, empowering them to recognize God’s call in their life as a child of God and their call to conversion. Realize that we are all called to be saints. Each moment, each thought, each action, each word, every prayer, meditation, reflection, holy pause and yes, see Gospel page 8.
Vets live faith through clinic

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Pets receive “special treatment” during visits to Staring Plaza Veterinary Center in Baton Rouge, where “arf and meow” are spoken and there are doors welcoming “cats” on the left and “dogs” on the right.

Pet owners feel included too, as owners Dr. Brett and Dr. Lucie Bark-er Berryhill keep a family-oriented, light-hearted atmosphere.

The Berryhills, who grew up in families who were active in the Catholic faith, are members of St. Jude the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge. They are long-time members of the choir, with Brett singing tenor and Lucie singing alto.

With cats, dogs and horses around as Lucie grew up in Lockport, her combined love of science and interest in what the veterinarians were doing when her pets were taken to them tweaked her interest in helping animals. Brett, a Baton Rouge native, attended kindergarten and first grade at St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge and found his calling as a vet in the fifth grade through family trips to the veterinarians.

The two met at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. Class seating was in alphabetical order so they sat next to each other and were lab partners. They graduated together in 1985. They have been married for more than 30 years and have four children and nine grandchildren and are happy to see the living out of faith in the next generation.

“That’s the way it’s supposed to be,” said Lucie. “It’s so hard today to stay true to the faith. It was hard for our generation.”

Lucie takes care of the clinic’s business while Brett cares for the animals and interacts with people, his favorite part.

“I enjoy chatting with people, I like to talk a lot,” mused Brett, who enjoys making them laugh.

Lucie said Brett’s people skills allow him to comfort owners when their pets are ill.

“We have some people who are really hurting (because of their ill pets). He is very compassionate when he has to tell them bad news.”

“Sometimes I have to be serious,” said Brett.

Even though people’s pets may come and go through the years they continue to come to the clinic when they adopt new pets. One owner continued to bring her dog even though it did not have medical problems, quipping that seeing the Berryhills was “so much cheaper than a therapist.”

“My theory is God must have a sense of humor. Just talk to my choir buddies,” smiled Brett, who likes to tell his clients “give me some knuckle (high-five)” when they follow his directions in caring for their pets. He said the best way to keep a balanced perspective about one’s work is not to let it define who you are.

“Who you are is not what you do. Who you are is what you bring to your job,” said Brett.

The Berryhills enjoy the fact that every day is different at the clinic. Lucie pointed out that Brett’s duties may range from trimming pet’s nails to orthopedic surgery to maintenance work around the facility.

The Berryhills know God’s grace is sufficient to handle the “good” and the “bad” of the day and hope they have passed on that gift of grace to owners.

“That’s what it’s all about, touching the lives of other people. That’s what the kingdom of God is like,” said Lucie.

Brett Berryhill (holding Hannah) and wife Lucie (holding Stella) enjoy working with people at Staring Plaza Veterinarian Center. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator
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Gero at FranU answering needs of ‘Silver Tsunami’

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

As people live longer and young families having fewer number of children, the need to provide resources and education to better health among the older generation is increasing.

Recognizing the “Silver Tsunami” of people 55 years of age and older, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University is answering the need through Gerontology at FranU program, a university initiative dedicated to providing Baton Rouge with relevant, up-to-date information regarding healthy aging practices and activities.

According to Dr. Lindsay Mullins, chair of the Sister Agnes Marie Fitzsimmons Endowed Chair of Gerontology, the Gero at FranU is a dedicated team of professionals providing the university community and Baton Rouge with cutting-edge information resources for healthy aging.

Mullins, who is a nurse practitioner, said changing demographics indicate that by the year 2050 people 65 years and older will actually outnumber those five and under. She said the university had the vision to dedicate resources to increase education and awareness in the community as to how to live healthy for as long as possible for people to stay independent.

Part of the program includes educating FranU students to be “leaders” for the aging population and to be educated in health education for the elderly.

She said the university has taken a look at the existing programs offered at FranU, such as nursing and physical therapy, and making sure students have content and knowledge in their specific profession regarding care of the elderly.

Students are also required to have clinical experience caring for older adults “so when they graduate they aren’t just a nurse practitioner or a nurse or a physical therapist but they are also going to be well equipped for the aging population because of their educational experience at FranU,” Mullins said.

“That is the challenge,” she added. “Long gone are the days where generations of families lived right on the same street, across the farm from each other, where you had this care for one another. So what we are seeing now is the adult children move away for better jobs, and you kind of have a breakdown of the family unit and not having that full caring for the life cycle.”

She said providing those experiences and seeing an individual’s life cycle “all the way to the end” is part of “our Catholic mission” to meet changing demands.

Mullins explained that when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act in 1935, establishing the retirement age at 65, the average life expectancy was about 68. Today, a person 65 years old might have another 30 years to live, she noted.

“It is so different than what it looked like 50, 70 years ago,” she said. “And that is one of the unique challenges. When people are reaching 65 and are in a place where they might have to work for the foreseeable future, how do we assess the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of the 65 plus generation.”

Community outreach is also a critical component of the gerontology program, Mullins said. In addition to the education piece with students, the university is providing a community outreach program, partners with community church parishes, the YMCA or other organizations.

They meet with senior citizens and ask senior citizens a number of questions, including what do they need to help them live as healthy as they can in their current state of health?

Program officials will also ask about practical resources that might be helpful to the senior citizen community, such as preparing a will, getting help in the home, gardening, social distancing and preventing loneliness during the pandemic.

Armed with that information, FranU will develop a talk series addressing those specific needs that were raised. The series is held once a month and incudes a meal.

“That is where FranU is uniquely positioned because as academics and educators we can filter through all of the information out there because it is not all good,” Mullins said. “We are kind of an evidence based filter of information and package it up and bring it to community group. (Senior citizens) are getting the tools they need to live the way they want to live.”

Mullins said the talk series was born out of meetings with priests. She said she and team members met priests at various
Why does a priest always wear black?

First of all, not all priests wear black. Priests in certain religious orders wear the color of their order. Franciscan friars wear brown or grey robes. Dominican priests normally wear robes that are mostly white. And, many priests in tropical climates wear white to decrease the heat from the sun.

Most diocesan priests in the United States, however, do wear black, but this is not required at all times. During their days off or when not involved in liturgical functions, priests do not have to wear all black.

Canon law states that priests “are to wear suitable ecclesiastical garb according to the norms issued by the conference of bishops and according to legitimate local customs.” The USC-CB (The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) states that outside of liturgical functions, a black suit and Roman collar are the usual attire for priests. Simple black clothes indicate that the priest is giving up the comforts and glories of this world in preference to what is to come.

Black is a sign of spiritual symbolism. It is a sign of mourning and death. It symbolizes dying to oneself to rise and serve the Lord, as well as giving witness to the kingdom of God. Black symbolizes the priest taking up his cross, dying to sin so that he may rise in the life of grace. Black is also a sign of authority, similar to a judge in court who wears black robes.

Wearing all black, along with a Roman collar, is intended to be distinctive, to set a priest apart from others. It makes a priest easily identified as a witness to Christ. It should remind those who see him of Jesus’ message of love and mercy; it can be a mini-homily. Just wearing black becomes an evangelistic tool.

Why does the pope wear white?

The pope’s daily dress includes a white cassock and zucchetto (skull cap), a white short shoulder cape and a white sash embroidered with his pontifical coat of arms. This is accompanied by a pectoral cross of his choosing. Depending upon the cross of his crossing and supplemented by a hat and full-length red cape (although I don’t think Pope Francis wears the red cape).

Popes also used to wear red shoes but the color of shoes is up to the pope; there is no rule that defines the color of shoes. Pope Francis has shunned wearing red shoes; he wears black shoes. The pope’s all white wardrobe makes him immediately recognized worldwide.

Guillaume Durand, in his 1286 treatise on liturgy “Rationale Divinorum Officiorum,” offers what some consider the fullest interpretation of the color of the papal robes: the white robe refers to the purity and holiness of life, while the red accessories symbolize the blood of Christ and his sacrifice for us.

Tradition has the wearing of white going back to at least the papacy of Pope Pius V, who was elected pope in 1566. He was a Dominican friar who did not want to give up the distinctive white robes of his Dominican order.

Another tradition reflects that the white robes of the pope comes from the appearance of a white dove at the time of the martyrdom of Pope St. Fabiano in the year 250.

DEACON HOOPER is a deacon assistant at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs. Questions may sent to hooper@cox.net.
Founders’ Day Mass honors legacy of St. Joseph Sisters

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

St. George Church in Baton Rouge had its prayers answered 60 years ago when the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived to staff the parish’s new school. That legacy was honored during a Founders’ Day Mass and commitment of 14 new lay associates Oct. 13 at St. George.

In her welcome, Sister Joan LaPlace CSJ said, “Our story associates Oct. 13 at St. George. and commitment of 14 new lay during a Founders’ Day Mass parish’s new school. St. Joseph arrived to staff the 60 years ago when the Sisters of corporal works of mercy. be the catalyst for spiritual and federation Sister’ in an attempt to attract the sisters to the parish. He is quoted as saying, ‘talked to the good Sisters of St. Joseph in New Orleans. Pray for a miracle.’"

Sister Joan said that on May 8, 1960 the St. George bulletin announced that “against all odds” two sisters and four lay teachers would staff St. George School that September. She noted that there were 150 students registered for school.

During the years, 23 sisters have faithfully served the St. George School community. In 1970 they entered a new ministry affiliated with the parish as religious education coordinators. Two sisters who mentor the lay associates served at St. George: Sister Lucy Silvio CSJ as principal of St. George School and Sister Illeanna Fernandez CSJ as religious education coordinator of St. George Church.

“The St. George community was influenced in many ways by the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The parish today is a leader and model of prayer, formation and action in our diocese,” said Sister Joan.

In her homily, St. George pastor Father James Finnegan told the congregation that “dear neighbor” has helped Harper develop a friendship developed with Sister Ily Fernandez CSJ.

“This charism is a gift of grace,” said Father Yi, who added it is a “fire in our hearts to serve others.” After the homily, 14 inquirers made their commitment to become lay associates.

The new associates were aglow as they spoke about their formation journey after the Mass.

“It’s impossible not to experience the charism by being with them,” said Monique Harper, who is the food services director at the Congregation of St. Joseph Center in Baton Rouge.

Learning about the history of the sisters’ journey to the United States and the sacrifices they made to minister to “dear neighbor” has helped Harper develop patience.

“I learned a lot about being a woman from the sisters by the examples they set in serving others,” said Harper.

Marla Silverberg said she came in contact with the sisters and their charism when her daughters attended St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, which also has a rich history with the congregation.

“They are very strong women,” said Silverberg, who said becoming an associate was an evolving process.

Even though the coronavirus pandemic prompted the meetings of the new associates to change from in person to virtual since March, meeting with other associates remained Silverberg’s favorite part of formation.

“We learned from each other because we’re on the same journey,” said Silverberg.

Alex Torres’ interest in the lay associates came through a friendship developed with Sister Ily Fernandez CSJ.

“She invited me to a retreat where I met associate Mary Karam and other sisters, including Sister Helen Prejean (CJS) and sisters working in New Orleans. I was inspired by their work and their focus on inclusivity,” said Torres.

The Congregation of St. Joseph stands for radical inclusivity for Torres.

“When we say ‘dear neighbor without distinction’ we mean it,” said Torres. “This means that the congregation is not afraid to say ‘Black lives matter’ and support policy that reflects this truth. The sisters condemn white supremacy and do the work to think about their privilege.

“They think critically about how we can be good stewards of this earth. They work to make sure that those at the margins feel included and work towards holding those in power accountable. I love that I can see that contemplation in action – that radical love in action that is needed to transform the world. I feel inspired and hopeful because I know we are doing the work together. And in these current times, to feel inspired and hopeful is a blessing,” said Torres.

Also becoming lay associates were: Amy Andrews, Blake Bruchhaus, Becky Demler, Fallon Gerald, Meg Gerald, Catherine Lowe, Rocio Coto, Linda Hipwell, Mary Michel, Margaret “Mag” Wall and Mary Williams.
even suffering, is an opportunity of growth in holiness as we imitate the Lord.

All Saints Day reorients the faithful to the heart of the Gospel, as we remember generations of men and women from diverse age groups, nationalities, ethnicities and cultures who, marked with the sign of faith, gave GREAT witness to the commandments and to the beatitudes, many to the point of death.

St. John Paul II writes, “Today’s liturgy speaks completely and to the beatitudes, many to the sign of faith, gave GREAT" (homily, Nov. 1, 2000).

Where am I seeking happiness? Am I a witness of happiness found in the love of God and neighbor? Am I asking the Lord to help me to become a saint? Do I recognize the saints who have journeyed the path of eternal beatitude? Do I seek communion with God now, while looking forward to everlasting communion in heaven?

In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “Today’s celebration of the Solemnity of All Saints invites us to rejoice in our communion with the saints in heaven, to implore their intercession for the church on earth and to follow their footsteps in the way of holiness. May the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints strengthen us in faith and fervent hope in the fulfillment of Christ’s promises.” (Angelus, Nov. 1, 2008).

Dow is the director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Bishop Duca announces reorganization changes

Bishop Michael G. Duca has made additional appointments as part of the ongoing reorganization of the Diocesan Curia.

The College of Consultants

The College of Consultants assists Bishop Duca in certain areas of administration as determined by canon law. It also provides for the governance of the diocese if the see is vacant or impeded. The law establishes that the bishop freely establishes the council from members of the Presbyteral Council. There must be six to 12 consultants, and the body is appointed for a term of five years.

Effective Oct. 7, the new College of Consultants is constituted with the following members chosen from the Presbyteral Council: Father Tom Ranzino, Father Jamin David, Father Mike Schatzle, Father Matthew Dupre, Father Matthew Graham, Father Joshua Johnson, Father Michael Miceli, Father Miles Walsh and Father Paul Yi.

Bishop Duca thanked the members of the former College of Consultants for their diligent service, including: Father Tom Ranzino, Father Paul Counce, Father Randy Cuevas, Father Mike Schatzle, Father Robert Stine, Father Walsh and Father Yi.

Director of Continuing Formation for Priests

The Director of Continuing Formation for Priests works with the Continuing Formation for Priests Committee to arrange annual study days and the annual priest retreat. He is also responsible to assist priests who request sabbaticals, to collaborate with the Director of the Priest Mentoring Program and to develop or identify programs to enhance the pastoral aptitude for priests.

Bishop Duca has appointed Father Bani as the new Director of Continuing Formation for Priests. The bishop thanked Father Cuevas for his many years of service in this role.

The Presbyteral Council

Composed of a mix of elected, appointed and ex-officio members, the Presbyteral Council represents the priests of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and serves as a “senate to the bishop” to assist him in governance of the diocese according to the norms of law and to promote the pastoral good of the people of God of the diocese. The council has its own statutes as approved by the bishop.

The council meets monthly September through June unless otherwise convoked by the bishop. The bishop, in consultation with the elected members of the council (Vice-Chair and Secretary), determines the questions to be considered by the council. Proposals for business from the members are to be considered in the weeks leading up to the monthly meeting.

Some changes have been made in terms of appointed membership during the past few months. The current composition of the Presbyteral Council is as follows:

Ex-Officio members:
Father Ranzino (Vicar General); Father Yi (Minister to Priests)

Elected at-large:
Father David (term expires 8/24)
Father Ryan Hallford (term expires 8/23)

Elected by retired priests:
Father Howard Adkins (term expires 8/21)

Elected by deanery:
Father Bani (North Central; term expires 8/24)
Father Al Davidson (Southwest; term expires 8/24)
Father Mark Beard (Northeast; term expires 8/22)
Father Pat Broussard (Northwest; term expires 8/23)
Father Johnson (Southeast; term expires 8/23)
Father Miceli (South Central; term expires 8/23)

Appointed by the bishop:
Father Cuevas, Father Dupre, Father Graham, Father Walsh
(All terms of these members expire 8/24)

Current officers:
Father Beard (Vice-Chair); Father Hallford (Secretary)

Elections for new officers will be held at the October Presbyteral Council meeting.

Bishop Duca thanked these priests for their continued service to the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

On Aug. 28, the bishop had announced several restructuring changes, including the appointment of archivist Ann Boltin as chancellor. She is first lay person to be appointed chancellor in the 59-year history of the diocese. Boltin’s appointment topped structural changes, including the reestablishment of the Bishop’s Cabinet to serve as an advisory council to Bishop Duca in administrative matters at the Catholic Life Center. According to Father David, the architect of the restructuring, the cabinet will meet six times annually and for emergency needs as determined by Bishop Duca.

Serving on the Bishop’s Cabinet are Father David, Episcopal Vicar for Strategic Planning; Boltin, Father Ranzino, Vicar General; Father Counce, Judicial Vicar; Father Yi, Secretary for Catholic Schools; Father Matthew Lorrain, Secretary for Clergy & Religious Life; Father Chris Decker, Secretary for Communications; Father Hallford, Secretary for Evangelization; Father Miceli, Secretary for Pastoral Services; and Amy Cordon, Victim Assistance Coordinator.

Further changes are expected in various consultative bodies and other positions of leadership in the coming months.

Building Bridges:
Racial Healing and Transformation

Coming in The Catholic Commentator

November 20

The mission of the Racial Harmony Commission of the Diocese of Baton Rouge is to build bridges by fostering racial harmony through prayer, dialogue and action, which are rooted in respect for others and in love of neighbor as commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

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### Successful Year

By Richard Mach

The Catholic Commentator

Tears drooled the young eyes of Bryson Addison as he awaited an operation to remove his appendix, one more procedure that total far too many in his 11 years.

Nearby, his mother, Ashley Dabney, patiently waited, a routine that has become all too familiar as her son copes with asthma and neutropenia, which is an abnormally low number of white blood cells, defending in fighting off infections.

When a housekeeper entered to clean the room she noticed tears streaming from Addison’s eyes and asked Dabney, “Mom is it okay if I pray with your son?”

Dabney immediately responded, “Yes, ma’am, please.”

“Tears are not within the realm of her job duties but she did that to make our child more comfortable,” she would later say.

Dabney said it’s the simple things, such as a housekeeper praying with a patient’s child, that sets Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital, which opened Oct. 5, 2019, apart.

### OLOL Children’s Hospital exceeds expectations

Bryson Addison, 11, suffers from asthma and leukopenia, a blood disorder that has developed wonderful relationships with team members at OLOL Children’s Hospital. Photo provided by Ashley Dabney

Addison and his mother, Ashley Dabney. Photo provided by Ashley Dabney

By Richard Mach

The Catholic Commentator

Despite unexpected challenges few could have predicted, including a worldwide pandemic that has claimed more than one million lives worldwide, the hospital has flourished.

“Our staff has held us up well,” said Dr. Troy Dunbar, president of Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Health. “The staff is obviously dedicated to care for those most in need. It is part of our ministry of the Franciscan Health System.”

“Translating from being a wing of Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center to a separate facility was initially an unknown but Dunbar said the move has gone smoothly and has also made a difference in the culture. Being a standalone children’s facility allows the staff to focus “100% of their energy on the children,” he said.

“It is a spirit and feel of care and has decreased in the amount of visits. It’s one less thing I have to worry about and stress over, to see him as comfortable as he is with the staff,” Dunbar said “Seeing his smile really eases my mind as a parent.”

Dunbar admitted COVID-19 presented unique challenges and directly affected patient population.

“Despite the success, or perhaps because of it, Dunbar noted that very few employees have been diagnosed with the virus and none were identified from hospital exposure but through community spread.

Even with the pandemic, Dunbar and the hospital faced extended periods, with some departments, including oncology, by 20 percent or more.

The pediatric trauma program, the only one in the state, has even created a secret handshake with one of the nurses.

“I tell them that healing environment, creating a healing spirit, he said.”

Dunbar cited as an example the ability to anticipate the needs of the child as well as the family in a different way, from the front door to the operating room to the discharge process, adding “it’s not quite as simple as you might feel in a general hospital.”

Dunbar readily agrees, fondly remembering how the staff once brought him a “griddle box” filled with frenchs, personal hygiene products and other items to raise his spirits.

“It is always a pleasant experience,” said Dunbar, who frequents the hospital so often there have been occasions when the ED staff recognized her as soon as she arrived.

“Tears are not within the realm of her job duties but she did that to make our child more comfortable,” she would later say.

Dabney said it’s the simple things, such as a housekeeper praying with a patient’s child, that sets Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital, which opened Oct. 5, 2019, apart.

### Official and employees gather at the blessing of the portrait of Sister Linda Constanin OSF at Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital in Baton Rouge.

Sister Linda died in 2005.

Officials and employees gather at the blessing of the portrait of Sister Linda Constanin OSF at Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital in Baton Rouge. For 30 years Sister Linda served as a nurse and administrator at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge and St. Francis Medical Center in Monroe. Sister Linda died in 2005. Photo provided by Grace Weber | Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center

“Mom is it okay if I prayer with your son?”

“When a housekeeper entered to clean the room she noticed tears streaming from Addison’s eyes and asked Dabney, “Mom is it okay if I pray with your son?”

Dabney immediately responded, “Yes, ma’am, please.”

### Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Health Ambulance.

“Tears are not within the realm of her job duties but she did that to make our child more comfortable,” she would later say.

Dabney said it’s the simple things, such as a housekeeper praying with a patient’s child, that sets Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital, which opened Oct. 5, 2019, apart.

### One day after opening, Oct. 6, 2019:

Addison and his mother, Ashley Dabney.

Adison and his mother, Ashley Dabney. Photo provided by Ashley Dabney

“Mom is it okay if I prayer with your son?”

“When a housekeeper entered to clean the room she noticed tears streaming from Addison’s eyes and asked Dabney, “Mom is it okay if I pray with your son?”

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World Youth Day Lisbon unveils 2023 logo

ROME (CNA) – World Youth Day Lisbon launched its website and unveiled its logo Oct. 15 as Portugal prepares to host the world’s largest gathering of Catholic young people in August 2023.

The logo, featuring the Blessed Virgin Mary in front of a cross, was selected in an international contest with hundreds of participants from 30 countries by the Vatican Diocastery for Laity, Family and Life.

It was designed by Beatriz Roque Antunes, a 24-year-old who works at a communication agency in Lisbon.

“It means a lot to me. It’s not every day that one has the opportunity to offer their gifts to the faith and the church,” Antunes said on finding out that her logo had been selected.

The Marian logo was designed to communicate the World Youth Day theme selected by Pope Francis: “Mary arose and went with haste,” from St. Luke’s account of the Virgin Mary’s visitation to her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation.

The pope announced that the Portuguese capital would host the global Catholic gathering of young people at the closing Mass of the last international World Youth Day in Panama City in January 2019.

Lisbon, a city of 505,000 people, is around 75 miles from Fatima, one of the most visited Marian pilgrimage sites in the world. The 2018 report “European Young Adults and Religion” found that Portugal has one of the highest levels of weekly Mass attendance among young people in Europe.

World Youth Day Lisbon was initially scheduled for Aug. 2022, but the Vatican announced last April that it would be postponed to August 2023, as the World Meeting of Families in Rome was postponed from June 2021 to 2022 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Both events usually include the presence of the pope and gather at least tens of thousands of people.

A delegation from Panama is now scheduled to pass the cross and icon to young people from Portugal on Nov. 22, the Feast of Christ the King. But Bishop Américo Aguilar, the president of the WYD Lisbon Foundation, said this date might be subject to change because of the pandemic.

World Youth Day, which is typically held on a different continent every three years, was started by St. Pope John Paul II in 1985. The Lisbon organizing committee said that it decided to release the logo on Oct. 15 in honor of the anniversary of the election of St. John Paul II.

Sister Gracelyn Soignet CSJ, 82, dies

Sister Gracelyn Soignet CSJ, a sister of St. Joseph for 64 years, passed away at Mount St. Mary Convent in Wichita, Kansas on Sept. 14 at age 82.

She was born in New Orleans to the late Mertyle Michael and Grace Walker Soignet and baptized Gracelyn Ann. She is survived by her brother Donald Soignet and his wife Jeanne.

Sister Gracelyn graduated from St. Joseph Academy in New Orleans in 1956 and entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph in New Orleans that same year. She professed first vows in 1959 and perpetual vows in 1964 and graduated from Dominican College in New Orleans in 1970 with a bachelor’s degree in education. Sister Gracelyn completed the program at Dominican College in teaching the mentally handicapped in 1972 and became a licensed practical nurse in 1980 after studies at Jefferson Vocational Tech in New Orleans.

Her dedication to 55 years in the ministry of Catholic education and healthcare began in...
“The One who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 1:6

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE – Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee in New Roads has added an engineering class to its curriculum. Offered as a Louisiana State University dual-enrollment class, students have the opportunity to take an Introduction to Engineering class. The class will count as a high school credit or as a college credit. Taught by Lillian Reyad, the class allows students to explore the profession of engineering through lectures, collaborative projects, technical writing and presentations. Students pictured are working on a team building exercise where they must learn to work together and communicate their ideas without talking. From left are Andrew Bonaventure, Holden Glaser and Cameron Decoteau. Photo courtesy of Megan Girlinghouse | Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee

PEACE, LOVE AND CURE – Holy Ghost School in Hammond students used their October stewardship to recognize the fight against cancer. Promoting “Peace, Love, Cure,” students were encouraged to wear a color that signified the cancer they were marching for. During their enrichment periods, students marched around campus carrying signs in honor or memory of loved ones who suffered from cancer. Donations will be sent to Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. Brothers, from left, Sal, Landon and Liam DeMarco wear blue to raise awareness for colon cancer. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

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Give online: www.officeofstewardship.com
deanery meetings, inquiring about their needs to help older adults and addressing aging issues.

Mullins said many of the questions centered on adult children preparing to care for aging parents.

“So we prepared a series,” she said. “We kind of looked at it who are the people who are interacting with and where they may be a need.”

They initially partnered with St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, which already had an aging group meeting monthly. Geno at FranU has also taking it a step further, developing an encompassing website that includes a link to ask medical questions and a blog with evidence-based information.

The talk series is available to any interested community group, “running the gamut trying to reach a diverse, geographic, socioeconomic group,” Mullins said.

Any interested group can go to the website and put in their number and contact person, and FranU will be in touch, she said.

FranU students will also have the opportunity to participating in the university’s International Healthy Aging Program present in Porto Portugal in the summer of 2021. Mullins said nursing and physical therapy sisters will take a weeklong class at FranU’s sister college, Colegio Luso-France.

“It’s just really cool stuff,” she said.

Mullins said the need to address the concerns of older adults will become increasingly important because “everyone is going to be aging.”

“Everyone is going to encounter someone, whether it be a neighbor, family member or older adult and have some role in their life,” she said. “It is our calling as Catholic Christians to really look at the whole cycle of birth to natural death and be a part of it all the way through.”

“It’s essential and something our culture does not talk about.”

For more information about Geno at FranU or to inquire about scheduling a talk series for your group, visit gerontology atfranu.com.

1959 at Our Lady of the Rosary School in New Orleans followed by six years at Sacred Heart School in Baton Rouge and two years at St. Pius X in New Orleans. Sister Gracelyn’s next eight years were spent ministering in special education at Sacred Heart-St. Agnes Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

After earning her LPN degree she worked in New Orleans for three years as a nurse at St. Joseph Infirmary and 16 years at Nazareth Inn Apartment Complex as a nurse and arts instructor. From 1999 to 2005 Sister Gracelyn was nurse and administrator at St. Joseph Convent in New Orleans.

As nurse and caregiver for the infirm sisters she evacuated with them during Hurricane Katrina, first to Menard High School in Alexandria, then to the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Barling, Arkansas and finally, on Sept. 5, 2005, to Mt. St. Mary Convent. Sister Gracelyn remained in Wichita caring for the sisters and working first for one year as a charge nurse and then assisting the director of nurses and the charge nurse by accompanying sisters to medical appointments and reporting doctors’ orders until 2016 when she retired.

She continued to offer assistance as long as her health permitted.

Special thanks to the sisters and staff at Mt. St. Mary Convent for their devoted care of Sister Gracelyn as her health declined.

A Mass of Christian Burial celebrated by Father Joseph Gile was celebrated Sept. 24 at Mt. St. Mary Convent. Burial immediately followed in the convent cemetery.

Donations in Sister Gracelyn’s memory may be made to the Sisters of St. Joseph, 3134 Hundred Oaks Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.
USCCB book on racism honored


The Moonbeam Children's Book Awards, according to its website, are “100% dedicated to identifying the best children's books published each year for the North American market.”

The book, published by Loyola Press in December 2019, was authored by the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and illustrated by Kristin Sorra.

“Intended for children ages 5-12, ‘Everyone Belongs’ helps young readers explore potential solutions, reconciliation and healing,” said the USCCB in a statement released on Oct. 15. The book tells the story of Ray Ikanga, a young boy who moves to the United States with his family as refugees fleeing violence.

“The family’s excitement as they move into a new neighborhood is interrupted when someone sprays a hurtful message on their garage,” said the USCCB. “‘Everyone Belongs’ will allow conversations with readers about what our faith calls us to do, especially now, as our country grapples with the realities of racial justice,” the statement said.

The book was inspired by the November 2018 publication of “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism,” which won a nearly unanimous vote at the USCCB’s general assembly that month, following several years of racial tensions in the U.S., sparked by incidents including police shootings of African-American men that prompted major protests in Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, among other parts of the country.

Racial tensions have continued to rise since then, including months of protests and civil unrest following the death of George Floyd earlier this year. “Everyone Belongs” won a gold medal in the 2020 Living Now Book Awards in the category “Children’s Picture Books,” and placed second in the 2020 Catholic Press Association’s children’s books category.

Sister Jane Arbour, 95, dies

Sister Jane Louise Arbour CSJ, a Sister of St. Joseph for 79 years, passed away at Mount St. Mary Convent in Wichita, Kansas on Sept. 17 at age 95.

Sister Jane was born in Baton Rouge, one of eight children of the late Sydney V. and Julia Mae Bahlinger Arbour Sr., and was baptized Julia Mae. She is survived by 31 nieces and nephews and their children. She was pre-deceased by her siblings: Gertie Lee Arbour McNeely, Katherine Arbour Hannaman, Eloise Arbour Selig, Virginia Arbour Tomet- ny, Sidney V. Arbour Jr., Julius B. (J.B) Arbour and Robert F. Arbour.

Sister Jane graduated from St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge in 1941 and entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph in New Orleans that year. She professed first vows in 1943 and perpetual vows in 1946.

Sister Jane earned a bachelor's degree in education from Loyola New Orleans in 1953, a master’s in library science from LSU in 1961 and a Master of Arts in Theology at the University of Notre Dame in 1969.

Sister Jane served for 66 years at various levels of Catholic education at the elementary, secondary and university levels and in adult education. She began as a teacher of first grade at St. Ann Catholic School in New Orleans in 1943 and continued teaching for the next 18 years at Our Lady of the Rosary in New Orleans, St. Joseph Academy in New Roads, St. Joseph Academy in New Orleans and St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge.

From 1962 to 1965 she broke new ground when was invited to serve as campus minister at the LSU Newman Center and librarian at St. Joseph Prep Seminary in Baton Rouge. The next six years she served as librarian at St. Joseph Junior College and provincial secretary in New Orleans.

The following 38 years were spent in Baton Rouge at St. Thomas More Church serving as co-director of religious education, doing adult education and serving from 1976 to 2009 as pastoral associate.

Sister Jane was beloved by her family, many former students, colleagues, parishioners and classmates, especially her dearest friend from their earliest years at St. Joseph’s Academy, the late Sister Jane Moore CSJ.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Sept. 29 at Mt. St. Mary Convent in Wichita and burial followed in the convent cemetery. Donations in Sister Jane Louise’s memory may be made to the Sisters of St. Joseph, 3343 Hundred Oaks Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA. 70808.
Fratelli Tutti

O

n Nov. 3, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, his namesake, Pope Francis, went to that beautiful little town in Umbria, Italy to celebrate Mass in its basilica and announce to the world the publication of his third encyclical letter “Fratelli Tutti.” The words in Italian are taken from a letter of St. Francis to his friars and translate “Brothers All,” a nice historical touch. Titles of encyclicals traditionally begin with the first two nouns, adjectives or verbs of the letter. However, Pope Francis was quick in his first sentence to address “brothers and sisters.” The name of the letter is also appropriate because the letter stresses the equality of all human beings, inclusiveness and fraternal charity, as antidotes to the divisiveness, inequality and estrangement that plagues modern society around the globe. In the fifth paragraph Pope Francis says, “Issues of human fraternity and social friendship have always been a concern of mine.”

The encyclical is quite long, 287 paragraphs plus some prayers that Pope Francis adds at the end. Commentators suggest that readers take one of its eight chapters at a time, read it and meditatively digest it before going on. It would be difficult to read in one sitting.

The encyclical is a moral assessment of modern society with very direct statements of the spiritual solutions needed to heal its problems. As usually happens when I read encyclicals, the chapters I like are those that stress sacred Scripture. Pope Francis gives a whole chapter to Jesus’ parable of the good Samaritan as an example of fraternal charity and inclusiveness. The Samaritan himself was an outcast, a Samaritan as an example of fraternal charity and inclusiveness. The Samaritan was quick in his first sentence to address “brothers and sisters.” The priest and the Levite show that “belief in God and worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. The guarantee of an authentic openness to God is a way of practicing the faith that helps open our hearts to our brothers and sisters.”

I began with Chapter Two because I think that Pope Francis is best when he uses Scripture to explain his points about living an authentic Christian life in today’s world. His opening chapter is a critique of our technological-informational society as some of its weaknesses have been highlighted by the global pandemic. Pope Francis says that COVID-19 exposed false securities in our national relationships. The inability of various countries to work together during COVID-19 became evident. There are dark clouds, the pope says, over a closed world, trends that hinder universal fraternity.

These are: The exploitation of resources that can end in completely depleting them. A large increase of wealth has been gained but with an equally large increase in inequality. Human rights are not equal for all. In many countries hyperbole, extremism and polarization have become political tools. We are growing ever more distant from one another. Wastefulness, especially of food, is deplorable. Worldwide, women do not have the same dignity as men. War, terrorist attacks, racial and religious persecution constitute “a real third world war fought piecemeal.”

The economy and technological progress gave us false security. Then came the pandemic. “We had gorged ourselves on networking and lost the taste of fraternity. It is urgent,” says Pope Francis, that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.

Pope Francis strongly defends immigrants. He names the next section “An Absence of Human Dignity on the Borders.” He claims that “certain populist political regimes, as well as certain liberal economic approaches maintain that an influx of migrants is to be prevented at all costs.” And then he adds, “No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet, in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human. For Christians, this way of thinking and acting is unacceptable, since it sets certain political preferences above deep convictions of our faith: the inalienable dignity of each person regardless of origin, race or religion and the supreme law of fraternal love.”

SEE CARVILLE PAGE 19

Another Perspective

Father John Carville

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

Oct. 29
Rev. Caye A. (Trey) Nelson III
Dcn. Natale (Nati) J. Garofalo
Br. Harold Harris SC

Oct. 30
Rev. Peter Neuman ICM
Dcn. Edward J. Gauthreaux
Sr. Adele Lambert CSJ

Oct. 31
Rev. Hung Viet Nguyen ICM
Dcn. Steven C. Gonzales
Br. Ray Hebert SC

Nov. 1
Rev. Michael Thanh Nguyen ICM
Dcn. Richard H. Grant
Sr. Frances Landry CSJ

Nov. 2
Rev. Minh Hai Nguyen ICM
Dcn. Ronald J. Hebert

Nov. 3
Rev. Tan Viet Nguyen ICM
Dcn. Clayton A. Hollier
Sr. Joan Laplace CSJ

Nov. 4
Rev. Thanh Van Nguyen ICM
Dcn. George Hooper SC
Br. Clifford King SC

Nov. 5
Rev. Nicholas J. (Jack) Nutter III
Dcn. Michael J. (Shelley) Joseph
Sr. Catherine Luu FMOL

Nov. 6
Rev. Michael J. O’Rourke OP
Br. Noel Lemmon SC

Nov. 7
Rev. Jason P. Palermo
Dcn. Robert J. Kusch
Sr. Lilian Lynch FMOL

Nov. 8
Rev. Amirat Raj IMS
Dcn. Chris Landry
Br. Roger LeMoyne SC

Nov. 9
Rev. Thomas C. Ravzano
Dcn. Albert Levy III
Sr. Joan Manuel CSJ

Nov. 10
Rev. Rubin Reynolds
Dcn. James A. Little
Br. Malcolm Melcher SC

Nov. 11
Rev. Anthony J. Russo
Dcn. Robert McDonner
Sr. Alphonse Maria CMC
Voting as a faith-filled citizen

This past week early voting began for the presidential election of 2020. Those who are already voting have made up their minds about the best choice for president, but there are many who continue to struggle with how and for whom they should vote. I’d like to present a few reflections on the principles that will help us make an informed and faith-filled decision as Catholics and disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, we must affirm that in this election we are foremost voting to choose the candidate to fill the office of PRESIDENT of the United States. We are looking for the candidate who best embodies the skills and virtues necessary for leadership both domestically and internationally. We are looking for a candidate whose policy and vision of what is best for our country expresses our hopes and vision for our nation and is the candidate we trust to use the great power that comes with the office of the presidency for the good of ALL the people and for sustaining and protecting this great democracy.

As Catholics we should approach our vote necessarily through the eyes of our faith. We would be naïve if we were not aware that each candidate and party has some policies that align with our faith and others that do not. We need a lens through which to discern how the policies of a party will shape the moral fiber of our country and answer the question of whether this president will protect the liberty and justice of ALL.

I along with the other bishops of the United States have given an in-depth teaching on this in our document “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” which can be found at: usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf. For this short article I give one of the principles that should stand at the heart of all our civic and religious lives and should be the foundational guide as we discern the right path to take through the divided landscape of our times.

At the center of all Catholic moral teaching is the clearest commandment of Jesus that we LOVE ONE ANOTHER. In the teaching of our church through the centuries, we live and witness this command through our beliefs in, and our respect for, the life and dignity of every human person. This command to love one another is a non-negotiable value for the Christian and can serve us well as we discern our choice for president. As we approach the polls to make our choice, we should consider the question, “How will each candidate, from their historical record and proposed policies respect the dignity of the human person?”

As Catholics, we understand that the respect for the dignity of human life must begin at the moment of conception, and we stand firmly against legalizing abortion because to respect human life we must respect human life at every stage. When we as a culture give permission for legalized abortion, we set up a cultural wound that legally makes the unalienable right to life, alienable, a right our government was established to protect. Our firm commitment to protect the unborn child’s right to life also binds us to act in defense of the dignity of each person at every stage of life. You cannot stand for the dignity of every human person if you do not include the life of the unborn, and you cannot be truly pro-life if you only stand up for the life of the unborn and fail, with an equal ferocity and fervor, to combat the evils that denigrate the human person throughout the world today.

The right to life implies and is linked to other human rights to the basic goods that every human person needs to live and thrive. All the life issues are connected, for erosion of respect for the life of any individual or group in society necessarily diminishes respect for all life. The moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work— is universally binding on our consciences and may be legitimately fulfilled by a variety of means. Catholics must seek the best ways to respond to these needs. Racism and other unjust discrimination, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger or a lack of health care, pornography, redeeming civil marriage, compromising religious liberty or an unjust immigration policy are all serious moral issues that challenge our consciences and require us to act. These are not optional concerns which can be dismissed. Catholics are urged to seriously consider church teaching on these issues. Although choices about how best to respond to these and other compelling threats to human life and dignity are matters for principled debate and decision, this does not make them optional concerns or permit Catholics to dismiss or ignore church teaching on these important issues.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not factions, but one family of faith fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ. Yet I know some are still unsure how they will vote even after seriously considering all that I have written. Ultimately, I counsel you to let your rightly formed conscience be your guide a conscience informed by Catholic teaching with a profound concern for the dignity of every human life.

Pope Francis’ new encyclical

On Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis released a new encyclical entitled, “Fratelli Tutti – On Fraternity and Social Friendship.” It can appear a rather depressing read because of its sorrowing realism, except it plays the long game of Christian hope.

Fratelli Tutti lays out reasons why there’s so much injustice, inequality and community breakdown in our world and how in faith and love these might be addressed. The intent here is not to give a synopsis of the encyclical, other than to say it’s courageous and speaks truth to power. Rather, the intent is to highlight a number of special challenges within the encyclical.

First, it challenges us to see the poor and to see what our present political, economic and social systems are doing to them. Looking at our world, the encyclical submits that in many ways it is a broken world and it names some reasons for this: the globalization of self-interest, the globalization of superficiality and the abuse of social media, among other things. This has made for the survival of the fittest. And while the situation is broken for everyone, the poor are ending up suffering the most. The rich are getting richer, the powerful are getting more powerful and the poor are growing poorer and losing what little power they had. There’s an ever-increasing inequality of wealth and power between the rich and the poor and our world is becoming ever more callous vis-à-vis the situation of the poor. Inequality is now accepted as normal and as moral and indeed is often justified in the name of God and religion. The poor are becoming disposable: “Some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others. Wealth has increased, but together with inequality,” the pope writes. In speaking of inequality, the encyclical twice highlights that this inequality is true of women worldwide: “It is unacceptable that some have fewer rights by virtue of being women.”

The encyclical employs the parable of the good samaritan as its ground metaphor. It compares us today, individually and collectively, to the priest and the scribe in that parable who for religious, social and political reasons walk past the one who is poor, beaten, bleeding and in need of help. Our indifference and our religious failure, like that of the priest and the scribe in the parable, is rooted both in a personal moral blindness as well as in the social and religious ethos of our society that helps spawn that blindness.

The encyclical goes on to warn that in the face of globalization we must resist becoming nationalistic and tribal, taking care of our own and demonizing what’s foreign. It goes on to say that in a time of bitterness, hatred and animosity, we must be tender and gracious, always speaking out of love and not out of hatred: “Kindness ought to be cultivated; it is no superficial bourgeois virtue.”

The encyclical acknowledges how difficult and counter-cultural it is to today to sacrifice our own agenda, comfort and freedom for community, but invites us to make that sacrifice: “I would like especially to mention solidarity which is a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion.”

At one point, the encyclical gives a very explicit (and see ROLHEISER PAGE 20)
Silver Rose Prayer Service – Knights of Columbus Council 3743 of St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge, will host a silver rose in prayer service Friday, Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m. at St. Aloysius. The silver rose program features eight silver roses that travel between Mexico, Canada and the United States in honor of our Lady of Guadalupe and to promote respect for life. For more information, email Sam Mistretta at smistretta2@cox.net or call the St. Aloysius Church office at 225-343-6657.

Pro-Vita-thon – A virtual Pro-Vita-thon, “With Lamps Burning Brightly” will take place Thursday, Oct. 29, 7–8:30 p.m., through Catholic Community Radio and YouTube Live. All proceeds will benefit scholarships for the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit youthmarchforlife.org.

LaFête de Bayou Bass Fishing Tournament – Fishers of Men National Tournament Trail will sponsor the first LaFête de Bayou Bass Fishing Tournament, open to all public waters Saturday, Oct. 31. There will be adult and junior divisions. For more information email Malcolm Smith, tournament director, at msmith@fosmmtt.com or call 225-779-3339.

Women’s Day of Prayer and Healing – A Women’s Day of Prayer and Healing, “Entering Canaan,” sponsored by the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will be held for women who have been impacted by abortion Saturday, Nov. 7, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. For more information, call 225-325-3459 or email enterinccanaan@diobr.org. All inquiries are confidential.

Virtual Called to Love Retreat – The Office of Marriage and Family Life will sponsor a virtual Called to Love retreat for engaged couples Friday, Nov. 13 – Sunday, Nov. 15. To register, visit mldiobr.org.

Virtual Born to Run – Woman’s New Life Center in Baton Rouge will host a virtual Born to Run Saturday, Nov. 14 – Saturday, Nov. 21. Choose your own route and start time. Register online and support women in need by walking or running 5K or 1 mile. A swag bag with t-shirt and participation medal are guaranteed for those registering online before Friday, Oct. 16. To register visit classy.org/event/born-to-run-baton-rouge-wherever-you-are/ezb907y.

Healing Mini-Conference – Sister Brigid McKenna, of the Sisters of St. Clare, will hold a Catholic Charismatic Healing Mini-Conference sponsored by Catholic Charismatic Renewal of New Orleans, Friday, Nov. 13 and Saturday, Nov. 14, at Angela Merici Church, 901 Beverly Garden Dr., Metairie. Both days there will be a morning session, 9:30 a.m. – noon, and evening session, 7 – 9:30 p.m. Cost is $15 per person per session. Pre-registration is required at ccrno.org. More information can also be found on the CCRNO website or by calling 504-828-1368.

Icon Workshop – The Abbey Retreat Center at St. Joseph Abbey in St. Benedict will host its 30th annual all-level Prosopon Icon Workshop Wednesday, Dec. 16 – Monday, Dec. 21. To register or for more information call Christine Daunis at 225-252-3090 or email christinedaunis@yahoo.com.

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Diocese of Baton Rouge

www.neveelaenders catholic.com
ing at each other’s home. During the weekly, two-hour meeting the women discuss the book, pray the rosary, reflect on the Gospel of the day, discuss virtues and study the Catechism of The Catholic Church. Sometimes they meet for Mass and at adoration chapels for silent, semi-guided prayer.

Romero said from the begin-
ing of the group’s participation in 40 Days for Life their commitment has been “100%.”

She added, “Honestly, there are so many beautiful experiences we have had while sitting there praying over the years, that it is difficult to remember them all. We have had women come to the 40 Days for Life tent and thank us as they tell us our wit-
ess of prayer prevented them from having their abortion.

“We have talked to dads in cars, and boyfriends while waiting in the parking lot, encour-
aging them to stop the abortion from taking place. We have sat and prayed with women under the tent and on the sidewalk who have shared their own abortion stories with us and we know by God’s grace, that they have never told anyone their stories until that day. We have met mothers and their babies who were spared from abortion, and we cele-
brate with them their joy.”

The group members come to 40 Days for Life weekly and draw from their experiences as mothers, pray the rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet, and read and reflect on the Gospel, said Jeanne Garcia and Tam-
mie May.

“But because we have family we (felt called) to be here,” said Garcia, a member of STM, who prays that the women coming to the clinic for an abortion will understand they are carrying an unborn child.

She added, “I know how much joy my children bring me; it’s heartbreaking to think that these women would take their own children’s lives. They are throwing away God’s blessings.”

OLOM member Tammie May said the group is a presence of love, mercy, help and healing for women coming to the clinic for an abortion. They also pray for the conversion for those who work for the abortion industry.

“He (Jesus) is love and we want to show (the women approaching the clinic) that love,” said May.

“I pray that they somewhere down the road they will find healing and be brought back to God,” Garcia said.

In the midst of tragedy, how-
ever, the women believe through prayer that God plants the seeds that save babies and redeems souls.

“You see so many things, hear so many stories,” said May.

Sheryl Womack attends St. Aloysius Church and Our Lady of Mercy.

She said To Jesus Through Mary lends her accountable and accompanies her on her faith jour-
ney.

“We’re strong as individu-
als and as a group,” said Womack.

She was moved to join the prayer group at 40 Days for Life after reading the book “Un-
planned” by Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic director who left her job and became a pro-life advocate after witnessing an abortion procedure.

Womack said the people praying and sidewalk counselors form bonds as they support each other.

“The sidewalk counselors say when we pray they can feel it,” Womack said. “We hope (the women coming to the clinic for an abortion) can feel it too. It af-
fected you did that. It’s healing.”

She said many of the women in the prayer group have teen-
agers and they know that many of the young girls coming to the clinic are likely scared.

“These girls may feel like they have no place to turn. We want God to touch their hearts and let them know there are people here who love them and to help them in any capacity … all they need is love and kindness. There’s no judgment; they want them to know ‘God put you on Earth for a reason,’” Womack said.

May agreed, “It’s one per-
son reaching out to another and that’s what Jesus does.”

CARVILLE

Nowhere does the pope name any specific countries as acting in an unchristian way towards immigrants. This is a global problem with people fleeing persecution in Africa as well as Central and South America. The borders of many nations are being crossed. The God of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament demands they be welcomed and helped.

At the end of Chapter Two Pope Francis swings back to the role of the media in forming human response to the world’s problems. He says that digital platforms can now group people who think alike. This actually shields them from debate with those who have contrasting views, resulting in ideologies which weaken true democracy and produce fake news, false information, prejudice and hate. All of this is hurtful to the “fraternity that we share as Samaritan in the persons of so many in medical and service work. Then follows the beautiful meditation in Chapter Two on Jesus’ parable where I began.

Chapter Three is about “En-
visaging and Engendering an Open World.” It is the theology of our response to the stranger in our world. Jesus died for all of us, “Not us and we,” Pope Francis says, “is beyond the scope of his universal love.”

And furthermore, we are all created in the image of God whom Jesus revealed as a trin-
ity of love, father, son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have to oppose those who support “va-
lentines of violent nationalism, xenophobia, contempt and even the mistreatment of those who are different.”

Our relationship with Christ can lead us to love the least of his brethren. Such love is more than a series of benevolent ac-
tions. It leads us to esteem and appreciate the value of others and see them as pleasing and beautiful in themselves. It is this love, “felt called” to be here,” that moves us to seek the best for their lives. Not every-
one, of course, is a believer. But even for agnostics and atheists, the dignity of every person has to be based on the intrinsic worth of every human being.

“Unless this basic principle is upheld,” Pope Francis warns us, “there will be no future for fraternity or for the survival of humanity.”

Upholding the dignity of every person means that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a stronger nation. We cannot forget the slow, the weak and the less talented. So we need institutions that are concerned with individuals and the com-
mongood. With this in mind, Pope Francis writes, “If a so-
ciety is governed primarily by the criteria of market freedom and efficiency, there is no place for such persons, and fraternity will remain just another vague idea.” The operative word here is “primarily.” It cannot mean “only.” We want a strong mar-
et and efficient government, but not at the expense of the slow, the weak (ill) and the less
talented. They are part of the common good, part of us, said Womack.

I hope to complete a sum-
maries of the chapters 5-8 in the next issue of The Catholic Comment-
ator.

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“To protect human life, nothing in this constitution shall be construed to secure or protect a right to abortion or require the funding of abortion.”

Van Haute said she is optimistic about voter approval of the amendment, noting she is sensing an “enthusiasm” among supporters.

She said many churches have put notices in their bulletins regarding the amendments provided by her office and clergy have made announcements from the pulpit. Yard signs and other materials have also been distributed by Louisiana Right to Life.

“People are excited about it,” Van Haute said. “To have something people can unite over is something that is really important right now. What better cause than the fundamental issue of the right to life.”

Added Thomas: “This is a huge moment in history. We have the opportunity to be a voice for the voiceless and use our vote to protect the unborn!”

During these difficult and uncertain times, we need your support, so that we can offer our community have been hit hard by the pandemic and the struggling economy. This is the desperate situation. Our Sweet Dreams Shelter is the answer to the prayers of mothers and fathers in desperate need. We provide a helping hand-up and a safe place to stay.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, we need your help more than ever. Every year, through our Sweet Dreams effort, we ask people to pray for those we serve. Please save this Sweet Dreams Prayer and make it a regular part of your spiritual life. Pray for the homeless, especially women, children like Libby and Amy, and families! See the envelope insert in this issue to see how you can help, or visit us online at www.svdpbr.org.