Diocese’s goal is to foster racial unity

One day I was having a conversation with my dad about growing up in Dallas. He explained that his south Dallas neighborhood was made up of mainly Italian, Jewish and African American families. He remembered that he mostly played on his own street, but often the children of the neighborhood would gather to play baseball at the neighborhood park. It’s just what children did back then.

He remembered one day, during a neighborhood baseball game, a policeman pulled up and called the white children over to his car. The policeman told them they should not be playing with those Black children and they should have their own game. My dad remarked that from that day on the way the neighborhood children played together changed a lot.

At the end of May this year, with the death of Mr. George Floyd, the issues of race and equality in our country have once again caught our nation’s attention. The voice of the African American community has been energized and encouraged to tell its story of what growing up and living in the United States is like for a Black American. While others, who have lived outside of the African American experience, feel threatened by this unfamiliar description of life in America. They refuse to listen, calling the stories of the Black communities’ experience of inequality propaganda, or fake news. Maybe they don’t listen because they just want things to get back to normal. This desire of the African community to be heard, and the resistance of others to listen, sets up a tragic scenario. There needs to be a way to avoid an ever-deepening divide within our community.

The BUILDING BRIDGES: Racial Healing and Transformation special section in this edition of The Catholic Commentator is one step to help build bridges that will bring us together as one family in faith and community. As Catholics, we know that our strongest bond is our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who commands us to love one another. We have all been baptized into this family of faith, and we are one in Christ.

But despite this profound unity in Christ, we do not know each other well. We, as a church community, have not always taken time or provided opportunities for all the different voices, nationalities, races and ages of our Catholic family to be heard and become better known to us. With this special section, we hope to foster greater unity and promote heartfelt conversation.

GOBBLE UP!
Thanksgiving tradition continues

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A pair of long-standing Thanksgiving Day traditions in Baton Rouge will continue although with a decidedly different look as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul will host its annual Thanksgiving dinner for the homeless at its men’s homeless shelter and also host the Holiday Helpers lunch at the Raising Cane’s River Center, which is open to the general public.

However, because of the pandemic, no indoor seating will be available. Rather, meals at the homeless shelter will be distributed through a to-go window and drive through will be available at the River Center, according to St. Vincent President and CEO Michael Acaldo.

St. Vincent has been serving hot meals on Thanksgiving Day since 1982 and Holiday Helpers was established in 1987.

“At St. Vincent de Paul we are excited about keeping these traditions alive,” Acaldo said. “COVID-19 has put a lot of question marks in a lot of things but we had always planned to do both.

“We would have liked to have had a sit down dinner but we really did not want to do anything that could be a (virus) super spreader event.”

Acaldo said limiting exposure to volunteers and patrons was a priority. As a result, because of the changes the typical army of 300 volunteers will be reduced to about 75.

“Louisiana (coronavirus) numbers are not looking all that bad but we really don’t know what those numbers will look like come Thanksgiving Day,” he said. “No doubt it’s going to be a challenge: we know that.”

Acaldo was thrilled with the news that for the second consecutive year Congregation B’nai Israel in Baton Rouge has agreed to donate the turkeys through its annual Turkey Train campaign.

Effects of the pandemic will likely reduce the number of people served, Acaldo acknowledged. He said a year ago, the venues provided close to a combined 1,200 Thanksgiving lunches but hopes to distribute at least 1,000 meals this year.

Acaldo also recognizes the increased difficulty in getting food to individuals so his agency is partnering with local church groups and community organizations to ensure people get meals.

See Thanksgiving Page 16

From the Bishop
Bishop Michael G. Duca

The Catholic Commentator is one step to help build bridges that will bring us together as one family in faith and community. As Catholics, we know that our strongest bond is our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who commands us to love one another. We have all been baptized into this family of faith, and we are one in Christ.

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See Duca Page 13
Our only hope

By Dina Dow

The liturgical year, Cycle A, concludes with the celebration of the Sollemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, as the new liturgical year, Cycle B, begins with the First Sunday of Advent. The Sunday Mass readings fill us with the light of the kerygma (pronounced ke-ri-ma), the first proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, namely “that in Jesus Christ, who was crucified, died and rose, salvation is offered to all people as a gift of God’s grace and mercy” (“Mission of the Redeemer” encyclical, St. John Paul II, 1990).

This is the hope in which we live ... Jesus, son of God, lived, suffered, died and resurrected so that the path to heaven is open by his perfect sacrifice which freed us from bondage of sin and death. Jesus loves us beyond measure. His mercy endures forever. We place our hope in his kingdom, his power and give all glory to our king.

Hope in the kingdom

The Sollemnity of Christ the King opens with a reading from the Book of Ezekiel. The prophet proclaims that God is the shepherd for the lost and exiled people of Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity. Like a shepherd, God looks after and tends the scattered flock, rescues them from darkness and provides rest and care. Even in our wandering away from the kingdom, the Lord pursues us. God’s kingdom is rich in mercy, yet he demands justice. Hence, those who choose not to follow him will be separated. For those who do follow, he rewards them sanctity in the kingdom. This is eternal happiness.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 1720 explains, “The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude (happiness) to which God calls man: the coming of the kingdom of God, the vision of God: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;’ entering into the joy of the Lord; and entering into God’s rest: ‘There shall we rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?’

God invites to live now in his kingdom by way of the path of Jesus Christ and anticipate with hope the eternal kingdom.

Psalm 23 sheds incredible light on life in the kingdom. “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” This well-known psalm gives rise to profound meditation. Place yourself in pasture filled with lush grass and embrace the calm, tranquil moment. Follow God to calm waters, as he refreshes your soul with quiet. Let the Lord guide you with advice, good counsel, enlightenment, teachings and movement on the right path. Then sit, sit at the table as the Lord pours abundant grace of anointing, sanctity and life, with goodness and kindness to follow. For surely, since the Lord is indeed our shepherd, we can fully trust in him for all that we need for today and in eternity, now and forever.

Hope in the power

Normally, when we refer to the power of a king, the first thought that may come to mind is the centralized power in one person, the one who holds the scepter, sheer authority, and unyielding might. Jesus Christ, as our sovereign king holds power with merciful might. Jesus reveals merciful power in his discourse of the final judgment. With an invitation, he said to his disciples when the son of man comes in glory, having separated the sheep from the goats, “He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me’” (Mt 25:25-46).

Jesus’ power is the merciful path of love which gives hope to others in how we love and serve. This is restorative power; healing power; life-giving power. Jesus continues, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.” We do it for him.

“Christ, king and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all, for he came ‘not to be served but to serve, and to give his

See GOSPEL PAGE 15
International adoption offers hope to forgotten youth

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Paula Davis’ office at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge is filled with pictures and letters telling of the tears, fears, struggles and snuggles of families she’s worked with as they open their arms over thousands of miles to welcome children from other countries through international adoptions.

Davis, CCDBR Clinical Director of Maternity, Adoption and Behavioral Health Services, said adopting families face many challenges but yet the rewards can be far greater.

Parents who tend to adopt children internationally are already parenting other children, Davis said. And their reasons for wanting to adopt can vary, she added, noting November is International Adoption Awareness Month.

Sometimes God has “put on their hearts” the desire to help a child from another country, or they have travelled to another country and desire to raise a child from there, or perhaps they might already have a couple of boys and, especially for moms, they “want a girl so they can put bows in her hair and have her wear a dress” and the other experiences of raising a daughter.

Children who are adopted domestically are often newborn but those adopted internationally are typically two years old or older and come from orphanages and institutions, Davis said. CCDBR connects families with these institutions and the guidelines are set by the foreign government.

Davis explained many of the circumstances of children adopted domestically and internationally are similar: typically children of color, have lacked prenatal care, the birth mother was under stress during pregnancy, the baby was exposed to substances in-utero, they are often premature and may have special needs.

In foreign adoptions, English might not be the child’s native language but the child tends to pick it up quickly, according to Davis. If not, the child is referred to speech therapy.

CCDBR steps in early to help potential families navigate the adoption journey. After the parents go through the pre-applications and application process, they go through training and a home study. Davis said Catholic Charities always wants to be sure the parents have realistic expectations when adopting a child.

COVID-19 has presented unique challenges affecting the adoption process, said Davis. Concerning the application process, interviews are conducted virtually and home visits may be conducted virtually or outside the home. Some families have been matched with a child but cannot travel to the child’s native country.

Adopting parents are provided little information about the background of the children, sometimes not even their age. Because the children typically come from institutions they may have developed “survival skills” that can be challenging for families.

But CCDBR provides individual and family counseling for those struggling with adoption-related issues. The agency also provides supervision after the child is in the home.

Adoption can mean the difference between life and death for the children, according to Davis, who shared stories of children who had emergency life-saving surgeries and procedures that they otherwise would not have had.

Davis, who received the 2019 Congressional Coalition Institute’s Angels in Adoption Award, has enjoyed helping connect children with families through international adoptions for more than 21 years.

“It’s nice to see pictures and updates on how the kids are doing,” Davis said.

One couple Davis has journeyed with are Ken and Koni Maat. While on a mission trip to China Ken met Jing, who has special needs, and the couple fell in love with her and adopted her. The Maats wrote that their first day started with “fears and tears” but ended with Jing nestled between them.

Their letter read, “Over the past five years there have been many days with fear of the unknown, a few tears, but the constant is the complete love we have for this little girl who has given us the privilege to love and raise. We often look at her and marvel that she is really ours.”

Next issue: Stories of families who adopted children internationally through CCDBR.
Voters send signal recognizing dignity of life

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Louisiana voters’ overwhelming endorsement of the Love Life Amendment was a statement that the majority of residents recognize the value of human life, according to the leading pro-life official in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

The amendment, which ensures that state judges cannot use the state constitution to hold sacred a right to abortion or the taxpayer funding of abortion in Louisiana and keeps the issue of abortion in the hands of the people through elected legislators rather than the courts, garnered more than 60 percent of voters’ support during the Nov. 3 election.

“I feel like it was bipartisan support and that reflects the whole trajectory of the amendment as we watched it pass through the legislature,” said Danielle Van Haute, Respect Life Director for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “The number of votes in support was reflective of not just one political party.”

Van Haute said the amendment reflects that any decision made, or any laws passed regarding human life and the dignity of the person do not belong in the hands of judges. In fact, she said if Roe vs. Wade is overturned, the amendment prevents any judiciary decisions that may undermine laws that are already in effect.

“Anything that happens pertaining to laws regarding abortion needs to happen with legislation, says Van Haute. “We the people, through our legislators, can pass laws defending life without the intervention of judges,” Van Haute said.

Louisiana Right to Life Executive Director Ben Clapper said voters showed their love for mothers and babies.

“We the people, through our legislators, can pass laws defending life without the intervention of judges,” Clapper said. “We encourage other states to pass their own version of the Love Life Amendment. For too long, activist judges around the nation have usurped the power of state legislatures and declared a right to abortion-on-demand.”

Although the landslide reinforced Louisiana’s reputation as one of the country’s leading pro-life states, Van Haute noted that abortion remains legal, and encouraged pro-life supporters to continue their efforts to overturn Roe vs. Wade.

“One of the primary aspects from the church’s perspective is that we continue to educate and evangelize within the Catholic Church on the dignity of the human person,” Van Haute said. “And then we seek to model that as we live our lives and bring that out into society.

“And also engage with society and find opportunities to speak about the life issues but we can’t divorce that conversation from the larger conversation of God and Christ.”

Van Haute was also thrilled with success of the recent 40 Days for Life campaign. She said there were at least 16 mothers who chose life and change their original intention to abort their unborn child.

“It’s a good number; any number is great,” she said. “We also realize that we’ll never know the full impact that all of those prayers and sacrifices made this side of heaven.”

She said more than 1,000 people representing more than 40 groups participated. She said those numbers were encouraging because of the uncertainty regarding the coronavirus pandemic and its restrictions.

“During 40 Days we are called to go out and to pray and to sacrifice,” she said. “At the end of the 40 days we can know we were faithful in fulfilling that goal.”

“It’s always a great consolation to be able to know that 16 women chose life, but ultimately there is no way to calculate the blessings and graces that have come from 40 Days,” Van Haute said.

“During 40 Days we are called to go out and to pray and to sacrifice. At the end of the 40 days we can know we were faithful in fulfilling that goal.”

Danielle Van Haute
Respect Life Director for the Diocese of Baton Rouge
Emotion tugged at Deacon Alfred Adams as he cast a forlorn eye at the rich St. James civil parish soil upon which he was standing, an area that was once plantation fields sprawling with slaves and the same site where corporate giant Formosa is hoping to build a mammoth $9.4 million plastics plant.

Deacon Adams could only wonder how many of his ancestors were buried in graves that lay below his feet.

“That is why I was in tears,” he said. “All I could think about was that I could have some of my ancestors down in that ground and didn’t even know it.”

Deacon Adams joined Bishop Michael G. Duca and several clergy members of the Diocese of Baton Rouge as well as St. James residents for a prayer service Oct. 31 at the site of the proposed plant, which stands in the shadow of the Sunshine Bridge. For Deacon Adams, the prayer service was personal not only because of his ancestral connection but because he was also raised in nearby Vacherie.

“The prayer service was very, very moving for me,” Deacon Adams said. “I like the way everything was done.”

Bishop Duca talked about how the slaves that were buried on the site, gravesites only recently discovered, were finally receiving a proper burial. Also during the sun-drenched morning service Father Joshua Johnson, pastor of Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, spoke about how God knows the names of the slaves buried there because they are written in the Book of Life.

“I’m glad I did not have to say anything because I would have probably teared up,” Deacon Adams said. “Most of my people are from (the area). I could just imagine I was standing on (the grave) of one of my great-great-great grandparents.”

As a homegrown native, he has a special affinity for the area and while he understands the need to generate much-needed revenue for the parish, he also questions when does money transcend human dignity and loss of life. St. James is already home to several petrochemical plants and if completed, the new Formosa facility would add up to 12 additional plants that would produce the foundational chemicals used in a number of plastic products.

Community and environmental groups have protested construction of the plant since it was announced in 2018, citing evidence revealing an extraordinarily higher rate of cancer among residents.

SEE FORMOSA PAGE 11

Bishop Michael G. Duca led the prayer service and before leaving spent a few moments in reflection and prayer in a nearby sugar cane field.

Several clergy members from the Diocese of Baton Rouge were in attendance, including, from left, Father Matthew McCaughey, Deacon Alfred Adams, Father Vincent Dufresne, Father Tom Clark, Father Johnson and Deacon Chris Kellerman, who is scheduled to be ordained a Society of Jesus priest in 2021.

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By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The One who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 1:6
I am confused, angry and frustrated with the Catholic Church with so much scandals involving priests in the Catholic Church. Why should I remain Catholic?

Because of the recent scandals involving two priests in New Orleans, as well as other scandals involving our clergy, you have a right to be confused, angry and frustrated. But this is not the time to run away and hide. It is a time to fight for your church, fight for change, fight for the priests who have remained faithful and fight for the victims who were abused.

Running away is what Satan wants you to do. He wants you to abandon the church. He wants you to abandon the priests and bishops who are strong in their faith and struggling for change. He wants you to abandon the abused victims. He does not want you to fight by praying for the majority of priests that have remained faithful. He does not want you to write letters to your bishop or the pope supporting transparency. He does not want you remain faithful to your church, even though it is imperfect.

We are Catholic because of Jesus Christ, the love of God, the sacraments, our Blessed Lady, the saints and our faith. We must remember that our faith is not in a priest, a bishop or even the pope. Our faith is in Jesus Christ, who instituted our church, a church founded on the apostles, even though he knew they would abandon him.

We must not give up on our church. We must not give up and abandon Jesus. He did not abandon us; just look at the crucifix and see how much he loved, and still loves, us.

The calendar says Advent starts Nov 29. What is Advent all about?

Advent is a season of the church that lasts about four weeks, beginning four Sundays before Christmas and ending on Christmas Eve. It is a time for hope and the joyful expectation and prayerful preparation for the second coming of Jesus, as well as the anniversary of his birth. It has a pro-life focus.

The predominant color of vestments during Advent is purple because Advent is truly a time for penance, preparation and sacrifice. Some people call Advent a “little Lent.” Just like during Lent, the Gloria (one of the most festive hymns of the Mass) is not sung.

Here are some interesting facts about Advent from the Catholic Apostolate Center:

• Advent is a time of expectation and preparation for the birth of our Lord. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word “adventus,” or coming.

• Advent has a changing start date.

• Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year, representing the time in history that Christ was not known to us. With his birth, the beginning of our faith was founded.

• Advent has two meanings: it emphasizes the celebration of Christ coming into the world as a man and also the second coming when the Lord will return again.

• Hope is the predominant theme of Advent. The Israelis hoped for a Messiah to come, and Jesus entered their world. We are hopeful for his arrival again into our world.

• Advent is a reminder of the Old Testament promises of the coming of the Messiah. Readings from the prophet Isaiah are often used to remind us that we are waiting for the day when the Messiah will come again.

• Advent focuses on light, as opposed to darkness. Christ enters our dark world as the light of the world and casts away the darkness of sin to redeem us.

• Advent has two parts: the first portion is preparation for the second coming of Christ and the second part prepares us for the commemoration of his first coming – his birth on Christmas Day.

• The origins of Advent can be traced back to the church in France, but Advent, as we know it today, was developed in Rome. Pope Gregory I in the late 6th/early 7th centuries composed many of the prayers, antiphons and psalm responses.

DEACON HOOPER is a deacon assistant at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs. He can be reached at ghooper@diobr.org.
By Debbie Shelley  
The Catholic Commentator

In a trend that mirrors society, religious communities face tremendous challenges in elder care and retirement that have been magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the national Retirement Fund for Religious collection scheduled the weekend of Dec. 12 – Dec. 13, Catholics can be present for those who have given a lifetime of service to the church in their time of need.

The church enjoyed a surge in vocations in the 1960s but the life span of that generation has increased, while the number of new vocations has decreased. Religious order priests, brothers and sisters traditionally received small stipends that barely met the needs of their day.

They put any surplus funds toward ministries and education of younger members. With fewer vocations the funds that come through their compensated ministry, which helps fund eldercare, has diminished.

Brother Paul Montero SC said “as a former provincial of the New Orleans Province of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, I am keenly aware of the importance of the annual Religious Retirement Fund collection.

“Congregations of teaching brothers such as ours are welcoming fewer and fewer new members. At the same time, our number of elderly and infirm members – men who dedicated their lives in service to others – is increasing while wage-earning brothers are fewer in number. The costs to repair or replace structures damaged by recent hurricanes in the south have been significant. Therefore, grants from the Retirement Fund play an important part in the lives of our brothers.”

The estimated annual cost for care for a religious past the age of 70 in the United States is $47,000, and it rises to $72,000 for skilled care. During the past 12 years, the total annual cost has exceeded a staggering $1 billion.

Donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious are put to work in many different ways, according to the National Religious Retirement Office.

Roughly 95 percent of the NRRO office budget aids senior religious, according to the office.

The RFR benefits nearly 30,000 elderly sisters, brothers and religious order priests. The RFR underwrites financial assistance, consultation and education that help the ongoing needs of aging members of the religious communities.

Sister Adele Lambert CSJ said the NRF is a good way for lay people to participate in the life of the church by supporting those who has been lifelines in various ministries.

“It raises an awareness of the needs of sisters, and (religious order) priests and brothers. We no longer do public ministry, but we still do minister,” said Sister Adele.

Sister Joan L'Allier CSJ serves as liaison for men and women religious for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. She entered religious life in 1960 and has spent half of her religious life in Baton Rouge.

“It’s a great place to serve,” said Sister Joan, who urges people to support men and women who have dedicated their lives to the church.

“It’s through the generosity and gratitude of people who were served (by them),” Sister Joan said.

People can donate through their church parishes, by visiting retiredreligious.org, or by mailing a donation to Retirement Fund for Religious, National Religious Retirement Office, P.O. Box 96988, Washington, DC 20090-6988.
McCarrick report summary cites lack of serious investigations of rumors

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Although dogged for years by rumors of sexual impropriety, Theodore E. McCarrick was able to rise up the Catholic hierarchical structure based on personal contacts, protestations of his innocence and a lack of church officials reporting and investigating accusations, according to the Vatican summary of its report on the matter.

In choosing then-Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark in 2000 to be archbishop of Washington and later a cardinal, St. John Paul II likely overlooked rumors and allegations about McCarrick’s sexual misconduct because of a long relationship with him, McCarrick’s own strong denial and the pope’s experience with communist authorities in Poland making accusations to discredit the church, the summary said.

But, in fact, rumors of McCarrick’s conduct, especially knowledge that he had young adult men and seminarians sleep in the same bed with him when he was bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey, led the Vatican to decide it would be “imprudent” to promote him when looking for candidates to become archbishop of Chicago in 1997, New York in 1999-2000 and, initially, of Washington in July 2000, the report said.

One hour before the release Nov. 10 of the “Report on the Holy See’s Institutional Knowledge and Decision-Making Related to Former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick,” journalists were given the document’s 14-page introduction, which described the two-year investigation that led to the report’s compilation and gave an “executive summary” of its findings.

In June 2018, the Vatican suspended McCarrick from ministry after an investigation by the Archdiocese of New York found credible a charge that he sexually abused a teenager. McCarrick resigned from the College of Cardinals in July, and in February 2019, after a canonical process found McCarrick guilty of “solicitation in the sacrament of confession and sins against the Sixth Commandment with minors and with adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power,” Pope Francis dismissed him from the priesthood.

In August 2018, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, former nuncio to the United States, called on Pope Francis to resign after claiming that he had informed Pope Francis of McCarrick’s abuse in 2013 and that top Vatican officials knew of McCarrick’s abusive behavior for years.

That claim led Pope Francis to initiate an investigation into how McCarrick was able to continue to rise through church ranks despite the repeated rumors, anonymous letters, allegations and even settlements with alleged victims.

The report summary said, “No records support Vigano’s account” of his meeting with Pope Francis “and evidence as to what he said is sharply disputed.”

“Until the allegations about child sexual abuse were made to the Archdiocese of New York in 2019, ‘Francis had heard only that there had been allegations and rumors related to immoral conduct with adults occurring prior to McCarrick’s appointment to Washington,’ it said.

“Believing that the allegations had already been reviewed and rejected by Pope John Paul II, and well aware that McCarrick was active during the papacy of Benedict XVI, Pope Francis did not see the need to alter the approach that had been accepted in prior years,” the summary said.

The introduction to the report said it is based on documents found at the Vatican and the apostolic nunciature in the United States as well as interviews — “ranging in length from one to 30 hours” — with more than 90 witnesses in the United States, Italy and elsewhere. They included survivors, cardinals, bishops and former seminarians.

In a statement issued with the report, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said the contributions of state, said the contributions of survivors were “fundamental.” The introduction of the report cautions survivors of abuse that certain sections “could prove traumatizing” and warns that some portions of the document are “inappropriate for minors.”

He also said that over the course of the two years it took to complete the investigation and compile the report, “we have taken significant steps forward to ensure greater attention to the protection of minors and more effective interventions to avoid” repeating errors of the past.

Among those steps, he highlighted “Vos Estis Lux Mundi” (“You are the Light of the World”), Pope Francis’ 2019 document on promoting bishops’ accountability and setting out procedures for handling accusations of abuse against bishops.

According to the summary, St. John Paul’s decisions to name McCarrick bishop of Metuchen in 1981 and archbishop of Newark in 1986 were based on “his background, skills and achievements. During the appointment process, McCarrick was widely lauded as a pastoral, intelligent and zealous bishop.”

The summary also said that, at the time, “no credible information emerged suggesting that he had engaged in any misconduct.”

But in October 1999 Cardinal John J. O’Connor of New York wrote to Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, then nuncio in the United States, summarizing allegations about McCarrick, then-archbishop of Newark. The letter was given to St. John Paul, who asked Archbishop Montalvo to investigate.

The nuncio did so by writing to four New Jersey bishops, the summary said without naming the bishops. The bishops, named in the full report, were Bishops James T. McGovern of Camden, 1989-1998; Vincent D. Breen of Metuchen, 1997-2000; Edward T. Hughes of Metuchen, 1987-1997; and John M. Smith of Trenton, 1997-2010.

“What is now known, through investigation undertaken for preparation of the report, is that three of the four American bishops provided inaccurate and incomplete information to the Holy See regarding McCarrick’s sexual conduct with young adults,” the summary said.

In response to Cardinal O’Connor’s accusations, the report said, McCarrick wrote to now-Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, St. John Paul’s secretary, claiming: “In the 70 years of my life, I have never had sexual relations with any person, male or female, young or old, cleric or lay, nor have I ever abused another person or treated them with disrespect.”

“McCarrick’s denial was believed,” the summary said, adding that because of “the limited nature of the Holy See’s own prior investigation, the Holy See had never received a complaint directly from a victim, whether adult or minor, about McCarrick’s conduct.”

“I think there is no direct evidence,” the summary added, “it appears likely from the information obtained that John Paul II’s past experience in Poland regarding the use of spurious allegations against bishops to degrade the standing of the church played a role in his willingness to believe McCarrick’s denials.”

In addition, McCarrick had a relationship with the Polish pope going back to
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Above, from left: Sister Alice Garcia, SSCJ, 91; Brother Martin Gonzales, OCSO, 95; Sister Theresa McGrath, CCVI, 86; Sister Anne Cecile Muldoon, OSU, 93; Abbot Emeritus Peter Eberle, OSB, 79. ©2020 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC • All rights reserved • Photo: Jim Judkis

“We don’t know what the future holds, but it’s all God’s work,” says Sister Theresa McGrath (center), 86, a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio. In good times and bad, she and the religious shown here have devoted themselves to God’s work. They are among nearly 30,000 senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your gift helps provide medications, nursing care, and more. Please be generous.

Please donate at your local parish December 12–13 or by mail at:
National Religious Retirement Office/BRL
3211 Fourth Street NE
Washington DC 20017–1194
Make check payable to Retirement Fund for Religious.

retiredreligious.org

Retirement Fund for Religious
Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

PRESENTATION OF CHURCH KEY – Bishop Michael G. Duca presents Father Babu Varreth IMS a key to St. Ann Church in Morganza during a pastor installation service Nov. 8. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

KEYS TO THE CHURCH – Bishop Michael G. Duca, right, presents the keys of St. Catherine of Siena Church in Donaldsonville to Father Raphael Asika MSP during his installation as pastor on November 7. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator
CHS dedicates student center, celebrates award

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

With temperatures plummeting under gray skies, spirits were soaring and everyone was proud to be a Bear at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge during a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating two historical occasions, the school’s record-setting sixth National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award and the opening of a stunning new student center.

The new 32,000-square-foot Brother Donnan Berry SC Student Center will create a dynamic environment where the school’s roughly 1,200 students can dine, socialize, study and interact with faculty, according to CHS officials.

The center’s first floor contains a student union with seating for up to 600 people and includes an expanded kitchen and food preparation area.

On the second floor are a seminar room and four classrooms with adjacent collaboration rooms and study rooms available for student and faculty use, a campus ministry gathering space, a faculty work center and terrace and student terrace.

Outdoors there is a large student commons area with a pavilion.

Concerning the blessing of the new building Oct. 30, CHS Principal Lisa Harvey told the crowd, “The tradition of blessing a building or a home dates back to biblical times and symbolizes that blessing a building Oct. 30, CHS Principal Lisa Harvey said.

In attendance were the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, the founders and avid supporters of the school. CHS President Gene Tullier saluted the namesake of the student center.

The first sentence on a plaque that will be installed on the side of the ‘Class of 73 Gathering Stairs’ leading up to the second floor of the students center will read: “With passion and a huge heart, Brother Donnan Berry SC left a legacy that shaped Catholic High School.”

Brother Donnan was principal at CHS before establishing the school’s development office.

“Anyone who knew Brother Donnan can attest to his huge heart … and his passion,” said Tullier. “He was at times gruff. He was opinionated. But he was a bold leader dedicated to his students.”

Tullier pointed out that in the student pavilion there are 11 brick columns naming the core values of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and the mission pillars of the school: sanctuaries, respect, missionary spirit, courage and trust, holistic formation, Catholic tradition, compassion, Gospel values, personal attention, friendly discipline and academic excellence.

CHS student body president Matthew Tilley shared his memories with the audience about the “Demo-Day” groundbreaking ceremony a year-and-a-half ago when, to the students’ delight, CHS demolished an empty house on Hearthstone Drive to make room for the student center.

“I can remember Mr. (Charles) Jumonville telling us about this student center and how it is going to change Catholic forever. My understanding of this at the time were minimal. However, today I see the impact this student center has not only for the campus, but all of our students as well.

“When we all came back to school at the beginning of this school year it was evident that students’ morale was low due to the pandemic and all of changes at the school. The student center’s opening has brought a sense of the liveliness and brotherhood back to our Catholic High community that we most certainly needed.”

He thanked his fellow students and especially faculty and staff for their hard work in the historic sixth Blue Ribbon School achievement and said the student center should stand as a reminder of Catholic’s legacy of great accomplishments.

“This student center is an excellent example of transmitting the school greater than we found it. All of us helped in the building of the student center, whether big or small,” Tilley said. “I challenge each and every one of you to continue striving for greatness, both within and beyond the classroom, so that you may leave the school better than it was given to you. Today is a great day to be a Bear.”

After the blessing by Brother Ray Herbert SC and ribbon cutting ceremony featuring blue and orange ribbons students nestled in their new home, filling the classrooms and conference rooms and studying in the commons. A school dream realized.

And a place where dreams are hatching for the future.

“I really love the study room. We have a white board and we can use it to knock out ideas,” said sophomore Sid Scheumack. “Everyone loves it and can enjoy (the historical moment) for the rest of the year.”
An estimated 50 people showed up to pray at a prayer service led by Bishop Michael G. Duca at the site of the proposed Formosa plant in St. James Civil Parish. Beneath the ground where the service was held are burial sites for slaves. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

**FORMOSA ▼**

From page 5

living near plants that dot both sides of the Mississippi River stretching from Baton Rouge to the New Orleans area.

The plant took another hit earlier this year when it was discovered slaves are buried where portions would be built.

“We understand the company will offer this and offer that but most of the money they are going to make they are going to take back to (Formosa’s Taiwan headquarters),” Deacon Adams said. “It is not going to benefit St. James, or maybe benefit said. “It is not going to be a tire project or at least delaying potentially mothballing the entire project or at least delaying construction.”

“It is a community where most of the African Americans are dying and getting sick. Let’s put it in your (the neighborhood (area and you will look at it differently),” Mr. D’s Tree Service

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Parish residents have galvanized in their opposition to the proposed $9.4 billion plant.

An estimated 50 people showed up to pray at a prayer service led by Bishop Michael G. Duca at the site of the proposed Formosa plant in St. James Civil Parish. Beneath the ground where the service was held are burial sites for slaves. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Where will it end?

Innocent lives lost, hundreds, perhaps thousands of others injured.

All too often headlines scream of a law enforcement officer shooting, where an African American man or woman was killed. Protests follow and significant portions of major cities are far too frequently burned to their skeletal bones.

But violence is not confined to officer related incidents. Unfortunately, violence continues to rise among the Black community, taking the lives of innocent young African Americans at far too early of an age, including infants as we have seen in southeast Louisiana.

Mourning families are left behind, asking why. And through tearful eyes those same family members publicly beg for the killings to stop.

Where will it end?

Predictably, each mass shooting or senseless killing renews the call for greater gun control and perhaps the time is ripe to revisit the issue.

Equally as predictable, gun control opponents view such legislation as draconian and counter that any such measures could potentially be the first step toward abolishment of the Second Amendment.

Answers, however, will not be found in statehouses, political shill, the increasingly intrusive if not downright malignant social media, or even in censoring of video games. It is irrefutable that each of those shoulder some responsibility but one must drill far beneath what has become a thinly-veiled culture of death that has permeated our society.

Quietly, we have become a country that is desperately in search of its moral compass. And when morality becomes the exception rather than the standard, when abhorrent behavior is accepted and even rewarded, violence permeating our neighborhoods has exposed a gaping void in our society: the absence of God. For the past several decades, a trend that has only heightened in recent years, God has been evicted from boardrooms, expelled from classrooms, excused from dinner tables and even demonized.

Yet, we shed tears and ask why when the news of another senseless killing curdles our own conscience.

Admittedly, separation of church and state is essential in an effective democracy but shouldn’t God at least have a seat at the table?

Are we becoming a country where God is becoming a lost ideal, gone the way of 8-tracks and dial-up modems? Has technology and its outgrowth, social media, become the new God, the new deity for our so-called evolving society?

The answer appears to be trending to yes.

Without faith, without God as our country’s moral beacon, societal behavior will have no boundaries, no accountability. The deterioration of the family unit, an increase in violence and even mass shootings will continue to surge.

At what point will our own consciousness become numb to such acts?

Answers can only be found in our churches and other institutions of worship, through our prayer lives, by emulating Christ in our own lives. Only then will the tools of violence be silenced.

Saints are us

“Everyone is invited to the heavenly banquet, everyone is welcome. But the decision to come is yours. Get ready though, for it is not just the party of the season, or the century, this is the party of eternity.”

I found this wonderful quote in a notebook I keep of ideas for future columns. Unfortunately, I didn’t write down who said or wrote it. But my thanks to author unknown.

It set me to thinking about the feast we recently celebrated, The Feast of All Saints. This year, the Nov. 1 feast day fell on a Sunday. Because of COVID-19 there was no obligation to attend Sunday Mass and because of social distancing our churches cannot accept too many congregants who would like to attend. Therefore, many probably did not attend Mass unless your attendance was virtual via computer or live television. However, since we live in the southern, more Catholic half of Louisiana, I bet many did honor their family obligation on the following day, Nov. 2, of clearing their family’s graveyard plot, perhaps bringing some flowers to place on the tombs and saying a few prayers.

Somehow, we feel more comfortable about praying for our dead on All Souls Day than on All Saints Day. We may think that they led good lives and are in heaven, or at least in purgatory and well on the way to rise higher. But do we really think of mom and dad, grandmother and grandfather, brothers and sisters now deceased, as saints? And heaven forbid we would never think of ourselves or any living relatives and friends as saints.

Don’t we begin every Mass by asking God’s mercy and forgiveness and then repeat that same plea three times before we dare to receive Christ’s presence in the Eucharist? “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world have mercy on us.”

We know we aren’t saints.

But St. Paul was not of the same opinion. When he wrote to the many churches he founded he very often addressed the members of those communities as saints. That doesn’t mean that any of them were perfect and never sinned. He was very proud of the Christian community in Corinth, Greece. Yet he rebuked them and told them that he shed a lot of tears over them.

Corinth was one of the principle seaports in Greece. Its residents were often guilty of all the sins that seaports everywhere are known for. St. Paul himself knew and confessed in his own writings that until his conversion on the road to Damascus he had been a sinner and a great persecutor of Christians. He complains in some of his letters that he still cannot do what he knows he should be doing. Yet, he was certain that he had done what he could, fought the good fight and Jesus would welcome him to heaven.

What gave St. Paul such confidence, confidence that he wants us to have? St. Paul says that it is the Spirit of God in him, the same Spirit he says that is in all of us. To the Ephesians he writes, “There is one God and Father of all, who is over all ... and in all” (Eph 4:6). God is with us, in us always, not just some of us, all of us. He never abandons us, even despite our sins. He is always inviting us to his banquet, sacramentally in this life and forever in the next. We just have to accept his invitation in actions as well as words. St. Paul explains further in his first letter to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple” (1 Cor 3: 16-17).

Strong words, amazing reality. This isn’t a “wish it were true” kind of statement. St. Paul repeats the same statement three chapters later and then goes on to rebuke the Corinthians because of their sexual sins and misuse of the Eucharist. He continues to call them saints because God is still with them even though their sins they try to flee him.

We should remember that Jesus told his disciples that he didn’t come to call the just but also sinners. We are his targets for salvation, the sinners all, for whom he died. But God will not allow the sin that killed his son to win out. He raised him from death to live eternally. That is the good news of our lives too.

So, Happy Feast Day that you didn’t celebrate this year! COVID-19 can keep us out of church. It can even kill us. But it can’t keep us from being saints with the risen Lord, now and forever.

Deo gracias!

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 johnnyecarville@gmail.com.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be typed and limited to 350 words and should contain the name and address of the writer, though the address will not be printed. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Send to: Letters to the Editor, The Catholic Commentator, P.O. Box 3316, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3316, or to tcc@diobr.org.
Racial reconciliation

My mother is Catholic and white, and my father is Methodist and Black. They raised our family in the Catholic Church but growing up, I never really felt connected to the church and didn’t have a relationship with Jesus.

We were “sacramentalized,” but I was never evangelized until high school, when Protestants began to share Jesus with me. I also lived a lifestyle that was not conducive to becoming a saint, and I stopped going to church.

My mom still made us go to religious education classes, and one of my friends was a white girl who recognized that there were only a few Black kids in our class and never any Black kids in youth group. She was very intentional about making us feel seen and welcome. The summer before my senior year she invited me to a Catholic youth conference. I didn’t want to go, but for some reason I said, “Yes, I would love to.”

On Saturday night during the conference, Bishop Sam Jacobs, who was then bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, processed the blessed Sacrament through the crowd of thousands of teenagers. And for the first time in my life, I perceived that the Eucharist was in fact the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. The first words I perceived from him were, “I love you,” and from that moment, I knew I wanted to be in a relationship with Jesus specifically in the Eucharist for the rest of my life.

I then perceived an invitation to discern the priesthood. I initially said no but over time I began to desire to become a priest. After eight years of formation, I was ordained May 31, 2014.

My greatest desire is to console the heart of Jesus and St. John in his Gospel reveals his heart’s desire for us. He prays to the father that there may be unity that we may be one as he and the father are one. I think this is a unique time in history and God has created us to bring about unity and renew and restore the body of Christ.

For years I have been speaking as a biracial man about healing the racial divide in this country; it’s in my DNA. In recent days, I’ve been so inspired by the number of Catholics, especially in this country, who have shared with me that for the first time in their lives they feel inspired by God to pray fast and work with others to really bring about racial reconciliation.

If any member is suffering, whether they’re white, Black or brown, we are all responsible for that member. I must offer up penances and sacrifices in spiritual reparation to bring about reconciliation with the entire community.

It’s a biblical spiritual practice to repent not only of our sins, but for the sins of others. I encourage people who have never said the N-word or have never participated in an institution that discriminated against people of color do penances on behalf of other Christians who have never said “I’m sorry” to God.

The rosary is one of the most powerful prayers, and because racism is a demonic stronghold that has attacked this nation for hundreds of years, I always encourage people to pray the rosary for this specific intention, as well as for the souls of our ancestors who have not repented.

We need to start with silence and prayer, listening and spending time with the Lord. We must also spend time with, listen to and learn from our brothers and sisters in Christ who have been hurting. We need to fast from speaking so that we can hear their stories about how they’ve been impacted by unjust practices and yes, racial prejudice and discrimination.

There are also a lot of practical ways to make things right in the body of Christ today. Support Catholic schools in your diocese that primarily serve minority communities and are struggling financially. Look at our handbook policies and see if there is anything there that might be discriminating against people of color. Add more artwork depicting saints who were Black and brown, Asian and indigenous.

When I was discerning to enter the seminary, I needed help financially. The Knights of Columbus called me and said, “We heard about you and want to help you out.” That’s how I was introduced to the Knights, and I’m very grateful.

The council in my parish is tremendous. The Knights here are intentional disciples of Jesus Christ. They pray the rosary consistently, lead small group Bible studies, do a lot of pro-life ministry, help the poor on a weekly basis and spend a lot of time in eucharistic adoration.

One thing I would encourage Knights to do is to be very aware of what groups, nationalities and people of color aren’t represented in your councils. Go out and find those people in your parishes and communities and invite them to walk with you, so that together you can use your
Daughters of St. Paul Concert  
– The Daughters of St. Paul will present a free virtual Christmas concert on Thursday, Dec. 3, 7 p.m. To view, visit youtube.com/c/daughtersofstpaul.

Men of the Immaculata Conference – Registration is open for the fifth-annual Men of the Immaculata Conference, Saturday, Feb. 20, 7:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. The theme is “St. Joseph: pillar of families, protector of the church, terror of demons.” Those unable to attend will be offered a virtual ticket option, which will include a link to watch to the conference. Tickets can be purchased online at catholicmenbr.com. For more information, call Eddie Samson at 225-571-6898.

Immaculata Conference, Saturday, Feb. 20, 7:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. The theme is “St. Joseph: pillar of families, protector of the church, terror of demons.” Those unable to attend will be offered a virtual ticket option, which will include a link to watch to the conference. Tickets can be purchased online at catholicmenbr.com. For more information, call Eddie Samson at 225-571-6898.

**COMING EVENTS**

**November 20, 2020**

**BLESSING OF THE GRAVES** – Father Charlie Landry, pastor at St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel, blessing the graves following Mass on Nov. 1. Clergy members throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge blessed graves on All Saints Day. Photo provided by Rozalyn Duplantis | Catholic Life Television

**TROOP BLESSING** – Bishop Michael G. Duca speaks with members of the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Brigade Combat Team during a prayer service at Baton Rouge Airport on Nov. 12. Bishop Duca blessed the Tiger Brigade, which deployed almost 2,000 soldiers to the Middle East. Photo provided by Father Jamin David | Episcopal Vicar for Strategic Planning, Diocese of Baton Rouge

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MCCARRICK ▼

From page 8

his days as the cardinal of Krakow. The summary said, “McCarrick’s direct relationship with John Paul II also likely had an impact on the pope’s decision-making.”

St. John Paul II “personally made the decision” to name him archbishop of Washington at a cardinal, it said.

The report also concluded that now-retired Pope Benedict XVI did not initiate a formal canonical process against McCarrick or even impose sanctions on him because “there were no credible allegations of child abuse; McCarrick swore on his ‘oath as a bishop’ that the allegations were false; the allegations of misconduct with adults related to events in the 1980s; and there was no indication of any recent misconduct.”

However, after initially asking McCarrick to stay on in Washington for two years past his 75th birthday in 2005, the summary said, new details related to a priest’s allegations about McCarrick’s sexual misconduct emerged and Pope Benedict asked him to step down in 2006.

At the time, the summary said, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, then-prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, told McCarrick “he should maintain a lower profile and minimize travel for the good of the church.”

“While Cardinal Re’s approach was approved by Pope Benedict XVI, the indications did not carry the pope’s explicit imprimatur, were not based on a factual finding that McCarrick had actually committed misconduct and did not include a prohibition on public ministry,” the summary said.

Archbishop Viganò, while working in the Vatican Secretariat of State, wrote memos in 2006 and 2008 “bringing questions related to McCarrick to the attention of superiors,” the summary said. The memos referred to allegations and rumors about McCarrick’s “misconduct during the 1980s and raised concerns that a scandal could result given that the information had already circulated widely.”

The archbishop, the report said, noted that “the allegations remained unproven,” but he suggested opening a canonical process to investigate.

Archbishop Viganò, who was appointed nuncio to the United States in 2011, was “instructed” in 2012 to conduct an inquiry into allegations by a priest who claimed he was sexually assaulted by McCarrick, the summary said.

Archbishop Viganò, it continued, “did not take these steps and therefore never placed himself in the position to ascertain the credibility” of the priest’s claims.

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

life as a ransom for many. For the Christian, ‘to reign is to serve him,’ particularly when serving ‘the poor and the suffering, in whom the church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder.’ The people of God fulfills its royal dignity by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ.” (Catechism paragraph 786)

We respond in this same dignity by believing in our Lord, and responding in acts, works of mercy and sacrifices of our lives which bear the witness and hope in God.

Hope in the glory

Written on the human heart is the desire for happiness, the desire to be loved. Belonging to God’s kingdom is like no other. There is no greater glory than to live life in the Lord. It fulfills our innate desire to know, to be in relationship, to love. As subjects of our king, we are invited to closely follow him, to love him, to serve him and to love neighbor as we love God. As our king, his riches pour out in drops of blood, his life sacrificed for ours, the sacrifice of all sacrifices, in order for us to share eternal life in the glory of God. He came to save. In the power of his sceptor, the cross, upon which our king wore a crown of thorns, is found life-giving hope in the glory of God.

For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen!

Hope in Advent

And so we begin anew. In four weeks, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, king of the universe.

What is our desire during the next four weeks as we prepare for this celebration? How can we ask the Lord to feed our soul between now and Dec. 25? Are we asking God for the grace to grow in love, mercy and peace? Do we seek knowledge and wisdom of God? Are we seeking to draw closer to the Bible, to read it in our home, to sit in silence? What do you hope for this Advent? How can we invite the Lord to show his face so we shall be saved? What are we thankful for in the midst of life?

My friend carves out time to sit on her newly renovated back porch (damaged by the 2016 flood). She shares these times on social media as a way of inviting us to “sit on the porch with God.” She notes the way God makes his presence known to her, an example of his love. Jesus tells the disciples, “Be watchful! Be alert!” I invite you, this Advent season to be watchful and alert for the Lord. Look for God in the present moment, even in the shadows. From the break of day to the glistening of the stars, become aware of the utter magnificence of God’s glory. Be alert in anticipation of the celebration of the Nativity of our king, our Lord Jesus Christ, a little baby, laid in a manger in Bethlehem, clothed in majesty of light. He who came to save us. Him we adore, for the kingdom the power and the glory are his, now and forever. Amen.

JOHNSON ▼

From page 13

charisms to do the work of God in our world.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said that the problem in our nation between Black and white Americans is not a societal problem; it’s a church problem.

The most segregated time in America is Sundays at 11 a.m.

I believe we have to take seriously the commandment of Jesus, “Go out and make disciples of all nations.” The word “nations” is actually translated from Greek “ethnos,” which is where we get the word ethnicity. When St. John had a vision of heaven in the Book of Revelation, he said, “Behold, I see people of different races, nations and tongues” (Rev 7:9).

So, our goal as Catholics should be this: I want my church on earth to look like the church in heaven. This is how I want my parish community, my K of C council, my Bible study group, my diocese and my nation to look, with every member abiding in personal, intentional, consistent relationship with each other. And until my earth is like heaven, I have a lot of work to do.

FATHER JOHNSON is the pastor at Holy Rosary Church in St. Armand and vocation director for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

ST THOMAS MORE

Diocese of Baton Rouge
Catholic Schools Office

PRINCIPAL OPENING

2021-22 School Year

St. Thomas More Catholic School
Baton Rouge, LA

St. Thomas More Catholic School seeks a joyful, faith-filled, dynamic, and visionary leader to serve as principal of our parish school, beginning in the summer of 2021.

STM has a rich history of success in the Baton Rouge community, and the parish has experienced revitalization in the past several years. We seek a leader who will continue the positive momentum for our community as we move STM forward.

The principal serves as the leader and chief executive of the school, reporting directly to the pastor of STM Church. The ideal candidate will embrace and promote best practices in Catholic elementary education, spirituality, pedagogy, curriculum, student formation, etc. The ideal candidate will also be an excellent communicator desiring to partner with parents, to support colleagues, and to nurture students.

STM St. Thomas More Catholic School opened its doors in 1960 and was recognized as a national Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2016. STM currently serves 675 students in PK through 8th Grade. The faculty consists of 80 dedicated employees including teachers, teaching assistants, two counselors, two resource teachers, a school nurse, and office staff.

Mission Statement:

STM St. Thomas More Catholic School is committed to continuing a legacy of excellence in religious and academic education in a nurturing environment that fosters self-discipline.

Applicants who meet the following criteria will be considered:

- Practicing Catholic
- Master’s Degree, able to meet LA non-public requirements
- Minimum of five years of experience in education, preferably in Catholic schools
- Demonstrated leadership ability, preferably in Catholic education
- Must be available on or before July 1, 2020

Mail résumé, letter of interest, philosophy of education, copies of all college transcripts showing degrees, and three letters of recommendation to:

STM Catholic Schools Office
Attn: St. Thomas More Principal Search
P.O. Box 2028
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028

Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent, and Embrace the Future

The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.
other organizations to identify those in need and have those groups commit to picking up the meals as well as be responsible for distribution.

“We will get the meals out (to the needy) in that way,” Acaldo said, adding he is “excited about the prospect of being able to do that for those in need.”

Sadly, he said, because of no indoor seating the meals will not be all-you-can-eat, a tradition at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter at the homeless shelter.

“That is one of the downsides because we do have some folks that will come and they are very hungry,” Acaldo said. “Being able to serve all-you-can-eat is something we always enjoy.”

The popular turkey carving contest, held the day before Thanksgiving, will also be held, with the contestants appropriately social distanced. The contest features local celebrities, political officials and even sports figures exhibiting creativity in showing off their carving skills, trying to impress each other and the judges who ultimately decide the winners.

“We felt comfortable we could pull it off and why not let the contest rock and roll,” Acaldo said. “It is a lot of fun and it’s kind of a Capital City tradition to kick off Thanksgiving and Advent.”

He said the carving contest leads into the busiest time of the year at St. Vincent de Paul, with the Thanksgiving weekend seeing a larger number of meals served to the homeless, then dovetailing into the holiday season.

“We get to touch a lot of lives, and it’s very rewarding to see the impact on the lives of the people who are truly in need,” Acaldo said.

He proudly noted St. Vincent de Paul Society also served the Baton Rouge community in 1918 when a Spanish flu pandemic created lockdowns and mask wearing eerily similar to that of current times. Admittedly, he is uncertain how the staff was able to provide the services but he is certain they “felt the uplifting feeling of being able to be there for someone who was truly in need at the time.”

“It seems like 2020 is a year back downhill and forth,” he ruefully added. “Hopefully next year we can get back to the norm.”

Meals will be served at the River Center from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. and at St. Vincent de Paul from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

In our nation, Thanksgiving originated as a harvest festival, a time of gratitude, and an opportunity to share nature’s bounty with family and friends. On this day, no one went hungry. So much has changed since that first Thanksgiving, but one thing that hasn’t changed is the need to share God’s blessings with the less fortunate.

On this special holiday, as we enjoy turkey and dressing, our favorite casseroles, and mouth-watering desserts, most of us will begin the meal with a blessing. In that prayer, we hope you will remember the poor and homeless men, women, and children who will be coming to St. Vincent de Paul for their Thanksgiving meal.

Thanksgiving will look different this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but good food will still be an important part of any small family celebration. As many of us plan our holiday menus, there are others who are wondering where their next meal is coming from. Many of them are living in homes where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. Some of them have no family or home. But on Thanksgiving Day, we want to make sure they have a place to turn for a holiday meal.

This year, we will be serving up a hot Thanksgiving to-go meal at our Dining Room and will continue the Holiday Helpers’ tradition as well. Sometimes, we are overwhelmed by the number of people who turn to St. Vincent de Paul for the nourishment they need. But these people are not numbers -- they are real people in desperate situations. Many of them were struggling before the pandemic, and the impact of COVID-19 has been a devastating financial blow.

At St. Vincent de Paul, we are seeing firsthand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and our troubled economy. People who were living paycheck to paycheck are now living in poverty. Layoffs, rising prices and high unemployment rates are resulting in a growing number of people who can no longer make ends meet. Those are the people who are coming to us in desperate need of assistance.

Our lines are long at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, but we are doing our best to meet the growing need.

During the upcoming holiday season, there are many people who are hungry and need a place to turn for help. St. Vincent de Paul is the only community kitchen that is open every day of the year, providing a hot lunch and a brown bag supper daily. This year, we will serve over 200,000 meals. The lines at our dining room are long, and we can only meet the need with the help of generous people like you.

Please use the enclosed envelope to help the needy, or give online at svdpbr.org.
BUILDING BRIDGES:
Racial Healing and Transformation
In 1979, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a landmark letter on racism. Titled, “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” reminding the faith-ful that “racism is a sin, a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same father.”

The bishops defined racism as “the sin that says some human beings believe they are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of their race. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor in the exercise of human rights.”

The prelates used Scripture to assert that racism “mocks the words of Jesus: ’Treat others the way you would have them treat you’ (Mt 7:12). Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus. It is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.”

The document is available at https://www.usccb.org/committees/african-american-affairs/brothers-and-sisters-us

It’s nothing new for the church to speak boldly about racial divides and the immorality of racism. Its continued leadership in this area has not only been important, it’s been essential.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge’s history can be traced to the words of fearless Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel of New Orleans. Nearly 65 years ago he wrote a pastoral letter to all parishes in the archdiocese titled “The Morality of Racial Segregation.”

In this groundbreaking document he said, “racial segregation is morally wrong and sinful because it is the denial of the unity and solidarity of the human race as conceived by God in the creation of Adam and Eve.”

Thus in the decade prior to the awakening of America’s conscience on discrimination and the passage of federal civil rights legislation, this unapologetic statement challenged people to embrace a radically different approach to race relations. At the time the archdiocese included church parishes that became the Diocese of Baton Rouge, created in 1961, and the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, formed in 1977.

Even before Archbishop Rummel’s prescient pastoral, his directives in 1948 admitted two African American students to Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. In 1951, he ordered removal of “white” and “colored” signs from churches and opened a new Catholic high school dedicated to educating young Black men in New Orleans.

In a 1953 letter “Blessed are the Peacemakers,” he ordered the end to segregation in the entire archdiocese. “Ever mindful,” he said, “of the basic truth that our Colored Catholic brethren share with us the same spiritual life and destiny, the same membership in the mystical body of Christ, the same dependence upon the word of God, the participation in the sacraments, especially in the most holy Eucharist, the same need of moral and social encouragement, let there be no further discrimination or desegregation in the pews, at the Communion rail, at the confessional, and in parish meet-
Systemic racism continues through institutions, clubs

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Systemic racism remains prevalent today, rooted in institutions, country clubs and even Catholic schools, according to Father Joshua Johnson, pastor at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

Flipping the script on a practice that has endured for more than four centuries lies with the church and American Catholics, who Father Johnson said have been “mediocre, lukewarm and cafeteria in general.”

“They have allowed society to impact how they see people who are different from them and how to treat people who are different from them as opposed to the church influencing society, saying ‘this is not ok.’ When the church begins to address it, by becoming disciples of Jesus, by praying, then the world will change,” Father Johnson added.

Father Johnson defined systemic racism as “practices which are unwritten rules, and policies which are written rules, that accommodate and give access to some people for no other reason than because of the color of their skin and discriminate and alienate and deny access to other people, namely people of color, for no other reason than because of the color of their skin.”

He said institution and systemic racism began with slavery, which back then was a written rule, a law. After slavery ended, the reconstruction period began, ushering in new laws, essentially targeting former slaves and imprisoning them if they did not have jobs.

Jim Crow laws followed, which Father Johnson said were written policies stating that white and Blacks could not eat, work, play, pray or stay in the same places.

The civil rights acts of the 1960s eradicated the Jim Crow laws, which ended direct institutional racism, but indirect institutional racism continues today through practices and policies.

He cited as an example a country club in Metairie that up until the mid-2000s did not allow Black people to be members.

“It was not a written rule, it was a practice,” Father Johnson said.

He noted the club changed its policy only after Archbishop Alfred M. Hughes wrote a pastoral letter against racism, specifying that no Catholic church, school or organization could hold an event at a place that does not allow diverse membership.

He also questioned a Louisiana law criminalizing the wearing of sagging pants. Admittedly against the fashion, Father Johnson questions the consistency of the law, especially since it is based on indecent exposure.

“There is no law against a woman’s bra being shown,” he said. “If it’s about indecent exposure there should be a law but the reality is most people who say their pants are Black. ‘If you’re going to have a law about indecent exposure then every woman whose bra strap is showing, whether it’s on their wedding day, in church or to go to a ball game, needs to be fined as well or get jail time’

Father Johnson also cited the lack of diverse reading sources for students attending public and Catholic schools as contributing to systemic racism. He said even in seminary formation, everything is “primarily taught from a white perspective.”

SEE RACISM PAGE 10B
Navigating the history of Black parishes

Welcome to “On the Road to the Parish.”

Travel with me during the course of several issues of the The Catholic Commentator as we visit the African American church parishes in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

We’ll learn the differences between a civil parish, a personal parish and a territorial parish. We’ll review the histories of each of our African American parishes, when they were founded, how they came into being, whether they currently have, or have had, schools associated with them and whether they have cemeteries to honor their beloved dead.

We’ll learn about their courageous clergy – Josephites, Jesuits, Divine Word Missionaries and Missionaries of St. Paul, many of whom chose to come to Louisiana to minister to Black Catholics in communities which were totally segregated and subject to Jim Crow laws that cruelly discriminated against their parishioners. We’ll hear their current pastors and parishioners talk about their vision for their vibrant parishes and what they hope the future holds for their families.

We’ll trek upriver to New Roads, down the Mississippi River and across the river to St. James, and we’ll ride down “the longest street in the world,” Bayou Lafourche, to visit parishes in Donaldsonville and Bertrandville. We’ll visit parishes in Baton Rouge and in Scotlandville that have ministered to African Americans for decades and have had tremendous impact on their faithful.

We’ll also travel to parishes where worshipers traditionally were primarily white but because of demographics now are predominantly Black. It’ll be interesting to see in what ways liturgies have changed in those parishes where this transition has occurred.

What’s driving my interest in getting to know our African American parishes better?

Well, three of my colleagues on the Diocese of Baton Rouge’s Racial Harmony Commission are pastors of African American parishes. Just visiting with them during the many months of our service has piqued my interest in the history of their parishes and what’s happening in them now.

In addition, when I was in formation for the diaconate, one of my classmates, Deacon Ed Gauthreaux, was a member of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Donaldsonville. He’s now assigned there as a deacon. Deacon Ed’s incisive commentary on his parish always proved fodder for interesting discussion during our classes.

But more fundamentally, my interest in writing about the diocese’s African American parishes comes from my youth in Thibodaux.

One of two Catholic churches in town in the 1950s and 60s was St. Joseph’s (now a co-cathedral for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux) where white Catholics worshipped. The other was St. Luke’s, where Black Catholics attended Mass.

It was located on the other side of the Southern Pacific railway providing the demarcation line between the white and Black parts of Thibodaux.

St. Luke’s was staffed by the Josephites (we’ll learn more about them in subsequent columns) and my mother loved their preaching. In those days, you went to church where Mama told you to go, so our family attended Sunday services at St. Luke’s.

There were just two other white families in the pews. One of them, the Freeman’s, owned a store near where St. Luke’s was located, and the other was a devout divorcee with her two little girls. Her mother had broken her hip and could not navigate stairs leading to the front doors of St. Joseph’s, so she and her girls attended St. Luke’s.

I guess you could say we integrated a Black church. Going to St. Luke’s was providential though, because I would marry one of those two little girls years later, my first having laid eyes on her at St. Luke’s.

The liturgy at St. Luke’s moved me tremendously. I was taken by the deep

On the Road to the Parish
Deacon Dan Borné

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2020 Louisiana SHRM Excellence in Diversity Award Winner
By Richard Meek  
The Catholic Commentator

Celebrated by a laudable history of affecting positive changes through peaceful protests, Louisiana, especially Baton Rouge, should be setting the standard for the rest of the country to building bridges of racial harmony, according to a local expert.

But in the past few years, the peace of the past in the Capitol City has seemingly ceded to the tragic violence that has besieged the country in recent times.

“Now it is going toward whatever is happening on the national trend, and that is what we want to do, to the extreme which is not beneficial to people,” Southern University Law Center Chancellor John Pierre said. “We have to set some standards of what is expected in terms of behavior, decency in how we approach each other, how we treat each other.

“This idea of constantly shouting, showing up in places with guns because we want folks not to do certain things, all of those things of intimidation that go way back to another history, have to be stopped.”

Pierre has been disturbed by the sporadic outbreaks of violence he has seen because Baton Rouge is the seat of state government.

“And large in comparison to other parts of the state, the opportunities in Baton Rouge are much more robust,” he said. “Baton Rouge ought to be a place of destination where people come to find leadership, find a path forward for better living, better lives. You have to lead by example.”

Pierre stressed that the person who shouts the loudest does not have the greatest impact. Rather, he said it’s when society works through difficult issues and develops resolution that allows people of color and ideologies to reach a point where they understand each other and positive change be effective.

“It takes work, grit and tenacity but we can do things and can create pathways to resolve big issues,” Pierre said.

Louisiana, he said, has always been at the epicenter of racial history as well as history of racial justice. He said several of the most important developments regarding racial equality have Louisiana roots.

Pierre cited the Louisiana Railways Accommodations Act of 1890 requiring all railway companies carrying passengers on their trains in Louisiana to provide “equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races.”

He also pointed out that the state was the center of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1896 landmark Plessy vs. Ferguson decision that upheld the constitutionally of “separate but equal” accommodations in segregated facilities.

And in 1960, the famous “Southern 16” protest on the campus of Southern garnered national attention in the early stages of the civil rights movement.

Pierre also mentioned Louisiana’s 1724 Code Noir, which, he said talked about Black people and Native Americans in a way different from others.

Baton Rouge was also the scene of the first bus boycott in 1953, sit-ins and an organized boycott of downtown stores.

“We have had a history of having public protests in Louisiana when we see something that is not right,” Pierre said. “We have been able to do it in a peaceful manner in a way to affect change.

“This is extremely important for us to understand how important a role Louisiana, and Baton Rouge plays. It shows we can lead the way in how folks can build bridges when we have these divides that have to be dealt with.”

“We have to be able to recognize when we uplift folks at the lowest end of the spectrum, we all get uplifted,” Pierre added. “It makes us better economically, spiritually, emotionally. And that is something we must always be conscience of.”

Pierre believes Baton Rouge is a model of diversity, equality and inclusion that can be shown to the rest of the state and the rest of the country as to how to recognize each human’s value and helps folks reach their maximum as a human being. But to be successful, he said the economic and educational disparity that still exists must be closed, including north Baton Rouge, which he said has been long neglected.

Pierre said Baton Rouge “still has a long way to go” regarding racial relations, partly because of the lingering effects of the Alton Sterling shooting. He called the 2016 shooting a “wakeup call” because it made residents much more conscience of issues problematic in the community but that had been continually ignored.

The Sterling shooting came on the heels of officer-related incidents that led to riots in other parts of the country.

“We watched other places, perhaps with shock, and we never thought that could happen in Baton Rouge,” Pierre said. “It happened because we failed to check things early that showed behavior that was not productive.

“We look at the situation involving the Baton Rouge Police Department, you had signs this could be a problem but people decided to turn the other way because of who was involved and connections and relationships. We should never let relationships deter us from calling out things that are wrong.”

But Pierre is encouraged because he sees people of all color earnestly attempting to work to improve racial relations.

He said part of the reasons is that Baton Rouge has the benefit of three higher education institutional systems, including LSU, Southern, and the state community college system.

“Those systems provide opportunity for interaction through education that allows people to see that in our goals toward self improvement you have space where people can interact and determine being around someone who is different from them from another race from a different cultural, demographic background, we can all work together.”

He said when people of good faith come together they are trying to move the needle to improve their lives and the lives of the people they interact with in the community they come from.

When examining the history of Louisiana, Pierre added, most people, “whether they want to admit it or not,” have relatives of a difference race. He said Louisiana was a place with much interaction that led to mixed race families.

“We cannot erase that history from who we are today and politics cannot erase that history,” Pierre said.

Bishop Alfred C. Hughes leads a procession at the beginning of the Mass. To Bishop Hughes’ left is Father Louis Oubre and behind Father Oubre is then-Father Shelton J. Fabre, who is now bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux.
‘Every fight is not a good fight’

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Aubrey Jones encounters students in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System who grapple with immense challenges within their families, peer pressure and in understanding the division and chaos defined as “normal” in society.

Because his own life is firmly founded on faith and family, he brings students the tools to help them turn their stories of challenges to ones of success.

A native of north Baton Rouge and member of Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge, Jones graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in drama and film for 10 years. Feeling the call to teach, he became a substitute teacher.

Jones said during his late 20’s he wanted to do something more meaningful in his life. He coached and taught through the YMCA’s Abstinence Program, visiting different schools each week, and eventually became a substitute teacher.

In 2019, Jones was selected Teacher of the Year at Westminster Elementary School in Baton Rouge and was offered a job as a prevention specialist with the ICARE program, the alcohol drug abuse and violence prevention program for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. It provides prevention education to students in public, parochial and charter schools in the areas of alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, violence, crisis response and management. Additionally, it provides support services related to social-emotional learning.

“My new position not only allows me to teach various groups of students about making healthy choices but I support principals, teachers and parents at seven different schools in East Baton Rouge Parish,” said Jones.

He has worked with St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge, particularly through the Young Men of Character Program.

While the specialists can plan their day, Jones pointed out, “We never know everything that will be needed until we pull up to the campus.”

Jones said he pursued a career in education because there are not a lot of male teachers in elementary schools, especially Black men.

Young acknowledges, “When I started working, I was very young. I received a lot of adversity and I had to work hard to get respect from my peers.”

But he turned those struggles into something positive to help his students.

“It is rewarding to inspire them that ‘you can be anything you want to be,’ ” said Jones.

His parents instilled confidence in him at an early age. They told him that although he might look different from his peers, if he worked hard and prepared himself, he would succeed.

They are also people of faith. His dad was Catholic, and his mother attended a full-Gospel church. Through them he learned to respect everyone as a child of God, even if they may not know God or heard the Gospel message.

Jones and his family enjoy the welcoming embrace of ICC, where he is a member of the Knights of Peter Claver. He said while he did not grow up around priests, ICC pastor Father Tom Clark SJ is a very active presence and Jones’ family is blessed to have a relationship with Father Clark that “organically happened.”

“(Father Clark’s) a brother,” said Jones.

He also has the support of educators. Jones said in high school his sociology teacher and track coach equipped him and his peers with tools that would help them be successful adults.

“He would say simple things, like ‘You should go to college,’” Jones said.

Having been pulled over by a police officer based on what Jones believes is his skin color, he stresses it’s good to be educated on how to handle oneself in those situations.

“I know how to conduct myself – and it turned out positive,” said Jones.

“Sometimes you have to turn the cheek to survive the situation,” he said.

“Every fight is not a good fight. ‘I have two sons (one is eight the other is 11) and I tell them the same thing. ‘You have to be strong and wise.’ ”

Jones cherishes the children of all races he works with. And they share their struggles with him.

During times of racial tensions, including in Baton Rouge in 2016 when some children were traumatized by the police shooting of their neighbor Alton Sterling, Jones said healing begins with conversations with the youth.

“Most of the time, young people want someone to listen to them. They want reassurance, they want to know that you value them. With that you can do so much,” said Jones. “Sometimes you have to let them vent. You never want them to keep it inside.”

On one occasion a high school student asked Jones why they had to study American history. Jones pointed out studying history not only provides information about the country’s past, but it is important to the future.

Jones said he has hope there for the youth. He said youth are resilient and those situations.

“Every fight is not a good fight.”

- John 17:21
Living the Golden Rule

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

In looking for solutions to racial divisions gripping the nation and world, Halley Perry, a senior at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, points to the simple and timeless Golden Rule.

“So many times we get backed up into seeing the world through only our own viewpoint,” said Perry, who urged people to ask themselves before they take any course of action, “Is this something you would want to happen to you?”

“Try to think about how it would affect others. Put yourself in another’s shoes,” said Perry, a member of the advisory board of the Office of Black Catholics.

A life-long member of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge, Perry said her mother, Andrea Perry, and grandmother, Anna Perry, also members of St. Paul, influenced her commitment to the Catholic faith. Andrea Perry teaches religious education at St. Paul.

Halley Perry grew up witnessing her mother and grandmother actively participating in the church.

“My grandmother was a member of the Knights of St. Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary (Court #351). She is part of what prompted me to join the junior daughters,” said Perry, who is junior grand lady for the junior daughters.

Mary Martin, counselor for the junior daughters, also influenced her faith.

“I started the junior daughters when I was seven years old, and she has been there ever since,” said Perry. “She pushes me to be a better Catholic Christian.”

Among the junior daughters’ projects is collecting supplies for those in need.

“It’s kind of joyous,” said Perry.

One of the most meaningful projects the junior daughters participated in for Perry was visiting the Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter for homeless women and children in Baton Rouge. As the youth dropped off blankets and other collected supplies, clients came in and out and the staff explained the circumstances that bring the needy there and the services they receive.

“I felt like I was part of something very large,” said Perry.

The future looks bright for Perry, who has been accepted to Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, where she will focus on the computer sciences and philosophy. Her faith experiences inspire her to seek a quality of life and opportunities for people of all races. She participated in discussions on racial diversity action at SJA.

“I want to see if they are going to continue the effort and changes happen,” said Perry.

She recently attended a virtual Day of Reflection about six African Americans on the path to sainthood sponsored by the Office of Black Catholics of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Perry most identified with Sister Thea Bowman, who has been declared a Servant of God. A Franciscan Sister, Sister Thea gave presentations across the country. Her lively gatherings included singing, Gospel preaching, prayer and storytelling.

Her programs focused on breaking down racial and cultural barriers. Sister Thea urged people to communicate with each other so they can understand other cultures and races.

“She was very outspoken and confident in what she had to say,” said Perry. “I admire that a lot. I try to do that so people can be heard.”
Deacon Adams a trailblazer in local church history

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

From humble beginnings rooted in the rich soil on both sides of the Mississippi River, Deacon Alfred Adams’ trailblazing life has become his ministry, a career of working toward racial equality using the Gospel as his vehicle.

Confronted by racism at an early age, when his mother moved him and his siblings from Vacherie to Lutcher, Deacon Adams has used life’s difficult experiences as guide posts along his journey of becoming the first African American to be ordained a permanent deacon in the Diocese of Baton Rouge as well as a community leader in helping bring racial harmony to Baton Rouge.

Along the way, he has moved from sitting in the back of the church as a younger to occupying the front row with his wife of 47 years, or even being on the altar assisting the celebrant during Mass.

“All of the stuff that happened to me, I thank God for it,” Deacon Adams said. “At the time I didn’t like it but now I look back, it formed me to the person that I am now. This is how you are supposed to behave, not to try to please anybody but just please the God that called me to do this.”

“Thank God for giving me that grace.”

Deacon Adams’ 1990 ordination was historic and nearly three decades later he continues to embrace his role as an inspiration for future men of color, living proof of what is possible when faith is one’s beacon.

“Being the first African American deacon in our diocese is something I will never forget,” said Deacon Adams, who is the director of the Office of Black Catholics.

“Bishop (Stanley J.) Ott (who ordained Deacon Adams) pointed it out to me, I remember him saying, Alfred, I appreciate you stepping forward. ‘I said, I’m just a guy whom God called.’ But now I look back and (realize) only the Lord could have done it. It sounds good.”

“I’m a part of history,” he added. “I can make this good or bad; that’s why I try to be more of a healer than always criticizing.”

As an African American male, Deacon Adams is a living witness to some of the most turbulent and difficult times in this country’s history. He first encountered racism as a youthful six-year-old who had moved from Vacherie to Lutcher with his family.

What he experienced was so hurtful that he told his mother that he could not see the altar and questioning why they would always sit in the rear. She just told him to be patient and let God “take care of it.”

When I look back, I say this woman planted the seeds of faith in me,” Deacon Adams said. “Don’t try to understand everything, just surrender to God. She built that faith in me.”

It was during those early years when he was forced to learn some of life’s cruelest lessons. When his older brother died of complications from a football-related injury, Deacon Adams, 13 at the time, became the man of the house. He was left to tend to his younger siblings while his mother went to work cooking and babysitting for others.

Deacon Adams took over many of the cleaning and cooking chores, with cooking being a love he has nurtured for decades.

“From that point, I did what I had to do,” Deacon Adams, the father of three children, including one deceased child, eight grandchildren and a two-year-old great granddaughter, said. “I learned how to cook and clean. You get up and do it every day. I (also) knew I had to be the breadwinner.”

After graduating from high school Deacon Adams found employment at a chemical plant. When he met his wife, they moved to Convent, where she was raised, and began raising their own family.

It was during that time Deacon Adams, who also drove a school bus, began working part-time at St. Michael Church in Convent, and has never left. His life would change forever when he attended a conference that he believes the Holy Spirit used to touch his heart.

Deacon Adams felt a desire to become a priest but knew that was impossible. Friends suggested he leave the Catholic Church and become a Baptist minister, a realistic solution since his wife had been raised Baptist.

He knew his heart strived for more but was uncertain of the answer.

“The calling was real but why would God call me to be a priest and I know I can’t be a priest?” Deacon Adams wondered. “That’s all I had in mind, to be a priest.”

Deacon John Veron, currently the Director of Diocesan Ministry and Life for the diocese, listened to Deacon Adams and suggested to his good friend that he study to become a deacon.

“I didn’t know anything about deacons,” Deacon Adams recalled with a chuckle.

In 1985 he began studying for the diaconate and was ordained in 1990 at the age of 35, becoming not only the first African American deacon in the diocese but also one of the youngest. But even as a member of the clergy, even wearing the vestments during Mass, racism was at his doorstep.

He recalled one white church member getting up and leaving whenever Deacon Adams was assisting at Mass.

“Some people still were holding on to the church as a white church,” Deacon Adams said. “Then you look at it and say, ‘Wait a minute. This is my church, too. How can I contribute to this church?’”

In 1992, he attended the National Black Congress in New Orleans, and shortly after became involved with the Office of Black Catholics. He was appointed director of the office in 2005, and immediately formed an advisory board comprised of representatives from all of the predominantly African American parishes in the diocese.

He said residents from such areas as Donaldsonville, Napoleon-
Josephinestes’ mission dedicated to African Americans

By Kelly Alexander
Special to The Catholic Commentator

St. Joseph may sometimes seem like an unsung hero of the Catholic faith.

He isn’t quoted in the Gospels, and little is known about him beyond the accounts of the Nativity and the finding of Jesus in the temple.

But he is honored as the church’s first missionary. And following the Civil War, when American priests and bishops appealed to Rome for help in ministering to newly freed slaves, Pope Pius IX issued the Negro Oath, solicited men who would pledge themselves to serving the Black community, and named the new order the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart more commonly called the Josephites.

In 2021 the Josephites will celebrate their 150th anniversary.

“For over a century, the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart has dedicated itself toward the needs of African Americans, especially to those of the spirit and soul, deeply wounded by racism and racial prejudice and to shoulder with them in procuring justice and solidarity,” Bishop John H. Ricard, the Josephites’ Superior General, a native of Baton Rouge, said in a statement to Crux after the death of George Floyd in May. “And (we) will continue to do so until this land lives up to its creed that all are created free.”

Bishop Ricard, a 1958 graduate of St. Francis Xavier High School in Baton Rouge, entered the Josephite College Seminary in Newburgh, New York and was ordained to the priesthood May 25, 1968 by Bishop Robert E. Tracy at St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge.

He earned his master’s degree from Tulane University in New Orleans in 1970.

In addition to his leadership role with the Josephites, he serves as president of the National Black Catholic Congress.

Bishop Ricard’s vocational origins and national reach is just one example of the significant impact the order has had in Baton Rouge. The Josephite mission first came to Louisiana to take charge of the Black missions along Bayou Lafourche in 1968 by Bishop Robert E. Tracy at St. Francis Xavier.

By 1982, with more than 600 students, it was the largest of all Josephite parochial schools in the nation.

Meanwhile the Josephites were active in the surrounding areas, opening St. Augustine Church in a rented storefront in New Roads in 1922 and establishing a mission in Mix, also in Pointe Coupee Parish.

The order brought a more visible presence to Southern University’s campus in the late 1960s when Father Rawlin B. Enette SSJ began celebrating Masses in a courtroom of the law school building. Under Father Enette’s leadership, the Josephites constructed and staffed a Newman Center, later renamed the Martin Luther King, Jr. Catholic Center, for the university’s 1,500 or so Catholics.

The Josephites built a strong Catholic community at South ern until the Jesuit order took over in 1984.

In 2005, the Josephites established the Josephite Hurricane Recovery Center to address the needs of 10 Josephite parishes, nine schools and thousands of displaced parishioners who were severely affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

For the past 15 years, the recovery center has operated under the direction of Father Patrick Healy, pastor of St. Augustine, who is also a board member of the Josephite Pro-Life, Pro-Marriage, Pro-Family Committee.

It wasn’t until 1991 that a local Josephite-founded church was led by an African American priest when Father William Nor vel SSJ, was appointed the 14th pastor of St. Francis Xavier. Father Norvel would make history again in 2011 when he became the first African American to be elected superior general of the Josephites, headquartered in Baltimore.

The irony isn’t lost on Father Norvel. Growing up in the racially divided South, he was initially discouraged from answering God’s call to ministry. “Basically, Josephites priests were white,” he told the Mobile Press-Register after his historic appointment. “When I wrote my bishop (at age 17) and told him I wanted to join the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, he told me there was no place for me in the church.”

His own pastor at the time, Father Edward Lawlor, who was white, had a different vision and encouraged him to attend the Josephite seminary in Newburgh, New York. Father Lawlor paid his way, and Father Norvel, who went on to serve at churches in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Baltimore, Mobile, Alabama, and even his hometown of Passcagoula, Mississippi, said, “I persevered.”

Always pray to have eyes that see the best in people, a heart that forgives the worst, a mind that forgets the bad, and a soul that never loses faith in God.
The Catholic Commentator BUILDING BRIDGES

November 20, 2020

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ings, just as there will be no segregation in the kingdom of heaven.”

In March 1962 he announced that Catholic schools in the archdiocese were to be integrated the following September.

The founding bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Bishop Robert E. Tracy, early in his episcopate put not only the diocese but the world on notice that he would be a pathfinder in the struggle to end racism and embrace racial tolerance. As a vocal participant in the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Tracy spoke for all the American Catholic hierarchy and urged the council to include the word “race” in a draft of a document that originally read, “There is no equality in Christ and in the church arising from nationality, social condition or sex.”

His recommendation was enthusiastically accepted and appears in one of the seminal documents of Vatican II, “Lumen Gentium,” commonly called “The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” which was promulgated on Nov. 21, 1964. With Bishop Tracy’s leadership, Paragraph 34 of this major conciliar publication would read, “There is, therefore, in Christ and in the church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus’ ” (Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3:11).

Bishop Tracy also published a pastoral letter on racism, presided over the total desegregation of diocesan Catholic schools and developed a syllabus on racial harmony. He directed that it be distributed to teachers “in grades seven to 12 to be used in providing moral guidance for the children of our schools in this important matter of racial justice.”

Other bishops of Baton Rouge have also spoken forcefully on racial matters. Their contributions to the history of race relations in the diocese will be discussed in subsequent articles.

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“Even if you look at the history of slavery, it is taught from a white perspective and glanced over and made to look like it’s no big deal,” he said. “Or Jim Crow laws are not always being taught in schools. We are not teaching the reality of what happened in our nation’s history.”

Father Johnson urged the council to include paragraphs on racial tolerance. As a vocal leader of the black movement, he spoke for all the American bishops on this matter.

Father Johnson urged the council. “It’s a crucial first step, saying that they were persecuted. I want to be like the few white Catholics who chose to do nothing when they were being persecuted. I want to be like the few white Catholics who chose to accompany them and walk with them.”

“Instead of our priests preaching about politics all of the time how about they preach about these six candidate for sainthood of African descent? That would inspire transformation.”

Father Johnson also outlined a series of changes he believes need to be made in Catholic schools, beginning with adding diverse artwork and statues that better reflect the school’s enrollment and even heaven.

He said establishing a Black Catholic curriculum must be established now and added the Catholic Schools Office for the Diocese of Baton Rouge is currently exploring that possibility.

He also encouraged Catholic schools to examine current policies and invite people of color to sit at the table to ensure there are not written rules that discriminate specifically against Black girls and to also make sure a school’s faculty looks like heaven since heaven looks like people of different ethnicities.

“Where Catholic schools began in our country they were not for the rich,” Father Johnson said. “So why are our Catholic schools accommodating rich people now?”

“Let’s look at policies. What are the requirements for people to get into Catholic schools? Policies need to change.”

Father Johnson urged Catholics to use their voice to fight unjust practices, and to listen, learn and pray and then acting because “God does use prayer and fasting to transform people’s mind.”

“There is no such thing as a white heaven and a Black heaven,” he added. “Everybody is in heaven together.”

From page 4B

spirituality of the Black parishioners and their total dependence on God. The deep fountain of faith from which they drank was an inspiration for me then, and it remains so to this day.

So I’m looking forward to revisiting that spirituality at the churches we’ll travel to over the next several months. As my companions On the Road to the Parish, help keep me between the lines and let me know what I’m missing.

Buckle up for our first trip together!

Deacon Dan Borné is a media consultant to the Diocese of Baton Rouge and a member of the Racial Harmony Commission. He is assigned to St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge. Email him at dborne@diobr.org.

The Catholic community stands with all people who struggle for an end to racism and violence, in our families, in our places of worship, in our communities and in our world. We must continue to build bridges and we must confront racism and violence with a commitment to life, a vision of hope, and a call to action.

Archbishop Kurtz
President of the U.S. Bishops Conference, June 19, 2015

From page 48

“Everyday is in heaven together.”

Learn More: www.sulc.edu
ville and St. James told him they felt as if they were being left out. He also reached out to a Southern University student to bring youth to the board.

“From there, that is how it got started,” Deacon Adams said, noting how the office has expanded to host youth conferences and days of reflections, along with helping African Americans overcome issues that might arise in their local churches.

Deacon Adams was a founding member of the Racial Harmony Commission, founded in 2016 by Bishop Robert W. Muench following a summer of racial unrest and violence in Baton Rouge.

He said one of the commission’s primary missions is to provide information to the African American community, hoping that information “can go from the head to the heart to start forming you as you are supposed to be.”

To achieve that goal, Deacon Adams has developed and presented several racial sobriety workshops, as well as assisted in developing the Racial Harmony prayer. He said it’s “a good prayer and I love it. But that prayer is supposed to be a bridge, and a bridge is only as good as its structure.”

“If we don’t know how to talk about race, it’s not going to happen,” he added. “Racial sobriety gives you your own voice. Jesus came with his voice, Martin Luther King (Jr.) came with his voice. Nobody can take that away from you.”

He is also working to encourage more African American vocations. Father Josh Johnson, pastor at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, is the only African American diocesan priest in the diocese.

Deacon Adams said he is working with the Knights of Peter Clever and other organizations to help nurture those vocations.

His is a career of many achievements, an architect of bridging the racial divide that divides the community. But perhaps his proudest moment was when Bishop Ott ordained him into history.

**ADAMS ▼**

From page 88

**DIOCESAN PRAYER FOR RACIAL HARMONY**

God our Father, You call us to love one another as You have loved us. We pray for the conversion of hearts in our Diocese of Baton Rouge to bring about racial harmony rooted in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, strip us of our pride, mistrust and prejudices, so that we may be able to dialogue with one another to build communities where justice, peace and love flourish. We ask these blessings trusting in the infinite mercy of Jesus and the intercession of Mary our Mother. Amen.

A diocesan liturgical dance troupe performs during an African American Mass at Southern University in 1994. Photo provided by the Archives Department | Diocese of Baton Rouge

**Powering positive change.**

Entergy is committed to creating a brighter, more inclusive future for everyone. From corporate diversity to investing time and resources to champion community causes, we’re powering that change by taking action today.
At Our Lady of the Lake, we are committed to living out our mission and core values.

“...We call forth all who serve in this healthcare ministry, to share their gifts and talents to create a Spirit of Healing—with reverence and love for all of life, with joyfulness of spirit, and with humility and justice for all those entrusted to our care...”

OUR LADY OF THE LAKE
Merry Christmas
The Catholic Commentator
CHRISTMAS  2020
November 20, 2020

Holiday spiritual and social events in the diocese

Editor note: Parishioners must wear mask at all indoor events.

Nov. 26, Dec. 3, 10, 17
Come and See the Word Made Flesh Mini Advent Retreat
St. Gerard Majella Church
Seelos Hall
5240 Maple Drive, Baton Rouge
Nov. 26 - Hope: The Faces of God
Dec. 3 – Love: The Kindness of God
Dec. 10 – Joy: The Word Made Flesh
Dec. 17 – Peace: Harmony and Unity
7:30 p.m.
Facilitator Rev. Tat Hoang CSsR
225-355-2553

November 29
Nativity Show
St. George Church
7808 St. George Drive, Baton Rouge
After each Mass
Nativities from traditional to exotic will be on display
Office 225-293-2212

December 6, 7, 8
Parish Mission
St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Church
30300 Catholic Hall Road
(I-12 Albany exit), Hammond
7 p.m.
Father Ryan Halford will speak on “Holiness is Perseverance!”
225-507-3573

December 9
“An Evening of Advent Reflection”
St. Benedict the Moor Church
5479 Hwy. 1, Napoleonville
6 p.m. Mass
Rev. Ralph Asika MSP, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena in Donaldsonville will deliver the message.
Confession before and after the Mass.
Music provided by the Inspirational Choir.
985-513-3470

December 12
Kids in Ministry Christmas Party
“Journey to Bethlehem”
St. Alphonsus Liguori Church
14040 Greenwell Springs Road
Greenwell Springs
9 a.m. – noon
Limited to 120 children. Only 2 adults per family.
Must register in advance at alphonus.org

December 13
Remembering Our Children Candlelight Service
St. Alphonsus Liguori Church
14040 Greenwell Springs Road
Greenwell Springs
6 p.m.
Everyone is invited to celebrate the life, love and light of children who have died with their parents, family and friends.
Church office 225-261-4650.

Living Christmas Nativity
St. Jules Church
7165 Hwy. 1, Belle Rose
6 & 7:30 p.m.
Watch and listen from car, listen on radio FM 90.9
Wendy Ourso 225-473-8569

December 15
Taize Prayer Service
Prayer Around the Creche
Holy Family Church
474 N. Jefferson Avenue, Port Allen
6:30 p.m.
225-383-1838

Advent Evening of Prayer
St. Jean Vianney Mass
1616 N. Harrell’s Road, Baton Rouge
7 p.m.
Belinda Smith 225-753-7950

December 18
Michael McDowell’s Christmas Concert
Most Blessed Sacrament Church
15615 Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge
6:30 p.m. – in the church
Tickets, only 250, can be purchased at McDowellPianist.com or by contacting the church office at 225-752-6230

There’s no better way to spend the holidays than surrounded by family and friends! STAT Home Health and St. Joseph Hospice work with physicians to help keep you or your loved ones at home.

STAT Home Health and St. Joseph Hospice are part of The Carpenter Health Network ... an agile, seamless solution to illness and injury, no matter the prognosis or expected outcome. From the stability of senior care, home health and rehabilitation to curative, life-extending treatment and the comfort and compassion of palliative and hospice care, The Carpenter Health Network is a continuum of care for the families they serve.

For hospice patients with symptoms not well managed at home, The Carpenter House, St. Joseph Hospice’s inpatient care home, serves as a place of peace, offering the confidence of a hospital ... with the comforts of home. Offering private rooms with comfortable dining and relaxing areas for family members, The Carpenter House can become an extension of your home during the holidays.

If you or a family member need assistance this holiday season, call today for information!

STAT Home Health: 225-769-4764 • St. Joseph Hospice: 225-769-4810
Penance services in the diocese

**Editor note:** Parishioners must wear mask at all services.

**November 30, December 5, 7, 14, 19, 21**

**Monday Nights of Advent Confessions**
St. Jean Vianney Church
16166 S. Harrell's Road, Baton Rouge
Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14, 21 – 6-7:30 p.m.
Saturday's of Advent, 2:45-3:30 p.m.
Deacon Richard Grant 225-926-1883

**December 2**

**Advent Penance Service**
Immaculate Conception Church
12364 Hwy. 416, Lakeland
5 – 7 p.m.
225-627-5124

**December 2, 9, 16, 23**

**Reconciliation during Advent Season**
Immaculate Conception Church
865 Hatchell Lane, Denham Springs
6 – 7:30 p.m.
225-665-5359

**December 3, 10, 17**

**Reconciliation**
St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Church
30900 Catholic Hall Road
(1-12 Albany exit), Hammond
4 p.m.
225-567-3573

**December 4 – 5**

**24 Hours of Mercy Reconciliation Service**
Holy Rosary Church
44450 Hwy. 429, St. Amant
6 a.m.; there will be a Taize Prayer Service at 7 p.m.
225-647-5321

**December 9**

**Advent Reconciliation Service**
St. Mark Church
42021 Hwy. 621, Gonzales
6:30 p.m.
225-647-8461

**December 9, 16, 23**

**The Light is on for You**
Our Lady of Mercy Church
445 Marquette Avenue, Baton Rouge
Parish Activity Room
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Deacon Richard Grant 225-926-1883

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**Holiday Masses in the Diocese of Baton Rouge**

**Editor note:** Parishioners must wear mask at all Masses.

**December 4**

**First Friday of Advent:**
Praise and Worship
St. Elizabeth Church
119 Hwy. 403, Paincourtville
6 p.m.
Wendy Ourso 225-473-8569

**December 7, 8**

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception**
Holy Rosary Church
44450 Hwy. 429, St. Amant
Dec. 7 – 6 p.m.
Dec. 8 – 5:45 p.m.
225-647-5321

**December 8**

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception**
Immaculate Conception Church
865 Hatchell Lane, Denham Springs
Dec. 7 – 4 p.m.
Dec. 8 – 8:30 a.m., noon, 6 p.m.
225-665-5359

**December 15**

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception**
St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Church
30900 Catholic Hall Road
(1-12 Albany exit), Hammond
6 p.m.
Must sign up at stmargaretstthomas.com
225-567-3573

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**Christmas Vigil Masses**

**St. Mark Church**
42021 Hwy. 621, Gonzales
4, 6 & 10:30 p.m.
225-647-8461

**St. Alphonsus Liguori Church**
14040 Greenwell Springs Road
Greenwell Springs
4 p.m. simultaneous Masses in church and family center
6 & 8 p.m. in church
Office 225-261-4650

**St. Jules Church**
445 Marquette Avenue, Baton Rouge
2, 4 & 8 p.m., midnight
Deacon Richard Grant 225-926-1883

**St. John Vianney Early Learning and Growth**

**Christmas Season!**

**Monday Nights Advent Confessions**
November 30, December 7, 14, 21 – 6-7:30 p.m.
Saturdays of Advent, 2:45-3:30 p.m.

**ADVENT EVENING OF PRAYER**
December 16, 7:00 p.m.

**CHRISTMAS EVE VIGIL MASSES**
4:00 p.m. in Church (capacity 350)
4:00 p.m. in Gymnasium (capacity 150)
7:00 p.m. in Church

**CHRISTMAS NIGHT MASS**
Midnight in Church

**CHRISTMAS MORNING MASSES**
8:00 a.m. (live-streamed) and 10:00 a.m.
Diocese of Baton Rouge Seminary Scholarship Funds

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

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

Who do I contact to establish or contribute to a fund?
To create a fund or to make a contribution to an existing fund, please send it to the Vocations and Seminarians Department, P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028. For information, call 225-336-8778.

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

Scholarship Fund Contributions August thru October

St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland
In Honor of: Father Jamin David
By: St. Margaret Kaycee Auxiliary $50.00
In Memory of: Charles DeMars
By: St. Margaret CDA Court #2678 $20.00 $15,894.80

Tomorrows Priest
By: CDA Court St. John the Baptist #2079 $300.00 $79,520.23

Father Clarence Waguespack Jr.
By: Our Lady of Peace Church $1,187.00
St. Philip Church $ 530.00
St. James Church $40.00
Chad/Erin Guillot $100.00

In Loving Memory of: Manuel J. Amedee
St. James Church $40.00
St. Philip Church $ 530.00
By: Our Lady of Peace Church $1,187.00

Additional Scholarship Funds
Mr. & Mrs. A. X. Guillot...........................................$20,000.00
Father Leo Guillot ....................................................$40,600.00
Kathlyn Elise Heroman .............................................$20,000.00
Father Salvador Impastato .......................................$20,000.00
Alvy Dee and Rezette Allemen Jenkins Family Living/Deceased
...................................................................................................$10,000.00

Alene Kaylor ..........................................................$18,518.68
Rev. Vincent Kleinpeter ............................................$20,000.00
Father Wilfred Knobloch..........................................$20,000.00
Mr. & Mrs. Albert J. Koppel ....................................$20,000.00
Father John Koppel ...................................................$20,115.00
Knights of Columbus Council 9016 .......................$75,000.00
Monsignor Paul Landsman ...................................$20,000.00
Gerald T. Leblanc ..................................................$20,475.00
Edith Louise Leonard .............................................$10,000.00
Madonna Chapel .....................................................$15,711.12

Monsignor Louis E. Marionneaux ..........................$20,000.00
Monsignor Louis E. Marionneaux #2 .....................$20,000.00
Fathers Martens & Perino ......................................$24,095.00
Thomas Beatty Mary .............................................$18,483.63
Dr. McCa & Monsignor Marionneaux ......................$20,000.00
Father Charles McConville ..................................$20,000.00

John McGinnis .....................................................$6,238.46
Father Joseph G. McLaughlin ................................$20,424.06
Deceased Members of KC Council #3298 ..............$6,721.39
Deceased Members St. Alphonsus KC Council #3311 $20,000.00
Deceased Members of KC Council #4030...............$20,000.00
Deceased Members of Pierre Part KC Council #5352 $150.00
Deceased Members of St. Gabriel Ladies Altar Society $3,800.00
Father Patrick Miller ..............................................$20,000.00
Mary Catherine Muench .......................................$1,675.00

Monsignor Charles J. T. Murphy ................................$20,000.00

Crawfish Cornbread

Favorite Southern holiday recipes

Crawfish Cornbread Dressing
Carolyn Milazzo
St. Agnes Church, Baton Rouge
2 boxes Jiffy cornbread mix
2 eggs
1 1/2 c. of milk
1 box Stove Top Chicken Stuffing mix
2 cans chicken broth
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 yellow onion, finely chopped
1/2 bell pepper, finely chopped
Green onions and garlic, to taste
1 1/2 sticks butter
2 lbs. crawfish tails
Salt and pepper, to taste

Make cornbread according to package directions. Melt butter and saué onion, bell pepper and green onions until soft, then add garlic and saué for just a minute or two. Add crawfish tails and seasonings. Add cream of chicken soup to crawfish and vegetable mixture. Crumble cooled cornbread and add in Stove Top Stuffing mix and chicken broth.

Pour crawfish mixture into cornbread mixture and put in an oven proof baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Squash Casserole
Carolyn Milazzo
St. Agnes Church, Baton Rouge
1 pkg. shredded cheddar cheese
2 lbs. fresh yellow squash, sliced
1 stick butter
1 med. onion and a little green onion, chopped
1 pkg. Jiffy cornbread mix
1 egg

Boil or steam squash until tender. Drain and mash and try to remove as much moisture as you can using paper towels.

Sauté onion in the butter. Prepare cornbread muffins according to package directions; let cool, then crumble.

Mix onions, squash and
**Recipes**

**From page 4C**

**Cornbread.** Put in greased casserole dish. Top with as much or as little of the cheddar cheese as you like. Bake at 350 degrees just until hot and cheese is melted.

**Peggy’s Molded Cream**
Carolyn Milazzo
St. Agnes Church, Baton Rouge
8 oz. sour cream
1 c. whipping cream
3/4 c. granulated sugar
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
1/4 c. tapioca
8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
1/2 tsp. vanilla

Optional: Frozen mashed strawberries with juice or other fruit with liquid of your choice

Brush one 4 cup or eight 4 ounce decorative molds lightly with vegetable oil. Set aside.

Combine sour cream and whipping cream in medium size pan. Stir in sugar. Place pan over low heat to warm, do not let it come to a simmer.

Sprinkle gelatin over water in a cup to soften then place in a saucepan with hot water to dissolve and liquefy gelatin. Once gelatin is dissolved pour into the warmed cream mixture and remove from heat.

Beat cream cheese in a large bowl with an electric mixer until soft and fluffy. Gradually stir in the vanilla, mix well. Add 1/4 tsp. salt, mix well then sprinkle over the mixture.

Cook broccoli according to package directions. Drain very well.

Place broccoli spears in rows in a greased baking dish.

Add milk and onion in butter until onion is soft. Remove onion and ham from pan leaving fat. Add cream to pan and blend well.

Add milk and cook slowly until thickened.

Add mustard, lemon pepper, parsley and mushrooms. Cook for a few minutes, blending well.

Remove ham and onions to sauce and then pour sauce over broccoli spears. Sprinkle grated cheese on top. Bake 350 degrees for 25 minutes.

**Peggy’s Molded Cream**
Carolyn Milazzo
St. Agnes Church, Baton Rouge
8 oz. sour cream
1 c. whipping cream
3/4 c. granulated sugar
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
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**Eggnog Trifle**
Carolyn Milazzo
St. Agnes Church, Baton Rouge
1 angel food cake
1 small pkg. vanilla instant pudding
1 pt. whipping cream
2 c. Kielbester eggnog
2 c. smashed strawberries with juice (or canned peaches with syrup)

Cut angel food cake in half so that you have two thinner round cakes.

Whip whipping cream until stiff peaks form. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Set aside enough whipped cream to cover the top of the trifle.

Make vanilla pudding using eggnog instead of regular milk. Refrigerate until it just starts to thicken. Once the pudding mixture starts to thicken, gently fold in the whipped cream. Mix thoroughly.

In a trifle bowl put one layer of the cake; pour half of the strawberries on top then one half of the pudding/whipped cream mixture. Repeat the layers. Top with the reserved whipped cream. Decorate with some whole strawberries or anyway you like. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

**Broccoli with Ham**
Carolyn Milazzo
St. Agnes Church, Baton Rouge
2 pkg. frozen broccoli spears
1 c. cooked ham, cubed
1 med. yellow onion, finely chopped
3 Tbsp. butter
3 Tbsp. all purpose flour
1 tsp. brown Creole mustard
1/4 tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. parsley, minced
1 small can mushrooms, drained
2-3 slices Swiss cheese, grated

Mix all ingredients using a fork gradually beat in.

**Erick’s “Inлагd Gurka”**
(Pickled fresh cucumber)
Erick M. Swenson
St. Joseph Cathedral
Baton Rouge
2 cucumbers, each about 7 in. long
2 Tbsp. sugar
2 Tbsp. water
2 Tbsp. vinegar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. dill seeds

Mix all ingredients using a fork gradually beat in.

**Cajun Bigmommachicken’s Chocolate Chip Cookies**
Janet Grimball
St. Joseph Cathedral
Baton Rouge
2 c. all purpose flour
1 1/2 c. half & half
3/4 c. white sugar
1/2 c. brown sugar
2 c. eggs
2 Tbsp. vanilla
8 oz. chocolate chips

Mix dry ingredients together in a bowl. The mixture should be well mixed.

Add dry ingredients to wet mixture, a little at a time until well mixed.

Drop on a pan with parchment paper. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until lightly brown.

When cookies are done put on a cooling rack.

**Italian Olive Spread**
Christine Richardson
St. Patrick Church, Baton Rouge
20 oz. can pineapple, drained
11 oz. can mandarin oranges, drained
21 oz. can strawberry pie filling
21 oz. can cherry pie filling
2 c. fresh blueberries
2 c. miniature marshmallows
1 c. pecans, chopped
1/4 c. can sweetened condensed milk
8 oz. Cool Whip

Mix all ingredients well and refrigerate for an hour or more.

**Cotton Candy Salad**
Christine Richardson
St. Patrick Church, Baton Rouge
20 oz. can pineapple, drained
11 oz. can mandarin oranges, drained
21 oz. can strawberry pie filling
21 oz. can cherry pie filling
2 c. fresh blueberries
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Mix all ingredients well and refrigerate for an hour or more.
Ways to give to those in need this holiday season

This time of year people focus on giving to others. Because of current economic conditions, many people will not be able to give presents nor will they be in a position to receive gifts from those close to them. Many people are in desperate need of the basics of life: food, warm clothing, medication and personal hygiene items.

**Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge**

Keep Christmas Lights Shining Bright Catholic Charities sponsors this program to help pay for utility bills of struggling families or individuals during the winter months. Contact Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge at 225-336-8700 or donate online to the Christmas lights program at catholiccharitiesbr.org

**Good Fellows-Good Samaritans**

Good Fellows-Good Samaritans brings Christmas gifts to children in East Baton Parish whose families are not able to provide Christmas presents for them. Each year, they purchase clothing, books and toys for children. GF-GS is part of the Sunrise Rotary Club of Baton Rouge, and 100% of all proceeds pay for the clothing, toys and books that are purchased. Both individual and corporate donations are appreciated.

Donations can be sent to Good Fellows-Good Samaritans, P. O. Box 80135, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

**Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

Annual Bishop’s Gift Distribution Children who won’t have the opportunity to sit on Santa’s lap and who won’t receive a visit from Santa on Christmas Eve will be able to visit with Bishop Michael G. Duca and receive a gift from him. These children live at the St. Vincent de Paul Homeless Shelter or eat at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room and depend on St. Vincent de Paul for their health and well-being. New toys can be dropped off at 220 St. Vincent de Paul Place, Baton Rouge.

**St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room**

With the meal count going up at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, donated food items are critical to providing a hot meal 365 days of the year. The Dining Room is in urgent need of rice, sugar, dry beans, spaghetti, and all types of canned vegetables and fruits. During the holiday season, there is also a need for ham, turkey and the trimmings that go with these.

**Bishop Ott Shelter Collection Campaign**

Men’s and women’s toiletry items, diapers, gloves, caps and underwear can be dropped off at the BR Clinic, Albertson’s, Home Bank or SVDP. Donations can be delivered to the Bishop Ott Shelter, 1623 Convention St., Baton Rouge.

**St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal**

Financial support given to St. Vincent de Paul allows the agency to provide food, shelter and health care to thousands of people each year through many direct services. Contributions can be sent to St. Vincent de Paul, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or online at svdpbr.org.

**Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank**

- **Donating Food**

While purchasing food for a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner at a local grocer, pick up a few additional items and place them in the Food Bank Barrel after checking out.

**Financial Contributions**

A $1 donation to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank provides 10 meals because the dollar can generate $12.14 worth of food. Donations can be made any time of year through brfoodbank.org or by sending a donation to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, 5546 Choctaw Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70805. The Food Bank serves people in 11 civil parishes in this area.

**Keep Christmas Lights shining all year.**


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**Holiday Hunks Cookies**

*(A mouth full of Christmas Cheer)*

Tracy Landry Crow

*St. Thomas More Church, Baton Rouge*

1 c. softened butter
1 1/2 c. sugar
3 eggs
1 tsp. baking soda dissolved in 2 Tbsp. hot water
3 c. flour
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. cloves
1 1/2 c. chopped pecans
1 1/2 c. raisins
1 pkg. chopped dates
1/2 c. chopped maraschino cherries (both red and green)

Combine all ingredients in a bowl, mix well. Chill until serving time. Yield: 8-10 servings.
Christmas Day Masses
St. Jean Vianney Church
16166 S. Harrel’s Road
Baton Rouge
8 (lived streamed) & 10 a.m. in church
Belinda Smith 225-753-7950

Christmas Day Masses
St. Alphonsus Liguori Church
14040 Greenwell Springs Road
Greenwell Springs
8 & 10 a.m. in church
Office. 225-261-4650

Christmas Day Mass
St. Gerard Majella Church
5354 Plank Road, Baton Rouge
10 a.m.
225-684-5321

Christmas Day Masses
Immaculate Conception Church
865 Hatchell Lane
Denham Springs
3, 5 & 7 p.m. (with prelude music at 11:30 p.m.)
225-665-5359

Christmas Day Masses
St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Church
30300 Catholic Hall Road
(I-12 Albany exit), Hammond
Midnight, 10 a.m.
Must sign up at stmargaretsthomas.com
225-576-3573

Christmas Day Mass
Holy Rosary Church
44540 Hwy. 649, St. Amant
9 a.m.
225-647-8461

Christmas Day Masses
St. Mark Church
42021 Hwy. 22, Gonzales
9:30 & 11 a.m.
225-627-5124

Christmas Day Masses
Our Lady of Mercy Church
445 Marquette Avenue
Baton Rouge
7 & 10:30 a.m., noon
Deacon Richard Grant
225-926-1883

Christmas Day Masses
St. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung Parish
2305 Choctaw Drive
Baton Rouge
Jan. 2 – 4 p.m. (English)
Belinda Smith 225-753-7950

Christmas Day Masses
St. Benedict the Moor Church
16166 S. Harrel’s Road
Baton Rouge
8 a.m.
985-513-3470

**December 31, January 1**

**Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass**
St. Thomas Chapel
32191 Hwy. 22, Springfield
6 p.m.
Must sign up at stmargaretsthomas.com
225-576-3573

**December, January 1**

**Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass**
Immaculate Conception Church
12364 Hwy. 416, Lakeland
Dec. 31, 4 p.m.
Jan. 1, 8 a.m.
225-627-5124

**Penance ▼**

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**December 15**

**Reconciliation**
St. Elizabeth Church
119 Hwy. 403, Paincourtville
6 p.m.
Wendy Oourso 225-473-8569

**December 17**

**Reconciliation**
St. Jules Church
7165 Hwy. 1, Belle Rose
5 – 8 p.m.
Wendy Oourso 225-473-8569
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