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Woman's New Life
Clinic Fundraiser

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Walking with third person of the Trinity

By Richard Meek

The Catholic Commentator

Journeying with the Holy Spirit can be as spiritually enriching as it is mystifying.

Some Catholics tend to consider the Holy Spirit the least understood person of the Holy Trinity. It's easy to put a face on Jesus through the Scriptures of the New Testament, and God is the ultimate father.

The Holy Spirit? Perhaps a bit more complex.

"I think we are not understanding the father, son and Holy Spirit as one being in three persons," said Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. "I think if we get back to the basics of understanding the Trinity – fa-



Photo by CNA

ther, son and Holy Spirit – and how that relationship is a relationship we are actually incorporated into and are a part

of, that we sit with, that we pray with, then I think our understanding will not separate the three.

"We will understand how the Trinity is one as we are one."

SEE SPIRIT PAGE 16



SUMMER BREAK! Catholic Schools students are taking a summer hiatus and spending time with family, friends and having fun. Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge celebrated the end of the school year with a Mass and awards presentation at MBS Church. Making their way home are first-grader Haley Stelly, pictured on the shoulders of her grandfather, Wayne Weicks, Julie Weicks (left) and Elizabeth Baudoin. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Program offers assistance to mothers

By Debbie Shelley

The Catholic Commentator

Trainees in the Mary's Hands Network Volunteer Community Doula Program learned the "nitty gritty" of what it means to walk with moms in need during a session that was packed with information and hands-on activities at a training session on May 20 at the Catholic Life Center.

The Doula Program has been developed in tandem with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, local crisis pregnancy centers and maternal wellness centers.

Doula training counts toward the ICEA Certification Require-

ment to become a certified birth doula.

Volunteers are required to complete a 24-hour ICEA birth doula training program and commit to serving two mothers a year while serving in the program.

The doulas work in teams of three to serve one mother directly throughout her pregnancy, birth and postpartum period.

The May 20 training covered the doula's role throughout the labor and birth process.

Attendees learned about comfort measures and the three R's during birth: relaxation, rhythm and ritual. They also learned about expectations of medical personnel

during an emergency in an operative birth and throughout recovery.

Healthcare professionals also gave presentations, which included a registered nurse on the important support role doulas play and a pediatrician discussing medications, tests and assessments for babies.

Issues that come after birth were discussed, such as bonding, breast feeding and postpartum depression.

Kaprishia Adikema, who moved from Opelousas to Baton Rouge and has worked in the healthcare industry for the past 10 years, learned about Mary's Hands

SEE DOULA PAGE 8

DID YOU KNOW

Novenas offer peace

When it comes to times of stress, anxiety or fear, the first thing Catholics will do is pray ... and ask others to pray. For some it means praying the rosary and for others it means praying a novena. The word "novena" comes from the Latin word for "nine" or "novem." It is a prayer, or set of prayers, prayed for nine days, hours, weeks or months.

Novenas offer peace as well as hope to Catholics who turn to them during their time of need. Traditionally, nine-day novenas are available for any number of intentions but likely one of the most popular is the St. Jude Novena, which is offered for hopeless causes. St. Jude is the Catholic's go-to guy in times of stress, whether it's life-threatening or facing a week of final exams.

Other popular novena prayers are to Jesus, Mary, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Therese and St. Anne. Novenas usually consist of a brief scripture passage, a novena-specific prayer that is repeated every day, a litany or petition response prayer and a canticle or hymn. There are four main types of novenas:

Novenas of mourning.

Novenas of preparations for cel-

ebrations such as Christmas, Easter and feast days.

Novenas of petitions.

Novenas of penance.

Scripturally, novenas take their origin from the nine days of prayer before Pentecost. In fact, it was Jesus who, after his ascension into heaven, instructed his disciples to return to Jerusalem and gather in prayer. Nine days later, the Holy Spirit appeared to the disciples in tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues on what was the first Pentecost.

Thus, the novena is an imitation of the Lord's command to the apostles when they prayed for nine days in anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In May 1897, in his Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, Pope Leo XIII decreed that every year the whole church renew its devotion by praying a Novena to the Holy Spirit in the nine days leading up to Pentecost.

It remains the only novena prescribed by the church and is a powerful plea for the strength and love needed by all people.

Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who, before ascending into heaven, didst promise to send the Holy Ghost to finish Thy work in the souls of Thy Apostles and Disciples, deign to grant the same Holy Spirit to me, that He may perfect in my soul the work of Thy grace and Thy love.

Grant me the Spirit of Wisdom that I may despise the perishable things of this world and aspire only after the things that are eternal,

the Spirit of Understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of Thy divine truth,

the Spirit of Counsel that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining Heaven,

the Spirit of Fortitude that I may bear my cross with Thee, and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation,

the Spirit of Knowledge that I may know God and know myself and grow perfect in the science of the Saints,

the Spirit of Piety that I may find the service of God sweet and amiable,

the Spirit of Fear that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God, and may dread in any way to displease Him.

Mark me, dear Lord, with the sign of Thy true disciples and animate me in all things with Thy Spirit.

Amen.

Life in the Holy Spirit

By Dina Dow

The upcoming Sunday Mass Readings are pivotal for our mission as disciples to go into the world and tell the good news:

The Ascension of The Lord and Pentecost Sunday. Pope Benedict wrote, "It (Pentecost) marks the fulfillment of the event of the Pass-

over, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus through the gift of the Spirit of the Risen One" (Homily, Sunday, June 12, 2011). The "Lord, the giver of life," the Holy Spirit descends, just as Jesus promised the apostles. They receive the power of Holy Spirit and become his witnesses. The action of the Holy Spirit directs, guides and sanctifies the life of the community, illuminating the power of new life in the resurrection, mainly the life of Jesus ascended, the life of the Holy Spirit and the life of the mission of the church.

Promise (Acts 1:1-5)

Jesus appeared to the apostles and other disciples throughout the 40 days after the Resurrection. He gave them hope and spoke to them about the "kingdom of God." The apostles initially gained strength to believe, to hope and to proclaim yet were still hesitant. Jesus instructed them to wait for "the promise of the father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." The promise of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit sustain my life?

Ascended into heaven (Acts 1:6-11, Mt. 28:18-20)

Soon thereafter, the Lord reiterates this promise, and gives one last command, the Great Commission, a commission we embrace today as missionary disciples. "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

After this, the disciples witness Jesus ascending to heaven, in a cloud. This cloud

represents the divine presence. The apostles were filled with awe as they witnessed Jesus ascending bodily into heaven. Yet, he has not left them orphaned for he promises the Holy Spirit who will give them the power to endure. The angels reassure this promise

and offer hope as they appear as two men dressed in white asking, "Why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven

will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven." What are they do? How do they, and we, witness this truth and live out the Great Commission?

Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-11)

The Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke, not only tells of the descent of the Holy Spirit, but also describes the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the early church. Acts 2:1-11 details the account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples who remained gathered in the Upper Room after the Ascension. Ten days have passed, when, "... suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." This triumphal presence of God is one to be celebrated. Now the new law is written on the hearts (Rom 8:2) of believers by an unyielding power. The coming of the Holy Spirit gives life, as with Adam, as with the overshadowing of Mary, and as with the church, the people of God, as we profess, "... the Lord, and giver of life" (Nicene Creed).

Come Holy Spirit, Come! Ten days after Jesus' Ascension the Holy Spirit comes like no other. Compared to Jesus' birth: quiet, humble, reserved for a few; the Holy Spirit literally shakes the Upper Room! The apostles are set "ablaze!" Fear was extinguished by the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit, blowing away doubt by instilling His powerful creative graces of life.

The miracle of Pentecost is still a miracle

SEE GOSPEL PAGE 15

LIFE-GIVING
FAITH



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Former inmates discuss their experiences in prison and life afterwards with SJA students. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

SJA students visit with former inmates during Teach-in

By Debbie Shelley

The Catholic Commentator

The table conversations between students of St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge and formerly incarcerated people in the school's Fife Student Commons were punctuated with bold questioning, active listening and laughter during a Teach-In on mass incarceration on April 26.

The evening was a collaborative effort with SJA, Loyola University in New Orleans and the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Dr. Sue Weishar, policy and research fellow of the Jesuit Social Research Institute at Loyola University, discussed the high number of imprisoned.

"I think it's important that we know that the United States is the world leader in incarceration," said Weishar.

There were two million prisoners nationwide according to data released in October 2021 by World Prison Brief.

Weishar talked about how population trends correlate with higher incarceration rates. Following World War II, war-weary soldiers looked to settle down and the "Baby Boom generation" was born. As the "boomers" children grew up in the 1970s, there was a rapid rise in crime.

As crime rates increased, policy makers reacted because people were "rightly afraid," stated

Weishar.

"I lived in New Orleans and yes there was definitely crime," she said. "But the policies enacted were very short-sighted, very imputative and did not look at the impact it could have on a wider society."

The length of imprisonment for different types of crime started going up, according to Weishar.

Louisiana far exceeds the incarceration rate per 100,000 people of founding NATO countries, at 1,094, according to data from the Prison Policy Initiative. The non-profit organization researches harm of mass criminalization, and then sparks advocacy campaigns to create a more just society.

Louisiana also has the largest African American incarceration rate per 100,000, at 2,749.

The good news is that Louisiana's inmate population was down 25% in 2022 but continues to lead in many incarceration trends, according to Weishar.

Ryan Hallford, SJA executive director of mission integration, discussed the church's view concerning incarceration.

Any offense against human dignity, which includes living in subhuman conditions, arbitrary imprisonment and treating laborers as profit is not in accord with church teachings, according to Hallford. While people

should be held accountable for their actions, the church teaches there cannot be a system that perpetuates human indignities against prisoners.

Mercy is always a functional justice, Hallford pointed out. It involves looking for ways to build healthy relationships and repair disorder.

"We don't throw away; we don't walk away. Rather we have to develop methods by which we are giving people an opportunity to change," Hallford said.

During roundtable discussions, the students heard the stories of formerly incarcerated people and asked questions.

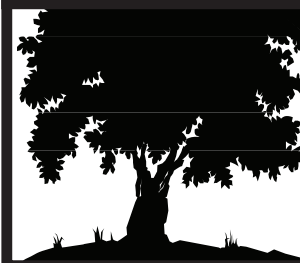
One of the ex-inmates was Sandra Starr, who was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 1994 because of a crime she committed while in a relationship in which she suffered domestic violence.

She said she was in a relationship as a teenager with a man who later abused her.

Following several years of a fruitless search to find justice and the violence escalating, Starr stood her ground. During an altercation in which the man abused her to the point she feared for her life, she grabbed a gun. A struggle ensued during which the man was shot and killed, according to Starr.

"I went to jail that day. I left
SEE SJA PAGE 14

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Father Hallford recovering from gunshot wounds

By Richard Meek

The Catholic Commentator

Father Ryan Hallford, former pastor at Holy Family Church in Port Allen and who is on personal leave from that position and from his sacramental duties, was shot on May 23 in an incident his brother.

According to the Tangipahoa Civil Parish Sheriff's Office, Casey Hallford, 31, shot his three siblings, including Father Hallford, on the morning of May 23. TPSO Chief Jimmy Travis said Casey Hallford, 31, and his girlfriend Ariannai Williams, 19, have been charged in the shooting.

Casey Hallford is facing three counts of attempted first-degree murder and one count of illegal discharge of a weapon in the shooting, which occurred at the Toulas Oaks Trailer Park in Ponchatoula.

Williams has been charged with three counts of principle to attempted first-degree murder.

Two of the siblings were treated and released, while Father Ryan Hallford remains hospitalized.

In a statement released May 25, the Diocese said Father Hallford "remains on a leave of absence in good standing."

"Our prayers go out to Father Ryan Hallford and the others who were injured in (the) tragic incident," the statement read.

Father Hallford was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Baton Rouge in 2017.

Travis reported that deputies responded to the Toulas Oaks Trailer Park following a report of shots being fired shortly after 11 a.m. on May 23. The caller recalled hearing approximately 15 gunshots and advised a male subject was laying on the ground.

Upon arrival deputies learned Casey Hallford had shot all three of his siblings before fleeing into the woods with Williams. Deputies, along with a

K9 search team, began searching for the duo, who were located shortly after and taken into custody without incident.

Preliminary investigation revealed that during a verbal altercation between the siblings, Casey Hallford retrieved a firearm from his bedroom and proceeded to shoot one of his siblings. As the other two siblings fled to their bedrooms, Ca-

sey Hallford individually sought them out, shot them and fled the scene, according to TPSO.

Travis said Father Hallford, who is

a resident of Baton Rouge, owned the trailer in which Casey Hallford and Williams were living and paying the expenses associated with the trailer park. The day of the shooting Father Hallford informed Casey Hallford that he would have to start paying his own expenses.

It was during this discussion when Casey Hallford allegedly retrieved the weapon and began firing.

Earlier in his life, Father Hallford had assumed the responsibility of his three young siblings.

He is currently the executive director of mission integration at St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge.

Holy Family Church prayed the rosary for him on May 24.

St. John the Evangelist church in Prairieville held a prayer service on May 25.

By May 26 Father Hallford's condition was updated to fair and two days later, it was learned through a source, that Father Hallford was sitting up and talking in his room.



Father Ryan Hallford



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION – Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in St. Francisville hosted its first holy Communion on April 20. Pictured is OLMC pastor, Father Brad Doyle distributing Communion and with the children afterwards. Photo provided by Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

Sexual abuse policy in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

Churches, schools and youth organizations have an obligation to provide children and youth with a safe place to worship, study or participate in activities sponsored by the Catholic Church.

In its ongoing effort to ensure that this is being accomplished, the Diocese of Baton Rouge has established an office of Child and Youth Protection. With the establishment of this office, the diocese has also implemented a process for reporting alleged abuse of a minor.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge has trained professionals available to provide counseling and information about additional care if needed. Information about reporting an incident is printed here in the three languages that are more commonly used in this diocese: English, Vietnamese and Spanish.

Issues relating to the Protection of Children and Young People

Mrs. Amy Cordon serves as Child and Youth Protection Officer of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Her offices are at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge. Her mailing address is P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028; telephone 225-242-0202; fax 225-242-0233.

A special confidential "Sexual Abuse Victim Response Contact Line" to be used in reporting any instance of child sexual abuse by an employee of the Church or a volunteer in one of the Church's programs has been set up: 225-242-0250.

Anyone victimized as a child or young person is urged to report this first to secular authorities (Louisiana State Police or State of Louisiana Department of Social Services) as well as to the special diocesan "Sexual Abuse Victim Response Contact Line" (telephone 225-242-0250) or to the diocesan counselors at Catholic Charities (telephone 225-336-8708).

Những Điều Cần Biết Về Bảo Vệ Trẻ Em và Người Trẻ

Cô Amy Cordon là giám đốc Văn Phòng Bảo Vệ Trẻ Em và Người Trẻ của Địa phận Baton Rouge. Văn phòng làm việc ở tại Tòa Giám Mục, 1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge. Hộp thư là P.O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028; điện thoại: 225-242-0202; fax: 225-242-0233.

Một đường dây liên lạc đặc biệt và uy tín dành cho việc thông báo những trường hợp lạm dụng trong giáo xứ sẽ được dùng là: 225-242-0250.

Những nạn nhân bị lạm dụng trước hết cần phải báo cáo lên các cơ quan chính quyền (Cơ Quan Cảnh Sát Tiểu Bang—Louisiana State Police hoặc Văn Phòng Xã Hội Tiểu Bang—State of Louisiana Department of Social Services), và thông báo lên Giáo phận qua đường dây đặc biệt (225-242-0250) hoặc qua những người hướng dẫn ở số (225-336-8708).

En Relación a la Protección de Niños y Gente Joven

La Sra. Amy Cordon se desempeña como la Oficial Protectora de Niños y Jóvenes para la Diócesis de Baton Rouge. Su oficina se encuentra en el Catholic Life Center, 1800 South Acadian Thruway, en Baton Rouge. Su dirección es P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028; telefono 225-242-0202; fax 225-242-0233.

Uno de los programas que la Iglesia ha establecido es la línea telefónica especial y confidencial de "Contacto para Responderle a la Víctima del Abuso Sexual" cometido por empleados de la Iglesia o voluntarios: 225-242-0250.

Cualquier persona como un niño o un joven victimizado debe reportar el incidente primero a las autoridades como la (Policía Estatal o al Departamento Estatal (Ministerio) de Servicios Sociales así como también a la línea de "Contacto para Responderle a la Víctima del Abuso Sexual" (telefono 225-242-0250) o a los consejeros de la Diócesis en las Caridades Católicas (telefono 225-336-8708).



ST. AGNES PILGRIMAGE – Father Brent Maher, pastor of St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge, led a pilgrimage/retreat to the Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Alabama May 8-11. Thirty-eight people from St. Agnes and other parishes in the Diocese of Baton Rouge went on the trip. Photo provided by Margaret Lovcraft

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Does purgatory exist?

Q Stump the deacon – Does purgatory really exist? If it exists, where is it?

A Yes, purgatory does exist. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraphs 1030 – 1032: “All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but (are) still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The church gives the name “Purgatory” to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.

The church formulated her doctrine of faith on purgatory especially at the councils of Florence and Trent. This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in sacred Scripture: “Therefore (Judas Maccabeus) made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin” (2 Mc 12:46).

“From the beginning, the church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for

them, above all the eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The church also commends almsgiving, indulgences and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead.”

So, where does this purification take place? Is it a place? There are differences of opinion on this.

Karlo Broussand, a Catholic Answers apologist, states the church has never ruled on this. She wrote some theologians refer to purgatory as “having a spatial locality (occupying space), you know, under the earth, and sort of ‘the bowels of the earth,’ but that’s pure speculation.”

Other theologians argue purgatory doesn’t have a place, it’s just a state of

existence — a condition of the soul, you might say, where the soul is existing

in the afterlife but is not restricted to any spatial location. Because the souls in purgatory don’t have any bodies, it seems to me that it’s unreasonable to speak of purgatory as a physical location, because there’s no matter to take up space. After the final judgement, when we are united with our bodies, the question of place has more significance.

It should not matter to us where purgatory is because it does exist. That’s the important thing. St. Thomas Aquinas says, “It is sufficiently clear that there is a purgatory after this life. For if the debt of punishment is not paid in full after the stain of sin has been washed away by contrition, nor again are ve-

nial sins always removed when mortal sins are remitted, and if justice demands that sin be set in order by due punishment, it follows that one who after contrition for his fault and after being absolved, dies before making due satisfaction, is punished after this life. Wherefore, those who deny purgatory speak against the justice of God: for which reason such a statement is erroneous and contrary to faith.”

Gregory of Nyssa, after the words quoted above, adds: “This we preach, holding to the teaching of truth, and this is our belief; this the universal church holds, by praying for the dead that they may be loosed from sins. This cannot be understood except as referring to purgatory: and whosoever resists the authority of the church, incurs the note of heresy” (Summa Theologiae, Appendix II, Article 1, Whether there is a Purgatory after this life?).

DEACON HOOPER is a deacon assistant at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs. He can be reached at ghooper@diobr.org.



Stump the Deacon
Deacon George Hooper

THE CATHOLIC COMMENTATOR

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WHITE CASTLE

Daigle Supermarket

ZACHARY

Lane Regional & Nursing Home
Oak Wood Nursing Home
Rouses Market
Zachary Manor

Women's New Life Clinic celebrated

By Debbie Shelley

The Catholic Commentator

Entangled by fear, confusion and sometimes thinking they have contacted the right place to have an abortion, numerous women with unplanned pregnancies reach out to Woman's New Life Clinic.

After receiving education, counseling and essential support services and space to think about their pregnancy, they become confident women who often choose to give life to their babies and discover new possibilities for themselves.

The clinic celebrated the dedication of its staff, volunteers and supporters during its recent "Saved in Hope: An Evening with Bishop (Michael G.) Duca" at Drusilla Seafood in Baton Rouge.

Allison Millet, CEO of Woman's New Life Clinic, said more than 10 years ago the community identified a need in the Baton Rouge area for life-affirming care and services for women in unplanned pregnancies and struggling from past abortions.

"For decades, Delta abortion clinic claimed tens of thousands of lives and in effect destroying the lives of countless woman and families," said Millet. "And our board of directors watched, unfortunately as women lined up in the blistering heat, rain, the cold and were lined up like cattle outside of Delta Clinic. With no support, no cell phones allowed, all lifelines cut off."

When office space became available in the building next door to Delta Clinic, Woman's New Life Clinic moved in, Millet said. Staff members met with women coming to Delta Clinic on the days doctors performed abortions and allowed the mothers to see their child through free ultrasounds and receive support.

"And they learned they could, in fact, continue their pregnancy, and we would be with them every step of the way," emphasized Millet.

In 2015 a fulltime counselor was hired, which enabled the clinic to be open five days a week to provide more comprehensive services. Through the years, Woman's New Life Clinic added the Creighton Model Fertility Care System as well as the abortion reversal pill.

In 2021, the clinic learned that its neighbor, a pro-life OBGYN, had retired, and the building was available. Through supporters' financial gifts, the clinic purchased the doctor's facility.

"And this building will allow us to double our clinic," Millet said.

In May 2022, when information leaked the Supreme Court would overturn Roe v. Wade, and the following June when the Supreme Court officially overturned the decision, churches and pregnancy centers and clinics were attacked.

"Like ours, and on the night of July 11, 2022, (so called) 'Jane's Revenge' did an attack on Baton Rouge. Their intent was to shut us down," said Millet, who showed pictures of the building and surrounding area littered with red graffiti.

"But ladies and gentlemen, we will never be stopped or slowed down. On the contrary we are fortifying our effort to dignify, protect and care for the most vulnerable – women and their unborn children," said Millet, her voice filled with resolve.

Within hours, the clinic opened its doors and supporters donated time and resources to restore the building. Security efforts have also been increased.

The clinic remains truthful and transparent to show women what it is about and how women

can be helped, according to Millet. She then showed video clips of women who shared their success stories after contacting Woman's New Life Clinic.

While the pro-abortion population utilizes the word "choice" and gives it a negative connotation, Woman's New Life Clinic embraces the word, according to Shannon McCormick, the clinic's nurse practitioner.

"At Woman's New Life Clinic, we embrace choice as a God-given gift and responsibility. Choice is part of our everyday thoughts and actions from the moment we awaken," said McCormick. "When a woman in Louisiana is faced with an unplanned pregnancy, she still has choices."

She noted the clinic offers women the resources and information they need to make life-affirming decisions.

Bishop Duca opened his talk by referring to Psalm 139 in which is written: "You formed me in your inmost being; you knit me from my mother's womb. I praise you because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works."

"That wonder of God sometimes is so wonderful that it's fearful, it overwhelms us with 'the fear of the Lord,'" Bishop Duca said. "And I think tonight we are all rejoicing in the many good things that are happening. But we always live with an appreciation for life, that we are fearfully,

wonderfully made."

It is good for pro-life advocates to come together and remind themselves because "we are in a changing landscape now," according to the bishop.

Bishop Duca, a Dallas native, had just entered the seminary in 1970 when the campaign was launched to constitutionally challenge the Texas criminal statute prohibiting doctors from performing abortions. This led to the passage of Roe v. Wade.

"This has been in the culture, it's been around, in our conversation. It's been in all of my life as a priest," Bishop Duca said.

From early on, there was a strong pro-life dynamic in Dallas, which Bishop Duca was involved with.

"With the overturning of Roe v. Wade I find myself rejoicing and watching things happen that I wasn't sure I would see, or at least see this soon," the bishop said.

The expansion of the Woman's New Life Clinic is "literally a breath of fresh air breathing life into the world and the country," Bishop Duca said.

The "culture of death" promoted abortion as a cure, even referred to as a medical practice as part of an automatic re-

sponse, and the culture of life was pushed aside. Hope was given in a strange, perverted way, said the bishop.

"Now that it's been taken away there's a fear – what's going to happen? In fact, this has turned into a kind of panic," he said.

And underneath all the bitterness and anger is human fear.

"We have an angry animal. An angry dog. And an angry dog, or trapped dog is dangerous; they are panicked," said the bishop.

In human terms, pregnant women who have no resources and nowhere to go believe abortion is the only way out, the bishop pointed out.

"It seems to me that this is our ministry," he said. "We should center ourselves in that kind of ministry that reaches out and provides that. That's what Jesus does. He shows us the way of salvation, shows us the way that we can overcome our sinfulness. He shows us a kind of freedom, the freedom of sons and daughters of God. And of course, it is not the freedom to do whatever we want. In Jesus it is the freedom of love."

For more information about Woman's New Life Clinic, visit womansnewlife.com.



Bishop Michael G. Duca talks about the important role pro-life advocacy ministries play in helping people discover their freedom as sons and daughters of God. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

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DOULA ▼

From page 1

through a friend and thought it was a great opportunity to learn a different side of healthcare as she serves moms in need and the community.

“I’ve learned so many things that will be beneficial to helping our clients as well as things I feel that are helpful to me as a woman,” said Adikema.

Cheramie Achee of Walker became a certified doula online earlier in the year. She attended the training for more hands-on experience.

“I’ve always had a passion for birth work,” said Achee. “I remember even as a little girl going through my mom’s maternity magazines when she was pregnant with my brothers. And I would cut out all the pictures of pregnant ladies and make a collage.”

She looks forward to serving moms in the Walker area.

Nelda Hunt of Baton Rouge said her career as a social worker and compassion for helping others naturally prompted her to join Mary’s Hands Net-

work.

“I chose to join this volunteer doula service because their compassion for maternal health is in line with mine,” she said. “As an adoption social worker, I’ve worked with expectant mothers. Seeing that portion of the process I wanted to continue to educate and support mothers through the prenatal process. I chose to grow my knowledge knowing some of the beauty maternal health brings.”

One of the hands-on activities Hunt enjoyed focused on helping moms get in comfortable positions during the labor process.

“It’s fun, but it’s also interesting because it’s the little things that we overlook throughout the labor process,” she said. “Such as how to calm moms and how to use pressure points and other techniques that come so naturally to any mom; reminding her of her power in just choosing those techniques that will take the tension and fear away and give her the confidence to birth her baby.”

Through Mary’s Hands Network the

church provides ministry in action to moms, according to Deacon Randall Waguespack, director of the Office of Life, Peace and Justice for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“Our church speaks about our responsibility as Christians to build a culture of life that joyfully proclaims the dignity of all human beings and aims to have a world where everyone can know God’s love, purpose and plan for their lives,” said Deacon Waguespack. “This is easier to talk about than to find tangible ways to put into practice. That is why I am so excited about the volunteer community network.”

“The classes have been a joy to witness. When the joy, love and support between the people involved in the classes begins to spread to women who are facing challenging pregnancies, I have no doubt that a real culture of life will begin to spread.”

For more information about Mary’s Hands Network, visit maryshandsnetwork.com or diobr.org/doula-program or email rwaguespack@diobr.org.

[A] Madeline LeBlanc, president and co-founder of Mary’s Hands Network, demonstrates how to swaddle a baby, Simon LeGrange, who is the son of Heather LeGrange, vice-president and co-founder of Mary’s Hands Network. Photos by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

[B] Activities involving exercise balls were relaxing and popular with attendees.

[C] Pediatrician Dr. Mallory Allen talks about medications, testing and assessments for babies.

[D] Barbara Thomas (left) and Jennifer Leonard practice slow dancing as a comfort technique.

[E] Michaelyn McGinnis (left) and Nelda Hunt practice wall squats.

[F] The Mary’s Hands Network doula training began with an icebreaker in which people passed a pillow and talked a little bit about themselves.

[G] Doula trainees learned various comfort and pain management techniques for moms.

Students ring in new life minus phone

(CNA) — As Franciscan University of Steubenville students wrapped up their spring semester, a large group of its undergraduates headed into summer significantly changed after participating in the school's invitation to drop their smartphones.

"It had way more of an effect on me than I thought it would," Grace Pollock, a sophomore nursing major at the private university in Steubenville, Ohio, told CNA recently.

Pollock has seen an improvement in her focus and productivity, and spent more time doing outside activities and reading since joining the school's "Unplugged Scholarship," which began its pilot run in the fall semester of 2022.

The scholarship awarded \$5,000 this academic year to undergraduate students who gave up their smartphones. Students can reapply for the scholarship even if they were selected the prior year.

Thirty students received the scholarship this year. Almost 170 students originally applied, and although not all of them were officially received into the program, a total of 80 undergrads gave up their smartphones and met monthly to support

one another and share their experiences in the program.

The initiative was started by Franciscan University alumni Justin and Hope Schneir, both from the class of '99, in addition to a small group of other alumni.

The scholarship is intended to help the students gain independence from their smartphones and is part of a larger initiative launched by The Humanity Foundation, which "was created for the sole purpose of helping humans engage with reality by gaining control of their digital universe," Justin Schneir told the National Catholic Register in November.

"We value a life lived fully, a life connected to meaningful engagement with self, other, and God," he said.

Pollock as well as 21-year-old junior Paul Merkel and 18-year-old freshman Theresa Ryan all said that giving up their smartphones helped them to become more "present."

"I could just sit down to pray and it was so much easier to be present," Ryan said.

She still finds it difficult to pray sometimes, but dropping the smartphone took away "a big obstacle" so she could "be present to the inspiration of the Holy



Franciscan University of Steubenville students who participated in the Unplugged Scholarship in its first year. Pictured, from left, are Theresa Ryan, Grace Pollock and Paul Merkel. Photos courtesy of Theresa Ryan, Grace Pollock, and Paul Merkel

Spirit."

Pollock said that prior to giving up her smartphone, she would often look down at the device while waiting in line, but not anymore.

Instead, she'll strike up a conversation with the person next to her.

"I think it's a great way to actually see the people in front of you rather than looking at your screen when you're uncomfortable in a situation," she said.

Pollock said that she notices how the phone takes people's attention while they are in conversation with others.

"There's constantly notifications going off, so whenever I'm talking to someone, they're constantly picking up their phone, looking at it and putting it down," she said.

Ryan, who is set to receive the scholarship funds next year but is participating in the program along with 50 other students who did not receive the funds, uses a Light Phone, which is marketed as "technology intentionally designed to be used as little as possible," according to its website.

There are several different options for people looking to drop their smartphones and switch to what is commonly called a "dumbphone."

CNBC reported in March the sale of flip phones was on the rise in the U.S. for one major flip phone distributor, HMD Global, which makes Nokia phones.

Merkel uses a flip phone.

"Almost immediately I noticed that my mind was a lot clearer after a week of not having a smartphone," he said.

Merkel told CNA his friends "started taking notice" because his phone "looks like it's from 2003." But it has been a great conversation starter and in speaking with his peers about modern-day cell phones, "no one actually likes their smartphones."

He said many people tell him: "I wish I could give up my smartphone, but I just can't."

Merkel told CNA that prior to joining the scholarship program, he believed he

couldn't give up his smartphone either. "I originally thought, 'That would be so cool, but I just am not capable of it.'"

Additionally, Merkel said that switching to his flip phone has been a lot cheaper than his smartphone because he doesn't pay for data and is only paying about \$20 per month for unlimited talk and text.

"But I could probably even find a plan that's cheaper than that," he said.

Without a smartphone, how do the students connect to social media?

Ryan isn't a big social media user, but Pollock and Merkel have Instagram accounts that are still active. Since they can't access their accounts on their phones, the two will use their laptops to check their accounts once in a while.

"It's so inconvenient to look at social media on your laptop, so I really don't find it worthwhile unless I know someone had a life update and I want to look at their post," Pollock said.

Merkel said he checks his account to see if he was messaged by someone, but not very often. The break from constantly checking social media has brought more peace into his life because "you don't have that kind of constant comparison of what other people are up to."

Merkel, Ryan and Pollock all said the community of the Unplugged Scholarship was helpful in supporting them through the journey.

Additionally, all three said they would recommend it to other students and hope other schools adopt the program.

Pollock is not going back to her smartphone for the rest of her schooling but will reevaluate once she enters her career. Merkel doesn't see himself going back to a smartphone at all.

Ryan, who hopes to join religious life after graduation, won't be going back to a smartphone either.

"We want people to recognize the inherent goodness in this sort of lifestyle and hopefully join us," Ryan said of the Unplugged Scholarship. "That would be amazing."







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ASCENSION CATHOLIC GRADUATION – Ascension Catholic High School in Donaldsonville held their graduation on May 13, at Ascension of Our Lord Church. Members of the 2023 graduating class are, from left, front row, seated, Malorie Denham, Tatum Nguyen, Alyse Ourso, Eli St. Germain; second row, Raegan Tripode, Emmie Lambert, Jeanne Lemann, Trinity Reneau, Preston Williams, Joselin Diaz, Annamarie Mabile, Ella Landry, Celia Denham; third row, Whitney Simoneaux, Casey Mays, Calvin Delone, Jr., Jacob Latino, Gavin Richardson, Kaitlyn Brooks, MaKayla McKinney, Keagan Davis, Anna Schexnayder; fourth row, Bryce Leonard, Trent Landry, McCullen Pearce, Patrick Cancienne, Michael Clifton, Evan Bouchereau, Mason Pearce, Layton Melancon, Collin Brown; and top row, Cruz Cassard, Brooks Leonard, Trot Capello, Lashawn Bell, Bennett Vega, Landon Szubinski, Cullen Nolan and Matthew Truxillo. Photo provided by Ascension Catholic High School



HOLY GHOST PASTOR INSTALLATION – Bishop Michael G. Duca recently installed Father Charles Johnson OP as pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Hammond. Pictured at the installation, are, from left, Father Johnson, Bishop Duca, Father Cayet Mangiaracina OP, parochial vicar and Very Rev. Roberto Merced OP, former Holy Ghost pastor and current Prior Provincial, Dominicans. Photo provided by Father Charles Johnson OP

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ACROSS

- 1 "I ___ forward to the resurrection of the dead..."
5 Caesar, for one
10 Fido's brand?
14 A dextrous way to be
15 "Same here"
16 "So the Lord God cast a ___ sleep on the man" (Gen 2:21)
17 Leader of the Maccabees
19 Blues singer James
20 Bathing suit top
21 Sly look
22 Papal residence, ___ Gandolfo
24 Wight and Man
26 Little ___ of the Poor
27 Ancient Palestine
29 Small swords
30 First letter of the Hebrew alphabet
31 Ephraim and Manasseh are each ___ tribes
32 Cushions
33 What you take when you're on "the take"
35 Select
39 Spotted
40 Archdiocese in Vietnam
41 Archdiocese in Ontario
44 Legitimate
45 Lets out of jail
46 "In my Father's ___ are many rooms" (Jn 14:2)
47 Gave a speech
48 Book of Samuel character
49 Pekoe
52 A contraction
53 Approval word
56 Stringed instrument
57 Mary was at the foot of this when Jesus died
58 Microbe
59 Applied
60 In biblical times this was often paid in commodities
61 Greek god of love

DOWN

- 1 "Lord God, ___ of God, Son of the Father"
2 "Rubaiyat" name
3 Acquired
4 Equipment
5 Soft glossy fabric
6 Palms are burned to make these
7 Den
8 US doctors' org.
9 Follower
10 "___ Fideles"
11 Paul sent this to the Church in Rome
12 One of the apostles and name-sakes
13 Gemstones
18 Supreme Being in Islam
23 "Yeah, right!"
25 Dupes
26 Car maker
27 Head covering
28 Pie-mode link
29 Nose (comb.)
33 Saint of Monte Cassino
34 Soaks, as flax
35 Crow calls
36 Liberate
37 Bud's Catholic partner
38 Diamond ___
39 Flat-fish
40 Single stem
41 Hometown of St. Paul
42 Early Christian art that symbolizes the Church at prayer
43 Decayed
44 St. ___ de Marillac
45 French World War I soldier
46 Stern
48 Small blemish
50 Continental money
51 Weapons
54 High-tech hosp. test
55 "His mercy is from ___ to..." (Lk 1:50)

Solution on page 14

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Greatest missionary of our time

Today we are speaking about evangelization, about apostolic zeal, of bearing the name of Jesus. And there are many women and men in history who have done this in an exemplary way. Today, for example, we choose as an example, St. Francis Xavier, who some say is considered the greatest missionary of modern times. But it is not possible to say who is the greatest, who is the least.

There are so many hidden missionaries who, even today, do much more than St. Francis Xavier. And St. Francis Xavier is the patron of missions, like St. Therese of the Child Jesus. And a missionary is great when he or she goes.

And there are many, many priests, lay people, women religious who go to the missions. This is incredible – to leave your own country to preach the Gospel. This is apostolic zeal. This is what we really need to cultivate. And looking at these men and women, we learn.

St. Francis Xavier was born into a noble but impoverished family in Navarre, northern Spain, in 1506. He went to study in Paris. He was a worldly young man, intelligent, wonderful, worldly. There, he met St. Ignatius of Loyola.

He made the spiritual exercises and changed his life. He left everything, his worldly career, to become a missionary. He became a Jesuit, took his vows. Then he became a priest and went to evangelize, sent to the Orient. At that time, the journeys of the missionaries to the Orient meant they were sent to unknown worlds. And he went because he was filled with apostolic zeal.

He was the first of a numerous band of passionate missionaries to depart ardent missionaries of modern times, ready to endure immense hardships and dangers, to reach lands and meet peoples from completely unknown cultures and languages, driven only by the powerful desire to make Jesus Christ and his Gospel known.

In just under 11 years, he accomplished an extraordinary task. He was a missionary for more or less 11 years. Journeys at that time were harsh and perilous. Many people died en route, due to shipwrecks or disease.

St. Francis Xavier spent more than 3 1/2 years on ships, a third of the entire duration of his mission. To get to India, he spent 3 1/2 years on ships; then from India to Japan. How touching.

He arrived in Goa, India, the capital of the Portuguese East, the cultural and commercial capital. St. Francis Xavier set up his base but did not stop there. He went on to evangelize the poor fishermen of the southern coast of India, teaching catechism and prayers to children, baptizing and caring for the sick. Then, while praying one night at the tomb of the apostle St. Bartholomew, he felt he needed to go beyond India.

He left the work he had already initiated in good hands – this is good, organization – and courageously set sail for the Moluccas, the most distant islands of the Indonesian archipelago. There were no horizons for those people; they went beyond. What courage these holy missionaries had! And today's missionaries too. Of course, they do not spend three months on a ship but go on a plane for 24 hours.

But it is the same thing there. They need to settle there and travel many kilometers and immerse themselves in forests. This is what it is like. And so, in the Moluccas, he translated the catechism into their local language and taught them how to sing the catechism, he entered through song. We understand his feelings from his letters. He wrote in 1548, "Dangers and sufferings,

accepted voluntarily and solely for the love and service of God our Lord, are treasures rich in tremendous spiritual consolations. Here, in a few years, someone could lose their eyes from so many tears of joy."

He cried for joy when beholding God's work.

One day in India, he met someone from Japan who spoke to him about his distant country, where no European

missionary had ever ventured. St. Francis Xavier felt a restlessness for the apostolate, to go elsewhere, beyond, and he decided to depart as soon as possible and arrived there after an adventurous journey on a junk belonging to a Chinese man. His three years in Japan were quite difficult, due to the climate, opposition and his ignorance of the language. Here too, however, the seeds planted would bear great fruit.

A great dreamer, in Japan he understood that the decisive country for his mission in Asia was another: China. With its culture, its history, its size, it exercised de facto dominance over that part of the world. Even today, China is a cultural center with a vast history, a beautiful history. So, he returned to Goa, and shortly afterwards embarked again, hoping to enter China. But his plan failed – he died at the gates of China, on an island, the small island of Sancian, in front of the Chinese shoreline, waiting in vain to land on the mainland near Canton.

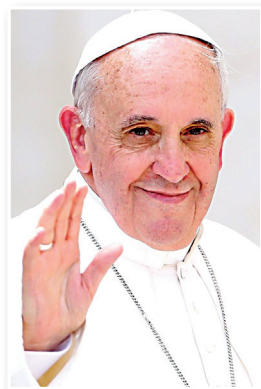
On Dec. 3, 1552, he died in total abandonment, with only a Chinese man standing beside to watch over him. Thus ended the earthly journey of St. Francis Xavier. He had spent his life zealously in the missions. He left Spain, a highly developed country, and

arrived in the most developed country at that time – China – and died at the threshold of great China, accompanied by a Chinese man. It is highly symbolic, highly symbolic.

His intense activity was always joined with prayer, the union with God, mystical and contemplative. He never abandoned prayer because he knew that is where he drew his strength. Wherever he went, he took great care of the sick, the poor and children. He was not an "aristocratic" missionary. He always went with the most in need, the children who were most in need of instruction, of catechesis. The poor, the sick. He specifically went to the "frontiers" when it came to care. And there, he grew in greatness. And the love of Christ was the strength that drove him to the furthest frontiers, with constant toil and danger, overcoming setbacks, disappointments and discouragement; indeed, giving him consolation and joy in following and serving him to the end.

It is St. Francis Xavier who did all these great things, in such poverty, with such courage, who can give us a little bit of this zeal, of this zeal to live for the Gospel, to proclaim the Gospel. So many young people, so many young people today have something, a restlessness, and they do not know what to do with that restlessness. Look to Francis Xavier, look at the horizons of the world, look at the people who are in such need, look at how many people are suffering, so many people who need Jesus. And have the courage to go.

Today too, there are courageous young people. I am thinking of the many missionaries, for example, in Papua New Guinea, of my own young friends who are in the diocese of Vaimo, and many others who have gone – young people – to evangelize in the steps of St. Francis Xavier. May the Lord grant us the joy to evangelize, the joy to bear this message, which is so beautiful, which makes us, and everyone, happy.



From the Pope
Pope Francis

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

June 8 Rev. Edwin J. Martin
Dcn. Michael A. Agnello
Br. Roland Champagne SC

June 9 Rev. Gerard R. Martin
Dcn. Donald Ard
Sr. Fe Borero Bista DM

June 10 Rev. Matthew E. McCaughey
Dcn. Frank E. Bains
Br. Robert Croteau SC

June 11 Rev. Paul A. McDuffie
Dcn. Thomas D. Benoit
Sr. Tonian of Heart of Jesus Borcellino HMSS

June 12 Rev. Roberto Merced OP
Dcn. Mark T. Berard

June 13 Br. Ramon Daunis SC
Rev. Andrew J. Merrick
Dcn. Willie M. Berthelot Sr.
Sr. Judith Brun CSJ

June 14 Rev. Victor G. Messina
Dcn. William B. Blair Jr.
Br. Alan Drain SC

June 15 Rev. Michael A. Miceli
Rev. Albert Blount
Sr. Lan Thuy Bui ICM

June 16 Rev. Cleo J. Milano
Dcn. Daniel S. Borné
Br. Carl Evans SC

June 17 Rev. Nutan S. Minj IMS

June 18 Dcn. Claude H. Bourgeois Jr.
Sr. Helen Cahill FMOL
Rev. Michael J. Moroney
Dcn. Jerry W. Braud

June 19 Br. Henry Gaither SC
Rev. Caye A. (Trey) Nelson III
Rev. Joseph Bresowar
Sr. Demetria Castro HMSS

June 20 Rev. Peter Neuman ICM
Dcn. Stephen Brunet
Br. Harold Harris SC

June 21 Rev. Hung Viet Nguyen ICM
Dcn. Alec Campbell
Sr. Maria Sato Culaway DM

Blessed Mother's shining light

There are not many things that bring my heart as much comfort and joy as the combination of the Blessed Mother and what some might call “tacky” colored lights. Sitting on my older son’s bed early one morning, before school we (by “we” I mean me and some noises that would occasionally come from his mouth) were praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet in the dark and the presence of light and the Blessed Mother overwhelmed me with love.

Now this was NOT like the image at Mt. Tabor or a Medjugorje-type moment. His door was closed and on the back of it is a giant decal of Our Lady of Guadalupe that he bought at Family Dollar with my dad. His room is trimmed in LED light strips that he controls remotely. He had the setting on pink which made her roses really brighten. It sent me into a wonderful reflection of all the times she eased my fears, prayed for me and reminded me in which direction I should go to meet her son.

Around 1990, I became very, very cool and so did my room. I had a black light bulb in the fan overhead, a sweet fiber optic tree, a wave machine and as many glow-in-the-dark stars as the night sky. All my troll dolls had luminous hair so they would “pop” when I flipped that switch, y’all. It was breathtaking. It was truly a happy spot for me. To accompany this decorative masterpiece I also had a collection of prayer cards freezer-taped to my wood paneling, tiny statues of saints and Mary, as well as a giant guardian angel picture over my door that was highlighted ever so lovely by my green lava lamp on the top shelf.

I was not the bravest kid so having Mary and my friends the saints glorified in iridescence was calming for me. Seeing Our Lady framed on the back of my

son’s door, in the same way, brought a heartwarming nostalgia that moved me into deep gratitude. Borderline gaudy things that light up and Jesus have always been my thing. If we are going to look at Christmas fun in Large Marge I will celebrate the houses with the biggest half-burnt multicolored lights and hard plastic Nativity scenes that need a paint job most of all.

In hindsight, I have created these settings for my kids and several of my godchildren subconsciously, too.

Do they enjoy them as much as I do, maybe? Am I pumped to give them presents like this? Absolutely! My nephew’s St. Michael’s shield of faith is illuminated by a neon sign of his name. My husband’s godchild has a marquee letter “E” sign that gives her angel’s picture the Hollywood spotlight. I’ve smiled since that morning thinking of all the shiny things and Jesus prizes I have wrapped and gifted to our sweet youngins near and far.

I feel the adult version of this is now my Mary garden. I have a nook between my garage and front porch where I spend a lot of time tending to lilies and roses I have planted for our sweet mother. There is also a fountain and comfy rocker nearby perfect for praying. She and baby Jesus stand underneath a shrine made from reclaimed red barn wood. It’s my new happy spot as a grown woman.

During the spring I take pictures of each new bloom and at night the real reminiscent action happens. Wrapped around variegated English ivy and the grotto’s roof is a string of blue solar micro LED lights. It may be a bit lurid to some but it is magnificent to me. I went out there late one night recently and took a picture of her face with the sapphire glow in portrait mode on my phone like I was some kinda professional. My husband glared at me funny. I replied, “Don’t even look surprised, dude.” Y’all can bet ya money I’ll be in the old folks home asking CNAs to turn on my blue string lights until the hour of my death when she comes.

During the second week of the pandemic shutdown, I was four months pregnant and struggling to keep

faith in all the uncertainty. We all were. I did not take it as an invitation to lean on our Lord. Everyone was encouraging people to make a spiritual Communion as much as possible. I prayed it often to no relief. I was also reminded by dear friends that me and my entire family were consecrated to the Blessed Mother and trusting in her intercession would be fruitful. I tried and remained anxious.

I do not recall from whom but someone shared a live-streaming link with me of the EWTN adoration chapel in Niepokalanow, Poland. It’s in the city of the Immaculata. I opened YouTube in the middle of the night and saw the most beautiful statue of the Blessed Mother with Jesus in the Eucharist glowing where her heart would be. She appeared to be suspended in the air with the sun behind her. She was surrounded by real flowers and flowers that were glowing.

The chapel had the familiar blue hue from LED lights but it also is seven hours ahead and the sun was just coming up in that part of the world, making it gold in tone as well. Blue and gold for our queen filled the room.

Their camera is set in the back of the chapel so you can see about three rows of pews on each side. They had people six feet apart praying the same as me. We were all making a spiritual Communion and calling on Our Lady’s intercession during a time of panic and worry. I then prayed a rosary and was gifted with so much consolation my pillow was wet from tears. Mary, our mother, comforted me in radiant blue rays, just like she would every night when I was a child. Now, I was having a child and calling on her again. She brought my frightened heart to Jesus and he poured his love right into it. I could not have designed a more perfect merge of the senses, memories and grace to bring me solace. The Lord is so generous and kind and his momma is so faithful and obedient. I pray you all will have something as special to you as stringed bulbs and our Lady is to me.

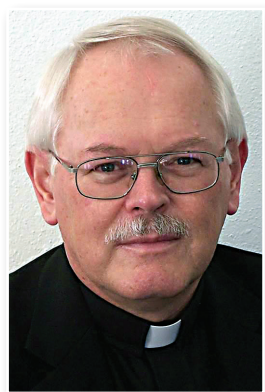
Mary, cause of our joy and Morning Star, pray for us.

ELDRIDGE is a Catholic mom living in the Diocese of Baton Rouge facing the same challenges all families face.



Raising Rascals for Jesus

Ellen Eldridge



In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser

In much of the secularized world, we live in a climate that is somewhat anti-ecclesial and anti-clerical. It’s quite fashionable today to bash the churches, be they Roman Catholic, Protestant or Evangelical. This is often done in the

name of being open-minded and enlightened, and it’s the one bias that’s intellectually sanctioned. Say something derogatory about any other group in society, and you will be brought to account; say something disparaging about the church and there are no such consequences.

What’s the proper response? While it’s easy to take offense at this, we must be careful not to overreact because, as a church, we should not be fundamentally threatened by this. Why?

First, because a certain amount of this criticism is good and helpful. Truth be told, we have some very real faults. All

atheism is a parasite feeding off bad religion. Our critics feed off our faults and we can be grateful that our faults are being pointed out to us – even if sometimes over-generously. Criticism of the church is healthily humbling us and pushing us toward a more courageous internal purification. Besides, for too long we have enjoyed a situation of privilege, never a good thing for the church. We generally live healthier as Christians in a time of dis-privilege than in a time of privilege, even if it isn’t as pleasant. Moreover, there are some important things at stake here.

We must be careful not to overreact to the present anti-ecclesial climate because this can

lead to an over-defensiveness and put us in an unhealthy adversarial position vis-à-vis the culture, and that’s not where the gospel asks us to be. Rather, our task is to absorb this criticism, painful though it is, gently point to its unfairness, and resist the temptation to be defensive. Why? Why not aggressively defend ourselves?

Because we are strong enough not to, and that’s reason enough. We can withstand this without having to become hard and defensive. Current criticism of the church notwithstanding, the church is not about to go under or away any time soon. We are 2.5 billion Christians in the world, stand within a

2,000-year-old tradition, have among ourselves a universally accepted Scripture, have 2,000 years of doctrinal entrenchment and refinement, have massive centuries-old institutions, are embedded in the very roots of Western culture and technology, constitute perhaps the biggest multinational group in the world, and are growing in numbers worldwide. We are hardly a reed shaking in the wind, reeling vulnerably, a ship about to go under. We are strong, stable, blessed by God, an Elder in the culture, and because of this we owe it to the culture to model maturity and understanding.

Beyond that, even more
SEE **ROLHEISER** PAGE 15

On not being defensive

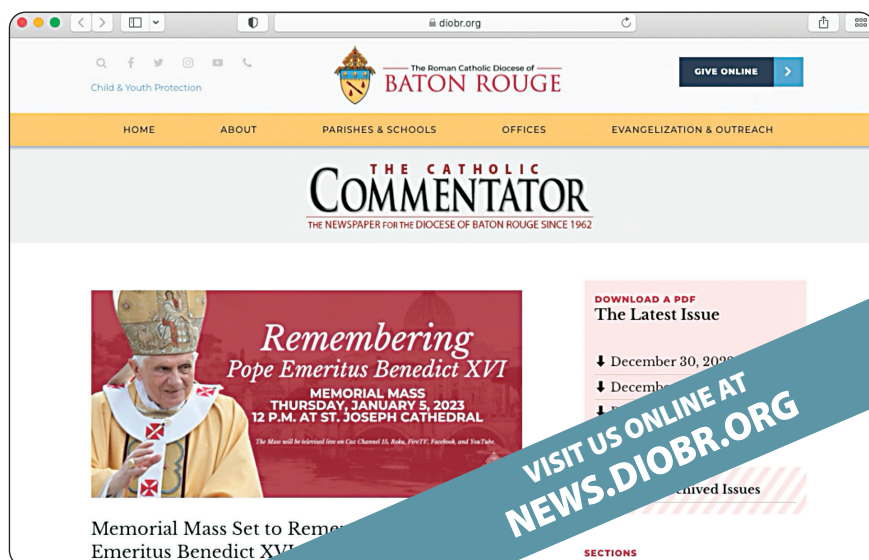
St. Alphonsus Eucharistic Procession – St. Alphonsus Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, will host a Eucharistic procession Sunday, June 11 after the noon Mass. Pastor Father Michael Moroney will process with the Eucharist around the St. Alphonsus campus. The procession will conclude with benediction at the church. For more information, call the St. Alphonsus Church office at 225-261-4650.

Patriotic Rosary – St. Gabriel Church, 3625 Hwy. 75, St. Gabriel hosts a patriotic rosary for protection for our families, churches, state and nation during troubling times on the first Sunday of the month at 3 p.m. in the church. The next rosary will be prayed on Sunday, June 4. For information, call Patrice Gremillion at 225-319-7300.

Pro-Life Summit – Louisiana Right to Life will host a Pro-Life Summit, “Saving Babies, Helping Moms: The Next Steps,” on Saturday, June 10, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., at Bethany Church, 11107 Honore Lane, Baton Rouge. To register, visit theprolifsummit.com.

Father Jeff Bayhi Retirement Reception – On Sunday, June 25, St. John the Baptist Church, 4826 Main St., Zachary, will host a reception following its 11 a.m. Mass for St. John Pastor Father Jeff Bayhi, who is retiring after 40 years of priesthood. The reception will take place at noon in the parish hall. For more information, call the St. John office at 225-654-5778.

Silent Ignatian Women’s Weekday Retreat – Becky Eldredge and Stephanie Cloutre Davis will direct a silent Ignatian women’s weekday retreat Monday, July 10 – Thursday, July 13 at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. There will be talks, payers and silence. Register at bekyeldredge.com.



SJA ▼

From page 3

my two babies at home, they were four and seven years old,” said Starr. “That was a heart wrenching thing to get in the back of a police car and looking at the children that you had to leave, that you tried so hard all those years to protect.”

At 23, Starr said she felt helpless and was not being heard by the criminal justice system. She was sentenced to life in prison at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women at St. Gabriel.

“Walking into LCIW was the scariest thing of my life because we watch this type of thing on TV, not actually walk it,” Starr said. “I felt I was being victimized again. I couldn’t get the image out of my head of those two little faces that I left behind.”

Starr worked with the prison chaplain and earned a degree in theology from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and became a peer minister. The Louisiana Parole Project and the Visiting Room helped her achieve her dream of freedom.

She was paroled after 25 years in jail and joyfully reunited with her children and grandchildren outside the LCIW gates.

She continues to provide messages of hope for other victims as well. She also works with 12 Keys Ministry in Baker assisting senior citizens in the area and is married to a loving husband.

“I get to build relationships every day and live my life as a free Christian woman,” said Starr.

Students also heard from Louis “Big Lou” Cruz. He served 40 years of a life sentence at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola before he was released on parole in 2021 with help from the Louisiana Parole Project.

While in prison, Cruz helped others. Artistically talented prisoners often donate hobby craft items to various organi-

zations to auction off at fundraisers. He worked with Sister Helen Cahill FMOL to donate items to raise funds for Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital in Baton Rouge.

Cruz assists with fundraisers for the Knights of Columbus of St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, where he is a member. He also works with the Louisiana Parole Project.

“Our mission is to show there are moral people that come out of prison and give back to society and that people in prison can give back. And that means a lot to me,” said Cruz.

SJA junior Chloe Sandefer was among the students who left the Teach-In with a fiery passion to work for social justice.

“When you give people life without parole, some don’t get an opportunity to show they can convert and change,” Sandefer said. “That’s just not right. I want to help people and make an impact and do what I can do for a fair criminal justice system.”

Sister Chris Pologa CSJ, director of pastoral care and service coordinator of the evening, said the Teach-In broadened, deepened and enriched the understanding of the Catholic faith and the Sisters of St. Joseph’s charism of unifying love.

“The Sisters’ of St. Joseph charism of serving the dear neighbor without distinction and the Jesuit dedication to academic excellence informed by real-life experience was evident throughout the night,” said Sister Chris. “We used current data on mass incarceration, personal stories and our Catholic social justice teachings to come up with action plans. The conversations around the tables were rich and reflected a variety of opinions and insights allowing for a sincere dialogue on a contemporary topic.”

“The richness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to respond whole-heartedly to the needs and issue of our times.”

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See
Puzzle
on
Page 11.



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GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

for us today. The Spirit invigorates the people of God to courageously share the good news of Jesus despite obstacles. Our hearts are set ablaze by the power of his love. We are the messengers of the good news. We are called to go forth and set the world on fire. We are the people of God!

Wind, fire and language

St. John Paul II writes, “Three basic elements mark the event (Pentecost) the sound of a mighty wind, tongues as of fire, and the charism of speaking in other languages, hence ... those present in the Upper Room “were filled with the Holy Spirit” (General Audience, July 12, 1989). The coming of the Holy Spirit is likened to the wind: movement with unseen origin and unknown destiny to human eye. The same “mighty wind sweeping over the waters” (Gn 1:2), the literal breath of God. The same breath that filled Adam’s nostrils, “the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gn 2:7). The same Holy Spirit animates the mission of

the church, and fills our souls with life, in order for us to glorify God and be life-giving witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the spark which gives rise to the flame from within; fire of the presence of God; fire to stir passion; fire to follow Jesus; fire to speak the truth; fire for the path to his life. The same fire in the burning bush, as Moses accepted his calling. The same fire in the form of a towering pillar, as the Israelites crossed the desert. The same fire within the churches illuminating candles beside the ambos, on the altars and next to the tabernacles holding the real presence of Jesus. The same fire that burns within our hearts as we proclaim the word of God, offer sacrifice for others, and eat of his flesh in the Eucharist. Fire that purifies, sanctifies and glorifies.

The Holy Spirit unites all in one common language: the language of love, willing the good for the other. St. John Paul II wrote, “One might say that the many incomprehensible languages have lost their specific character, or at least have ceased to be a symbol of division. They have given way to the new work of

the Holy Spirit, who through the apostles and the church brings to spiritual unity peoples of different origins, languages and cultures in view of the perfect communion in God announced and implored by Jesus. Pentecost is a powerful manifestation of God” (Catechesis by Pope John Paul II on the Holy Spirit, General Audience, July 12, 1989).

Mission

As living missionary disciples, we are called to be open to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives every moment. We each have a personal mission, to grow in holiness by prayer and conversion; by actively participating in the sacraments given to us from Jesus and receiving the grace poured out by the power of the Holy Spirit; by embracing virtue and living the Ten Commandments and beatitudes. We as church have a corporate mission as one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. We are many people, yet one in the mystical body of Christ. We are people called to unite. We are called to deep holiness because God is holy. We are called to be saints. We are Catholic, universal, embracing all of humanity with the tender love of Jesus, as we serve others and promote a life rooted in faith, hope and peace of God. We are apostolic, as we follow in the footsteps of the Twelve Apostles, those who first received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and by the grace of God, changed the world as they proclaimed the mighty deeds of Jesus.

As a thriving community of faith, we

answer the call and “go out and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:18-20). Witness to others your story of faith, how Jesus has changed your life, how prayer has made a difference, how helping others has led them and you to an encounter with Jesus.

Make disciples by being Christ-like to them. Invite others home to the faith, whether they are non-Catholic, Catholic but have been away, or those who do not know Jesus. Help form their faith through the power of the Holy Spirit by sharing what you know, the teachings handed on for centuries through what we learn from The Catechism of The Catholic Church. Receive Jesus in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and his great mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation. Live your vocation fully, with joy! And pray. Pray. Pray.

Finally, KNOW Jesus loves you, suffered, died and rose for you so that you may have eternal life. Trust in his promise of the Holy Spirit. Rely on the Holy Spirit as a daily companion. Trust and be open to God’s will. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love! Amen.

Dow is the director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

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HELP WANTED



Assistant Director of Faith Formation St. Alphonsus Liguori Catholic Church

The Assistant Director of Faith Formation (ADFF) will oversee and professionally manage the Parish School of Religion (PSR) for youth ranging from K-11th grade. The ADFF will oversee and collaborate with the planning and execution of Sacramental Preparation and ongoing parish formation activities related to that age group. The ADFF will work closely with the Director of Faith Formation to establish a comprehensive curriculum and series of programs designed to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith and its teachings.

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- Practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church
- At least 3 years’ experience in Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation
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Send resume to:
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14040 Greenwell Springs Rd
Greenwell Springs LA 70739
or email: info@alphonsus.org

ROLHEISER ▼

From page 13

important, is the fact that we have Christ’s promise to be with us, and the reality of the resurrection to sustain us. Given all this, I think it’s fair to say that we can absorb a fair amount of criticism without fear of losing our identity. Moreover, we must not let this criticism make us lose sight of why we exist in the first place.

The church exists not for its own sake or to ensure its own survival but for the sake of the world. We can easily forget this and lose sight of what the Gospel asks of us. For example, compare these two responses: At a press conference, Cardinal Basil Hume was once asked what he considered the foremost task facing the church today. He replied simply: “To need to try to save this planet.” Compare that response with that of another cardinal who, in a recent radio interview, was asked the same question (What is the foremost task facing the church today?) and replied, “To defend the faith.” Who’s right?

Everything about Jesus suggests that Bishop Hume’s view is closer to the Gospel than the other. When Jesus says, “My flesh is food for the life of the

world,” he is affirming clearly that the primary task of the church is not to defend itself, or ensure its continuity, or protect itself from being crushed by the world. The church exists for the sake of the world, not for its own sake. That’s why there is such a rich symbolism in the fact that immediately after Jesus was born, he was laid in a trough in a stable, a place where animals come to eat; and it’s why he gives himself up on a table in the Eucharist, to be eaten.

Being eaten up by the world is largely what Jesus is about, namely, risking vulnerability over safety and trust over defensiveness. At the very heart of the Gospel lies a call to risk beyond defensiveness and to absorb unjust criticism without fighting back: “Forgive them, they know not what they do!”

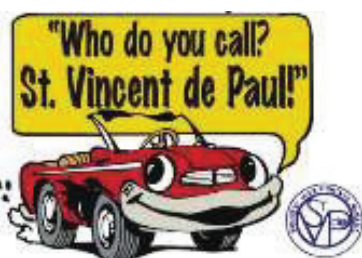
The church is meant to give itself over as food for the world. Like all living bodies it needs sometimes to protect itself – but never at the cost of losing its very reason for being here.

OBLATE FATHER RON ROLHEISER, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com and [facebook.com/ronrolheiser](https://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser).



MAY CROWNING – St. Anne Church in Napoleonville celebrated May as the month dedicated to the Blessed Mother with a May crowning on May 13. Pictured crowning a statue of Mary are Herbert "Dickie" Daigle and his wife, Jeanie. Photo provided by Julie Adolph

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It's almost summer time, and we can help with your cleaning before spring is over. If you have been thinking about getting rid of your old car, now would be a great time to donate it to St. Vincent de Paul.

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SPIRIT ▼

From page 1

Dow said the love between the father and son, or God and Jesus, is so great that the Holy Spirit was born of that love, much the same way a child is born out of the great love of a mother and father. She said the Holy Spirit animates the life of every Catholic, moving every person according to his or her faith.

"As blood runs through the veins, the Spirit runs through our souls as part of our being," Dow said. "Without the Holy Spirit, we can't move."

Catholics initially receive the Holy Spirit at baptism, through the words of the Rite of Baptism. Dow recalled Christ's words from Scripture when he said, "I baptize you in the name of the father of the son and the Holy Spirit."

"That's how we receive the trinitarian rite in our lives," she said. "All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit we receive at Baptism."

Pope Francis is even more emphatic regarding the importance of the Holy Spirit. He said the protagonist of the Acts of the Apostles is not St. Peter, Stephen or St. Philip but the Holy Spirit.

"(The apostles) could have sought a good compromise between tradition and innovation: some rules are observed, others are left out," the pope said. "Yet the apostles do not follow this human wisdom, but adapt themselves to the work of the Spirit, who had anticipated them by descending upon the pagans just as on them."

"As church, we can have well-defined times and spaces, well-organized communities, institutes and movements, but without the Spirit, everything remains soulless."

Dow said she petitions the Holy Spirit daily to lead, to guide, to protect, to heal, to comfort and recommends a similar practice for Catholics. She emphasized the Holy Spirit is the transformative love that transforms all beings into the Lord.

She also said Pentecost Sunday, which was celebrated May

28, is one of the most important solemnities of the year, calling it the birthday of the church.

It is when we see the movement of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles who were still, even after the Lord's ascension, doubting. And so the Lord told them to wait for the advocate. "And so that day in the Upper Room the Holy Spirit descends upon and animates and empowers and enlivens and infuses the apostles to have the fortitude, strength, wisdom to go out and proclaim that Jesus is risen from the dead."

If indeed the mission of the church is to evangelize, pro-

Pentecost are a good time to discern what it means to be a disciple and to recommit to that call. She said she often hears people complain about what is going on around the country and the world but her response is to ask them how are they are answering the call to discipleship and are they reaching out to help people who are struggling?

"How much courage do we have to speak with them in such a way to invite them back into a relationship with God?" she said. "With family, friends that are off the path, how are we taking that moment to ask the Holy Spirit to open the door and ask for that dialogue to happen?"

"I really want to walk with this person but how do I do that?"

She said to ask through the Holy Spirit and it will be received but quickly added, "Then hang on because the Holy Spirit will take you where you will never have thought of, you will be able to accomplish what you set out to do, and it's always going to be more than what you expect."

"You have to trust and let go."

Dow encouraged people to faithfully and intentionally pray to the Holy Spirit, beginning with the morning prayer and ending with the night prayer. She recommends people asking the Holy Spirit to be

part of one's daily life, to consecrate one's self to him.

"He says 'I'm your advocate, I am here for you.' We are never alone, not with the Holy Spirit," she said. "We receive the Holy Spirit, we become holy. We have the openness to grow each day."

The fire of the Holy Spirit burns within everyone and it's up to each individual to call upon that Spirit to be able to walk closer with Christ.

"If the church does not pray to and invoke the Spirit, it closes in on itself, in sterile and exhausting debates, in wearisome polarizations, while the flame of mission is extinguished," Pope Francis said regarding praying to the Holy Spirit. "Do I pray to the Spirit? Do I let myself be guided by him?"

"I think we are not understanding the father, son and Holy Spirit as one being in three persons. I think if we get back to the basics of understanding the Trinity – father, son and Holy Spirit – and how that relationship is a relationship we are actually incorporated into and are a part of, that we sit with, that we pray with, then I think our understanding will not separate the three."

Dina Dow

Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
for the Diocese of Baton Rouge

claim, teach, baptize and bring all souls to Jesus then Pentecost marks the day Catholics are called. Dow said the faithful are called daily to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, to claim it and to go out with courage and spread the good news.

And that only be accomplished through the Holy Spirit.

"It's what moves us to do so things," Dow said. "He is what helps us with the Spirit of truth, to grow in our understanding."

"Can I see the holy spirit?" she said. "No. I can see the presence of the Holy Spirit in someone else. I can see the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, I can see things in people that I had never seen before without the grace and power of the Holy Spirit moving through them."

She said the days following