

CHURCH TODAY

Volume XLVII, No. 12

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December 19, 2016



ON THE INSIDE

Memorial Mass held for Sister C.C. Vanderlick, CDP

Family and friends of Sister Cecile Clare Vanderlick gathered Dec. 10 in Alexandria for a Memorial Mass at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church. The beloved Menard chemistry teacher passed away Nov. 24 in San Antonio. See pg. 7.

Cardinal DiNardo elected president of USCCB

The bishops "intend to be attentive," said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston hours after his Nov. 15 election as USCCB president to a three-year term that began at the close of the bishops' fall assembly. See pg. 2.

St. John the Baptist Church celebrates 200 years

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Cloutierville celebrated its 200th anniversary Nov. 19 with a special Mass celebrated by Bishop David Talley. See pg. 9.



**A Savior has been Born
who is Messiah
and Lord**

Luke 2:11

MARY AND THE CHRIST CHILD are depicted in this 17th-century painting by Giovanni Battista Salvi. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, is celebrated Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Images)

Cardinal DiNardo elected president of USCCB during fall meeting

Diversity, immigration issues dominate assembly; four sainthood causes advance

BALTIMORE (CNS) -- The newly elected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said he is not planning on "creating a new vision" but hopes to continue the bishops' priorities particularly focusing on dialogue and listening to Catholics.

The bishops "intend to be attentive," said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston hours after his Nov. 15 election to a three-year term that began at the close of the bishops' fall assembly in Baltimore.

For the past three years, he has served as USCCB vice president, a role that typically leads to election as president. He succeeds Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky.

The cardinal said he plans to focus on the needs and concerns of Catholics, particularly members of the immigrant community who fear deportation with the recent election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. But he also said he remained hopeful about working with the new administration, saying its newness "offers options and possibilities."

In other business, the U.S. bishops made decisions on:

• USCCB Vice President

Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez said his election as vice president of the USCCB may have had more to do with his archdiocese than anything else.

"I'm grateful to my brother bishops for electing me," he said, before adding that he thinks it was "also about the Archdiocese of Los Angeles" -- the largest archdiocese in the country with about 5 million Catholics, 70 percent of whom are Latino. He said "our church in the United States is becoming more and more diverse."



CARDINAL DANIEL N. DINARDO of Galveston-Houston addresses a news conference Nov. 15 at the fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore. The cardinal was elected USCCB president that morning. Seated to his left is Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, who was elected USCCB vice president. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

• National Collections

The U.S. bishops approved making permanent their Subcommittee on the Church in Africa and the hiring of two people to assist the subcommittee in carrying out its work.

The bishops in a later vote also approved another 10-year extension for its most popular national collection, the Retirement Fund for Religious collection, which is taken up in most U.S. dioceses in early December.

• Christian Persecution

Maronite Bishop Gregory J. Mansour called on the bishops to bring wider attention to the persecution of Christians in the Middle East to their parishes and political leaders.

While referring to the acts of kidnapping, torture and killings by the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, he encouraged the bishops to take several steps to "increase our communion with our brothers and sisters there" including raising funds for the humanitarian work of organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Aid to the Church in Need, and the Knights of Columbus.

He also said the U.S. church could play a major role in developing a plan with Catholic bishops around the world to rebuild churches and restore the livelihoods of Christians in the region.

Bishop Mansour also called for advocacy with the U.S. Department of State to boost aid for refugees and displaced people

who do not find their way to established camps but are taken in by individual families, hospitals and churches.

• Sainthood causes

The bishops approved by voice vote the sainthood causes of four men and women as part of the episcopal consultation in the process for possible canonization.

The four candidates are Julia Greeley, a former slave who lived in Colorado; Sister Blandina Segale, a Sister of Charity who served on the frontier; Father Patrick Ryan, who ministered to those suffering yellow fever; and Msgr. Bernard Quinn, who fought bigotry and established a black church and orphanage in Brooklyn, New York.

• Diversity Abounds

A groundbreaking new study commissioned by the bishops that finds diversity abounds in the U.S. Catholic Church is a clarion call to Catholic institutions and ministries to adapt and prepare for growing diversity, said Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio.

Results of a report by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University shows the church is one of the most culturally diverse institutions in the United States.

It was commissioned to help identify the size and distribution of ethnic communities in the country -- Hispanic and Latino, African-American, Asian-American and Native American.

He asked his brother bishops to look at the data and see how it speaks to their regions to help dioceses plan, set priorities and allocate resources.

The V Encuentro, the culmination of parish, diocesan and regional encuentros, will be held in September 2018 in Fort Worth, Texas. More than 1 million Catholics are expected to participate over the next two years.

• Religious Freedom

As chairman of the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore said all U.S. bishops are required to speak out for religious freedom for all people of faith whose beliefs are compromised.

Bishops must equip laypeople to speak in the public arena about the necessity to protect religious liberty when interventions by government officials at any level infringe on the free practice of religion, he stressed.

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Sean Callahan chosen as new CEO of Catholic Relief Services

By Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

(CNS) — A six-month search for a new president and CEO for one of the largest humanitarian relief agencies in the world ended at its doorstep, with Catholic Relief Services announcing Sept. 16 that it is hiring a veteran employee — the agency's No. 2 — Sean Callahan, as its new president and CEO.

"We looked all across the nation and found that the best person for the job was Sean, already working for us," said Bishop Richard J. Malone of Buffalo, New York, head of the CRS Board Search Committee, in a statement announcing Callahan's new position, which begins Jan. 1, 2017. He succeeds Carolyn Y. Woo, who ends her five-year term at the end of 2016.

Callahan began his career with CRS 28 years ago and has served as director of Human Re-



SEAN CALLAHAN, the new CEO of Catholic Relief Services, one of the largest humanitarian relief agencies in the world, is seen greeting children in an undated photo in El Salvador. His new position begins Jan. 1, when he succeeds Carolyn Y. Woo, who ends her five-year term at the end of 2016. (CNS photo/Oscar Leiva, Silverlight for CRS)

sources, regional director for South Asia, head of its Nicaragua program and executive vice president for overseas operations. Four years ago he was appointed as the agency's chief operating officer.

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the CRS board, said in a statement that all that experience is what makes Callahan "eminently qualified" for the top spot.

Callahan said mission, not climbing the corporate ladder, is what has motivated him in his almost three decades at CRS, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency based in Baltimore. In his new leadership position, he said he wants to inspire and motivate staff and CRS partners around the world to be united in humanitarian efforts, incorporating different elements of the Catholic Church to help humanity.

That means emphasizing the sanctity of life and how charita-



Carolyn Woo
Ends 5-year term

ble efforts to help those suffering around the world is part of that Christian mission.

"Sacredness of life is key," Callahan said. "We need to be aware of the situation of the least among us. We have a responsibility."

That means teaching others about situations that bring suffering and snuff out lives around the world. It means finding a way, whether by prayer, voting, volunteering or giving financially, to become involved with finding a solution to the hardship of others.

Cuban President Fidel Castro's death provokes mixed emotions

(CNS) — In a video message, Cuban President Raul Castro announced the Nov. 25 death of his 90-year-old brother and longtime Cuban leader and Communist icon whom many in Latin America know by just one name: Fidel.

"It is with great sorrow that I come before you to inform our people, friends of our America and the world, that today, November 25, 2016, at 10:29 p.m., the commander in chief of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz passed away," said his brother Raul, who took over control of the island in 2006, after Fidel

Castro, became too sick to govern.

Until that year, Fidel Castro had ruled Cuba in some form since 1959, the year he led a revolution that toppled the government of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Over the years, he survived attempts to be toppled by others, including the United States. He gained fame throughout Latin America, where many saw him as a David-against-Goliath figure each time he denounced the commercial, "imperialist" interests of the U.S. as attempts to rob the re-

gion of its riches.

But for others Castro was a menace and a dictator, particularly those whose properties were seized when his regime nationalized homes and businesses on the island nation without compensation. Over the decades, he was accused of a range of wrongdoings, from unjust imprisonment to executions to religious persecution.

Others lauded him and pointed to Cuba as a model for other Latin American countries to emulate in the areas of education, medicine, and gender and racial equality. Many also blamed the



Fidel Castro
1926 - 2016

U.S. embargo against Cuba, not Castro's governance, for the is-

land's financial woes.

Recognizing the complexity of the different feelings the Cuban leader evoked in life — and now in death — Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, where many Cuban exiles live, released a brief statement Nov. 26.

"His death provokes many emotions — both in and outside the island. Nevertheless, beyond all possible emotions, the passing of this figure should lead us to invoke the patroness of Cuba, the Virgin of Charity, asking for peace for Cuba and its people," Archbishop Wenski said.



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What God wants for Christmas

By Tony Rossi
Director of Communications
The Christophers

A couple of years ago, I was watching the Christmas tree lighting at Rockefeller Center on TV when country singer Darius Rucker performed a song off his album "Home for the Holidays."

It wasn't a Christmas standard or classic hymn, but a brand new piece of music. And what a piece of music!

The title is "*What God Wants for Christmas*," and I was surprised that a popular, secular singer would share such a God-centered message in song, even if it was the Christmas season. The first chorus asks, "I wonder what God wants for Christmas, Something that you can't find in a store.

Maybe peace on Earth, no more empty seats in church, Might be what's on His wish list."

Then it continues, "What do you give someone Who gave His only Son? What if we believe in Him like He believes in us? I wonder what God wants for Christmas, What might put a smile on His face. Every Bible with no dust, the devil givin' up, Might be what's on His wish list."

The song's final line states, "By now we ought to know what God wants for Christmas." And, of course, Rucker is right.

It was spelled out by the angels who declared, "Glory to God in the highest" and told us to live with each other in peace and good will. Or, as Jesus responds in Matthew 22 when asked which is the greatest commandment, "You



shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

It would be great if that song became a Christmas classic because it gives us food for thought during this holy season when it's easy to get caught up in the busyness of everything that needs to be done. Another story I read of-

fers the same.

On her blog, Catholic author Danielle Bean recalled a favorite Christmas memory about Monsignor Leo, an elderly priest who served as pastor of a parish to which she belonged. He was especially popular with people at that time of year because he would always end his first Christmas mass by singing "O Holy Night" a cappella and without a microphone.

"Here was one man's simple expression of a great love he felt in his heart," wrote Bean. "Here was one man giving all of himself to God. God made him to sing, and so he sang. For God alone. With all that he had."

The simplicity of that expression of love resonated with Bean. She said, "At Christmas, many

of us feel pressured to do great things. We can't send out just any card; we can't give just any gift...

Thankfully, the kind of greatness God asks of us is not as complicated as we sometimes make it ourselves. The kind of greatness God demands has nothing to do with ribbons or wrapping, packages or presents. The kind of greatness Christ seeks comes from small, ordinary things done with great love."

So in addition to Christmas shopping for your loved ones this year, take some time out to ask yourself what God wants for Christmas and how we can better live out the type of greatness to which He calls us. The answers you find might be more valuable than anything that's under your tree.

Let our 'presence' be our present to others this Christmas

By Sister Constance Veit
Little Sisters of the Poor

In the past few weeks I've been asked to speak about loneliness in the elderly on numerous occasions.

The issue of loneliness in the elderly may not be as clear-cut as it seems. While one recent study reported that nearly half of people over 60 said they feel lonely on "a regular basis," another asserted that only 6 percent of American seniors said they "often" feel this way. Contradictory statistics aside, in our country roughly one third of those over 65 and half of those over 85 live alone.

Sociologists see this trend as a sign of social progress. Improved health care, increased wealth and the emergence of retirement as a relatively long stage of life, they say, have created more choices for seniors and enabled them to live independent of their adult children.

This situation, often referred to as "intimacy at a distance," respects the life choices and autonomy of both older persons and their adult children, fostering more positive and supportive emotional bonds for all.

The problem is that our exaltation of personal autonomy over family and community fails to acknowledge that sooner or later, each of us will need the help



of others to survive and enjoy a meaningful life.

This brings us to Christmas. What is Christmas without family and community? And yet this season can also be a time of stress for those who are estranged from their loved ones, those who cannot afford to fulfill their children's wishes, those whose holiday joys are but a distant memory, and those who find themselves alone in this world.

Christmas is the perfect time to begin promoting (rather than demoting) family and practicing what our Holy Father asked in his apostolic letter for the closing of the Year of Mercy, *Misericordia et Misericordia*.

As we gather in our families, social circles and faith communi-

ties – even at our office parties – may we look around to see who is standing on the periphery, who is at risk of being excluded from the joys of this season. Inspired by mercy, let us offer a word of consolation and begin restoring joy and dignity to those who feel left out.

Mercy leads us to see each person as unique. "We have to remember each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history," Pope Francis wrote; "this is what makes us different from everyone else. Our life, with its joys and sorrows, is something unique and unrepeatable that takes place under the merciful gaze of God."

If you are young, you can share God's mercy this Christ-

mas by patiently listening to your grandparents' stories, or offering them a hand in a way that says, "You are important to me."

If you are a grandparent, look to see which one of your children or grandchildren is waiting for your affirmation or your words of wisdom.

Even if you are infirm or in need and feel that you have

nothing to give, you can still offer your smile, your thanks or a word of kindness to those who help you.

Our Holy Father reminds us that God never tires of welcoming and accompanying us, despite our sins and frailties.

Let our loving presence be the gift we give others this Christmas!

CHURCH TODAY

Volume XLVII, No. 12 • December 19, 2016

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 Circulation: Sandi Tarver, ext. 209; starver@diocesealex.org

THE CHURCH TODAY (USPS 393-240) is published by the Catholic Diocese of Alexandria, once a month, free of charge to members of the parishes in the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana. Out of diocese subscriptions are \$20 a year.

The office is located at 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria, LA 71303. Periodicals postage paid at Alexandria, LA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The CHURCH TODAY, P. O. Box 7417, Alexandria, LA 71306

The CHURCH TODAY is a member of the Catholic Press Association.
 Website: www.diocesealex.org
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Christmas is a season - not just one day - of feasts, celebrations

While so many of our cultures only celebrate the build-up to Christmas, as a faith community we celebrate Christmas through January 8.

And, there is much to celebrate here, much to enter into more deeply.

Too often, the days before Christmas are too busy to enter into the meaning of this feast or to reflect on the daily scriptures and the graces that are offered us, in our concrete life circumstances.

The Octave of Christmas is a time for us to enter into the stories of special saints who are associated with the birth of our Lord because of their innocence: our first martyr and the disciple Jesus loved.

The Birth of Christ - Dec. 26

Sunday is Christmas Day, the first day in this eight-day celebration of the Octave of Christmas. We take joy in the story of the nativity and of Our Savior's entrance into the world in the most humble of ways.

St. Stephen - Dec. 26

December 26, the day after Christmas, is the Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr. The reading from Acts takes us into the story of his being stoned by an infuriated crowd.

St. John, the Apostle - Dec. 27

December 27 we traditionally celebrate the Feast of St.



John, Apostle and Evangelist. This apostle is associated with the wonderful tradition and writings that bear his name. This week, our reflection is framed by the wonderful words of the First Letter of John and the story from the Fourth Gospel of Simon Peter and "the other disciple whom Jesus loved" ran to find the empty tomb on Easter morning.

The Holy Innocents - Dec. 28

On December 28, we cel-

ebate the Feast of the Holy Innocents. This celebration takes us back into the infancy narrative of Matthew. The account of how Jesus begins his journey to become one with us, is powerfully told as a journey of Jesus' entering into the journey of his people, with the flight into Egypt and the horrible slaughter of the innocent children. This very difficult scene is important for us to reflect upon as we imagine the unborn and the newly born who are so unjustly

deprived of dignity and life today.

St. Thomas Becket - Dec. 29

On December 29, we celebrate the Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord -- and the feast of St. Thomas Becket, who was a bishop and martyr.

The Holy Family - Dec. 30

The Feast of the Holy Family is often celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas. When a Sunday

does not occur between December 25 and January 1, this feast is celebrated on December 30 with only one reading before the Gospel.

What family or faith community can't benefit from reflecting upon the Holy Family? This is not the time to reflect upon a "perfect family," but to ask ourselves how we might be blessed to reflect upon Joseph, Mary and Jesus, and ask ourselves what graces they could offer us.

And, this allows us a bit more time to reflect upon the Christmas story, including the everyday reality that was part of their lives as family - the patience, give and take, the self-sacrifice and the love that was a part of their very human interaction together, throughout what we call "the hidden life" of Jesus. That can include all the hidden years of Jesus' life, what their village was like and what ways they spoke with each other, as well as what difficulties they might have experienced.

Mary, Mother of God - Jan. 1

On New Year's Day, the octave day of Christmas, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God. It is the highest title of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Theotokos, Mother of God. This title was given to Mary at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.

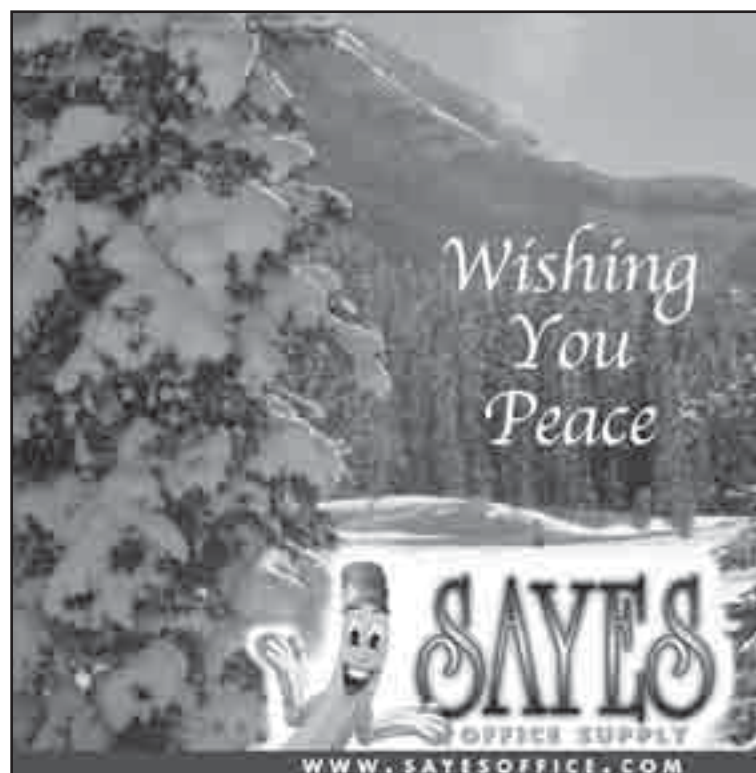
The Epiphany - Jan. 8

In most countries and dioceses, the Feast of the Epiphany is transferred to the Sunday between Jan. 2 and Jan. 8. This year, we celebrate the Epiphany on Sunday, Jan. 8.

The Epiphany is the celebration of the visitation of the Wise Men or Magi. It is a week of gratitude -- growing in a sense of freedom and joy over the gift we have been given to know God's love for us and presence with us more deeply.

However, if our celebration of the days before Christmas and Christmas Day itself were busy or even difficult, then this can be days of recovery and added time to let Our Lord come into our lives where we need him to come.

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St. Thomas Becket of Canterbury: Dec. 29

King Henry II asks: *'Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?'*

By Thomas Kennedy
Alexandria seminarian

Christmas is a time for family gatherings, gift-giving, acts of charity, and most importantly, the celebration of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Christmastide is a season of the church when many martyrs are commemorated, reminding us that we must be prepared to shed our blood for our faith.

Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury (Dec. 21, 1118 – Dec. 29, 1170), whose memorial is on December 29, was the martyred archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered by four knights of King Henry II during Vespers in his cathedral, following the king's infamous words, *"Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?!"*

Following Becket's consecration as archbishop it is said that, "No one could have imagined the dramatic change that took place in Thomas Becket's personality and lifestyle...he now wore the dark habit of a monk...everyday Becket washed the feet of a dozen poor men."

Becket had been the worldly chancellor and best friend of King Henry II. This dramatic change and his pastoral attention to the poor, along with his challenges to the king's abuses of power, won many admirers and enemies.

Within hours of his murder in Canterbury, miracles began to be reported. It is said that, "Tiny droplets of blood...healed the lame, and the blind, cured dropsy, epilepsy and leprosy, exorcised demons..."

In March of 1173 Pope Alexander III canonized Becket as a saint – in less than three years! This was in response to more than 500 miracles which had been reported. Perhaps as dramatic as the miracles was, "...the unceasing procession of believers who came to touch the spot where he had fallen...and for 300 years they would continue to come." Canterbury, and its richly adorned shrine became the center of the cult of veneration of the martyr.

During the so-called "Reformation", Henry VIII had the major shrines in England destroyed; the shrine of Canterbury being most significant as, "St. Thomas



Becket was not simply a saint like the rest. His particular and despicable crime, in the eyes of King Henry VIII, has been his challenge to the authority of his royal predecessor, Henry II."

The shrine was destroyed, its wealth taken into the king's purse, and the major relics purportedly destroyed.

An edict issued by Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell on November 16, 1538 read, "Henceforth the said Thomas Becket shall not be esteemed, named, reputed and called a saint... and that his images and pictures throughout the whole realm shall be plucked down, and avoided out of all churches, chapels, and other places; and that from henceforth the days used to be festival in his name, shall not be observed, nor the service, office, antiphons,

collects, and prayers in his name read, but erased and put out of all the books."

By royal decree, the center of the Becket cult of veneration in England was destroyed, the major relics disappeared, and arguably the most popular cult of veneration in all of Christendom began to fade into obscurity.

For today's Catholic Church, it seems that Henry VIII was largely successful in destroying the cult of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. He is still venerated as the patron of secular clergy, and many individual Catholics (such as myself) venerate him as their patron saint.

During this Christmastide, join me in prayer to Saint Thomas of Canterbury and let us revive devotion to this miracle-working martyr!



Happy holidays from your ABM team!



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Friends, family gather for Memorial Mass for Sister 'C.C.' Vanderlick

Sister Cecile Clare Vanderlick, CDP, age 86, entered eternal life on Nov. 24, 2016, at Our Lady of the Lake Convent in San Antonio.

A Mass of Resurrection was held Nov. 28 in the Annunciation Chapel at Our Lady of the Lake Convent in San Antonio. Interment was at the CDP cemetery on the OLL campus.

Friends and family gathered Dec. 10 in Alexandria for a Memorial Mass at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church. After Mass, she was eulogized by Sister Ann Petrus, CDP superior general, and long-time friend of Sister C.C.

"She made learning easy and fun with her flamboyant teaching style," she said. "Such a courageous, and intelligent and giving woman! She set the stage for my

entire professional life."

'Bessie Barbara' Vanderlick was one of six children born from Blanche Vermaelen and Henry Joseph Vanderlick. She graduated from Providence Academy in 1946, worked at Wellan's Department Store for three years, and answered God's call to dedicate her life to her God and His people by entering our Lady of the Lake Convent in San Antonio, Texas.

After three years of spiritual formation, she pronounced her religious vows and was sent to Abilene, Texas, to teach in the elementary school. Subsequently, she taught in Ennis, Castroville, and San Antonio, Texas and in Norman, Oklahoma.

In 1965, she was assigned to Alexandria, spending two years at Providence Academy, until it was closed. She moved to Menard

Central High School, where she was known for her ability to motivate students to learn chemistry.

Her love of caring for the sick led her to night nursing school in 1977. After earning her R.N. certification in 1979, she worked at Cabrini Hospital for over 17 years on weekends, holidays, and during the summer vacation, simultaneously continuing to teach chemistry. In 1985 she was named the Outstanding Chemistry Teacher in Louisiana.

Affectionately called Sister C.C., she continued teaching and working as principal or president at Menard for 38 years. In 2005 she felt it was time to move on for health reasons.

In 2005 she joined the Spiritual Care Department at Cabrini Hospital where she ministered in the Cancer Care Center.



Sister Cecile Clare Vanderlick
1930-2016

Sister C.C. was very involved in the community. She gave presentations to community groups on end-of-life issues; served as a Cabrini ambassador; worked for the Children's Miracle Network;

was involved in breast cancer awareness programs; was a member of the Catholic Daughters of America and the Belgian-American Club.

Sister also served her Congregation by spending three years on the personnel board, being regional coordinator for three years, and working for eight years with aspirants, young girls who were considering a religious vocation.

Health issues caused Sister to leave her beloved Alexandria in 2008 to receive care with her Sisters in San Antonio.

She is survived by her sisters Sister Virginia Lee Vanderlick, Cecilia Mathews (Dick, deceased), and brothers Henry (Sally), Dr. Charles (Helen), David (Dot), numerous nieces, nephews, and their families and her Sisters of Divine Providence.

Vatican updates guidelines for selection, education of priests

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Catholic Church needs holy, healthy and humble priests and that requires prayers for vocations and the careful selection and training of candidates, said the Congregation for Clergy.

Updating 1985 guidelines for preparing men for the Latin rite priesthood and ensuring their continuing education, training and support, the Congregation for Clergy Dec. 7 released "The Gift of the Priestly Vocation," a detailed set of guidelines and norms for priestly formation.

The updated document draws heavily on St. John Paul II's 1992 apostolic exhortation on priestly formation, as well as on the teaching of and norms is-



POPE FRANCIS greets a new priest during the ordination Mass of 11 priests in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 17. The Catholic Church needs holy, healthy and humble priests, and that requires prayers for vocations and the careful selection and training of candidates, said the Congregation for Clergy. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

sued by now-retired Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis and by Vatican offices over the past three decades.

It reaffirms an instruction approved by Pope Benedict in 2005, which said, "the church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture.'"

The document insists that through courses in pastoral theology, the example of priests and practical experience, candidates for the priesthood learn that priestly ministry involves -- as Pope Francis says -- being

"shepherds 'with the smell of the sheep,' who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them."

Highlighting lessons learned over the past 30 years from the clerical sexual abuse scandal, the new guidelines state, "The greatest attention must be given to the theme of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, being vigilant lest those who seek admission to a seminary or to a house of formation, or who are already petitioning to receive holy orders have not been involved in any way with any crime or problematic behavior in this area."

Seminars and courses on the protection of children and vulnerable adults must be part of both seminary education and the continuing education of priests, it says. And bishops must be very cautious about accepting candidates for the priesthood who have been dismissed from other seminaries.

In the end, each bishop is responsible for determining which candidate for priesthood he will ordain, but the guidelines strongly encourage bishops to accept the judgment of seminary rectors and staff who determine a certain candidate is unsuitable.

Seminarians should also be encouraged to use social media to build relationships and for evangelization, but to use it wisely and in a way that is healthy.

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Merry Christmas

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CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAS SUNDAY. The 2nd annual CDA Sunday was hosted Oct. 16 by CDA Court Notre Dame #1452 of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria. The ladies celebrated Mass together with Father Dan O'Connor, pastor who has served as chaplain for CDA Court Notre Dame #1452 for the past 15 years. More than 100 CDA ladies, JrCDA girls and 3rd and 4th Degree KCs attended this special day. The CDA ladies include Court Notre Dame #1452, OLPS, Alexandria; Bishop Desmond #1459 St. Rita Church, Alexandria; St.

Anthony #968 St. Anthony Church, Bunkie; Court Bishop Greco #2072, Sacred Heart Church, Pineville; and JrCDA members of Menard High School, Alexandria, who are sponsored by the OLPS Court Notre Dame. The knights who attended include the Knights Honor Guard of Msgr. Piegay General Assembly #0328 Fourth Degree Knights and Msgr. Henry A. Thompson Assembly #27 Knights of Saint Peter Claver. After Mass everyone was served a wonderful spaghetti luncheon hosted by the OLPS Court and prepared by OLPS KC Council #8029.

ST. PETER CLAVER DAY. The District V Knights and Ladies of the St. Peter Claver celebrated St. Peter Claver Day Sept. 11 at Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Marksville. Father Scott Chemino, vicar general and pastor of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Bunkie, celebrated the Mass and Father Abraham Varghese, pastor of Holy Ghost Catholic Church, assisted with music provided by the Holy Ghost Choir. The event was hosted by Avoyelles Councils and Courts #169, #202, #302 and the Fourth Degrees Msgr. Henry A. Thompson, Assembly #27, Alexandria; and Father Ardwin Hiller, Assembly #36, Monroe; served as honor guards. Immediately following Mass was a luncheon at the church gym. This year's theme was "Rise Up and Unite in the Jubilee Year of Mercy." The guest speaker was Brother Paul Desselle, Jr., former District V board member, area deputy, and Grand Knight for Council #268 in Alexandria.



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St. John the Baptist, Cloutierville celebrates 200th anniversary

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Cloutierville celebrated its 200th anniversary Nov. 19 with a special Mass celebrated by Bishop David Talley and concelebrated by Father Christian Ogbonna, pastor and a group of other priests from the diocese.

During the Mass, Bishop Talley recognized senior member of the congregation and then asked the youngest members to stand as well.

“For 200 years your ancestors have worshipped in this house of prayer,” he said. “When you rejoice in 200 years, we must rejoice in our ancestors.”

A St. John the Baptist Catholic Church proclamation was issued by the City of Cloutierville, the State of Louisiana, and the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff Department.

After Mass, Bishop Talley gathered outside the church with the priests and parishioners to bless a new shrine of St. John the Baptist located near the front of the church.

The history of St. John the Baptist parish began in 1816,



CELEBRATING 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH (Cloutierville). Participating priests are (front row) Fathers Charlie Ray and Kenneth Obiekwe, Bishop David Talley, Fathers Christian Ogbonna, Gabriel Uzundu, and John O'Brien. Back row: Fathers Remi Owuamanam, John Pardue, and Bartholomew Ibe.

when Alexis Cloutier built a small chapel on his plantation along the Cane River at the heart of what he hoped would become a thriving new community south of Natchitoches.

The chapel was blessed by Father Francisco Maynes of Natchitoches on Nov. 19, 1916 and dedicated in honor of St. John the Baptist.

The town Alexis Cloutier dreamed of and planned for did slowly form and in 1850, a resident pastor Father George Guy, was appointed to St. John's.

Three years later the small town was devastated by a violent yellow fever epidemic that claimed the lives of more than half the population.

Father Guy suffered through the painful effects of the fever but survived.

In 1856, Father Jean Marie Beaulieu was assigned as pastor. He remained at his post through the difficult days of the Civil War when the church and the rectory were plundered by Union troops.

After the war, Father Beau-

lieu repaired and enlarged the church in 1870. During his ministry of 41 years, he built two schools for his parishioners -- St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. He died on Sept. 15, 1897.

Under Father M.S. Becker, the church was remodeled. Twin towers were added together with a pillared portico and the outside walls were stuccoed. Structural repairs and a new high altar were added by Father Frederick Lyons. The exterior of the church was completely remodeled in 1962 preserving the interior decor which dated back to 1870. In June of 1965, the historic structure burned. The faithful congregation rebuilt the church and the new structure was dedicated by Bishop John Favalora on Nov. 2, 1986. A new marble altar and catechetical building were added to the parish plant by Father Daniel Corkery.

In 2003, Bishop Sam Jacobs designated St. John the Baptist Church as a “proto-parish” in the Diocese of Alexandria.



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL was a vibrant school in Cloutierville from 1889 when it was built, to 1966 when it closed. The school was run by St. John the Baptist Church and the Sisters of Divine Providence.



SHRINE OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST. A new statue and brick covered walk were blessed and dedicated Nov. 19 at St. John the Baptist Church in Cloutierville. The shrine was built as part of the parish's 200th anniversary celebration.

Merry Christmas!

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Our Lady of Sorrows Group Homes celebrate 25th anniversary

By Melissa Gregory
The Town Talk

Angela Campbell's brother has been under the care of Our Lady of Sorrows for most of his life, and she's seen him grow and thrive.

"I've seen everything," she said of her 41-year-old brother Joey, who has been with the sisters since he was 3 1/2. "His disposition is wonderful, his character has grown. He loves his brothers who he lives with."

Family and friends gathered Nov. 20 at St. Rita's Family Life Center to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Our Lady of Sorrows Community Homes, three private homes for adults with developmental disabilities that are licensed by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.

The event was catered by Chef John Folse, who spoke to the crowd of his own upbringing and his need to give back. Folse flew into Alexandria late Saturday from Kansas, where he had catered another event — "even in Kansas, they need Louisiana chefs to give them good food" — and said he would have walked back from the Midwest just to see Mother Carla Bertani.

Bertani was the administrator and manager of the Greco Home, one of the three homes, from its inception in 1991 until 2011, when she was transferred to Italy. She returned to Alexandria for the anniversary, recalling the fears and challenges of starting the concept with the help of the late Bishop Charles Greco.

She called it an "adventure," moving the residents from one larger facility to smaller homes. But it all worked out with the support of parents and the Alexandria community, she said.



CELEBRATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF OLS COMMUNITY HOMES. Mother Carla Bertani (left) and Chef John Folse pose for a photo on Sunday. (Photo: Melissa Gregory/mgregory@thetowntalk.com)

The first two homes opened in 1991, and the third opened in 1993. The operation also includes an office building and a bakery called the Cookie Jar that opened in 2012.

The Cookie Jar gives clients the chance to be employed, giving them a sense of self-worth, said Bertani.

"So for them to be able to work, to be able to receive a paycheck, to be able to plan what they're going to do with the money that they make, it gives a chance to feel like adults, to be important, of being independent," she said.

The land for the homes, two for men and one for women, was donated by James and Gerry Verzyvelt. Photos of the two were displayed at the event next to a photo of all 20 residents who live in the houses on Browns Bend Road. Linda Serio, a Shreveport resident whose father is from Al-

exandria, spent time looking at the photos Sunday.

Her godchild is a resident, and she said that "everything about the organization is wonderful."

Folse agreed with that sentiment, saying that it was a pleasure to be associated with "this beautiful ministry." He told the attendees the story of how his mother died in 1955, when he was 7, and how his father raised him and his seven siblings.

But he said that, before her death, his mother instilled in all her children why they were put upon the Earth.

"It's really special for me to be here because I know the need in a community," he said. "I'm just really so passionate about doing whatever we can to help others and encourage everybody to continue to do what you're doing. Continue to live your lives in a way that we come to clearly

understand that we're here for a purpose.

"We're here for one purpose only, and that's to do the deeds that God has put in our hearts to see where the need is around us and respond to it and to realize that the gifts that we have are not for us. The gifts that we have are to share with those that he intended for us to give them to."

The celebration focused on the clients and how the homes have bettered their lives, said Sister Mavis Champagne.

"Today is about where we've been and where we are and where we're going because we don't intend to stop now. We're just starting," she said.

(Reprinted with permission from Melissa Gregory of The Town Talk)



PHOTOS of the Our Lady of Sorrows Community Home clients decorated a luncheon on Sunday, along with samples of the goodies they make and sell through the Cookie Jar. (Photo: Melissa Gregory/mgregory@thetowntalk.com)

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St. James Memorial celebrates 105th anniversary; elders honored

St. James Memorial Church in Alexandria celebrated its 105th anniversary Oct. 22 with a dinner and dance at its hall facility.

Joseph Cotton, a former graduate of St. James School, was the guest speaker. Cotton is currently the director of the Ronald

E. McNair Scholars Program at the University of Louisiana - Lafayette.

Mistress of ceremonies Lillian Metoyer presented the elders of the church with certificates for their love and dedication to the parish. Elders receiving cer-

tificates were Mary Ann Ford, Joseph Frank, Birdia Metoyer, Lillie Mae Baker, Spellman Francois, and Bertha LeGras.

Mrs. LeGras, the second oldest member of the congregation, turned 100 the following day (Oct. 23, 2016). The congrega-

tion sang happy birthday and Father Gabriel Uzundu, pastor of St. James Memorial, blessed her.

The history of St. James began in 1894 when Sister Mary Xavier, a Sister of Divine Providence, opened a school for black children in a one-room building on Watkins Ave. In 1902 a new school was built between Fisk and Beauegard Sts. In May of 1911, Father Marcos received permission from Bishop Van de Ven to establish a separate black church in Alexandria.

Bishop Van de Ven invited the Holy Ghost Fathers to take charge of the new parish, which marked the first Holy Ghost mission in Louisiana. The fathers served the parish faithfully for 75 years until 1986.

In May of 1915, ground was broke for a new church. Money for church was donated by Father Joseph Smith of Cleveland, who stipulated that the church be named after the patron saint of his brother, James. The new church, built at a cost of \$7,500 by the LeGras Brother Construction



Joseph Cotton

Company, was dedicated in December, 1917. A new two-story rectory and school was completed in 1918. The new school included a high school and the first high school graduation was celebrated in 1919. The school continued in operation until 1967 when it was forced to close.

In 1956, a mission church was served by St. James for south Alexandria, until it was transferred to St. Juliana in 1979.



THE YOUTH MASS is held every Sunday at St. James Memorial at 10 a.m.

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HOLY SAVIOR MENARD HOSTS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS AT THE NEST. Dressed as Santa's elves, Menard students hosted the annual Christmas at the Nest Dec. 6 for young children. The students assisted the young children with making crafts, serving refreshments, singing carols, and

listening to story-teller Sylvia Davis tell Christmas stories. Santa Claus was played by (who else but) Deacon L.G. Deloach. The annual event attracts almost 200 young children ages PreK 3 - 6th grade.

Prayerful best wishes on the celebration of the
**25th Anniversary of the
Our Lady of Sorrows
Community Homes.**

*May you be blessed in your mission of caring for
those with developmental disabilities.*





ST. ANTHONY SCHOOL (Bunkie) PRESCHOOLERS used their hand prints to make a manger for Jesus to lay.



EACH CLASS AT OL of PROMPT SUCCOR chose a Christmas project that would help others in the community. First graders chose to donate new and gently used books, blocks and art supplies to St. Mary's Residential Training School. Other classes filled shoe boxes with gifts for small children, collected food for Manna House, and other community projects.



ST. MARY'S SCHOOL (Natchitoches). St. Mary's FBLA members delivered 66 Operation Christmas Child boxes Nov. 17 to Westside Baptist Church.



SERVICE WITH A SMILE AT MANNA HOUSE. Coadjutor Bishop David Talley smiles and welcomes each client who came to the Manna House Dec. 8, while he served during the noon hour. The Manna House, open 365 days a year, expects to feed a crowd of people, even on Christmas. For more information about how to volunteer or donate, go to www.givetomannahouse.com.



ST. MARY'S RESIDENTIAL TRAINING CENTER celebrated the service of a long-time employee. Ms. Frances Marshall has devoted 40 years to caring for children with severe and profound developmental disabilities. Frances received the St. Mary's Service Award Nov. 18 from administrator Christi Guillot at a special staff celebration in her honor. In a brief speech, Frances shared some of her favorite memories of St. Mary's and encouraged all of her fellow co-workers to remember that Christ is at the heart of their work and to continue being a voice for St. Mary's children.

LSUA receives grant from Catholic Home Missions appeal

WASHINGTON—The US-CCB subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions approved \$9.2 million in grants to assist 84 dioceses and eparchies across the country.

The Diocese of Alexandria was one of those 84 dioceses that received a grant.

"Grants from Catholic Home Missions are vital for many dioceses in the United States to provide spiritually for their flocks," said Archbishop Paul D. Etienne, Archbishop of Anchorage, Alaska, chairman of the subcommittee. "The support of this collection means that our neighbors can experience the love and mercy of God through the Church."

These grants assist dioceses and eparchies which would otherwise struggle due to difficult geography, impoverished populations and limited resources.

Catholic Home Missions funding supports various pastoral programs, including religious education and youth ministry, priestly and religious formation, prison ministries, and lay minis-



LSU-A STUDENTS from the Catholic Student Organization, address Christmas cards to men and women in prison.

try training.

The Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana, received a grant that will help support Catholic campus ministries at Louisiana State University at Alexandria and Louisiana College. These ministries provide programs such as weekly noon meals and reflections, welcome back dinners, monthly bible

studies, and an annual retreat for young adults.

The Diocese of Tyler, Texas, has also received a grant to help fund priestly formation. Since 2013, the diocese has experienced unprecedented growth and now has a total of 15 seminarians.

The next collection will be taken on April 30, 2017.



IN MEMORY OF ROLAND LABORDE, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS member. The family of Roland Laborde donated multiple memorial offerings to St. Anthony School in his honor. Laborde was very active in the Knights of Columbus and his wife, Mary, contributes her time to the school and St. Anthony Church. The family and parishioners gathered recently to bless the entrance doors to the school which were purchased as a result of these offerings. Very Rev. Scott Chemino, vicar general and pastor, is shown blessing the plaque along with family members.

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Lou Holtz is special guest of SEEK2017 Jan. 3-7 in San Antonio

Group of 45 students from Natchitoches, Monroe to travel together for conference

A group of 45 college students from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches and from the University of Louisiana at Monroe will be travelling together Jan. 3-7 to attend the SEEK2017 conference in San Antonio.

Donnie Kuzma, a FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) campus minister from NSU will be accompanying the 27 NSU students and 18 ULM students.

"The NSU FOCUS missionary team and I are very excited with the great response from the students wanting to attend the conference," said Donnie.

The adventure-themed conference is open to the public and expects 11,000 – 13,000 attendees. The event provides a life-changing opportunity for at-



tendees to grow in faith or to encounter Jesus Christ for the first time.

Special guests for SEEK2017 include sports legend Lou Holtz, a former American football player, coach and analyst. Entertainment headliners include comedian Michael Jr. and folk rock band The Oh Hellos.

SEEK2017 includes many opportunities for reflection and discernment such as daily Mass, adoration and confession. Nearly 10,000 attendees came to SEEK2015, including students and chaplains from nearly 450 campuses. Close to 200 priests concelebrated daily Mass and priests heard more than 5,500

confessions.

"What I found at SEEK were two things: knowledge and love," said Dave Korenchan a student from the University of California-Berkeley who attended SEEK2015. "Not only did the conference equip me with the necessary Catholic teaching I needed to understand, but it addressed my fears of sacrificing myself for the sake of the gospel. Love is an act of will, not an emotion. When I encountered Christ during adoration, I discovered, as tears welled up in my eyes, how much I was loved and how much I desired to love Him! This experience inspired me to change my life."

Keynote speakers for SEEK2017 include Sr. Miriam James Heidland, Sr. Bethany Madonna, Fr. Mike Schmitz, Mark

Hart, John Leyendecker, Curtis Martin, John O'Leary and Dr. Edward Sri.

Several nationally recognized speakers will likewise share perspectives on discipleship, relationships and other hot topics during more than 50 Impact Sessions, including the following: Fr. Philip Bochanski, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Fr. Dave Dwyer, Fr. Michael Gaitley, Fr. Joshua Johnson, Fr. Robert Sirico, Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, Fr. Scott Traynor, Ryan Anderson, Audrey Assad, John Carmichael, Jeff Cavins, Kevin Cotter, Lisa Cotter, Leah Darrow, Paul Darrow, Crystalina Evert, Jason Evert, Matt Fradd, Jackie Francois, Jennifer Fulwiler, Dr. Tim Gray, Dr. Scott Hahn, Marcel LeJeune, Patrick Lencioni, Dr. Jonathan Reyes and Sarah Swafford.

Pope selects Marian themes for next three World Youth Days

(CNS) -- Pope Francis has chosen a focus on Mary for the next World Youth Day celebrations, which will be held in dioceses in 2017 and 2018 and with an international gathering in Panama in 2019.

The pope has highlighted the way the Mother of Jesus was always open to the Lord's will and has described her "as a role model

to be imitated," said the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life in a press release Nov. 22.

The themes "are intended to give a clear Marian tone to the spiritual journey" of the next three World Youth Days as well as to "give a picture of young people on a journey between the past (2017), present (2018) and future (2019), inspired by the

three theological virtues of faith, charity and hope."

World Youth Day is celebrated annually on a local level, and every two or three years with an international gathering with the pope.

At the end of the World Youth Day celebration in July in Krakow, Poland, Pope Francis announced the next international gathering would be held in Panama in 2019.

The annual Rome diocesan celebration with the pope is held on Palm Sunday each year; the date of the celebration in other dioceses varies.



2017 -2019 THEMES

- **2017:** The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His Name." (Lk 1:49).
- **2018:** "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." (Lk 1:30).
- **2019:** "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Lk 1:38).

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HOLY SAVIOR MENARD CLASS 2A GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY STATE CHAMPIONS. Members of the Class 2A Girls Cross Country State Championship team

Menard Lady Eagles win Class 2A Cross Country State Championship

The Lady Eagles Cross Country team won the Class 2A girls championship for the third time in four seasons after scoring 42 points -- besting Episcopal by 20 points.

This is the 10th girls state championship title won in the past 31 years under the coaching of Coach Wally Smith.

"For six months, they've been pointing to this 20-minute race," said Smith. "Hard work pays off and I'm just so proud of them. They're real talented, and they work as hard as anybody in this state. I tell them that all of the time and it's not just in cross

country it's in life -- if you work hard, you reap the benefits."

Menard placed four runners in the top ten, with freshman Claire Vaughn leading the way with a time of 19 minutes and 28.6 seconds. Twin sophomores Hannah (19:50.3) and Addison Hays (20:03.1) took 6th and 7th, respectively. Vaughn's sister, Katharine, was 10th with a time of 20:06.3. Faith Michiels rounded out the team with 15th place.

The Menard boys CC team took third in the Class 2A standings with 95 points -- finishing behind Episcopal and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Coach Wally Smith touches the lives of his cross country runners

By Noelle Dunn
Cross Country Senior

Attention to detail. Finish what you start. Dance.

These are the three components of a successful season as taught by Menard cross-country Coach Wally Smith.

He stresses the attention to detail, explaining how the simplest details affect the overall season. Coach Smith has never been a quitter, and he encourages his runners to finish out the season with the same passion they possessed at the beginning. Once the season is over, and the team has

worked their hardest, it is time to dance and enjoy the success.

This life lesson is only one of the many that Coach Wally bestows on his runners. His passion for the sport and his tremendous faith influence each person on the team. All of the advice he gives to his team prepares them to live a fruitful life.

Coach Wally's biggest virtue: perseverance. He believes that each runner can finish their workout, even when the pain kicks in. His biggest piece of advice to runners in a race is to unite their sufferings to Christ's. He tells us that Jesus probably did not want

to suffer on the cross, but he did it anyway. Coach says for three miles, think of Christ on the cross and realize you can give your suffering as an offering to Him.

At the closing of the season this year, Coach Wally imparted a lesson that applies to every part of life. --"How do you respond?"

Everything that happens in life has a purpose, so how do you respond when something does not go your way? He told us that when we respond to God with trust and acceptance, He will bless us abundantly.

Coach teaches accepting God's will and trusting Him dur-



ing the season, and he hopes that we continue through the rest of our lives. His life serves as an example of trusting God's plan and being blessed. Many runners have graduated and still remember the

example of Coach Wally's life and his many inspiring lessons.

As a graduate this year, I know Coach Wally has touched so much of my life. His lesson of perseverance is an asset I can carry with me through all the trials that will arise in life. Coach Wally's biggest gift to me has been his demonstration of steadfast faith and total reliance on God. He showed me how to look for Christ in every situation. Throughout Coach Wally's coaching career, he has touched countless lives and helped them become successful adults today.

Thank you Coach Wally!

ST. MARY'S CROSS COUNTRY (Natchitoches). Elementary and Junior High Cross Country had a great season this year! They competed in their final race of the season Oct. 15 and our 1st and 2nd grade boys brought home the 2nd place team award.



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ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL (Plaucheville) HOMECOMING was celebrated Dec. 9 in a basketball game vs. Family Community Christian School.

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ST. MARY'S ASSUMPTION (Cottonport) WRAP CONTEST WINNERS. The Catholic Daughters, Court Padre Pio, of Cottonport sponsored a coloring contest in conjunction with WRAP (White Ribbon Against Pornography) which is a program intended to educate the public about the extent of pornography and what can be done to fight back. White ribbons are given out at the weekend masses for WRAP week, which was celebrated Oct. 30 - Nov. 5. The students at St. Mary's Assumption School in kindergarten through 6th grade participated and the winners were announced after the school Mass. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th place winners of each grade are pictured along with Father Walter Ajaero, Regent Sue White and religion teacher Ms. Monica Nicholson.



CITIZENSHIP AWARD. School Tours of America presents a Citizenship Award to a student who exemplifies the qualities of integrity, service and leadership during a tour. A trip by a group of St. Mary's School (Natchitoches) students to New York City in May 2106, resulted in the award being presented to (pictured with assistant principal Andrea Harrell).



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CCD CLASS. The CCD class at St. Francis de Sales Church in Echo were part of the balloon release held Oct. 25 at the church in honor of rosary month and in memory of Grant Pitre and others in the parish who have passed away. At the same time, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for a rosary walk to be built on the grounds of the church. Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Pitre are constructing the rosary walk in memory of their son Grant who died in an accident in October 2015. He was a former catechism student at St. Francis de Sale Church and one of three catechism students the parish has lost tragically in the last year.

Iconic statue of Our Lady of Fatima on tour of United States

The International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima has been venerated around the United States and the world since 1947, and will have particular significance this year as the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal approaches.

Last week (Dec. 12-15) the iconic statue was in New Orleans where it was venerated in seven churches.

"It's been great, not only in the numbers of people who are coming but also hearing from the individuals who are so excited and joyful and have told me they have gone back to confession after so many years," said Patrick L. Sabat, the principal statue custodian.

Sabat is taking the 3 1/2-foot mahogany image of the Blessed Mother, carved by artist José Thedim, on a tour of more than 100 U.S. Catholic dioceses to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1917 apparitions of Mary in Fatima, Portugal.

Sabat said the statue tour will take a brief hiatus during the Christmas season but resume in January in Mississippi and Alabama.

The statue travels east of the Mississippi in 2016 and west of the Mississippi in 2017. If your diocese/parish would like to participate in the tour, contact Katie Moran at 330-647-3833 or email kmoran@bluearmy.com.

You may also send an



email to Patrick Sabat, psabat@bluearmy.com. Dates are filled on a first-come, first-serve basis, and require permission from the bishop to visit your diocese.

For a complete tour schedule, go to <https://www.fatimatourforpeace.com/the-tour/>

In addition, Pope Francis has decided to grant a plenary indulgence opportunity throughout the

entire anniversary year, which began Nov. 27, 2016, and will end Nov. 26, 2017.

According to the rector of the Fatima Shrine in Portugal, André Pereira, the plenary indulgence can be obtained during the entire Jubilee Year.

There are three ways of obtaining the indulgence:

To obtain the plenary indul-

PRAYER FOR THE U.S. TOUR

O Queen of the Rosary, Sweet Virgin of Fatima, who has deigned to appear in the land of Portugal, we beg you to watch over our dear homeland and assure its moral and spiritual revival.

Bring back peace to all the nations of the world so that all, our own nation in particular, may be happy to call you their Queen and the Queen of Peace. Amen.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for our country.

Our Lady of Fatima, obtain for all humanity a lasting peace.

gence, the faithful must also fulfill the ordinary conditions: go to Confession and Communion, be interiorly detached from sin, and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

1. Make a pilgrimage to the shrine

The first way is for "the faithful to make a pilgrimage to the Fatima Shrine in Portugal and participate in a celebration or prayer dedicated to the Virgin."

In addition, the faithful must pray the Our Father, recite the Creed, and invoke the Mother of God.

2. Pray before any statue of Our Lady of Fatima

The second way applies to "the pious faithful who visit with devotion a statue of Our Lady of Fatima solemnly exposed for public veneration in any church, oratory or proper place during the days of the anniversary of the apparitions, the 13th of each month from May to October (2017), and

there devoutly participate in some celebration or prayer in honor of the Virgin Mary."

Regarding this second way, the rector of the Fatima Shrine told CNA that the visit to the statue of the Virgin, "does not necessarily have to be only at Fatima or exclusively in Portugal," but can be done anywhere in the world.

Those seeking an indulgence must also pray an Our Father, recite the Creed and invoke Our Lady of Fatima.

3. The elderly and infirm

The third way to obtain a plenary indulgence applies to people who, because of age, illness or other serious cause, are unable to get around.

These individuals can pray in front of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and must spiritually unite themselves to the jubilee celebrations on the days of the apparitions, the 13th of each month, between May and October 2017.

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Forest Hill mission celebrates feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe



Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission in Forest Hill was filled to capacity Dec. 12, with an overflow crowd standing outside. It was the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Hispanic

community in Forest Hill came out in large numbers to honor Our Lady. The 5 p.m. Mass was celebrated by Bishop David Talley and concelebrated by Father Adam Travis, pastor

and Deacon William Travis. After Mass, a procession, led by men carrying a statue of Our Lady, processed to the gym, where Our Lady was placed on an altar surrounded by numer-

ous flowers.

Inside the gym the celebration came alive with the music of a mariachi band, brightly clothed and feathered dancers, and lots of good food.



FORMER SOCIAL SECURITY JUDGE **PETER J. LEMOINE** Social Security Disability Law

Offices in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Cottonport
Adjunct Professor (1994-1997), Northwestern State University

MEMBER: Louisiana State Bar Association, American Bar Association, Baton Rouge Bar Association, Avoyelles Parish Bar Association, National Organization of Social Security Claimant Representatives, Legal Services for Purposes of Disability Committee (Louisiana State Bar Association).

PUBLISHED ARTICLES: "The Worn-Out Worker Rule Revisited," "Significant Work-Related Limitations of Function Under §12.05C," "Questionable Retirement and the Small Business Owner," "Crisis of Confidence: The Inadequacies of Vocational Evidence Presented at Social Security Disability Hearings."

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• Tuesday, Jan. 10 -- 6 p.m.,
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Pope Francis answers letters from children around the world

If you could ask Pope Francis one question, what would it be?

Now imagine what you might ask as a child. Would your question be much different?

In *Dear Pope Francis: The Pope Answers Letters from Children Around the World* (Loyola Press; March 1, 2016; hardcover), Pope Francis reveals that even small children have big questions about the world -- and beyond.

The book consists of the pope's personal responses to 30 hand-written letters and drawings from children ages 6-13 from every region of the globe.

Since publication, the book has been translated into eighteen languages and is available in 48 countries.

To gather the letters for the book, Loyola Press communicated in Spanish, English, and French to Jesuits or lay collaborators in 29 countries. Just eight weeks after their efforts began, Loyola received 259 letters.

The global scope of the book is unprecedented.

Six continents and 26 countries including Albania, Syria, China, Kenya, and the United States are represented. While each region demonstrates its unique aesthetic sensibilities, many common themes and concerns emerge in the book:

- intense love for Pope Francis and curiosity about his life;
- concerns about the afterlife
- a strong sense of justice, both



social and theological

- the importance of family
- a longing to be seen and heard

When presented with the questions, Pope Francis remarked, "But these are tough questions!" Pope Francis's re-

sponses are thoughtful and inspiring, reinforcing his belief that children are the future and their voices must be heard.

On pages 64-65, 7-year-old William from the United States asks, "If you could do one miracle, what would it be?"

Pope Francis responded: "I would heal children. I've never been able to understand why children suffer. It's a mystery to me. I don't have an explanation. I ask myself about this, and I pray about your question. Why do children suffer? My heart asks this question. Jesus wept, and by weeping, he understood our tragedies. I try to understand too. Yes, if I could perform a miracle, I would heal every child."

Your drawing (pictured at left) makes me think: there is a big, dark cross, and a rainbow and the sunshine behind it. I like that. My answer to the pain of children is silence, or perhaps a

word that rises from my tears. I'm not afraid to cry. You shouldn't be either." -- Franciscus

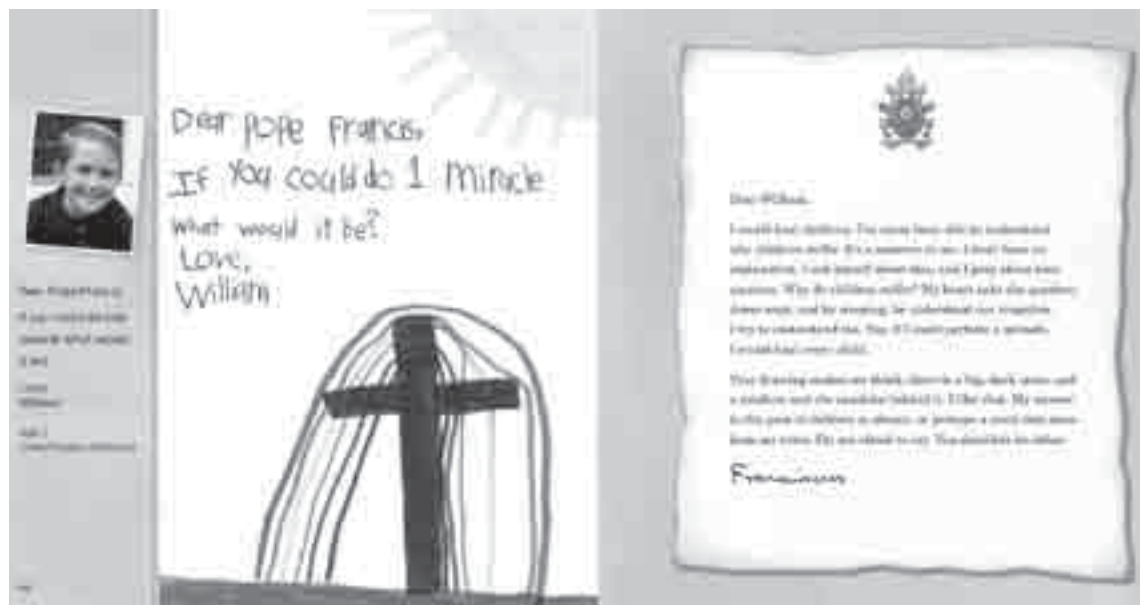
Every question, from every child (many from other countries and in their native language) is simple, yet thought provoking.

Every answer from Pope Francis, is also simple, but direct, heart-felt, and filled with his love and compassion for the innocent children who write him letters.

"Loyola Press is grateful to Pope Francis for this opportunity to publish this lovely conversation between Pope Francis and children from around the world," said Tom McGrath, managing editor of the book.

"We're also grateful to the Jesuit community, as this was an international project of the Jesuits. In light of the many tragedies in the news, many of them happening in countries where children who wrote the letter live, it was heartening to be part of a project that was bringing a different, more hopeful story to the world that would counter the stories of darkness that we so often hear.

For parents, grandparents, or any adult looking to give children a Christmas present to last a lifetime, the first and only children's book by Pope Francis is the ideal gift. To order a copy of *Dear Pope Francis*, go to www.loyola-press.com. \$18.95. Also available in Spanish.



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Believe: old-fashioned Christmas movie for a world so in need of one

(ALETEIA) -- It is generally accepted that the first Christmas movie ever made was the 1898 short film, *Santa Claus*, which, naturally enough, chronicled the visit of good Saint Nick to two sleeping children. More holiday-themed films quickly followed, with the reason for the season, Jesus, finally making the scene in 1912's *The Star of Bethlehem*. Since then, silver bells and the silver screen have been pretty much inseparable.

The early days gave us true classics in the genre such as *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, films that still tug the heartstrings to this day.

Decades later, things had taken a definite cynical turn, but movies like *A Christmas Story* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* still managed to balance their sharp tongues with a soft heart. These days, not so much.

All Hollywood is offering us this Yuletide is *Bad Santa 2*, a movie twice as mean and half as funny as its predecessor, and *Office Christmas Party*, a film which posits a man sticking his privates into a 3-D copier as the epitome of humor. Safe to say, they don't make 'em like they used to.



BELIEVE. Evangelical Christian faith hovers in the background of this holiday-themed drama about a cash-strapped factory owner (Ryan O'Quinn) facing both the collapse of his business and the end of the annual Christmas fair his family has long sponsored in his small hometown. (CNS photo/Believe the Film)

The folks behind the new movie *Believe* would sure would like to give it a try, though.

The film chronicles the trials and tribulations of Matthew Peyton (Ryan O'Quinn), the owner of a small town industrial plant which is inexplicably on the verge of bankruptcy. Along with the loss of much needed jobs, the

company's financial woes also mean Matthew will not be able to sponsor the town's annual Christmas pageant, an event essential to the community's financial well-being. Once this news gets out, Matthew quickly becomes the least popular man in town.

While driving through the poorest part of town, Matthew

is targeted by thugs and severely beaten. He is rescued and tended to by Sharon (Danielle Nicolet), an out of work nursing student, and her overly-enthusiastic son Clarence (Isaac Ryan Brown), a young lad whose singular dream is to play the angel Gabriel in the soon-to-be defunct Christmas pageant. When a winter storm

MOVIE REVIEW

settles over the town, Matthew reciprocates this act of charity by inviting Sharon, Clarence, and their equally impoverished neighbors to stay in his mostly abandoned factory.

Unfortunately, there are some who might stand to benefit from Matthew's continued troubles, and can't have his actions generating good will among the townsfolk. Invoking a local ordinance that prohibits unsanctioned homeless shelters, these forces demand Matthew toss his guests out into the freezing cold.

Now, not only must Matthew face the likely loss of his family business and the ire of the entire town over the canceled pageant, but he might also have to turn his back on those in need.

As *Believe* strives mightily to be an old-fashioned Christmas movie, figuring out the answer to that question shouldn't be very hard. In fact, it's relatively easy to determine precisely where the story is headed about 30 minutes in. But mystery isn't really the point in *Believe*. Instead, writer/director Billy Dickson seems mostly interested in providing a straightforward family-friendly PG-rated film (even the thugs in this town don't curse) peppered with mild doses of populist politics and enough generic God-talk to keep the faith-based target market happy.

See more at: <http://aleteia.org/2016/12/03/believe-and-old-fashioned-christmas-movie-for-a-world-so-in-need-of-one/#sthash.zUkbVVR4.dpuf>



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Next issue of
The Church Today:

Jan. 16, 2017

Deadline for
news/pictures:

Thursday, Jan. 5

Dec. 20: A Festival of Carols Concert

The St. Martin Catholic Church Choir in Lecompte will present *A Festival of Carols* at 7 p.m. in the parish hall. The concert will feature traditional sacred music of the Advent and Christmas seasons. The choir, under the direction of John de Chiaro, will be accompanied by the Alexandria String Chamber Orchestra. The concert is free and open to the public.

Dec. 21: SHS Christmas Show

Sacred Heart School will hold its annual Christmas Show -- *An Expression of Christmas* -- Dec. 21 at 5:30 p.m. at The Earl Barby Convention Center in Marksville. Each class will interpret their idea of Christmas with song and dance. The 8th grade students will bring all of these elements of Christmas together with "The Nativity". The finale, Joy To the World, will include the entire student body. Admission will be a donation at the door. The public is invited. For more information contact Karen Moreau @ 985-2772.

OLL-Vidalia Cookbook for Sale

The Ladies' Altar Society and Men's Club at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Vidalia, have published a cookbook titled, *Manna on the Mississippi*. The cookbook is comprised of over 320 recipes contributed by cooks throughout the Miss-Lou area and the U.S. Also included are recipes from some of our local Indian priests. The cost of the cookbook is \$15 plus \$5 per book if you want us to mail it to you. Contact Corinne Randazzo at 601-597-2917 or Pat Stein at 601-807-6383 to order. Net profits from the sale of this cookbook will be used toward upgrading our A/C and heating system in the church hall.

Jan. 3-7: FOCUS conference

The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) invites college students to seek and understand "What Moves You" during five days of fun, talks, worship and more at SEEK2017 on Jan. 3-7 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio, Texas. Speakers include Lou Holtz, Dr. Scott Hahn, Dr. Tim Gray, Dr. Edward Sri, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Fr. Michael Gaitley, Jeff Cavins, and many more outstanding speakers. Registration is open at seek2017.com.



PUBLIC ROSARY. For the 5th consecutive year, a group of ladies prayed the Rosary Oct. 15 at the home of Madeline Seiss White as part of America Needs Fatima's Public Rosary Rally. Pictured are (from left) Joan Lanius, Madeline Seiss White, Mae Rose Nash, Rosalie Chark, Rose Lie, Shirley Green, Jessie Kimble, Magalin Gail Blade, and Wanel LeRochele.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS



TASTE OF CREOLE committee members from St. Juliana Church in Alexandria are (sitting) Winston Bell, Lynn Lemott (chairman), Gwen Milo, and Hattie Turner. Standing: Jean LaCour, Gwen Bell, Anthony Gilliard Sr., Jackie Joffrion, Beverly Patterson, Sirley Roque, Tommy Milo, Jessie Turner and Josph Patterson.

Jan. 20-22: Marriage Help

Retrovaille (pronounced retro-vi) has helped tens of thousands of couples at all stages of disillusionment or misery in their marriage. This program can help you too. Retrouvaille is more like a lifeline for troubled or broken marriages and hurting couples. It is for married couples who are anxious about their marriage, alone or distant from their partner, disillusioned or bored in their marriage, or who are experiencing coldness or conflict. For confidential information about or to register for the program on Jan. 20-22, 2017, in Lafayette call 1-985-714-2442/2443 or 1-337-298-5170 or visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.com

Jan. 22: Finance Class for Young Couples

A class in basic finances for engaged couples, young spouses and single persons is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 22, 2017 at 11:45 A.M. at the Sts. Francis and Anne Church Youth Building in Kolin. The presenter will be Donovan Davis, CFP, a local financial planner and a member of our



PUBLIC ROSARY. The Presidium of the Legion of Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary met in the courtyard of St. Juliana Oct. 15 to pray the Rosary for America. Pictured are Erma Bayone, Patricia Jeanpierre-Hicks, Audry Sanders, Valerie Bandy, John Greenhouse, Mr. & Mrs. May, Bo Rachel, Linda Monette Broussard, Donald Metoyer, Doris Prevot, Emily Boswell, Allie Metoyer, Theresa Fields, Mary James, Michael Ray, Angela Lee, Kim Boswell, Lynn Lemott and Mary Anne Reddoch.



CDA COUR NTRE DAME #1452 presents a \$1,000 check to Bishop Herzog for the Seminarian Education Fund. Pictured are Linda Gauthier, Elsie Campbell, Bishop Herzog, Joan Lanius, and Mattie Mitchell, Junior Catholic Daughters.



FOURTH DEGREE KNIGHTS diocesan coordinator John Morovich presents a check to Bishop Ronald Herzog for the Seminarian Education Fund.

parish. This is a great opportunity to learn about handling finances whether one is just starting out in life or needs a little assistance along the way. The course will cover topics such as budgeting, timely paying of bills, credit score, tithing, and managing one's cost of living. For more information or to register for the class, please contact Kara Bertrand at (318) 290-9228 or email kara@pecangrove-trainingcenter.net.

Jan. 25-29: Pro-Life Pilgrimage

Magnificat Travel is offering a Women's Pilgrimage to Washington D.C. Jan. 25-29 for the National March for Life. Trip will include visits to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Arlington Cemetery, Monuments & Memorials, Mount Vernon, the Holocaust Museum, and the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Seton. For more information call 337-291-1933 or info@holyltravels.org.

June 2017: Pilgrimage to Rome

Father Taylor Reynolds will be leading a pilgrimage to Rome June 6-12, 2017. Sites include St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum, and a day of culinary inclusions. Prices start at \$3,919 for airfare from Alexandria, hotel accommodations, guided tours, taxes and fees. For more information call, Fr. Taylor at 445-7141 ext 211.

December - January

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<div>19</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA</div>	<div>20</div> <div>A Festival of Carols 7:00 p.m. St. Martin Church, Lecompte</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. W. AJAERO</div>	<div>21</div> <div>Sacred Heart School Christmas Show 5:30 p.m. Barbry Convention Center, Marksville</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. T. ALLEN</div>	<div>22</div> <div>Advent Reflection Series 6:00 p.m. St. Frances Cabrini School Library, Alexandria</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. ANTONY</div>	<div>23</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. BRANDOW</div>	<div>24</div> <div>Fireworks 7:00 p.m. Natchitoches</div> <div>CHRISTMAS EVE PRAY FOR FR. D. BRAQUET</div>	<div>25</div> <div></div> <div>SOLEMNITY of the NATIVITY of the LORD (CHRISTMAS DAY) PRAY FOR FR. J. BROCATO</div>
<div>26</div> <div>FEAST of ST. STEPHEN PRAY FOR FR. S. CHEMINO</div>	<div>27</div> <div>FEAST of ST. JOHN the APOSTLE and EVANGELIST PRAY FOR FR. D. COOK</div>	<div>28</div> <div>FEAST of the HOLY INNOCENTS PRAY FOR FR. D. CORKERY</div>	<div>29</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. CUNNINGHAM</div>	<div>30</div> <div>FEAST of the HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH PRAY FOR FR. W. DECOSTE</div>	<div>31</div> <div>NEW YEARS EVE PRAY FOR FR. D. DEJESUS</div>	<div>JANUARY 1</div> <div>SOLEMNITY of MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (NEW YEARS DAY) PRAY FOR FR. B. DESHAUTELLE</div>
<div>2</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. DESIMONE</div>	<div>3</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK</div>	<div>4</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. FERGUSON</div>	<div>5</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. T. FEY</div>	<div>6</div> <div>FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. R. GARRIONE</div>	<div>7</div> <div>FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. W. GEARHEARD</div>	<div>8</div> <div>Burning of the Greens Queen's Soup 6:15 p.m. St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria</div> <div>SOLEMNITY of the EPIPHANY of the LORD PRAY FOR FR. R. GREMILLION</div>
FOCUS CONFERENCE -- San Antonio, Texas						
<div>9</div> <div>FEAST of the BAPTISM of the LORD PRAY FOR FR. J. HASIEBER</div>	<div>10</div> <div>VIRTUS Training 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria</div> <div>PRAY FOR BISHOP R. HERZOG</div>	<div>11</div> <div>PRAY FOR MSGR. R. HOPPE</div>	<div>12</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. R. HUMPHRIES</div>	<div>13</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. B. IBE</div>	<div>14</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. H. IMAMSHAH</div>	<div>15</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. K. ISHMAEL</div>
USCCB National Migration Week						
<div>16</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. G. KROSFIELD</div>	<div>17</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. KULIGOWSKI</div>	<div>18</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. KUNNUMPURAM</div>	<div>19</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. KWEBUZA</div>	<div>20</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. M. LAIRD</div>	<div>21</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. LAPALME</div>	<div>22</div> <div>Finance Class for Young Spouses and Singles 11:45 a.m. Sts. Francis and Anne Church, Kolin</div> <div>RETROVAILLE WEEKEND -- Lafayette PRAY FOR FR. R. MATHEWS</div>

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