

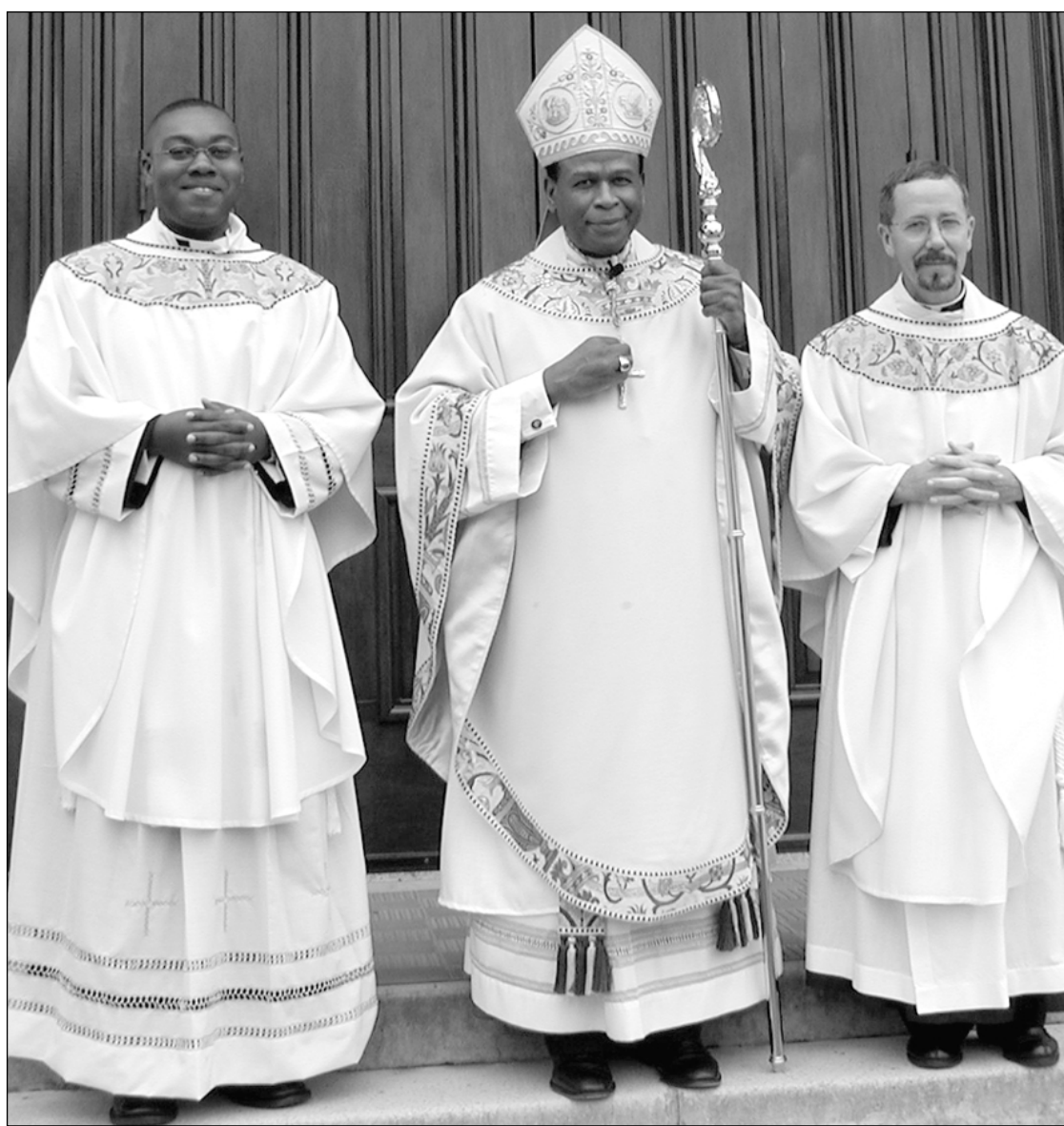
CATHOLIC CALENDAR.

A page devoted to local Catholic interests

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The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton joins with his two newest priests, the Reverend Marcus Johnson, left, and the Reverend Charles McMillin, right, on the steps of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception following the pair's ordination to the priesthood on Saturday, May 18.

Conversion and Faith in the Christian Life

(Editor's Note: Third of three installments)

Happy Easter! In our Catholic tradition Easter is not simply one Sunday. It is an entire Liturgical Season. This is why we celebrated seven Sundays of Easter through Pentecost Sunday, the Feast of the Holy Spirit on May 19th. Thus, it is completely appropriate for us to keep saying "Happy Easter". Our long Easter Season provides us with the opportunity to explore our Easter faith at a deeper level as we support the newly baptized members of the Church during their Mystagogia (growth in faith). Easter Faith is much more than believing that Jesus Christ was raised to glorified life by God the Father. It is really the whole vital reality of our daily lives as members of the body of Christ, the Church. Easter Faith is a matter of ongoing Conversion.

Moral Conversion (Being and Doing Good)

Moral conversion is the effort that those to be reborn by water and the Holy Spirit must make to respond to the call of God in conscience. It is the quest for authenticity in every aspect of one's life. Like Thomas More, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Archbishop Romero, the morally converted person seeks out the good, and does the good simply because it is the good. The morally converted person cares not for appearances, rewards, punishments, advancements or fleeting public opinion. He or she has gone beyond Lowell Kohlberg's five stages of moral development to his sixth stage: the grasp of transcendent values. The morally converted man or woman strives to conform to the deeds incarnated in his or her life with the values inscribed in his or her heart. In the effort to achieve moral conversion one struggles with St. Paul, who said to the Romans, "That which I know I should not do, I do, and that which I know I should do, I do not do."

The authentically Christian understanding of moral conversion embraces far more than the sixth and ninth commandments. As important as these matters are, moral conversion is not simply a matter of sexuality, birth control or abortion. Moral conversion encompasses every personal and public area of human thought and conduct where

gospel values are at stake. Thus Christians who wish to live out the meaning of their faith must scrutinize, from a Christian perspective, their attitudes, actions and omissions in many areas; war and peace, government, social justice (e.g., racism, sexism), care for the environment, just wages for workers and the prospect of ongoing conflict. It is well to be reminded that as we grow in faith and the moral life, self indulgent living, an excess of material goods, irresponsible use of alcohol, smoking, indulging one's appetites, overeating, and not exercising and caring for one's health are all instances of moral decline and potential sin. They are not simply minor bad habits that are the unavoidable by-products of American secular culture.

Intellectual Conversion (Understanding Your Faith)

Intellectual conversion is the slow and painful process through which the thinking person experi-

bias, misinformation, or issues which simply are not mature.

The seemingly irreconcilable conflicts between Galileo and the church in a past age are easily reconciled today because a higher viewpoint makes it possible to see that positions that seemed in conflict were actually the result of the confusion of scientific and theological categories. Intellectual conversion integrates all forms of human knowing and understanding in a dynamic unity. Those who join the church should be encouraged to seek God's truth wherever it may be found. Where faith is deep and strong there should be no fear that it shall be easily undone.

Thus the on-going conversion that feeds the life of faith of all Christians is manifold. It is religious-the turn to the holy; Christian-the turn to Jesus as the Christ; ecclesial-the turn to community; moral-the turn to values; and intellectual-the turn to a holistic understanding of truth and human wisdom. Obviously, conversion does not operate with a predictable mechanical sequence. A new Catholic for example does not necessarily move smoothly from religious conversion to intellectual conversion-from the day of election to the celebration of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. The whole process overlaps.

A deeper understanding of faith and conversion in the life of a Catholic Christian may be a source of great support in these challenging times in the life of the church. There is justifiably profound concern being expressed about the sexual misconduct of a small percentage of our clergy with children. Concern is also expressed about bishops who may not have always made the correct judgments or acted wisely in dealing with this misconduct. These concerns remind us of the human frailties and potential sinfulness of all of us. However, they should not lead us to conclude that we should lose confidence in our faith. In the end Catholics do not anchor their faith in priests, bishops or even the pope. Faith is anchored in the mystery of God, the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Mystery of the Church, which is more, oh so much more than the flaws of any of its ministers. If we all live by this faith, it really will be a Happy Easter, an Easter that will live forever.

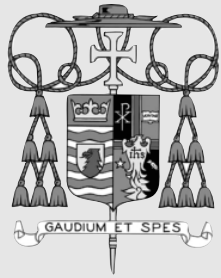


Bishop Edward K. Braxton

ences the liberation and integration of the mind. By means of intellectual conversion we come to terms with the complexity of the world and the desire of the mind to know everything about everything. It is the realization that things may not be the way they appear. It appears that the sun rises and sets. But it does not. The earth turns on its axis and moves in an orbit around the sun.

The intellectually converted Catholic should not be burdened with battles between religion and science. If they are encouraged to be open to intellectual conversion they will recognize that there is no one exclusive path to truth: poetry, proverbs, music, art, and common sense can all direct one to the true. The findings of serious studies in history, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, science and theology are not necessarily in conflict. By a certain intellectual agility one can appreciate that they are complementary, from a higher view point. Usually where conflict arises, e.g. so-called creationist vs. evolution conflict, it is because of the inexact use of language, the presence of

OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS



His Excellency, The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, makes the following appointments:

Pastoral Appointment

• The Reverend Augustine Mulanjanany is reappointed Pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fenton, La., effective July 1, 2002 until June 30, 2008.

First Assignments

• The Reverend Charles McMillin is appointed Associate Pastor of St. Theodore Parish in Moss Bluff, La., effective July 1, 2002 until June 30, 2005.

• The Reverend Marcus Johnson is appointed Associate Pastor of St. Margaret Parish in Lake Charles, La., effective July 1, 2002 until June 30, 2005.

By Order of The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, dated at The Pastoral Center, May 18, 2002.

"Searching for the Living God," June 14-15

MOSS BLUFF - The Diocese of Lake Charles invites all Catholic men to a retreat on Friday, June 14 beginning at 6 p.m. and concluding on Saturday, June 15 at 5 p.m. The retreat will be held at Tabor Retreat House of Saint Charles Center. All retreat participants must spend Friday evening at Tabor Retreat House.

"Searching for the Living God" is the theme of the retreat and will be facilitated by Deacon Glenn Harmon, Director of Evangelization.

There is growing evidence of a spiritual renewal among men, according to Deacon Harmon. However, it can be confusing to be a man today, particularly a Christian man. There is a natural tension between the stereotypical male, the one many of us were taught to be, the male of the media and the male that calls men to be.

The man today is expected to be protective and hard working on the one hand, and gentle and supportive on the other.

How do they do that effectively and at the same time, enjoy the process of getting there? This retreat is designed to provide a source of energy and rejuvenation to men's faith so they can stand and be counted as godly men of integrity. Through prayer, private reflection, and group process, Catholic men throughout Southwest Louisiana will be strengthened in their faith and in their role as husbands, fathers, sons, and disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cost is \$60 per person, which includes lodging at Tabor Retreat House, meals, snacks and materials. For further information and registration forms, please contact the Office of Evangelization at 337-439-7426, Ext. 15. All fees and forms must be submitted by June 8.

Pro-life panel to be held at OLQH June 3

LAKE CHARLES — A Pro-Life Panel will speak at Our Lady Queen of Heaven on Monday, June 3. The presentation will begin with a Communion Service led by Deacon George Carr at 5:30 p.m. in the Day Chapel and is scheduled to conclude at 6:45 p.m.

The Panel will consist of Deacon Garrett Caraway, Director of the Diocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities; Marcia Schexnider, Director of New Life Counseling; Ellie Bercier, Board Member of New Life Counseling; and Burt Parham, Pro-Life Director of OLQH. They will specifically focus on support for those who choose life with the title: "If I choose life, what next?"

"One baptism for the forgiveness of sins"

By Rev. Jim Ferguson

This statement is found in the Nicene Creed, which speaks of the link between baptism and the forgiveness of sins. The Father has shown forth his mercy by reconciling the world to himself in Christ and by making peace for all things on earth and in heaven by the blood of Christ on the cross. The Son of God made man lived among us in order to free us from the slavery of sin and to call us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

He therefore began his work on earth by preaching repentance and saying: "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15).

This invitation to repentance, which had often been echoed by the prophets, prepared people's hearts for the coming of the kingdom of God through the voice of John the Baptist, who came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin" (Mk 1:4).

Jesus, however, not only exhorted people to repentance so that they would abandon their sins and turn to the Lord, but welcoming sinners, he actually

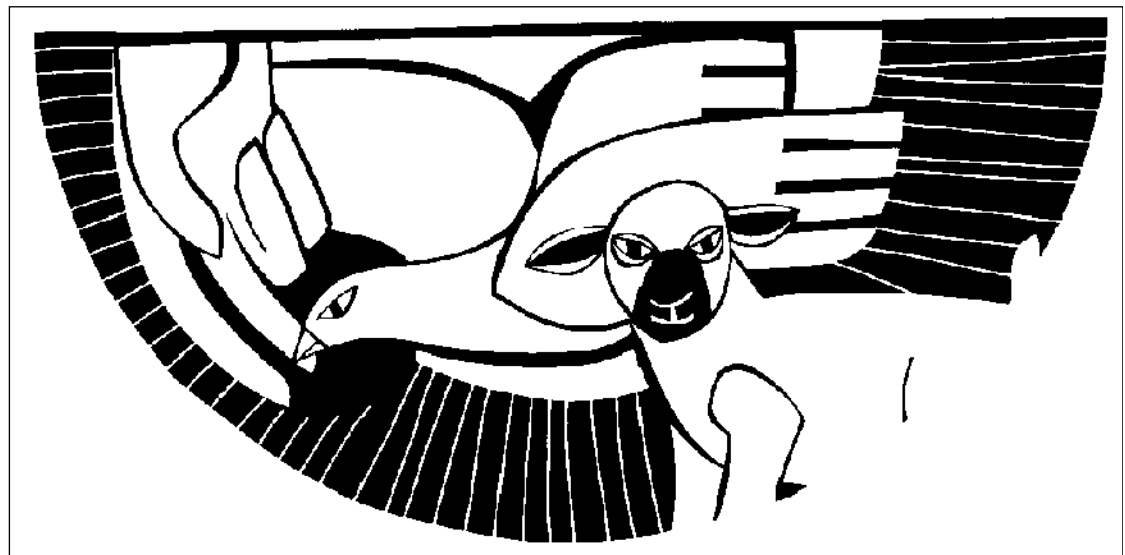
reconciled them with the Father. Likewise, he healed the sick in order to offer a sign of his power to forgive sin. Finally, he himself died for our sins and rose again for our justification. After his resurrection he sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, commissioning them forth to all peoples to preach repentance and the forgive-

ness of sins in his name.

The Lord said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed also in heaven" (Mt 16:19). In obedience to this command, on the day of Pentecost Peter preached the forgiveness of sins by baptism: "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Since then the Church has never failed to call people from sin to conversion and through the celebration of penance to show the victory of Christ over sin.

This victory is brought to light in baptism. Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of the forgiveness of sin: it unites us to Christ, who died and rose, and gives us the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, by Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance. Its purpose is that the faithful who fall into sin after baptism may be reconciled with God through the restoration of grace. For this reason the Church proclaims its faith in "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins." (Father Ferguson is the pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marksville, La. This column is reprinted with the permission of The Church Today, Diocese of Alexandria.)



Trinity Sunday, May 26

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. John 3:16-18

Vocation Retreat set June 7-9 at Maryhill Retreat Center

PINEVILLE - A vocation retreat, jointly sponsored by the Dioceses of Lake Charles, Alexandria, Baton Rouge and Shreveport, is set for June 7-9 at Maryhill Retreat Center.

This retreat is intended to assist young men, 16 years or older, who are seriously discerning a call to diocesan priesthood.

It invites participants to look at their spiritual journey in light of the Lord Jesus' call to a life of personal holiness.

This retreat will help a young man to reflect on and judge how best to respond to God's call to the priesthood.

The Most Rev. Sam Jacobs

and Vocation Directors from all four dioceses will be in attendance. The retreat is staffed by seminarians from the four dioceses.

For more information contact your church pastor or call the Vocation Office at 439-7426, Ext. 17.

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)