
CHURCH TODAY

Volume LIV, No. 1

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Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

January 23, 2023



Be courageous

Approximately 140 8th graders from six different schools within the diocese attended a retreat January 10 at Maryhill Renewal Center. The retreat was facilitated by the Diocese of Alexandria and hosted by the Menard Apostles for Christ (MAC Team) of Holy Savior Menard High School. Students enjoyed praise and worship, small group discussions, testimonials, and prayer.

INSIDE

Opening our hearts to love

“See to it that your Holy Communion produces between you and Jesus Christ a union so strong that you will never separate yourself from him.” See page 2 for a letter from Bishop Marshall encouraging us in our journey through Scripture.

Final 40-Hours Devotion

In support of the National Eucharistic Revival, Bishop Robert Marshall asked for each of the four deaneries in our diocese to host a 40-Hours Devotion. See page 5 for more information on the fourth and final event, Feb. 23 - 25.

Catholics who loved Benedict share how he has shaped their lives

“It all comes down to the faith is an encounter with the living God.” See page 13 for more on the late pontiff’s lasting legacy.

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In the last chapter, we discussed the Emmaus account wherein two disciples found that their hearts were burning in their discussion of Scripture with the stranger they met on the road. Stopping for a meal, they recognized the stranger as Jesus in “the breaking of the bread.” If we find it difficult to relate to that story, if we find that our hearts rarely burn with faith and love, then I suggest that we are not alone. Too often, we do not even give our hearts the chance to encounter a spark, much less to catch fire. In our digital world, we have become accustomed to moving from one website to another with the click of a mouse, pausing for 30 seconds or so to watch one video clip, reading a few tweets, acquiring one bit of information here or there, and then moving on. We rarely pause and reflect on what we have seen or heard or read. Even those of us who grew up in a much slower world find that our attention span has diminished. We can only imagine what it is like for the young people of our time who have never lived without a cell phone and texts and sensory overload. A sustained encounter with the Lord, remembering that we are in his holy presence, seems to be impossible – but the saints of our tradition bear witness to the fact that it was always difficult. In one of his meditations, St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle asks, “How long has Jesus been knocking at the door of your heart and been waiting to enter, and you have not wished to receive him?” (Meditation 85.1). We might quibble with the word “wished,” I suppose. We might say that we have been too busy or too distracted or that there was so much going on that we did not hear the soft knocking. However we might describe the sensation, we must candidly admit that often we miss an encounter with the Lord because we are not prepared to receive him.

Opening our hearts to the Lord may be the most difficult task we face if we seek to appreciate the great gift of the Holy Eucharist. Many of us sense an emptiness in our lives and we try to fill that void through constant noise and visual stimulation and activity. We are too busy for the Lord. Others of us desperately want the Lord but we expect him to overwhelm us or knock us off our feet. Even if he does that, we often do not



Live, Jesus, in our Hearts Forever
The Joy and Promise of
the Most Holy Eucharist

By Bishop Robert W. Marshall, Jr.

Opening Our Hearts to Love

recognize him because we have some other explanation for what happened. Still others of us do not open the doors of our hearts because of our fear or our shame. We are afraid of God's rejection or his disapproval. We treat the Lord as we do company at the front door – we busily try to clean the house (or at least the front room) before we answer the door. The problem, of course, is that the room of our heart is never completely prepared for God because we have not invited him into the messes of our lives. We want to encounter the Lord when we are perfect, but we cannot be perfect without him. As St. de La Salle wrote, “If you wait until you are without defects before receiving Communion, you will not receive Communion in your lifetime! We go to Communion to become holy, not because we are holy.” (Meditations 55.1 and 55.2). Yes, if we have committed any mortal sin, we are asked to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to receiving Communion – but that does not mean that every defect in our character has been removed, or that we have been healed of every fault. We are forgiven by the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but our brokenness and our susceptibilities to sin often remain. Somehow, we must accept that God wants to encounter us as we are – wounded, broken, imperfect, but open to returning God's love. We come to the Eucharist to be nourished – but also to be healed. When we are physically ill, we often go to the doctor only as a last resort. We pointlessly seek to heal ourselves rather than turning to a professional for help. When we are spiritually troubled, we do not always turn to God in prayer, even though God continually offers us his forgiveness, compassion and love. If we have the courage to open the door of our heart, then God – especially as present in the

Eucharist – will offer us his love and his peace.

As I write this chapter, we are mourning the death of Pope emeritus Benedict XVI. His first encyclical letter as Supreme Pontiff, *Deus caritas est* (DCE) or “God is Love” offers us some poignant insights into the nature of our relationship with God. The title comes from the First Letter of John and reminds us that Love is God's very nature, his essence. Pope Benedict speaks to us of “the love which God lavishes upon us and which we in turn must share with others.” (DCE, 1). Greek philosophy, Pope Benedict reminds us, described the divine power as the object of human desire and human love. By contrast, the Scriptures describe God as one who loves humanity with a personal love. In metaphysics, the divine power is the object of love; in Scripture, before God is ever the object of our human love, God first loves us. (DCE, 10, 11).

This preeminence of God's love is profoundly important as we contemplate the divine presence in the Eucharist. The nature of God found in the Old Testament becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. The God who is Love, becomes love incarnate in Jesus. “The real novelty of the New Testament,” Benedict writes, “lies not so much in new ideas as in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to [God's love] – an unprecedented realism.” (DCE, 12). It is this incarnate love, this flesh and blood reality, that we are invited to receive in the Holy Eucharist. That divine self-gift is the very nature of Christ, the very nature of the Eucharist. And in the Eucharist, we are offered not just a glimpse, not just a taste, but a union, a Communion, with the living God. (DCE, 13, 14). This union, as noted in Chapter 2 of this letter, is a true participation in the union of love that is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. In the words of St. de La

Salle, “The Son of God has come to earth and wishes to come into our hearts to make us sharers in his divine nature.” (Meditation, 85.3). But St. de La Salle also reminds us that with the profound gift of the Eucharist, comes a challenge, “See to it that your Holy Communion produces between you and Jesus Christ a union so strong that you will never separate yourself from him.” (Meditation, 49.2). The extraordinarily good news for us is that Jesus Christ desires that union – and offers us all the graces necessary to make it happen. We need only order our minds and hearts to cooperate with that grace. We need only open our hearts to love.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

- How easy is it for you to open your heart to another? To God?
- Have you experienced rejection or betrayal in your life that makes you reluctant to open your heart even to God? Have you found that human love is imperfect?
- Do you ever find yourself to be too busy, too timid, or too ashamed or afraid to open your heart to God?
- Do you believe that God first loves you – even if you do not yet love him? Are you willing to believe that – unlike human love – God's love is perfect?
- Are you prepared to take the risk of returning God's love and allowing him to form a union, a Communion with you?

New abortion pill rules challenge Catholics to reimagine effective pro-life outreach

By Kimberley Heatherington
Our Sunday Visitor



WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Just six months after the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision that abortion is not a constitutional right, America's pro-life advocates and health care providers are preparing for another consequential shift following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's finalization of a rule change that expands availability of the abortion pill mifepristone.

In a Jan. 6 statement, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, denounced the move.

"The Catholic Church is consistent in its teaching on upholding the dignity of all life, and that must include care for both women and their children," Bishop Burbidge said. "We decry the continuing push for the destruction of innocent human lives and the loosening of vital safety standards for vulnerable women."

The FDA announced early January that under its modified Mifepristone REMS Program, patients will be able to acquire Mifeprex — and its approved generic — at retail pharmacies. According to the FDA website, "a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) is a drug safety program that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can require for certain medications with serious safety concerns to help ensure the benefits of the medication outweigh its risks."

When used in combination with misoprostol, mifepristone — introduced 20 years ago — induces a "medication abortion" up to 10 weeks into a pregnancy. The same pills used for abortions are also prescribed to women who experience early pregnancy

miscarriage.

The Guttmacher Institute reported in December 2022 that their census of all known abortion providers found "medication abortion accounted for 53% of all facility-based abortions in the United States in 2020."

The FDA's January announcement, however, portends to accelerate the transition of first trimester abortion — 90% of all abortions in the U.S. — from a surgical procedure to a medication experience. It builds on a December 2021 FDA rule change that allows telemedicine consultations with mail-order pharmacy fulfillment, reversing a prior requirement for in-person consultation.

Both Walgreens and CVS plan to offer mifepristone in states where it is legal. While many states still restrict abortion pill use, state policies may change in the aftermath of the FDA's latest rule modification.

The FDA's rule changes, however, is forcing pro-life advocates to rethink effective, lifesaving strategies, as more women seeking an abortion no longer require visiting a physical clinic.

Molly Sheahan, associate director of Life & Family

Advocacy at the California Catholic Conference, noted the digital dimension of securing abortion pills requires the pro-life movement to understand where it needs to be.

"The frontier on the issue of abortion isn't necessarily the abortion clinic — it's the mobile phone," said. "Women are seeking abortion by searching online ... they're able to order abortion pills through the mail. That's been available for a while — it's just become more readily accessible now."

In response, the California Catholic Conference utilizes social media and digital ads to reach women in the state, where abortion appointments have markedly increased post-*Dobbs*.

"It just creates additional concern for women when they're not able to be seen by a physician to screen them for contraindications," said Sheahan. "We're putting vulnerable people at greater risk when we're not serving them in a physician's office."

Leah Jacobson, CEO and founder of Guiding Star Project, a nationwide network of pro-life health centers, said the normalization of the Plan B emergency contraceptive "has

been so normalized that a woman doesn't even think twice."

"Many college-age women have used Plan B on several occasions — and the abortion pill, to them, is just a next back-up step in case Plan B failed," she said.

Guiding Star has focused on fostering an early interaction with patients — as young as age 9 — about healthy life choices. In the event their patients experience an unplanned pregnancy, they can turn to Guiding Star for life-affirming care, support and resources.

A statement released by the Catholic Medical Association's former president Lester Ruppertsberger, D.O., and Marie T. Hilliard, Ph.D., senior fellow at the National Catholic Bioethics Center, backed up that concern, saying the FDA's changes put at risk women's "true informed consent.

"Furthermore, no onsite or in-person physical assessment to even document the weeks of gestation or the location of the fetus is required," they stated. Without follow-up physical examination to assess a potentially incomplete abortion, CMA notes increased "risks of continued bleeding, retained products of

conception necessitating surgical removal, or infections, which can lead to infertility and in extreme cases even death."

The CMA further cautioned that "removing the requirement for in-person dispensing facilitates the potential for concealing rape of a minor." Such concerns also extend to human trafficking victims.

Katherine Talalas, assistant director for Pro-Life Communications for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told OSV News it is critical for Catholics to inform, advocate at state and federal levels, and pastorally assist.

The majority of abortion-minded women fall below the poverty line, are unmarried, and lack social or financial support, Talalas explained. She said the USCCB's Walking with Moms in Need initiative — a parish-based process that assists vulnerable pregnant women — seeks to provide a safety net for all, "whether you are in a red state, a blue state, a state that already has a lot of regulations on abortion or none."

Abandoning women to the trauma of chemical abortion, which always involves a delivery of some kind, is cruel, Talalas stressed.

"Abortion doesn't make a baby disappear," she said. "It just means that the baby's life is ended."

Kimberly Heatherington is an OSV News correspondent who writes from Virginia.

HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTIONS for February 2023

For parishes //

We pray that parishes, placing communion at the center, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity, and welcome towards those most in need.
Amen.



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Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana needs you!

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana is busy at work to serve the needs of our community in the areas of mental health, disaster relief, and basic needs.

We need volunteers in the following areas: take and process basic needs applications, assist with SNAP enrollment, help with fundraisers, work with staff and community partners on disaster preparedness.

Please join us for a light breakfast, Tuesday, Feb. 23, 9:00 a.m. at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, and learn more about our emerging services at Catholic Charities and how you may share your gifts and talents with us!

Please RSVP to Jennifer Gilchrist at jgilchrist@cccenla.org by Wednesday, Feb. 15.

We appreciate your prayerful consideration of working with us.

Catholic Charities Upcoming Events

Share your Heart

Volunteer recruitment breakfast
Tuesday, February 23, 9:00 a.m.

St. Joseph Catholic Center Conference Room
RSVP to Jennifer Gilchrist at jgilchrist@cccenla.org
by Wednesday, February 15

Divorce Support:

Catholic Charities aims to help individuals heal from the pain of divorce by tapping into the Power of the Divine Physician. Individual or group sessions are available and are led by our consulting Christian Life Coach. The approved Catholic Program, *Surviving Divorce: Hope and Healing for the Catholic Family* by Rose Sweet is faithful to the teachings of the Church and blends empathy for others with clear explanations of the truths of the Catholic faith.

For more information, please contact
jgilchrist@cccenla.org.

SNAP Enrollment Assistance:

Catholic Charities offers assistance either in person or over the phone to those who need help to apply for Food Stamps. The SNAP application is by online application only and many senior citizens are not familiar with computers and websites. We can help. For more information, please contact jgilchrist@cccenla.org.



The Holy Family

by Marcus Descant, Leesville, LA

Our Lord and Savior was brought to this earth,
Through the Holy Spirit by a virgin birth.

Mary was chosen to bring Him here,
His love for her was ever so dear.

She was placed on earth for a serious reason,
To bring forth Jesus during the Christmas season.

Joseph was chosen to protect them here,
Like a mighty warrior, they had no fear.

As Jesus grew in age, knowledge and grace,
He knew for sure this was His place.

lizdescant@gmail.com
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Visit www.diocesealex.org/people-by-name/ and press the red button
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Prayer for vocations

God our Father, we thank you for calling men and women to serve in your Son's Kingdom as priests, deacons, religious, and consecrated persons. Send your Holy Spirit to help us respond generously and courageously to your call. May our community of faith support vocations of sacrificial love in our youth. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Final 40-Hours Devotion set for Feb. 23-25 for Avoyelles



NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

The Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception was the location for the Natchitoches Deanery 40-Hours Devotion. The event was held Jan. 12-14.

Special thanks to the clergy who participated including Fr. Irion St. Roman, pastor of the Minor Basilica, Dcn. Chad Thibidaux, Fr. John O'Brien, pastor of St. Anthony of Padua in Natchitoches, Fr. Wade DeCoste, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Winnfield and Dcn. John Whitehead.

In support of the National Eucharistic Revival, Bishop Robert Marshall asked for each of the four deaneries in the Diocese of Alexandria to host a 40-Hours Devotion at some point during the months of November 2022 through February 2023.

The Central Deanery was the first to host theirs on Nov. 3-6 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral and the Eastern Deanery held theirs Dec. 8-10 at St. Joseph Church in St. Joseph, LA.

The devotions begin with an opening Mass on Thursday, followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and conclude with Mass and Benediction on Saturday.

The last opportunity to

participate in a 40-Hour Devotion will be for the Avoyelles Deanery at St. Joseph Church in Marksville from Feb. 23-25. If you would like to participate, please visit www.diocesealex.org for more information or to sign up. Though we ask that you to sign up online, it is not necessary in order to participate. It is just a way for us to assure there will be at least one person present at all times during adoration. We hope to see you there.

What is the 40-Hours Devotion?

The 40-Hours Devotion is an opportunity to gather as a community before the Blessed Sacrament and to pray before the Lord in solemn adoration. It gives us time to deepen our

appreciation of the importance of the mystery of the Eucharist in our lives. Traditionally, it begins with a celebration of Mass. At the end of this opening Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and over a period of a few days the faithful are given the opportunity to assemble in prayer before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. The form of prayer to be prayed can be done in diverse ways. The celebration then normally ends with the celebration of the Mass.

In the celebration of the 40-Hours Devotion, we are able to witness a fuller expression of our theology of the Eucharist. It is first and foremost about our participation in the Paschal Mystery through our celebration of Mass. In the celebration of Mass, we participate directly in

the saving acts of Christ and by the grace of the Holy Spirit unite the sacrifices of our lives with the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is in this way that we give praise and thanksgiving to God for Jesus and participate in the true worship of our God by which we are sanctified as His holy people. This leads us then to live out our lives more fully in Christ. This devotion also gives an opportunity to give voice to our belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements. As the community gathers in prayer before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, it witnesses to our belief, as a Church, that what is before us is bread no longer but truly the Body of Christ.

Why are we celebrating the 40-Hours devotion now?

The Holy Father has designated this year as the Year of the Eucharist. With this, Pope Francis is presenting the Church with a wonderful opportunity to explore, develop, and deepen our appreciation of the Eucharist. The primary setting for the promotion of a life centered in the Eucharist is, of course, the celebration of Mass, but the Church also offers other means of deepening a Eucharistic-centered faith. One such practice is adoration, where we gather to pray before the Lord as his presence is revealed to us in the mystery of the eucharistic bread which is truly the Body of Christ. The 40-Hours Devotion gives us the opportunity to come as a community to pray before the Lord in solemn adoration.

You can sign up for an hour or more by visiting the Diocese of Alexandria website at www.diocesealex.org.

Again, though we do not require you to sign up online in order to participate, it is a way for us to assure that at least one person will be present at all times during the event, especially overnight.

o God, deliver us through the intercession of Thy holy bishop and martyr Blase, from all evil of soul and body, especially from all ills of the throat; and grant us the grace to make a good confession in the confident hope of obtaining Thy pardon, and ever to praise with worthy lips Thy most holy name. *saint blaise // pray for us*

Position available: Line Cook at Manna House

Manna House needs a Line Cook. Skills and qualifications required include:

- Knowledge of safety procedures, including safe temperatures at which ingredients must be stored and which food must be prepared to avoid food borne illness.
- At least 1 year of cooking or food experience.
- Excellent kitchen administration knowledge and ability to work as part of a team.
- Follows directions and instructions.
- Ability to stand in one place for hours at a time, handle extreme heat and work shifts.
- The ability to work on your feet for most of the day and lift 50 pounds at a time several times a day.
- Ability to place cases, pans, utensils, and plates on both low and high shelves.
- Manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination to handle tools, such as knife techniques for chopping, slicing, cutting, and dicing.
- Accuracy and speed in executing tasks.
- Valid Louisiana driver's license.
- Ability to respond to emergency situations to avoid endangering themselves or others.

Send your resume to cenlamannahouse@gmail.com

Upcoming VIRTUS Sessions

Thursday, Feb. 16, 6:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Catholic Center
Alexandria

Tuesday, Mar. 28, 6:00 p.m.
Minor Basilica of the
Immaculate Conception,
Natchitoches

NOTE: Minors are not allowed to attend because of the adult content of the videos and discussions. To register, go to www.virtus.org. For more information, call 318-445-6424, ext. 213.

The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.

Psalm 112: 4
Responsorial Psalm for
February 5
Fifth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Catholics must be 'active participants' in MLK's 'unfinished' work, Cardinal Gregory says at Mass

By Richard Szczepanowski
Catholic Standard

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (OSV News) — Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is best honored when people “recall to mind and heart that the issues Dr. King placed before our nation have not been adequately accomplished,” and strive to continue his work, Washington Cardinal Wilton Gregory said during a Jan. 15 Mass honoring the legacy of the late civil rights leader.

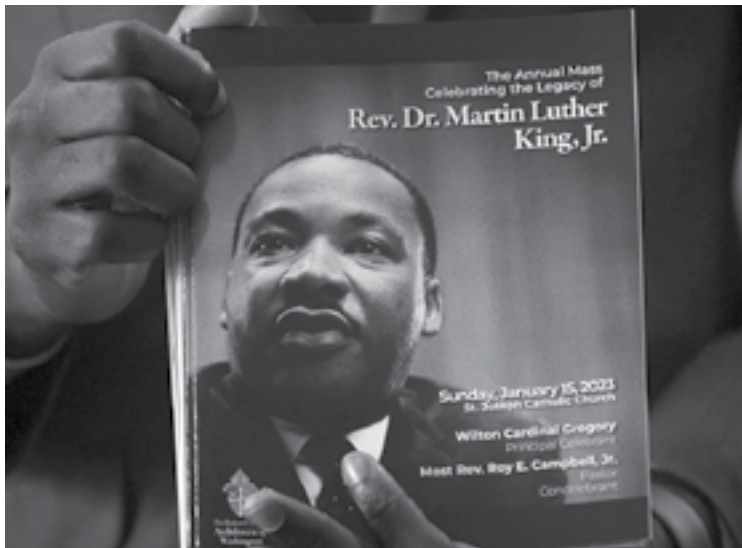
“Dr. King’s national holiday will provide a welcome respite from work for most Americans,” Cardinal Gregory said at the Mass, “but it cannot, and it must never, be used to provide any diminishing in our determination to bring about the fulfillment of that dream that he held out before America, a dream unfortunately still deferred for far too many Americans from every region, of every race or who speak a different language.”

Cardinal Gregory was the principal celebrant and homilist of the Mass at St. Joseph Church in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell Jr., St. Joseph’s pastor, concelebrated the Mass which was sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington’s Office of Cultural Diversity.

The Mass and celebration, which began with a praise and worship service featuring the St. Joseph Gospel Choir, are held annually near Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the federal holiday observed on the third Monday of January. This year, the holiday will be observed on Monday, Jan. 16.

The cardinal told those at the Mass that “despite the God-given progress for which we must also today offer prayers of thanksgiving,” society must address “the unfinished agenda (of Dr. King) that still confronts our society each and every day.”

“We are still a nation with too many strangers. Our lives — when they do not intersect in open hostility — still seem to pass as parallel lines often at great distance from each other,” he said. “We are still discovering, and frequently with great surprise, that we are a diverse people, and



An usher holds a program for Archdiocese of Washington’s Mass Jan. 15, 2023 celebrating the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which was held at St. Joseph Church in Upper Marlboro, Md. (OSV News photo/Tyler Orsburn, Catholic Standard)

that diversity, far from being a threat, can be and ought to be received as a blessing.”

During the Mass, prayers were offered that “the dream for truth and justice of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. inspires all people to work for equality among all members of our society.” The prayer was a reference to Dr. King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

On Aug. 28, 1963, Dr. King was among the leaders who organized a March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march included a rally on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial that was opened with an invocation by Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle, then the Catholic archbishop of Washington. It was at that rally that Dr. King delivered the “I Have a Dream” speech.

In that speech, Dr. King spoke of his dream where “my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream that one day ... little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

“Dr. King courageously and consistently invoked the truth of the Gospel in calling the men and women of our nation to live as sisters and brothers. The truth that he announced reflected the light that is Christ Jesus,” Cardinal Gregory said at the Mass. “We

who are the followers of Christ in a church that is simultaneously universal as well as one must be active participants in the healing of any residual wounds of racism, bigotry and intolerance that still plague this wonderful ecclesial family of ours.”

Dr. King was assassinated almost 55 years ago. In late March 1968, he traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to support Black sanitation public works employees who were on strike seeking higher wages and better working conditions. On April 4 of that year, Dr. King — standing on the balcony of his room at the Lorraine Motel — was mortally wounded by a gunshot fired by James Earl Ray. He was taken to St. Joseph Hospital, where after emergency surgery he was pronounced dead.

Cardinal Gregory said that while Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a federal holiday, “most dioceses have established the honored practice of such a prayer event” as the one hosted by the Archdiocese of Washington. He said the event not only celebrates Dr. King, but anticipates February’s Black History Month.

Calling the next few weeks “a season of racial and cultural pride” for African Americans, Cardinal Gregory said it is a time to “focus with fervent attention on the pride which is rightfully ours in our unique and God-given heritage and history.”

“People of color throughout

our nation are justifiably proud of the heritage of Dr. King because he represents for us and for all people a rich example of the contributions African Americans have made to this nation,” the cardinal said.

The cardinal also noted that some may question “the need and indeed the prudence” of such observances as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day or Black History Month. He pointed to the extensive media coverage usually given to urban riots, the many aggressive conflicts between law enforcement personnel and people of color, the occasional expressions of antipathy between African Americans and those neighborhood merchants from other cultures and races, and “the depressing fact of the all too prevalent events of Black-on-Black crime and violence.”

“Like all of you I wince and grieve when I hear or read of racial and racially motivated conflicts,” he said. “Like all of you I wish there were more attention paid to the moments of grace and justice in America rather than the constant highlighting of the sinful and destructive elements that are still to be found within our society.”

Cardinal Gregory said that “in a unique way, America holds out the promise of being a common home to a great host of people of different cultures, races, languages and ethnic heritages.”

He pointed that when people

identify themselves as “African Americans, Black Americans, Native Americans, Indigenous Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans or just plain Americans,” they are not just engaging in “tentative and highly linguistic nuances,” but instead are reflecting “a wholesome desire on the part of all people to acknowledge with sincere respect one of the more fundamental dignities of any people — the right to identify and determine their own identity.”

He urged those gathered for the Mass to rededicate themselves “to a richer expression of the dignity and unity that ought to be the hallmark of our nation and ... the very foundation of our church itself.”

Cardinal Gregory has a long association with the late civil rights leader. Cardinal Gregory previously served from 2004 to 2019 as the archbishop of Atlanta, Dr. King’s birthplace. He has preached in Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church, where both Dr. King and his father preached, and in 2006, he was inducted into the Martin Luther King Board of Preachers at Morehouse College in Atlanta. In 2019, then-Archbishop Gregory was appointed by Pope Francis to become the archbishop of Washington, and the next year, the pope named him as a cardinal, making Cardinal Gregory become the first African American cardinal.



(Above and below) MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY. Bishop Robert Marshall participated at the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Prayer Breakfast at Alexandria Convention Hall on Monday, Jan. 16. Clergy and ministers from many Christian churches and people of good will gathered to celebrate the life and work of Dr. King. Bishop Marshall was joined by Father Craig Scott, Vicar General and Pastor of St. James Memorial Church, and by Father Luke LaFleur, Pastor of St. Juliana Church as well as members of the ministry team of CHRISTUS Cabrini Hospital.

Saint Martin de Porres: Saint of the Broom

By Mytae Carrasco Wallace
Blessed is She

San Martin De Porres, also known as “the Saint of the Broom”, is no stranger to rejection, abandonment, racism, and prejudice. He was born on December 9th, 1579 in Lima, Peru.

Martin de Porres

Upbringing

His father was a Spanish nobleman and his mother was a freed slave from Panama. During that time period, there was not wide acceptance of diversity or mixed marriages. His father didn’t accept him as his son until he was about eight years old. In his baptismal record, Martin is described as “son of an unknown father.” His father did pay for his son to attend school for a year but eventually moved away and left Martin living in poverty with his mother and sister.

When he was 12 years old, his mother apprenticed him to a barber-surgeon. Martin learned how to cut hair and also how to draw blood. During this time, he became a member of the Third Order of the Dominicans. He did manual work to earn his room and board.

Rejected in Religious Life

A law preventing people of mixed race from joining religious orders kept him from entering the



Dominican Order as a religious brother until 1603. Before he made his vows, he worked in the infirmary caring for the sick. He earned his nickname, “Saint of the broom” for completing all of his menial tasks with hard work and dedication.

He ministered to African slaves brought to Lima and founded an orphanage and hospital for the poor. He was aided by Saint Rose of Lima, who respected his penances and labors. He also planted fruit orchards for the poor, who were allowed to take one day’s supply.

Deep Devotion to Our Lord

Depictions of the Saint often include cats, dogs, and even rats too. One account of St. Martin of Porres says the monastery was tired of their rodent problems and decided to set traps. The Saint was so distressed that he spoke to the mice and cut a deal with them that if they would leave the monastery, he would feed them at the back door of the kitchen. From that day forward, no mouse was seen in the monastery.

He referred to himself as a “poor slave” and happily embraced his circumstances, using it as a way to serve the poor and care for the sick. His compassion was limitless as he served the poor, destitute, outcast, marginalized, and animals too!

Saint Martin lived in self-imposed austerity, never ate meat, fasted continuously, and spent much time in prayer and meditation with a great devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

“He excused the faults of others. He forgave the bitterest injuries, convinced that he deserved much severer punishments on account of his own sins. He tried with all his might to redeem the guilty; lovingly he comforted the sick; he provided food, clothing and medicine for the poor; he helped, as best he could, farm laborers and Negroes, as well as mulattoes, who were looked

upon at that time as akin to slaves: thus he deserved to be called by the name the people gave him: ‘Martin of Charity.’” (stmartinshrine.org).

The First Black Saint of the Americas

San Martin of Porres became the first Black Saint of the Americas. He was beatified on October 29th, 1837 and canonized on May 6, 1962 by Pope Saint John XXIII. San Martin of Porres is buried at the Basilica and convent of Santo Domingo, Peru alongside his dear friend Saint Rose of Lima.

Here in the U.S. there is a National shrine dedicated in his honor.

If Martin were with us now, undoubtedly he would avail himself to victims of Covid-19. Like many healthcare workers today, he would work tirelessly to relieve the distress of their symptoms. He would provide particular comfort to the elderly who are dying. Through his care they would face death knowing the strength of the glorified Christ. (source)

Prayers to Saint Martin of Porres

Lord Jesus Christ, you called Saint Martin de Porres as a prophetic witness to be a source of racial and physical healing. During this time of racial tension and global pandemic, may his prayers help to bring about the

healing you and your children so earnestly desire. We ask this in your name. Amen. (source)

A novena to Saint Martin of Porres can be found at dominicanfriars.org/martin-novena-post/, and a litany of Saint Martin of Porres can be found at nashvilledominican.org/prayer/litanies/litany-of-st-martin-de-porres/.

Live Like Martin

Find a dominican ministry near you to see how you can get involved.

Take some time to look at racism and other issues regarding the dignity of the human person.

Watch and Listen to the We are the Church series from Blessed is She to become more informed on the issues surrounding the sin of racism and how just a simple conversation with friends and family members can be a source of enlightenment and healing.

Go to your local parish gift shop or shop online for a statue of Saint Martin of Porres and invite this inspiring Saint as well as other Saints of color into your home. Welcome them into your domestic Church. God has blessed us with the beauty of the Universal Church but it is up to us to incorporate it into our daily lives.

Saint Martin de Porres, pray for us!

Mytae Carrasco Wallace is Las Vegas born and raised, and holds a Masters in Public Administration. She and her husband have the privilege of leading Pre-Cana retreats for their home parish. On the daily you can find her raising her three kiddos, choreographing dance moves to entertain her children, and doing her own version of carpool karaoke. Find out more about her at [instagram.com/chiscuas/](https://www.instagram.com/chiscuas/).

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 - Monsignor Milburn Broussard
 - Monsignor Thomas F. Early (3 completed)
 - Monsignor Bruce Miller (2 completed)
 - Monsignor B. A. Scallan
 - Father H. Gerald Bordelon
 - Father Daniel Corkery (2 completed)
 - Father Michael P. Kammer
 - Father William B. Provosty (2 completed)
 - Deacon Rodrick "Benny" Broussard
 - Bobby D. Basco
 - Angelo R. and Ena F. D'Angelo
 - John Dominick Driscoll
 - Miss Mary F. Early
 - Irvin and Elma Moreau, Harrison P. Moreau, Michael N. Moreau, Deborah S. Moreau Bouche, Emily A. Moreau, Tom and Mary Candiotta, and Ruby Moreau
 - David Stafford "Brother" O'Shee
 - John Gregory Simms
 - Joseph T. Simms, Jr.
 - Sadie Stroud

The Following is a list of established bursees and amounts in each:

St. Damien De Veuster175.00
 Bishop William Friend100.00
 Bishop Lawrence P. Graves5,805.00
 Bishop Charles P. Greco1,600.00
 Bishop Ronald P. Herzog450.00
 Bishop Sam G. Jacobs1,100.00
 Bishop Robert W. Marshall, Jr.200.00
 Bishop David P. Talley525.00
 Monsignor Marcel J. Anderson100.00
 Monsignor Leon R. Aycocock1,535.00
 Monsignor Norman C. Buvens100.00
 Monsignor Paul E. Conway825.00
 Monsignor Allen M. Chenevert1,000.00
 Monsignor Isidore Deceulaer160.00
 Monsignor S. J. Dekeuwer650.00
 Monsignor Gerald J. Ducote560.00
 Monsignor Robert C. Friend50.00
 Monsignor Ronald C. Hoppe1,000.00
 Monsignor James E. Howard50.00
 Monsignor Charles M. Jekeler325.00
 Monsignor Joseph F. Kidd1,500.00
 Monsignor William Kwaitaal850.00
 Monsignor Warren T. Larroque800.00
 Monsignor Terrence J. Lennon125.00
 Monsignor George W. Martinez500.00
 Monsignor Bruce Miller300.00
 Monsignor Patrick Murphy2,304.00
 Monsignor William C. O'Hanlon5,000.00
 Monsignor Aloysius O. Olinger965.00
 Monsignor Mozart Pelletier100.00
 Monsignor John V. Plauche400.00
 Monsignor F. Joseph Rateau570.00
 Monsignor Russell J. Richie616.14
 Monsignor B. A. Scallan10,085.90
 Monsignor Matthew J. Scanlon310.00
 Monsignor Joseph M. Susi9,906.00
 Monsignor Steve J. Testa10,755.00
 Monsignor Henry A. Thompson360.00
 Monsignor John M. Timmermans9,820.00
 Monsignor Martin J. Tyrrell4,250.00
 Monsignor Henry Van der Putten1,291.89
 Monsignor John C. Vandegaer1,350.00
 Monsignor Nicholas F. Vandegaer1,350.00
 Monsignor John J. Wakeman100.00
 Monsignor Julius G. Walle2,170.00
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 Father William G. Allison160.00
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 Father Lawrence Bonin70.00
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 Father Wilbur G. Cloutier3,690.50
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 Father Anthony N. Cumella1,750.00
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 Father Leonard Curtis, OP1,050.00
 Father Ferreolus D'Cruz875.00
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 Father Edward Deasy625.00
 Father Blake Deshautelle275.00

Seminary Burses

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 Father Govie J. Moraus, Jr.200.00
 Father Christudas Nayak250.00
 Father Peter T. Norek1,150.00
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 Father Thomas O'Connors10.00
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 Father Charles Ray550.00
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 Germaine Armand550.00
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 Congregation of the sisters of Divine Providence100.00
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 In Honor of Providence Central High School Class of 19591,450.00
 Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches100.00
 Our Lady of Prompt Succor Parish, Alexandria3,260.00
 St. Edward the Confessor Parish, Tallulah100.00
 St. Mary's Assumption Parish, Cottonport700.00
 General Fund2,000.00

Total709,657.17



RITE OF CANDIDACY FOR HOLY ORDERS. On Thursday, Jan. 5, the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders was celebrated with Matthew Bonner, one of the seminarians of the Diocese of Alexandria. Thank you to our concelebrants, Fr. Dale Meade, Pastor of Matthew’s home parish (Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pineville), and Fr. Luke LaFleur, Vocations Director, our servers and Matthew’s fellow seminarians, Donnie Kuzma and Gabe Dowden, our deacons (not pictured), Deacons Jason Lavergne and Richard Mitchell, and to the people of the diocese for your support and encouragement for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and the consecrated life.

Seminarian Burses

December 2022 Donations

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Mr. and Mrs. Silton Innerarity | \$25.00 |
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| Knights of Columbus Council #9217 | \$25.00 |
| Father Adrian Molenschot Burse | |
| Mr. and Mrs. Keith Chapman | \$50.00 |
| Father Paul LaPalme Burse | |
| Mr. and Mrs. Marion French | \$100.00 |
| Father Gus Voltz Burse | |
| Mrs. Barbara Rigby | \$100.00 |
| Leo P. Dobard Burse | |
| Mrs. Bernadette Mansour | \$200.00 |
| Anthony and Mary Glorioso Burse | |
| Mr. and Mrs. Timothy J. Hart | \$250.00 |
| Father Anthony N. Cumella Burse | |
| Mr. and Mrs. Timothy J. Hart | \$250.00 |
| Father Peter T. Norek Burse | |
| Diocese of Alexandria | \$250.00 |
| Mark Vilar Burse | |
| Deacon and Mrs. L. G. Deloach | \$500.00 |
| Father Dwight de Jesus Burse | |
| Deacon and Mrs. L. G. Deloach | \$500.00 |
| Father Rickey Gremillion Burse | |
| Mr. and Mrs. Timothy J. Hart | \$2,000.00 |
| Father Daniel Hart Burse | |
| Total | \$2,175.00 |

Thinking about becoming a deacon?

Now is the time to contact diocese to learn more

Do you have a desire to serve the Church in a deeper way? Do you have the heart for serving others? If so, you may be interested in learning more about becoming a Permanent Deacon for the Diocese of Alexandria.

Deacon Richard Mitchell, director for the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, is now taking contact information and fielding questions from men who may be interested in discerning this ministry to begin formation late August, 2023.

If interested, contact Deacon Mitchell at (318) 445-6424, ext. 206 or email: dcnrmitchell@diocesealex.org.

The qualifications for the permanent diaconate include: must be at least 35 years old at the time of ordination, must have wife’s consent (if married) and can be married, but can’t marry or re-marry after ordination.

The four dimensions of formation -- Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral -- are learned throughout the five-year formation process that consists of Aspirancy, Candidacy, and Post-Ordination.

In the Aspirancy and Candidacy stages, the men and their wives are required to attend classes. One weekend a month, an instructor from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans comes to Alexandria to teach the aspirants philosophy and the theory of ministry. A psychological exam will also be done at this time.

The next four years include the formal study of theology for the Candidates. Church history, the Sacraments, Preaching, Moral Theology, and Scripture are some of the courses the men and their wives will study in classes held from September to July.

After the Candidate passes the theology curriculum and the psychological exam, the Bishop makes a final determination of his readiness for ordination.

Just as priests and bishops are ordained, a deacon is the third order in the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

After ordination, the deacon becomes incardinated into the Diocese of Alexandria. The Bishop assigns the deacon to a parish or charitable ministry.

seminary burses

A Seminary Burse is an invested sum of money, the interest of which is used in perpetuity to help fund the education of men to the priesthood. A Seminary Burse may be names of anyone - bishop, priests, religious, or lay person - chosen by the original donor, and may be added to and allowed to grow. A burse is completed when it reaches \$15,000.00 but another burse of the same name can be started. Contributions to any of the burses or to establish a

new burse should be sent to the Chancery Office,
Post Office Box 7417, Alexandria, LA 71306-0417.

--- Very Reverend M. Craig Scott

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

11 prayer for priests

2023 “Season of Service” (S.O.S.) Lenten program set for February 22-April 6



SEASON OF SERVICE. St. Richards Prayer Warriors got together each Friday during lent to pray the rosary for the sick and shut-in and for the people of Ukraine. The team plan to continue to render their service to the community once a month. Team members: Angie Champ, Mary L. Ford, Deacon Ted Moulard, Baby Penny, Betty & John Augustine, Jayce Augustine, Stella Bonton, Mariah Simon, Rose Noel, Veronica & Harold Barton and Fr. Abraham Varghese, pastor.

The Season of Service (S.O.S.) program is a coordinated effort to promote service and build community throughout the Diocese of Alexandria during the Lenten Season. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, sacrifice, and almsgiving. In 1 Peter 4:10, we read “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

Last year, over 70 teams with over 700 volunteers participated. Projects completed included window washing, parking lot striping, church maintenance, roof repairing, painting and rosaries for vocations were prayed.

Deacon Richard Mitchell says, “the S.O.S. gives us an opportunity to use our gifts to help our Church and those in need in our Community.”



The program is designed to recruit S.O.S. Team Captains who in turn recruit members to be on their team. The group will name their team and then discern and decide on a project to complete during the Lenten Season (February 22-April 6). Projects can be something as simple as coming together to pray a rosary for a specific intention, weeding the flowerbed at the Church Parish, or tackle a small repair project at a homebound

parishioner’s residence.

Team leaders determine their projects and set dates for them to take place. Team leaders are expected to follow through with their organizing, performing and completing their projects.

To register your team, please visit the Diocese of Alexandria’s website at diocesealex.org, click on the S.O.S. tab, and click on Registration. You will need the following information: a team name; Team Captain’s name and contact information; description of your project; team members’ names, email addresses (if applicable) and t-shirt sizes.*

Examples of projects could include but are not limited to:

- cut grass or regular yard maintenance at the church or for parishioners who are not able
- painting
- parking lot maintenance
- preparing or purchasing food to distribute to the needy in the parish
- simply praying for those in need
- other community service

Any photos taken of teams performing their projects will be published in the Church Today and on the diocesan website and social media. *T-shirt orders are not required to participate but if requested, they take 3 weeks to produce and deliver (t-shirts are free). A portion of the funding for this project will be provided by Catholic Extension.

For additional information please contact Deacon Richard Mitchell via email at dcnrmitchell@diocesealex.org or Deacon Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org.

Parish Spotlight: Sts. Francis and Anne, Kolin established 2008

Between 1900 and 1912, one hundred and ninety-six families immigrated from Czechoslovakia and acquired 10,000 acres of land east of Pineville at \$12 an acre. On this tract, they established two communities – Libuse and Kolin. Their spiritual needs were met by visiting priests from Alexandria and Deville, LA.

In 1948, Bishop Charles P. Greco secured a donation of two acres of land located at the corner of Miller and Denny Roads in the small Czech community of Kolin. The original building was a remodeled army barrack from Cape Claiborne. The moving

gift to the church, was installed in a special place of reverence and was dedicated on May 16, 1953. Msgr. Aloysius O. Olinger and Msgr. Gerard J. Ducote assisted in the special service.

The next few years saw several changes and additions. A bell steeple was built with a bell installed. Wrought iron altar rails were donated and installed. A two-room apartment was added behind the sacristy for the priest to have a place to stay overnight when ministering to the people of the mission parish.

Under the leadership of Fr. Alfred Chlebowczyk, an



STs. FRANCIS AND ANNE CHURCH, KOLIN.

and remodeling of the structure was made possible by financial aid from the Catholic Extension Society.

The original name of the church was St. Francis of Assisi, but was later changed to include St. Anne, with special permission from Bishop Greco.

The first Mass was celebrated on Palm Sunday, 1949 by Rev. Placid Sasek, O.S.B., the pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Deville. There were approximately 13 families who attended the church the first year.

In the fall of 1949, Fr. Sasek retired and was replaced by Fr. Mark Horacek, O.S.B. During the next year, the little church began to grow with the formation of the first Ladies Altar Society, choir, and CCD classes. The Church was dedicated on July 29, 1950.

Since Kolin was a Czech community, with many of its members of Czech heritage, the congregation had a close devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague. The statue of the Infant, a

activity building (named Alfred Hall) and a mausoleum were built. The building committee began exploring the idea of building a larger church. After many fundraisers, Bishop John Favalora gave permission to build a larger church. Under the leadership of Fr. James Foster, a groundbreaking ceremony was held on August 28, 1988. The new church building was dedicated on May 1, 1989.

Sts. Francis and Anne continued to grow as an active faith community. The Knights of Columbus Council #13296, the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court Sts. Francis and Anne #2613, and a Columbian Squires Cirled were organized offering the congregation opportunities for putting faith into action.

On June 30, 2010, Bishop Ronald P. Herzog designated Sts. Francis and Anne mission as an independent parish and assigned Rev. Joy Antony Retnazihomoni as the first resident pastor.

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ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, LEESVILLE. The Leesville Ladies Circle gathered for Christmas this past December. Pictured left to right, first row: Mary Harding, Pat Triplett, Linda Stegman, Paige Fontenot, Olivia McKee, Frances Moss. Second row sitting: Dora Navarro, Beryl Ford, Anna Sonnier and third row standing are Tammy Anderson, Linda Clever, JoAnn Willis, Liz Descant, Florence Endris, Susan Pilley, Maxine Hopewell, and Linda Spoor.



NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY CHURCH, CAMPTI. The NBVM CCD Youth Christmas Program was held on Dec. 14, 2022.




OLL FIFTH WARD, CHRISTMAS PROGRAM. Our Lady of Lourdes in Fifth Ward presented a Living Nativity play for Christmas Mass.



SACRED HEART CHURCH (MOREAUVILLE) CHRISTMAS EVE NATIVITY PLAY. The children depicted Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus, shepherd, farm animals, wise men and angels during the Sacred Heart Christmas Eve play. Pictured with the children is Fr. Brian Seiler, pastor.

Off Campus Mass Schedule
Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Pineville would like to share their off campus Mass schedule for the following locations:

- Tuesday of the 1st full week of the month:** Hilltop Nursing Home at 10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday of the 2nd full week of the month:** The Oaks Care Center at 9:00 a.m.
- Tuesday of the 3rd full week of the month:** St. Christina Nursing and Rehabilitation Center at 9:30 a.m.
- Tuesday of the 4th full week of the month:** Pine Grove Apartments at 9:00 a.m.



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Spiritual Warfare

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SPANISH MASS AT ST. RITA CHURCH, ALEXANDRIA. Bishop Robert Marshall joined the Spanish speaking community at St. Rita Church for Mass on Sunday, Dec. 18. He welcomed two religious sisters from the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus (the Teresians) who were visiting our diocese through the efforts of Catholic Extension Society. Thank you to Father Peter Faulk, Deacon Alex Mangini, Deacon Richard Mitchell, the servers, and the communities in Alexandria and Forest Hill for helping to welcome our guests.

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA, BUNKIE. Saturday, Dec. 10, the St. Anthony of Padua, Bunkie, Children of Mary group went to Bailey Place Assisted Living Facility and Bayou Vista nursing home to sing Christmas carols and hand out Christmas cards to the residents.



MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS, WOODWORTH. For Christmas 2022, Mary, Mother of Jesus Church collected items to donate to the Cenla Pregnancy Center and gift cards for our seminarians.



BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS DINNER FOR SEMINARIANS. Bishop Robert Marshall hosted a festive Christmas dinner for the seminarians of the diocese.

Catholics who loved Benedict share how he has shaped their lives

By Maria Wiering
Our Sunday Visitor News

(OSV News) — “Jesus, ich liebe dich,” “Jesus, ich liebe dich,” “Jesus, ich liebe dich.”

Pope Benedict XVI’s reported last words comprise the refrain of a simple hymn composed the night of his death. “Lord, I love you,” were spoken in Italian, according to Vatican News, but Minnesota composer Jacob Flaherty used Pope Benedict’s native German in a choral piece he composed late in the night Dec. 31.

The hymn began to take shape as a few piano riffs in the key of F-sharp major, and, after an 11 p.m. Mass at Holy Family in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, where Flaherty is the sacred music director, he united it to the words of a pope he’s long admired. Arranged in four parts, the piece echoes both Taizé chant and “traditional reverence,” he said.

“Here’s this 20th-century lion of theology, and it all comes to a culmination with the most childlike simplicity: ‘Jesus, I love you.’ It’s so inspiring to hear that,” said Flaherty, 40, of Pope Benedict.

He worked on the piece until 2:30 a.m., then brought copies of his handwritten composition to two choirs the following day at Jan. 1 Masses for the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. It was expected to be sung again at a memorial Mass for Pope Benedict at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul. The verses, which speak about love, are in Latin and English, and drawn from 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4.

With his final words, Pope Benedict “just summarized that the whole work of theology is a relationship of love with its author, Jesus Christ, and to go into death and likely eternal life with that sentiment on your lips was so inspiring to me,” Flaherty said. “It made me think of his encyclical on hope. ... There was nothing theoretical about it. It was a lived-out and firmly believed-in reality.”

Through his prolific writing, public addresses and humble demeanor, Pope Benedict made a lasting impression on many Catholics both before, during and after his papacy. In the days following Pope Benedict’s death, Catholic admirers posted public tributes on social media, shared photos with him from public



MEMORIAL MASS FOR POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI. A Memorial Mass was celebrated by Bishop Robert Marshall for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on Friday, Jan. 6. Pope Benedict passed away on December 31, 2022.

and private papal audiences, and retweeted favorite quotes.

Others reflected more quietly on what his life and work meant to them. When Ryan Ayala, 33, heard Pope Benedict had died, it was 4 a.m. at his home in Arizona, but he felt compelled to wake up to journal his impressions of a man who he said was able to “maintain a balance” in the seeming tensions between “the timeless traditions of the church and an evolving world.”

As a senior at Holy Cross College in Notre Dame, Indiana, in 2011, Ayala was inspired to “muscle his way through” Pope Benedict’s “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” written in 2000, prior to his papacy. It gave him confidence to read more theology, including more of Pope Benedict’s writings, which he said have profoundly shaped his life.

“It all comes down to the faith is an encounter with the living God,” said Ayala, director of marriage and family for a Scottsdale parish. “It’s not just an assent to some sort of philosophical truths or even theological truths, but it’s an encounter with the living God who is Jesus Christ. That being central to his theology has really meant everything. It’s given me life, it’s given me happiness, and it’s really allowed me to understand that this person, this God, is not an abstract principle, but he’s a father who’s mercifully, lovingly invested in my life and my well-being.”

As a student studying in Rome from 1999 into the Great Jubilee year in 2000, Jenny Kraska

attended a weekly Mass at the German College in the Vatican. It was always a small Mass, no more than 25 attendees, she said. Then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was the usual presider, and he often visited afterward with attendees in the courtyard. He remembered the students’ names and would ask about their studies and what they were reading, she said.

“I was struck by how soft-spoken he was,” said Kraska, 43, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference. “He also had this wonderful sense of humor.”

Kraska said after encountering him personally, she saw him again years later in a professional capacity. In 2008, she was among Catholic conference directors invited to hear Pope Benedict speak on the White House Lawn in Washington during his U.S. papal visit. She said she often quotes from his writings on religious freedom and the importance of participating in public life.

Auxiliary Bishop Adam J. Parker of Baltimore happened to be in the room Feb. 11, 2013, when Pope Benedict announced to a small group of cardinals his plans to resign. At the time, then-Msgr. Parker was living in Rome as the priest secretary to Cardinal Edwin F. O’Brien, a former Baltimore archbishop who had been appointed Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Bishop Parker vividly recalls the surprise announcement, as well as the conclave and resignation day that followed. He said he spent time Dec. 31 scrolling through

his photos from those weeks, reflecting on his experience of the historic events.

“In the sense that Pope John Paul II taught us so much about suffering and doing so with dignity, Pope Benedict taught us a great lesson in humility and in the self-awareness that is required of leadership,” said Bishop Parker, 50.

Although Father Harrison Ayre never met Pope Benedict in person, the retired pope has been a constant companion in the priest’s academic work and priesthood. The priest of the Diocese of Victoria, British Columbia, and co-host of podcast “Clerically Speaking,” is a doctoral candidate at Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, United Kingdom, writing his dissertation on Pope Benedict’s theology. He’s read everything the pope had written that’s been translated into English, and now the priest is making his way through the pope’s untranslated German scholarship.

“There’s a ton to unpack, and every time it’s like an explosion in the brain of new material,” said Father Ayre, 39.

Pope Benedict has influenced his priesthood “in every way possible,” he said. “He’s really influenced me on the kind of Marian character of the church. ... He has this homily where he talks about Mary as the holy soil for the seed of the Word, but that seed needs time to take in the soil and to grow and to mature, and that’s what the church is meant to be. And so we need to actually almost slow down at times, become more contemplative, less activistic,

less worried about numbers or whatever, and let the Holy Spirit do his work.”

Antonina Zielinska Schlenker only saw Pope Benedict from afar at World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011, but she treasures the copy of the YOUCAT given to pilgrims from their Holy Father. Her copy of the youth-focused catechism is now shabby from heavy use, she said.

“When I read the beginning letter I just couldn’t stop crying, it was just so beautiful,” said Zielinska Schlenker, 34, who lives in Brooklyn, New York. “It was basically saying, ‘This is all the information, we can help you get it, but you have to think for yourself, you have to question and reason and grow. And feed yourself. You’re responsible for your own journey, basically.’”

She said her positive impression of Pope Benedict confirmed during World Youth Day led her to read more of his papal writings. While a scholar, he never “talks down to” his readers, she said.

Benedict’s election may have also inspired spikes in the name’s popularity, especially in 2005, the year he was elected, when “Benedict” jumped from the 5,005th most-used name in the United States in 2004 to No. 2,391, a popularity level not seen since 1968, according to Social Security Administration data compiled by The Bump, a baby-focused website.

Pope Benedict was not the “outgoing, sanguine leader” that Pope St. John Paul II was, said Kemnitz, 42, but he offered “a different type of leadership, which is also powerful,” making him worthy of emulation.

Pope Benedict has also long been an academic focus for Ramage, who teaches theology at Benedictine College. However, the pope’s death has brought him more joy than grief, he said.

“I’m happy for him. He’s lived to a ripe old age, and now he can arrive at that goal he’s been desiring for so long: to meet the Lord,” he said. “It’s been cause for thankfulness that he’s reached the end of his life and is with the Lord and can intercede for us now.”

Maria Wiering is senior writer for OSV News.

Are you interested in some quiet reflective prayer time at Maryhill Retreat Center?

The Diocese of Alexandria, along with clergy, deacons, and spiritual directors are hosting a silent retreat during lent, on March 2 - 5, at Maryhill Retreat Center.

This retreat is for all men and women, age 18 or older, who are seeking quiet reflective prayer time. Your time at Maryhill will include daily Mass and adoration, daily time with a spiritual director and the sacrament of reconciliation will be offered.

What is a directed retreat?

Interior as well as exterior silence is the hallmark for a silent retreat. Guidance and direction are supported by your assigned spiritual director who will be available to meet with you daily and provide a personally designed retreat based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. All spiritual directors are trained and are certified. Prayer and reflection are encouraged to develop a meaningful, intimate relationship with God. During your stay, daily Mass and adoration will be available, with a closing Mass on Sunday afternoon. The retreat is open to all Christian faith denominations, men, and women.

The retreat differs from a "preached" retreat. Discussions with attendees are individualized and confidential. Reflection and solitude are supported to enhance prayer by decreasing the distractions of life. Meditation and contemplation are the hallmarks of prayer while participating in silent retreats. While God is ultimately the director, the assigned director will assist you in discerning the movement of God during your prayer and reflections.



What is spiritual direction?

Spiritual direction is the process of working with a guide to help you in your pursuit of holiness. Spiritual direction offers prayerful listening that invites the directee to create a space in their heart to hear God's voice.

The practice of spiritual direction involves three persons: the person seeking direction, the Spiritual Director, and God.

What is a Certified Spiritual Director?

A spiritual journey is the path one seeks to grow in holiness as they spiritually mature with the hope of salvation. A spiritual director, then, is one who has received education, training, and supervision from programs offered by Catholic institutions, who uses effective methods to best support others on the

spiritual journey.

The Diocese of Alexandria now has four practicing certified Spiritual Directors, ready to walk with those in our area seeking assistance in their spiritual journeys. These spiritual directors have completed the Internship in Spiritual Direction from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, under Archbishop Gregory Aymond and directed by Sister Dorothy Trosclair, O.P. The program includes completion of a theological/catechetical background, 2 years of spiritual direction from a certified spiritual director, completion of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: 30 day or 19th Annotation (9-month retreat), attendance of an 8-day Directed retreat, and more.

The application and internship itself are rigorous, meaning to provide our area

with spiritual directors who are empathetic, non-judgmental, objective, and able to recognize the core movements of God in people.

Who would benefit from Spiritual Direction?

Spiritual direction is not just for priests. The spiritual direction journey is for:

- Those who desire growth in their relationship with the Lord;
- Ministry leaders relying on God for guidance;
- Anyone discerning God's will;
- Recent retreatants desiring to embrace mature spirituality;
- Faithful experiencing dryness in prayer;
- And, others seeking to grow in their spiritual journey.

If you count yourself among the many in our area seeking spiritual growth, you

are encouraged to reach out to any of the newly Certified Spiritual Directors in our diocese. Together, you will decide on the time and place for your meetings (by appointment or virtually), and begin the journey to become more like Christ himself.

Additional retreat information:

All attendees and staff will be aware of the need for silence. We ask that you also be respectful by avoiding making noises and loud sounds. We invite you to bring a bible, drawing or coloring books, a notebook or journal, a rosary, and other prayer materials.

Please abstain from the use of a telephone, radio, or other electronic devices during your stay.

Alcohol is not permitted. Meals will be served at designated time, and snacks and coffee will be available in the kitchen area. Additionally, please bring your own personal hygiene products. You may bring extra towels and facecloths.

Diocese of Alexandria spiritual directors include: Maria Burke, Renee Aldridge, Tracy Simpson, and Ingrid Canella. Greg Laroux will serve as the Diocese of Shreveport spiritual director.

The retreat starts on Thursday night and ends Sunday at 3:00 p.m.

Retreat fees of \$275 include a private room on the north side of Maryhill campus, and meals. A deposit of \$75 and a registration form is needed to secure your spot.

Spots are limited. To register, contact Renee Aldridge at 318-542-1966 or renee.aldridge1@gmail.com or Ingrid Canella at icnewell@yahoo.com.



*Blessed are they who follow
the law of the Lord!*

Psalm 119: 1 | Responsorial Psalm for February 12
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.”

// pope benedict xvi

Adoration Chapel // Daily

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Pineville, Perpetual Adoration Chapel will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in the Community Center. You will need to call the office during office hours to obtain the code to the chapel: 318-445-2497.

Insights Prayer Group // every Tuesday

The Insights Prayer Group (formerly Tuesday Afternoon Prayer Group) has resumed its weekly meetings every Tuesday at 12:45 p.m. in the **Sacred Heart of Jesus Church Community Center, Pineville**. Anyone interested in gaining insight into the role of Sacred Scripture and power of prayer as tools to navigate Catholic life in the present is invited to attend. For more information, contact Melba LaCaze at 318-445-6851 or Rhonda England at 318-452-9739.

St. Nicholas Thrift Shop // Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

The Sacred Heart of Jesus Church St. Nicholas Thrift Shop is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. The Thrift Shop is located at 616 Lakeview Street, Pineville. For more information, call 318-442-2072.

Food Pantry Distribution, Pineville // every other Wednesday

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 600 Lakeview Street, Pineville. Distribution bags are for “cook” and “non cook,” bread, sandwiches, personal hygiene items (when in supply) will be available. Food distribution will be every other Wednesday, from 8:00 a.m. until noon, in front of the church office. Please call Linda Boniol for more information at 318-623-1492.

Book Study on Saints // every Wednesday

Every Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m., Father Taylor Reynolds will lead a book study on his recently published book titled, “*No Longer Strangers.*” Discussion will follow 5:00 p.m. Adoration and confession, and 6:00 p.m. Mass at **St. Joseph Church in St. Joseph, LA**. For more information or to acquire a book, contact Fr. Taylor at stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com or 318-766-3565.

Maryhill Real Presence Prayer Group // every Wednesday

The Real Presence Prayer Group will meet every Wednesday evening at **Maryhill Renewal Center in Pineville**. Rosary begins at 7:00 p.m. with Charismatic Praise and High Worship at 7:20 p.m. and Healing Prayer at 8:00 p.m. (Closing by 11:00 p.m.). Wheelchair accessible. Directed by Jim Gootee. For more information, call Joey LaFossee at 318-332-2234 or Bob Weeks at 318-442-1794.

Food Pantry // every 2nd and 4th Thursday

The St. Francis of Assisi Food Pantry is open every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. It is a walk-in style pantry, located on the backside of **St. Francis of Assisi Church in Waterproof, LA**. All are welcome to come and receive or to donate.

Divine Mercy Hour // every Friday

Sacred Heart Church of Moreauville has a weekly Divine Mercy Hour at 3:00 p.m. on Fridays. There will be adoration with benediction, recitation of the divine mercy chaplet, and confessions available. Everyone is invited.

Disalced Carmelites Meeting // every 2nd Saturday

The Order of the Disalced Carmelites holds its monthly meeting at 9:00 a.m. every second Saturday, at Maryhill Renewal Center. Anyone is invited to attend morning prayer followed by Mass and then the meeting. If you are interested in Carmelite spiritual studies, please contact Mary Jo McCoy at 318-346-6860 or 318-481-9638.

St. Timothy Food Pantry // last Saturday every month

Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Alexandria conducts its St. Timothy Food Pantry distributions on the last Saturday of every month from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at the St. Timothy Center, 409 21st Street. Anyone in need of food is welcome to come. For more information, contact Chris Bayonne at 318-955-1222.

Holy Hour with Benediction, Moreauville // every weekend

Sacred Heart Church in Moreauville has Holy Hour with Benediction every weekend before Mass. The times are: before Saturday Vigil Mass, starting at 3:00 p.m., and before Sunday evening Mass starting at 4:00 p.m.

National Eucharistic Revival - sign up for the newsletter!

The Diocese of Alexandria is participating in the National Eucharistic Revival. The mission of this three-year revival is “To renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.” Stay current with the National movement by registering to receive the weekly “Heart of the Revival Newsletter.” To do so, visit eucharisticrevival.org, and provide your name and email address.

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A message from the Diocese of Alexandria's Safe Environment Program

If you have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected and that the abuse is by a parent or caretaker, please call: Louisiana Child Abuse / Neglect Hotline at 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437).

If suspected abuse is related to a diocesan/church/school program, or if abuse occurred by anyone acting in Church services, a report also should be made to the diocesan victim assistance coordinator, Dr. Lee Kneipp at 318-542-9805.

For updated information, news articles, and documents regarding ongoing activity and planning for securing and maintaining a Safe Environment for all, visit www.diocesealex.org/our-faith/healing (visit www.diocesealex.org and look for "A Safe Environment For All" under the "Our Faith" tab). Here, you can find more information, as well as updates from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Also found on this page is the letter from Pope Francis to all Bishops in the United States regarding a meeting in February 2019 at the Vatican entitled "The Protection of Minors in the Church."



Upcoming Retreats

February 9 - 12
St. Alphonsus, Hessmer
Men's ACTS

March 16 - 19
St. Michael, Leesville
Men's ACTS

March 23 - 26
Sacred Heart, Pineville
Men's ACTS

A list of ACTS Retreat dates can be found at www.diocesealex.org/our-faith/acts/. All retreats are held at Maryhill Renewal Center.



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What is an ACTS Retreat?

An ACTS retreat is a three-day and three-night Catholic lay retreat presented by fellow parishioners.

The retreat begins on Thursday evening and ends the following Sunday at a Mass celebrated with the parish community.

Retreats for men, women, and teens are given separately. The focus of the retreat is Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service, from which the ACTS acronym is derived. Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are the guides for the retreats. Visit www.diocesealex.org/our-faith/acts/ for more information.

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The Lord is kind and merciful.

Psalm 103: 8 | Responsorial Psalm for February 19
 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

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 Social Security Disability Hearings," "An Unsolved Mess:
 Analyzing the Social Security Administration's Methodology
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*Be merciful, O Lord,
for we have sinned.*

Psalm 51: 3
Responsorial Psalm for February 26
First Sunday of Lent

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**Annual Golf Tournament
benefiting Manna House set for March 7-11**

The annual ATP Pro Golf Tour and the Hixson Ford ProAM Golf Tournament hosted at Links on the Bayou Golf Course in Alexandria La., will once again benefit Manna House. Professional golfers from all over the world will travel to Alexandria for the Coca-Cola Dr. Pepper Open March 8 – 11.

The Hixson Ford ProAM Tournament will be held on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at Links on the Bayou Golf Course. Each

ProAM team of three(3) will be paired with a professional golfer.

The entry fee of \$1,000 per team includes green fees, golf cart, hole sponsorship, food and drinks including the opportunity to play with a professional golfer. Entry forms are available on the Manna House website – givetomannhouse.com

"We are excited to be the beneficiary of this world-class golf tournament," said Jessica Viator, executive director of

Manna House. Viator said a number of sponsorship packages are available including Presenting Sponsors, Driving Range, Putting Green, Cart Sign, Hole Sponsors. Viator explained, it provides a great opportunity to promote your business as well as your personal commitment and support of the less fortunate in our community.

For more information contact Theresa Slater, tournament chairperson at (318)664-3603 or Jessica Viator at (318)445-9053.

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How can elderly help the young?

*By Sister Constance Veit, Isp
Little Sisters of the Poor*



I attended SEEK23, the annual conference of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), At the beginning of January.

Our Sisters have attended this event for many years and we have seen it evolve from a modest gathering of several hundred college students in a hotel to a huge, intergenerational event with 17,000 participants.

One of the first people I encountered was a young priest who had volunteered with our Sisters as a seminarian and who currently serves in a university parish in the Rocky Mountain region.

I asked him about his ministry, thinking that a university parish must be a perfect combination of generations and backgrounds. I was surprised by his reply!

He told me that it is actually quite challenging for him and his collaborators because various age groups have different needs and aspirations and they live more or less separate lives. Whenever the parish invests time or funds in one age cohort, he said, the others seem to resent it.

How sad! I am passionate about bringing young people and seniors together and assumed this type of parish would be the ideal place for intergenerational relationships.

The young priest told me that he has succeeded in bringing teens to visit seniors in a local assisted living facility but it is more difficult to interest active seniors – those still living on their own – to get more involved in the

parish where they could engage with families and young people.

We brainstormed about how he might motivate young people to perform acts of service for seniors living in the community – from shoveling snow and helping with home improvements, to helping seniors get up to speed with the internet and social media.

We also talked about how he might draw young and old together for social events in the parish as well as how the generations might join forces to serve the community.

Pro-life work, outreach to individuals dealing with poverty and groups living on the peripheries, ecological initiatives and fund-raising efforts to support refugees are just a few examples of charitable efforts that could be undertaken by intergenerational parish teams.

Finally, I shared my conviction that older people have a special calling – an authentic mission – to mentor the young and inspire hope in them by sharing their own life experiences, dreams and wisdom.

Even when they seem accomplished and self-sufficient, young people need guidance and affirmation. They want role models and wisdom figures who look on them with fresh eyes, discern their potential and accompany them on their journey.

In *Christus Vivit* Pope Francis wrote, “The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young

people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them. All should regard young people with understanding, appreciation and affection, and avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years.”

Pope Francis’ words to older people shows his concern for them, but also shows his conviction that they have a serious responsibility to younger generations. As I feel myself aging, I sense this responsibility very personally.

In the book *Sharing the Wisdom of Age* he wrote, “What

do I ask of the elders among whom I count myself? I call us to be memory keepers ... where prayers of supplication and songs of praise support the larger community that works and struggles in the field of life.”

He continued, “I also urge that we take action! ... As elders, we can thank the Lord for the many benefits we have received. ... We can remind today’s young people, who have their own blend of heroic ambitions and insecurities, that a life without love is an arid life. We can tell fearful young people that anxiety about the future can be overcome.”

Clearly, the church as a whole, and each local faith community, needs seniors who take their unique mission seriously.

If you have witnessed initiatives fostering the role of seniors as mentors or the effective partnering of young people and elders in your parish, I would love to hear from you! Please email me at serenity@LittleSistersofthePoor.org.

Sister Constance Veit is the communications director for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.

Our Catholic Schools staff attend retreat partly facilitated by high school seniors

A spiritual retreat for all Diocese of Alexandria Catholic School employees was held Jan. 3, 2023 at St. Augustine Catholic Church on Cane River.

The day was filled with dynamic talks and inspirational music by Fr. Tony Ricard of New Orleans, a priest for the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the pastor of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish. He is also an instructor of church doctrine/youth ministry for the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University and serves as the Catholic Chaplain of the New Orleans Saints football team.

Fr. Tony is also the Campus Minister at St. Augustine High School, New Orleans. St. Augustine is a college preparatory school for young men in grades 8-12 founded in 1951 by the Josephite priests and brothers. In his role as Campus Minister, he has the privilege of sponsoring the music ministry there.

A few of these young men accompanied Fr. Tony to the retreat. Some of the students spoke from their hearts about how Catholic Education has impacted them and their songs were soul stirring. Fr. Tony used humor, Bible stories, personal stories, and thought provoking anecdotes to convey his message. It was an amazing way to begin the New Year.

School staff, teachers and administration officials and support employees attended the day-long retreat. Every school was represented with some schools sending upwards of 20 people.



FR. TONY AND HIS STUDENTS FROM ST. AUGUSTINE HIGH SCHOOL, NEW ORLEANS. Fr. Tony Ricard and seniors from St. Augustine High School in New Orleans facilitated a spiritual retreat for the Diocese of Alexandria Catholic Schools Office. For some of them, this was their first experience in public speaking for a large group of people.



ATTENDEES FROM SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE. Sr. Sandra Norsworthy, principal of SHS, brought staff and teachers with her to attend the retreat. Attendees from all 8 schools of the diocese were represented at the retreat.

Catholic Schools Week: Jan. 29 - Feb. 5

Our Catholic Schools will be hosting activities including fairs, breakfasts, faculty fun days, Spelling Bees and Open Houses during Catholic Schools week.

If you are considering Catholic education for your child, this is a great time to learn more about what each school has to offer:

Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, Alexandria

Pre-K through 6th Grade
Open House will be held Tuesday, Jan. 31 from 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

St. Frances Cabrini School, Alexandria

Pre-K through 8th Grade
Open House, Sunday, Jan. 29 begins at 1:00 p.m. in the church hall.

St. Mary's School, Natchitoches

Pre-K through 12th Grade
2nd Annual March for Life begins at 10:00 a.m. on the Natchitoches riverbank on Saturday, Jan. 28 the day before CSW begins.

St. Joseph School, Plaquemine

Pre-K through 12th Grade
Will attend Cenla March for Life in Pineville on Saturday, Feb. 4 as part of CSW activities.

St. Mary's Assumption School, Cottonport

Pre-K through 8th Grade
Book Fair and other activities.

Holy Savior Menard Central High School, Alexandria

7th Grade through 12th Grade
Preview Day, Thursday, Feb. 2 begins at 9:30 a.m. Parents and prospective students will have the opportunity to see campus in action and meet HSM students and faculty.

Sacred Heart School, Moreauville

Pre-K through 8th Grade
Open House, Thursday, Feb. 2 from 12 noon until 2:30 p.m.

St. Anthony School, Bunkie

Pre-K through 8th Grade
Thursday, Feb. 2, 1st-8th graders will be participating in our first ever Religion Fair.

Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service.

Catholic Campus Ministry at our local universities:

LSU of Alexandria:
Catholic Student Organization,
318-447-2956

Northwestern State University
Catholic Student Organization
FOCUS Ministries:
<https://nscatholic.org/focus>

Louisiana College:
Catholic Student Organization,
318-447-2956

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Dinner:
Mon.-Thurs. 4 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Fri.-Sat. 4 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Sunday:
11 a.m. - 9 p.m.





SHS ESSAY WINNER. Congratulations to John [redacted], son of Kieth and Laura [redacted] of Cottonport, who won The Knights of Columbus Council #2142 Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest. The topic was: "Young Catholics Can Evangelize Our Faith to Family & Friends & Encourage Them to Return to Church & Embrace the Sacraments." He was awarded a cash prize. Pictured left to right: Jeremy Lemoine, EJ Cox, John [redacted], Sr. Sandra Norsworthy, Stephen Couvillion.



ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA SCHOOL, BUNKIE. 5th grade student of the year is Katie Rose Middlebrooks and 8th grade student of the year is Parker Pilgreen.

GO! Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference



GULF COAST FAITH FORMATION CONFERENCE, KENNER. Deacon Jason Lavergne, Director of Religious Education and Faith Formation for the diocese, assists Archbishop Aymond during the opening Mass for the GO! Conference held Jan. 14-15 in Kenner.

The 2023 GO! Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference drew approximately 750 parish catechists, religion teachers, clergy and religious from Louisiana and Mississippi Friday and Saturday, January 14 - 15, at the Pontchartrain Center in Kenner.

Becky Eldrdge, founder of Ignatian Ministries, was the keynote speaker, explaining how being a Catholic evangelist involves a three-part action plan: to "see" Christ (see the world as it is without sticking your head in the sand); to "listen" to Christ (hearing his message to go forth to tell others); and then to "act" with Christ (avoiding the temptation to be a lone ranger).

Participants also heard from New Orleans Archbishop Gregory Aymond and from Baton Rouge Bishop Michael Duca, who gave the homily at the opening Mass after the Gospel reading was proclaimed, telling the story of Jesus healing the blind man at the pool of Siloam.

"We are the ones who now see with new eyes," Bishop Duca said. "We are the ones who are called to speak the truth and dispel the darkness of falsehood, of sin, of evil in the world. We should embrace that with a great joy - not with an anger, not with

a need to convince because of argument - but with the Gospel that fills us with great joy because we were blind and now see."

GO! The Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference offers those involved in catechesis and evangelization in the Catholic Church an opportunity to enhance their ministries and to deepen their commitment to Jesus Christ through:

- Personal and professional development sessions with leaders in evangelization and catechetical ministry;
- Liturgical celebrations and a variety of prayer experiences;
- Formal and informal networking opportunities;
- Thought-provoking and inspirational presentations.

The conference is hosted and sponsored by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in collaboration with dioceses in Region V of the Official Catholic Directory, which includes Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Laity, clergy, and religious from the Gulf Coast and throughout the United States attend this conference each year. In its 41st year, the conference continues its heritage inspired by its previous namesake, Father Johannes Hofinger, S.J., a world-renowned missionary, evangelist, teacher, and catechetical leader.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED:

If you have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected, and that the abuse is by a parent or caretaker, please first call the Louisiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437) and/or your local law enforcement agency. If suspected abuse is related to a diocesan/church/school program, or if abuse occurred by anyone acting in Church services, a report should then also be made to the diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, Dr. Lee Kneipp, Clinical Psychologist at 318-542-9805.

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Life March Cenla - February 4

Join us for the Louisiana Life March Cenla in 2023 as we march in celebration for the reversal of Roe v. Wade but also in unity that every unborn child, even those given terminal diagnosis, deserves a birthday. The event will begin at 10:00 a.m. at Louisiana Christian University and march to the Pineville Riverfront under the big American flag for a program with music, prayer, and speakers. Arrive at LCU's front lawn before 10:00 a.m.!

Taste of Mardi Gras - February 5

The Sacred Heart of Jesus Church Youth Group in Pineville will have a fundraiser Sunday, Feb. 5, in the Activities Building from 9:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. All food will be "Louisiana Cuisine" and available for take-out, \$10 per person, pay at the door. Thank you for supporting and participating with our fantastic youth.

Winter Fest at St. Joseph Church, Colfax - February 5

Gumbo AND Bingo, Sunday, Feb. 5 at 11:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Television Raffle, Silent Auction, Cake Sale and Auction. Great Gumbo and Fun Bingo! Join us at 801 Third St. Colfax, LA.

St. Frances Cabrini School Anniversary Gala - February 9

Join us at Lagniappe Theater Event Center, 7521 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria, for dinner, dancing entertainment and auction. Begins at 6:00 p.m. Cost is \$75 per person. Call (318) 448-3333. All proceeds will benefit St. Frances Cabrini School.

Discalced Carmelite Meeting - February 11

The Order of the Discalced Carmelites holds its monthly meeting at 9:00 a.m. every second Saturday, at Maryhill Renewal Center. Anyone is invited to attend morning prayer followed by Mass and then the meeting. If you are interested in Carmelite spiritual studies, please contact Mary Jo McCoy at 318-346-6860 or 318-481-9638.

Mardi Gras Celebrity Clergy Dinner at Tunk's Cypress Inn - February 20

Join us on Monday, Feb. 20 at 6:00 p.m. at Tunk's on beautiful Kincaid Lake. The evening will include dinner of steak, shrimp, pasta, asparagus, side salad and cheesecake, all served to you by the clergy and deacons of

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

the Diocese of Alexandria. There will also be music and a silent auction. \$50.00 per ticket. All proceeds will benefit Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana. To purchase tickets or sponsor a table, call Heidi at 445-2401 ext. 510 or email: hwampler@ccenla.org or visit www.ccenla.org

Season of Service set for Lenten season - begins February 21

The Season of Service (S.O.S.) program is a coordinated effort to promote service and build community throughout the Diocese of Alexandria during the Lenten season. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, sacrifice, and almsgiving. Deacon Richard Mitchell says "the S.O.S. gives us an opportunity to use our gifts to help our Church and those in need in our community." Last year, over 70 teams with over 700 volunteers participated. Projects completed included window washing, parking lot striping, church maintenance, roof repairing, painting and rosaries for vocations were prayed. For additional information, please contact Deacon Richard Mitchell via email at dcnrmitchell@diocesealex.org or Deacon Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org.

Engaged Couples Retreat - February 24 - 26

At Maryhill Renewal Center in Pineville. ECHO is a life-changing retreat! Hosted by Dumb Ox Ministries, this weekend gives engaged couples the chance to grow deeper in relationship with God and each other in an environment of true freedom and secure love. Inspired by St. John Paul II's life and teachings, couples prepare meaningfully to enter into the sacrament of marriage in the context of authentic community with other couples and mentors. From dynamic talks and life-giving discussions to daily access to the Sacraments and quality time with your fiance, ECHO offers the perfect way to prepare for a lifetime of love together. Toss in art, music, silent prayer,

and so much more - this is a weekend like no other! Cost is \$425 per couple. To register, visit www.echoretreats.com.

Marriage Prep (Pre-Cana) - February 25

Pre-Cana for engaged couples will be held Saturday Feb. 25, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at St. Frances Cabrini Church. Please contact the church office at 318-445-4588 for more information or to register. Cost is \$50 per couple.

Rite of Election - February 26

Upcoming Rite of Election is February 26, 2023 at 2:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral.

Silent Directed Retreat - March 2-5

The Diocese of Alexandria, along with clergy, deacons and spiritual directors are hosting a silent retreat during lent, on March 2-5 at Maryhill. This retreat is to all men and women 18 or older, who are seeking quiet reflective prayer time. Your time at Maryhill will include daily Mass and adoration, daily time with a spiritual director and the sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered. The Retreat starts on Thursday night and ends Sunday at 3pm. Retreat fees of \$275 include a private room on the north side of Maryhill and meals. A deposit of \$75 and a registration form is needed to secure your spot. Limited availability. To register contact Renée Aldridge 318-542-1966 at renee.aldrige1@gmail.com or Ingrid Canella at icnewell@yahoo.com.

Marriage Help - March 10-12

Retrouvaille (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. For confidential information about, or to register for the program beginning with a weekend on March 10 - 12, call Randall and Robin at 225-271-4092, or visit the website at www.helpourmarriage.org. Retrouvaille is a three-phase program for marriages that helps couples face their marriage challenges in a productive and healthy way. It begins with a weekend retreat, followed by post weekend follow-up sessions, and ongoing monthly marriage support.

Quiz Bowl - March 18

The Diocesan Quiz Bowl competition for Jr. High students will be held at St. Frances Cabrini School on Saturday, March 18 beginning at 9:00 a.m. For information and study guides contact Emily Ann at 318-448-3333.

**Church Today
News Deadlines**

February 20
Deadline for news:
Thursday, February 9

March 27
Deadline for news:
Thursday, March 16



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February 2023

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| 30 | 31 | FEBRUARY 1 | OPEN HOUSE 2 9:30 a.m. Holy Savior Menard, Alexandria 12:00-2:30 p.m. Sacred Heart School, Moreauville | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | Life March Cenla 10:00 a.m. Louisiana Christian University | Taste of Mardi Gras 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville Winter Fest 11:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. St. Joseph Church, Colfax |
| CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK | | | | | | |
| PRAY FOR FR. J. WILTSE | PRAY FOR FR. J. XAVIER | PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL | PRAY FOR DCN. M. YOUNG | FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. K. ZACHARIAH | FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA | PRAY FOR DCN. W. ALDRIDGE |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| | | | Anniversary Gala benefiting Cabrini School 6:00 p.m. Lagniappe Theater Event Center, Alexandria | | Discalced Carmelite meeting 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center | |
| ST. ALPHONSUS MEN'S ACTS Retreat -- MARYHILL | | | | | | |
| PRAY FOR DCN. F. ANDRADE | PRAY FOR FR. J. ANTONY | PRAY FOR DCN. E.J. BARRE | PRAY FOR FR. S. BRANDOW | PRAY FOR FR. D. BRAQUET | PRAY FOR FR. J. BROCATO | PRAY FOR FR. S. CHEMINO |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| | | | VIRTUS Training 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria | | | |
| FULLNESS OF TRUTH CONFERENCE | | | | | | |
| PRAY FOR DCN. R. CHRISTOPHER | VALENTINE'S DAY PRAY FOR FR. D. CORKERY | PRAY FOR FR. J. CUNNINGHAM | PRAY FOR FR. W. DECOSTE | PRAY FR. D. DEJESUS | PRAY FOR DCN. LG DELOACH | PRAY FOR FR. B. DESHAUTELLE |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| Mardi Gras Celebrity Clergy Dinner at Tunks 6:00 p.m. Tunks Cypress Inn | | | Show Your Heart 9:00 a.m. St. Joseph Catholic Ctr. | | Pre-Cana Day 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Cabrini Church | First Sunday of Lent Rite of Election 2:30 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria |
| ENGAGED COUPLES RETREAT -- MARYHILL | | | | | | |
| 40 HOURS DEVOTION -- AVOYELLES | | | | | | |
| PRESIDENT'S DAY PRAY FOR FR. J. DESIMONE | MARDI GRAS PRAY FOR FR. A. DHARMARAJ | ASH WEDNESDAY PRAY FOR DCN. D. DUBROC | PRAY FOR FR. D. DUCOTE | PRAY FOR DCN. R. DUCOTE | PRAY FOR DCN. B. ENDRIS | PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK |
| 27 | 28 | MARCH 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | | Second Sunday of Lent |
| SILENT DIRECTED RETREAT -- MARYHILL RENEWAL CENTER | | | | | | |
| PRAY FOR DCN. L. FELDKAMP | PRAY FOR FR. J. FERGUSON | PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL | PRAY FOR FR. B. GEARHEARD | FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR DCN. L. GLANKLER | FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. J. GOOTEE | PRAY FOR DCN. S. GRAMIGNA |

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