

CHURCH TODAY

Volume LVI, No. 8

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Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

August 25, 2025

Back-to-School

On Monday, Aug. 4, Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated Back-to-School Mass at St. Rita Church's Holy Family Center with faculty, staff and administration of our Catholic schools across the Diocese.



INSIDE

Pilgrimage of grace

Fr. Thomas Kennedy reflects on his recent pilgrimage across England, from celebrating Mass at Canterbury Cathedral to praying at the tombs of beloved saints. His journey of prayer, memory, and renewal offers inspiration for our own faith. Read the full story on page 8.

35 Years of hope

Manna House marks 35 years of feeding the hungry with its "35 for 35 Challenge," inviting the community to give or raise \$35 to continue its mission of compassion and care. Learn how you can join the effort on page 13.

Empowered for mission

Over 60 youth ministers, catechists, and parish leaders gathered for Empower, a diocesan event designed to equip and inspire those guiding the next generation of disciples. The day blended prayer, formation, and practical tools. Read the full story on page 17.

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PRE-CANA MARRIAGE PREP WORKSHOP. Fourteen couples attended the Aug. 2 Pre-Cana Marriage Prep Workshop held at the St. Joseph Catholic Center in Alexandria. The next workshop is scheduled for October 11. Couples planning to marry should register to attend as advised by their pastors. The day-long workshop will include presentations on various topics that are vital to a couple's lifelong marriage. Cost is \$60 per couple and includes morning refreshments and lunch. For more information, contact Deacon Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org or 318-445-6424, ext. 207. To sign up, please visit www.diocesealex.org/pre-cana-marriage-prep-workshop

CHURCH TODAY



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On 100 days of Leo

By OSV Editorial Board
Our Sunday Visitor

(OSV News) — During the homily at his inauguration Mass, Pope Leo XIV said: “I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God’s love, for he wants us all to be united in one family. Love and unity: these are the two dimensions of the mission entrusted to Peter by Jesus.”

A unifying leader

It was a moving beginning, which outlined Leo’s desire for a papacy that would be able to heal wounds of division and lead a united church forward on the path of love. It is a lofty goal, and yet it is the only one worth having. The 12-year pontificate of Pope Francis, while powerful in its advocacy of peace, the poor, the marginalized, the immigrant and the environment, in many ways deepened the already growing fissures of division among the world’s 1.4 billion Catholics. Now, the church needs a unifying leader, and Pope Leo knows it.

While a full picture of Pope Leo XIV is still emerging, it confidently can be said that the Chicago-born pontiff is not a carbon copy of his predecessors. While he has referred frequently to Pope Francis, and has liberally quoted Popes St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI and St. Paul VI, Pope Leo has shown himself to be his own man. He has signaled a shift from his immediate predecessor by returning to traditional papal dress and once again vacationing at Castel Gandolfo during the summer. He is almost certainly to live at the apostolic palace, which is currently undergoing renovations. At the same time, Pope Leo has also indicated his embrace of a synodal church, as well as one that cares deeply for the poor, the environment and for peace — all, as previously stated, hallmarks of the Francis papacy.

In the same way that any understanding of Pope Francis had to be informed by his Jesuit background and charism, no understanding of Pope Leo is complete without the recognition



GENERAL AUDIENCE. Pope Leo XIV greets a baby from the popemobile as he rides around St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience June 25, 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

that he is, as he proclaimed on the date of his election, “a son of St. Augustine.” In the first months of his pontificate, Pope Leo has referred frequently to St. Augustine, including mentioning him to young people at the Jubilee of Youth at the beginning of August. And he uses this masterful doctor of the church to bring peoples’ focus back to Jesus, their Lord and savior.

Christ at the center

“Dear young people, every person naturally desires a good life, just as lungs long for air, but how difficult it is to find it!” Pope Leo said Aug. 2 at a prayer vigil during the Jubilee. “Centuries ago, St. Augustine understood the deepest desire of our hearts, even without the technological developments of today. He too had a restless youth, but he did not settle for less, he did not silence the cry of his heart. He sought the truth that does not disappoint and the beauty that does not fade. How did he find it? How did he find true friendship and a love capable of giving hope? By finding the one who was already looking for him, Jesus Christ.”

With Pope Leo XIV being the first pope born in the United

pizzeria. But Leo also maintains a close connection with the people of Peru, where he served for many years as a priest and then a bishop. At the end of July, he met with a delegation from that country. He also hired a Peruvian chef at the Vatican. It is clear that Pope Leo is a pope with a foot in both the north and the south, and we should expect his decision-making and perspective to reflect that experience.

While Pope Leo’s papacy has to-date projected steadiness, thoughtfulness, restraint and discretion, many Catholics are anxious to see more. As we approach the fall, all eyes will be on the new pontiff’s decisions — especially whom he selects to replace himself as head of the Dicastery for Bishops. Also, how he will handle the former Jesuit artist Father Marko Rupnik scandal, as well as pastoral frustrations over the status of the Traditional Latin Mass, keeping the two-fold mission of love and unity firmly at the fore.

As he exits the “honeymoon phase” of his papacy and moves on to the serious business of church governance, Pope Leo has our prayers, support and love. For, most of all in his first 100 days, Pope Leo has shown himself to be

a lover of Jesus Christ, and a man who desires to help others love Jesus, too.

The members of the OSV Editorial Board include Father Patrick Briscoe, OP; Gretchen R. Crowe; Paulina Guzik; Matthew Kirby; Peter Jesserer Smith and Scott P. Richert.

“We are often
preoccupied
with teaching
doctrine...
but we risk
forgetting that
our first task is
to teach what it
means to know
Jesus Christ.”

pope leo xiv

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION THIS HURRICANE SEASON

O God, Master of this passing world,
hear the humble voices of your children.
The Sea of Galilee obeyed Your order and returned to its former quietude.
You are still the Master of land and sea.
We live in the shadow of a danger over which we have no control;
the Gulf, like a provoked and angry giant,
can awake from its seeming lethargy,
overstep its conventional boundaries, invade our land,
and spread chaos and disaster.
During this hurricane season, we turn to You, O loving Father.
Spare us from past tragedies whose memories are still so vivid,
and whose wounds seem to refuse to heal with the passing of time.

O Virgin, Star of the Sea, Our beloved Mother,
we ask you to plead with your Son of our behalf
so that spared from the calamities common to this area
and animated with a true spirit of gratitude,
we will walk in the footsteps of your Divine Son
to reach the heavenly Jerusalem, where a stormless eternity awaits us.
Amen.

*Composed by Most Rev. Maurice Schexnayder (1985 - 1981)
Second Bishop of Lafayette (1956 - 1973),
following Hurricane Audrey in 1957*

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.

It's true, young people are seeking the faith

By Robert Neighart
Word on Fire

In a cultural context marked by fickle trends and sensational claims, a skeptic's lens has become an unfortunate yet necessary adaptation against misinformation. So, when headlines suggest that Gen Z and millennials—long touted as highly secular cohorts—have started turning toward Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, one's natural reaction, understandably, might be skeptical. However, despite the surprising nature of such a development, data seems to indicate a marked shift that would compel even hardened skeptics to look twice and perhaps consider that something is taking root in the pews.

Beginning with Christianity more broadly, Barna Group—a Christian research organization—reports from a 2025 study that 66 percent of US adults have “made a personal commitment to Jesus that is still important in their life today.” This marks a 12-point increase from the same metric in 2021, translating to approximately 30 million more Americans who now say they've made Jesus a priority in their lives. While this metric may be a bit nebulous for the Catholic palate, it nonetheless reflects a

significant rise in individuals who have at least considered placing God at the center of their lives.

Broken down by age, millennial and Gen Z men are at the forefront of this movement: Between 2019 and 2025, the number of Gen Z men reporting a personal commitment to Jesus increased by 15 percent, while millennial men showed a 19 percent increase.

Engaging with the faith online essentially allows a young person to engage on their own terms and at their own pace.

Across the pond in Britain, similar phenomena have been observed. According to YouGov, a London-based polling organization, belief in God among 18–24-year-olds

has climbed from 16 percent in August 2021 to 45 percent in January 2025. Further, 4 percent of 18–24-year-olds attended church monthly in 2018 whereas that value stands at 16 percent today, with young men increasing from 4 percent to 21 percent.

As for Catholicism's popularity in Britain, the trend is even more pronounced. Among churchgoers aged 18–34, 41 percent now identify as Catholic compared to 30 percent Anglican—a notable shift from 2018 when Anglicans comprised 41 percent of all churchgoers while Catholics made up 23 percent. Among the 18–34 demographic broadly, 35 percent claim they're Catholic while only 25 percent self-identify as Anglican.

In the US, the Church is also seeing unprecedented interest, even relative to the broader trends of Christian conversion. The Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio, saw conversions climb by 49 percent in 2025, jumping from 545 to 812 individuals. The Archdiocese of San Francisco followed closely with a 47 percent increase, growing from 444 converts in 2024 to 653 in 2025.

Beyond mere conversions, which are noteworthy but possibly reflective of nominal commitment rather than lived faith, there's also some data on Bible usage. The American Bible Society found millennials experienced a 29 percent increase in Bible use from 2024 to 2025, while men saw

a 19 percent increase—the first of such developments since 2021. This translates to 10 million more American adults reading the Bible outside of church at least three times yearly.

These developments defy convention for a couple reasons. First, the evident revival of Christianity is being driven by young people—millennials and Gen Z, which is out of the ordinary; the historical norm is that older generations represent the predominant share of religious fervor. Second is the gender piece. While there's an evident increase in religious commitment among young people, the lion's share of that interest is coming from young men. As young people have historically been less religious than old, and men less so than women, this is a noteworthy shift.

From a higher-level view, and at the very least, all this data suggests the long-declining trend of religious affiliation in the US is showing signs of stabilizing or potentially even reversing. The Pew Research Center, perhaps the most trusted authority on the nation's pulse, documented steady erosion of religious identification among younger Americans for years but released a report this February indicating declining rates of Christianity have begun to taper off and stabilize.

Why any of this is happening is up to conjecture; however, there are some decent causal theories worthy of consideration. The first is social media and the online sphere more broadly.

There are a number of Christian and Catholic influencers who've amassed significant followings online. This is noteworthy because engaging with the faith online essentially allows a young person to engage on their own terms and at their own pace.

Young people are increasingly engaging with the faith not through institutions or parental influence but through decentralized, self-directed exploration.

Unlike prior generations, young people are increasingly engaging with the faith not through institutions or parental influence but through decentralized, self-directed exploration—often via short-form content that feels native to their digital context. What's novel isn't the

In every age,
O Lord,
you have been
our refuge.

Psalm 90: 1
Responsorial Psalm
for September 7
Twenty-third Sunday
in Ordinary time

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presence of evangelists online—such have existed for decades—but the peer-to-peer, algorithmically amplified way in which faith-based content now spreads and resonates.

Interestingly enough, the dimension of social media cuts both ways. While the viral potential of short-form content is likely to credit in getting more young people interested in religion, it may be religion itself that they're seeking in order to avoid the sort of surface-level interaction social media provides. Looming in the background of all this is the apparent "loneliness epidemic" plaguing Americans young and old. Religion of any kind—and Christianity in particular—may exist in the eyes of the unaffiliated as a means to circumvent these feelings of isolation: It's an opportunity to connect with others and to something outside of themselves.

There's also the potential that the surge in religiosity is the result of reactions to perceived or actual negative world states. It's a well-documented phenomena that religious affiliation tends to ebb and flow congruent to world events. Typically, the more hardship—pandemics, war, economic turmoil—the more people are inclined to start believing in a higher power.

While it's beyond the scope of this article to discuss whether the status quo truly represents an unprecedentedly disordered world compared to times past, there's little question that much of the modern context—hyperconnectivity, sensational media, and the like—is able to make it at least seem like the world is burning. As young people are those in the position to inherit



YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SEEKING THE FAITH. Young Catholics lift their voices in prayer during the 2025 Steubenville South Conference in Alexandria, LA. The annual gathering, photographed by Lilly Brouillette, drew thousands of teens and young adults - reflecting the broader trend of millennials and Gen Z rediscovering faith in surprising numbers.

the world—both literally and as they perceive it—such anxieties may be to credit for their current propensity to Christianity.

The obvious looming question in light of all this, at least in my mind, is whether the observed phenomena represent a flash in the pan or whether

they are reflective of systemic, lasting change. I don't think there's much doubt that one's arrival to the faith can often require some sort of external impetus: a personal tragedy, a mounting sense of emptiness, and the like; however, the critical piece is that one's faith remains beyond and despite that impetus. Whether young people's increasing commitment to Catholicism has that staying power remains to be seen.

5th Annual Bishop's Bowl Football game set for Sept. 19

Join us at the Eagle's Nest on Friday, Sept. 19 for the 5th Annual Bishop's Bowl football game between the Tigers of St. Mary's Catholic School, Natchitoches, and the Eagles of Holy Savior Menard High School, Alexandria. Always a

spirited community tradition, this rivalry brings students, families, and alumni together under the lights. St. Mary's has remained undefeated in this annual sports event, but we'll see if Menard is able to claim the trophy this year.



ANNUAL BISHOP'S BOWL FOOTBALL GAME. The Eagles of Holy Savior Menard Central High School welcomed the Tigers of St. Mary's Catholic School, Natchitoches on Friday, Sept. 15, 2023 in this file photo of the 3rd annual "Bishop's Bowl" football game. Adversaries on the field, both teams and schools share an abiding faith in Jesus Christ and a profound respect for the dignity of every human life. (Photo by Cindy Campbell)

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Sister Daira reflects on what it means to be a consecrated woman

by Sister Daira Figueroa, STJ

After making my perpetual vows in the Company of St. Teresa of Jesus, what comes next for me is to persevere, to keep listening each day to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and to bear fruit wherever He sends me. I am not the protagonist of this story, but a disciple, and my desire is to be a pilgrim of hope in the places where God places me.

Sometimes people think of us as “nuns,” but actually we are consecrated women, part of apostolic religious life. From the moment of the novitiate—when we receive the constitutions of our congregation—we begin to live this call. It is not a title, but a vocation.

Our charism rests on three pillars: prayer, teaching, and the gift of one’s life. Every morning God calls me anew, and I try to renew my “yes.” Love, if it is not cared for, fades away; that is why I strive to live with faithfulness and joy, always learning, because in consecrated life we are both teachers and disciples.

Lo que sigue para mí, después de haber hecho mis votos perpetuos en la Compañía de Santa Teresa de Jesús, es continuar desde la perseverancia, buscando escuchar cada día la voz del Espíritu Santo y dar frutos allí donde Él me envíe. No soy la protagonista, sino una discípula, y mi deseo es ser peregrina de esperanza en los lugares donde me toque estar.

A veces se piensa que somos “monjas”, pero en realidad somos mujeres consagradas, que pertenecemos a la vida religiosa apostólica. Desde el noviciado —cuando recibimos las constituciones de la congregación— vivimos esta llamada, que no es un título, sino una vocación.

Nuestro carisma tiene tres pilares: la oración, la enseñanza y la entrega de la vida. Podríamos decir que cada mañana Dios me vuelve a llamar, y yo renuevo mi respuesta. El amor, si no se cuida, se marchita; por eso trato de vivir con fidelidad y alegría, siempre aprendiendo, porque en la vida consagrada somos a la vez maestras y discípulas.



SISTER DAIRA PROFESSES VOWS TO ORDER OF ST. TERESA OF JESUS. Sister Daira Figueroa, STJ, professed her perpetual vows on July 3. Sister Daira is a trained social worker from Universidad de Antioquia (UdeA) and is here in the Diocese of Alexandria through the Catholic Extension Exchange Program. The Perpetual Vows ceremony took place at the Casa de Convivencias y Retiros Espirituales S.T.J (The House of Familiarity & Spiritual Retreats S.T.J [St. Teresa of Jesus]) in Bogota, Colombia. Pictured with Sr. Daira (center) is her family, fellow Teresian sisters, colleagues, theologians and others.



VOCATIONS HOST ST. ANDREW DINNER. The Diocese of Alexandria Office of Vocations hosted a St. Andrew’s dinner on Aug. 7 at Maryhill Renewal Center. Select young high school men were invited and they and their families were able to meet and speak with the current seminarians, the bishop, and Fr. Luke LaFleur about a vocation to the priesthood.



MEMORIAL MASS FOR FR. CHRIS NAYAK. A Memorial Mass was held for Fr. Chris Nayak, long-time chaplain in the chapel at St. Frances Cabrini Hospital, and attended by hospital staff and administration personnel. Priests of the diocese concelebrated including Fr. Joy Antony, current Director of Pastoral Care at the hospital.

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Do not forget the works of the Lord.

Psalm 78: 7b | Responsorial Psalm for September 14
Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



PASSING A GOOD TIME ON THE RIVER. Bishop Robert Marshall “passed a good time” on the Red River, Monday, July 28. St. Genevieve parish hosted the clergy of the Avoyelles Deanery (and a few others) for a boat ride on the river and supper afterward. What a beautiful evening and a great chance to relax! Thank you to all of our hosts! Pictured left to right: Deacon Jason Lavergne, Fr. Albi Mulloth, Deacon Richard Mitchell, Fr. Martin Laird, Fr. Dwight DeJesus, Fr. Kenneth Obiekwe, Bishop Marshall, Fr. Paul Kunnumpuram, Fr. Abraham Varghese, Fr. Kenneth Michiels, Fr. Abraham Pallikkattuchira, Fr. Kurian Zachariah, Deacon Reggie Ducote and Fr. Joy Antony.



AN EVENING WITH THE SEMINARIANS. On Monday, Aug. 4, the people of the diocese had the opportunity to meet and chat with eight out of ten of our seminarians gathered at St. Rita’s Holy Family Center at an open house event. Donations made at the event went to the Seminarian Education Fund. Pictured from left to right: Cullen Phillips, Graham Descant, Will Brittain, David Rubio, Matthew Kramer, Blake Bernard, Matthew Bonner, Jacob Cass and Fr. Luke LaFleur, Director of Vocations for the diocese. Seminarians able to attend were Gabe Dowden and Blaine Phillips.

Seminarian Burses

July 2025 Donations

Knights of Columbus Council #9217	\$25.00
Father Adrian Molenschot Burse	
Mr. and Mrs. Silton Innerarity	\$25.00
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Father Wade DeCoste Burse	
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Mr. and Mrs. Marian French	\$100.00
Father Gus Voltz Burse	
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Vanderlick In Memory of Walter Vanderlick.	\$200.00
Father Randolph J. Engelen Burse	
Mr. Patricia Vandersypen-Basco	\$200.00
Jerome and Audrey Vandersypen Burse	
Total	\$800.00

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:

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Thank you for your generosity!
--- Very Reverend M. Craig Scott, Chairman

SAVE THE DATE!
October 13
Bishop’s Annual
Golf Tournament

benefiting the
Seminarian Education Fund

Contact
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318-445-6424, ext.

What is my Vocation?

Do you want guidance in learning about God the Father’s specific plan for you?

Do you feel called to give more and be more? Do you have questions about how to discern you Vocation?

JOIN US! Saturday, November 8

The day will include an extensive panel of vocations experts made up of religious brothers, sisters, and priests. **Open to All Youth** and anyone discerning his/her vocation.

Where: St. Mary’s Assumption Catholic Church, Cottonport
More details to follow.

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.

Fr. Thomas Kennedy shares his pilgrimage experience to England

*By Father Thomas Kennedy
Parochial Vicar, Our Lady
of Prompt Succor Church,
Alexandria*

Earlier this July, I had the privilege of making my fourth personal pilgrimage across England — a journey rooted in prayer, sacred memory, and deep gratitude. The path took me from London to Birmingham, Coventry, Canterbury, Ramsgate, Durham, York, and back again to London before returning home.

This pilgrimage was centered around a special Mass at Canterbury Cathedral in honor of the Feast of the Translation of the Relics of Saint Thomas Becket, with the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain presiding. I was invited to take part in this momentous occasion by a priest friend serving in Canterbury. That invitation led to one of the most moving experiences of my priesthood: celebrating a private Mass at the very site of Saint Thomas Becket's martyrdom — early in the morning, alone, before the Cathedral opened to the public. Becket has long been a powerful intercessor in my life and is my Confirmation saint, so to offer the Holy Sacrifice where he shed his blood was a profound grace.

While in Canterbury, I also had an unexpected encounter: I was approached by an EWTN news crew and interviewed by reporter Colm Flynn about the pilgrimage and the Becket celebration. It was

“Remember the sufferings of Christ, the storms that were weathered... the crown that came from those sufferings which gave new radiance to the faith... All saints give testimony to the truth that without real effort, no one ever wins the crown.”

Thomas Becket



CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL. Fr. Thomas Kennedy with the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía.

a surprise and a joy to share a few words on camera about the faith that connects us across centuries.

The journey began in London, from where I traveled to Birmingham to offer Mass at the Shrine of Saint John Henry

Newman. From there, I passed through Coventry, where I visited the solemn ruins of its bombed cathedral.

At the Shrine of Saint Augustine of Canterbury in Ramsgate, I celebrated Mass in

a chapel designed by Augustus Pugin, a hero of mine whose vision for Gothic revival architecture continues to shape my love for beauty in worship. Pugin and his family are buried beneath the very

chapel where I offered the Holy Sacrifice.

In Durham, I prayed at the tombs of Saint Cuthbert and Saint Bede the Venerable, as well as Saint Oswald, whose head is buried with Cuthbert. In York, I celebrated Mass at the York Oratory's Martyrs' Altar, prayed at the shrine of Our Lady of York, and visited the home-shrine of Saint Margaret Clitherow, a courageous Catholic mother martyred for hiding priests.

Back in London, I was granted special access to the former prison cells of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More in the Tower of London, where I prayed alone in silence. At Westminster Cathedral, I celebrated Mass in the crypt, prayed at the shrine of Saint John Southworth, and was given a private tour of the vast sacristy. I ended the day praying at the tomb of Saint Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey, one of my saintly ancestors.

At every stop, I carried your intentions with me — offering them at Mass and in prayer. This was no vacation. It was a pilgrimage of heart, memory, and renewal — a return to the saints who shaped England's Catholic soul, and a reminder that their witness still shapes us today even in Alexandria, Louisiana.

Here is a link to the EWTN interview. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWXWIKuZsEA>



EWTN INTERVIEWS FR. THOMAS KENNEDY IN ENGLAND. Fr. Thomas Kennedy, parochial vicar at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Alexandria, was approached by an EWTN news crew and interviewed by reporter Colm Flynn about the pilgrimage and the Becket celebration while Fr. Kennedy was in England. The interview was published on EWTN's YouTube channel.

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NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, CAMPTI. A Lector Workshop was held at NBVM Church in Campti on Saturday, July 19. Pictured with the eleven attendees is pastor, Fr. Dutch Voltz. Lector Workshops are held throughout the year at the St. Joseph Catholic Center as well as church parishes in the diocese. If your church would like to host a Lector Workshop or a Extraordinary Minister of the Holy Communion Workshop, contact Deacon Jason Lavergne at 318-445-6424, ext. 207 or email dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org.



KOLIN CHURCH VISITS VILLE PLATTE. Members of Sts. Francis and Anne Church, Kolin, travelled to Sacred Heart Church in Ville Platte, LA to visit the relics of St. Padre Pio on display.

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St. Rita Catholic Church - Alexandria, La



Rev. Taylor Reynolds, JCL
Guest Speaker



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VBS ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, DEVILLE. "The Great Journey with Jesus Through the Church Year" was held the week of July 21-25 for grades Pre K-6th at St. John the Baptist in Deville. Pictured are the kids and volunteers with pastor, Fr. Albi Mulloth.

(below left and right) STS. FRANCIS & ANNE, KOLIN VBS FOR 2025. We had a great turnout for "True North: Trusting Jesus in a wild world" Vacation Bible School held July 14-18. Below left: the kids attending. Below right: the volunteers.



(above left and right) VBS WINNFIELD. Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Winnfield held Vacation Bible School Aug. 28-30. The theme was "Journey With Jesus". Director Leah Rustom was assisted by pastor, Fr. Louis Sklar. The gathering enjoyed a journey from the garden, to the desert, and ended in heaven!



(both photos at left) SUMMER CAMP AT ST. JOSEPH CHURCH IN ST. JOSEPH, LA. The Alliance of the Two Hearts, a group of sisters and missionaries who minister in Plaquemine, came to St. Joseph Church from July 22-25 to put on a summer camp for kids, enthrone families to the two hearts, and put on a prayer vigil Friday to Saturday.

To see more photos visit the photo galleries at www.diocesealex.org



ANNUAL DEACON BBQ AND SOCIAL. This annual get-together for deacons, deacons in formation and all of their families, starts with a morning prayer and then proceeds to a day of fellowship and good food. The annual event occurs near the Feast of St. Lawrence in August.



WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP, ECHO. "Women of the Well" women's prayer group was hosted by St. Francis de Sales on Wednesday, Aug. 6.



EMPOWER TRAINING DAY. Over 60 priests, deacons, youth ministers, directors of religious education, and youth ministry volunteers attended the recent Empower training day to receive training and resources for their parish ministries.



ALLONS SOUPER A'LOURDES, JR. The Sweet Shop bakers a from left to right: Elise and Adaline [redacted], and Kensley and Layla [redacted].

Allons Souper a' Lourdes, Jr.

On Saturday, July 26, following the 4:00 p.m Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Fifth Ward, the surrounding communities were treated to a culinary showcase featuring the talents of young cooks at the inaugural Allons Souper a' Lourdes, Jr. event. These junior cooks, ages 18 and under, volunteered to prepare their favorite dishes to serve 125 people, covering all courses from appetizers to desserts.

Our Lady of Lourdes members had long envisioned an event to engage its young people. Plans were put on hold due to several hurdles, which included Covid. Building on the success of the Allons Souper a' Lourdes event for adults, members collaborated to create an opportunity for young cooks to shine. Most of these young chefs had learned from their parents or grandparents, so it was evident that they possessed culinary skills.

The event aimed to foster community involvement among the youth, instilling pride and a sense of community. Ultimately, the event was a testament to the potential of our future generations.

Over twenty young chefs participated including: Jathan Dubroc, Austin Rabalais and Morgan Brantley, Elise Laborde, Carlie and Alyssa Ducote, Tristan Dauzat and Bree Brouillette, Aiden Reynaud, Brendon Reynaud, Maci Bordelon, Emma Wanersdofer, Ainsley Bordelon, Elliot Wanersdorfer, Eli Watts, Jewel Bordelon, Abigail Rabalais, Emma Juneau and Carson Lemoine [redacted].



JUNIOR CHEF CULINARY SHOWCASE IN FIFTH WARD. A large crowd attended the first annual Allons Souper a' Lourdes, Jr. event at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Fifth Ward.

Breathe, Believe, Begin Again: Catholic Charities' Grief Support Ministry

By **Cindy Upton**
*Manager of Coaching Programs
for Catholic Charities of
Central Louisiana*

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana supports the Diocese of Alexandria in bearing “witness to the charity of Jesus Christ, in both word and deed” by serving as the arm of social welfare through a wide range of compassionate services.

In response to a growing need for a safe and supportive space to process grief, Catholic Charities is offering a seven-week program designed to foster healing, growth, and forward motion. While grief is most often associated with the death of a loved one, it can also arise from other life-altering experiences such as divorce, illness, job loss, empty-nesting, or even the loss of a beloved pet. Regardless of the source, grief is deeply personal—and healing is nurtured through community, understanding, and hope.

Beginning September 15, Catholic Charities' Christian Life Coaches will lead participants through a structured grief support program built around a seven-step model known as

B.R.E.A.T.H.E.® Each weekly session is designed to meet individuals wherever they are in their grief journey, offering practical tools, measurable goals, and spiritual encouragement. With a focus on growth and openness, the program invites anyone navigating loss, regardless of their story, to take part in a shared journey of renewal. What unites all participants is a mutual longing to find peace in their loss and take meaningful steps toward healing.

B.R.E.A.T.H.E.® sessions will be held every Monday from September 15 through October 27, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., in the Diocese of Alexandria Conference Room, located at 4400 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria, LA 71303.

To register, visit the Catholic Charities website at cccenla.org and navigate to the Mental Health Services/Life Coaching section. For more information, contact Catholic Charities at 318.445.6424, Ext. 506.

+++

“Pain and suffering have come into your life, but remember pain, sorrow, suffering are but the kiss of Jesus—a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you.”
— St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta



Upcoming Retreats:

September 18-21
SPANISH

Womens ACTS Retreat
hosted by Our Lady of Guadalupe, Forest Hill

September 25-28
Womens ACTS Retreat
hosted by St. Mary's Assumption, Cottonport

October 16-19
SPANISH
Mens ACTS Retreat
hosted by Our Lady of Guadalupe, Forest Hill

All retreats are held at Maryhill Renewal Center.

What's the deal with daily Mass?

by **Louis Wasson**
Guest Contributor

I arrive early. Maybe three people are there. I come early because I can't stay away from Adoration. More people gradually enter the Church. They can't stay away either: Adorers, each and all. But they are not here just for Adoration. There is a Mass at 12:05. By then, there are 40 to 50 people gathered. This happens every day. They are called daily communicants. Mass is the center of their lives. Everything else in the day revolves around it. The

priests schedule the Masses to make it more convenient. 6:30 A.M., 8:00 A.M., 12:05 P.M., 12:15 P.M., 5:30 P.M. These are the times for the different Churches in Alexandria—every day.

Everyday Mass is a discipline. It is often a sacrifice to be there. But somehow these people make it. I estimate that at least 350 to 500 people in the city go to daily Mass. Maybe you think that's not very many, but they are the backbone of the Church. They regularly go to confession, daily Adore Christ truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, daily receive Christ

in communion, pray for each other, pray for the whole world, and pray for you. Daily Mass is where the action is. The day is incomplete without it.

Maybe it's a calling. Maybe it's the Holy Spirit drawing these people into worship every weekday. Not to substitute for Sunday worship but to supplement it. If it's a calling, can you hear it? Why not come to a daily Mass? And come a few minutes early to Adore a while. *It's where the action is!*

Services Offered by Catholic Charities of Central LA

Visit cccenla.org to access a variety of services. Appointments are required and can be made online.

- **Mental Health Counseling**
- **Christian Life Coaching**
- **Christian Support Groups:**
Grief/Loss B.R.E.A.T.H.E.
Peace in the Mds of Crisis Divorce Support
- **Vaping/Tobacco Cessation (Youth and Adult)**
- **Disaster Preparedness Resources**
- **Financial Literacy Budget Class**
- in partnership with Red River Bank and OFMS
- **Assist.Educate.Elevate.**
Emergency Basic Needs Assistance
(For those at risk of utility disconnect and eviction, victims of house fires, and information and referral)
- **SNAP Enrollment Assistance**
To support our work, thank you for your donation of time, talent, or treasure!
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Manna House celebrates 35 years of service with "35 for 35 Challenge"

For more than three decades, Manna House has been a steady sign of God's providence in our community. Founded in 1989 as a response to the growing need among families and individuals experiencing hunger, the mission of Manna House has always been simple but profound: to ensure that no one in our community goes without a meal, and that every person who walks through their doors is met with dignity, compassion, and hope.

This year, Manna House is celebrating 35 years of service. That milestone represents not only countless meals served, but also countless lives touched. From its earliest days—when volunteers first began distributing meals out of a small kitchen—to



the well-organized operation it is today, Manna House has always been fueled by the generosity of parishioners, neighbors, and friends who believe in the Gospel

call to feed the hungry.

In honor of this 35th anniversary, Manna House has launched the "35 for 35 Challenge." The invitation is simple: give \$35, or raise \$35 from friends and family, to help ensure the work of Manna House continues for years to come.

Every gift matters. Whether it's a single donation or a group effort, each dollar helps put food on the table for someone in need. When you give to Manna House,

you're not just providing meals - you're providing hope.

Over the years, Manna House has adapted to the changing needs of the community. What began as a small grassroots effort has grown into a vital support system for individuals and families facing food insecurity. Today, Manna House continues to serve hot meals, distribute groceries, and offer a welcoming place where neighbors can find encouragement and care. Volunteers are the heart of this mission, preparing meals, stocking shelves, and offering a smile and a listening ear to those who walk through the doors.

The "35 for 35 Challenge" is a practical way for everyone—families, school groups, parish ministries, and individuals—to take part in the mission. The concept is straightforward:

- **Donate \$35.** Every contribution goes directly to feeding those in need.
- **Raise \$35.** Ask three friends to give \$10 each, or get

creative with a small fundraiser.

- **Spread the word.** Share the challenge with family, friends, and on social media so that others can join in.

While \$35 may not seem like much, when multiplied across our parishes and neighborhoods, the impact becomes enormous. A small gift, when combined with others, becomes a wave of generosity that sustains this ministry of mercy.

As Catholics, we are called to see Christ in the face of the hungry, and Manna House's 35 years of service stand as a testament to what can happen when a community answers that call.

Will you join the challenge? Together, we can ensure that Manna House continues to provide food, friendship, and faith-filled hope for the next 35 years and beyond.

To make your gift or to learn more, visit givetomannahouse.com.



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Praise the Lord who lifts up the poor.

Psalm 113: 1a, 7b

Responsorial Psalm for September 21 | Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



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Blessed are you,
holy Virgin Mary,
deserving of all
praise; from you rose
the sun of Justice,
Christ our God.

feast of the
nativity of the
blessed virgin mary

september 8

From Lisieux with love: Help from our friends, the Martins

By Grace Bellon
Blessed Is She

“Is there a patron saint of potty training?” my husband asked, somewhere between exasperation and laughter.

Our oldest was about to turn three and begin a full-day preschool that required students to be fully potty trained. She had been using the facilities without accidents for a couple of months when, suddenly, a regression reared its head. We had no alternative childcare options come August, so our daughter’s sudden fear of the commode was especially stressful.

All our eggs were in one basket. We lived states away from family. Daycares had year-long waitlists. The high cost of living required both of us to work outside the home. We know there’s no use in worrying, but our emotions got the best of us.

“Let’s say a novena to Louis and Zélie Martin,” I suggested, hoping their empathy for fellow parents would make up for their lack of official patronage regarding this very specific stage of child development.

Faith + Action

We started our novena that day, combining it with a more practical approach: educating ourselves. We found a discounted webinar from a potty training expert and tried strategies tailored



NATIONAL GRANDPARENTS PILGRIMAGE. Eric Hynes and GGA Founder, Catherine Wiley, carry Pope Benedict XIV’s Prayer for Grandparents.

to our daughter’s personality. Even after the official nine days of prayer ended, we continued saying the novena. It brought comfort, and the Martins began to feel like our heavenly parenting mentors.

Things improved drastically.

It seemed like everything was going to be okay—until the day before school started.

At the open house, we were told the school’s definition of “potty trained” went beyond being out of diapers. Children were expected to be fully independent:

able to wipe themselves thoroughly and change their own clothes if an accident occurred.

We knew our daughter didn’t yet have those skills, but we started practicing immediately. She made it through her first day just fine. On the second day, disaster struck. An accident occurred, and our daughter couldn’t change herself. There were a lot of tears and emotions. My husband drove to the school, changed her into clean clothes, and brought her home.

“I’m not sending her back there,” he said when he saw me, and I shared the sentiment.

From Panic to Providence

Desperate, I began calling friends to see if anyone had ideas or leads. A colleague gave me the number of a family new to the area, but lifelong friends of hers. By some miracle, they were open

to watching our daughter short-term—and they had a child close in age.

We exhaled, our hearts swelling with gratitude. To me, it felt like the Martins had a hand in this arrangement. Our new friend was of French descent and fluent in the language.

With about five months to find a long-term childcare plan, we continued our daily intentional prayer to Saints Louis and Zélie. We got on daycare waitlists for both our daughter and the baby on the way. We explored nanny shares and au pair options but found they would strain us too much. Finally, we received a call: A daycare had space for both children—but not until the following school year. A ray of hope, but we still had a three-month gap to bridge.

See PATRONS, pg. 16

“God protects
all who trust in
Him.
Not a single
person has ever
been abandoned
by Him..”

zélie martin

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Over 5,000 gather at Knock Shrine for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly and the National Grandparents Pilgrimage

By Catholic Grandparents Association

Knock, Co. Mayo – On Sunday, 27 July 2025 — the feast day of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, Grandparents of Jesus — more than 5,000 Grandparents, elderly faithful, and families filled the Basilica at the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock in Ireland to celebrate the 5th World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly and the National Grandparents Pilgrimage, organized by the Catholic Grandparents Association (CGA).

It was a day full of grace, hope, and blessings, as Grandparents from across Ireland and beyond came together in prayer, thanksgiving, and love. The solemn Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Francis Duffy, Patron of the CGA, joined by Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Loughlin, Ireland. The packed Basilica was filled with sacred music from Una Nolan and Choirs, and a moving solo by beloved Irish singer Dana.

The pilgrimage continues to grow in significance, especially as the spiritual birthplace of the World Day itself. It was at Knock, in 2017, that Irish Grandparents began a year of prayer to Pope Francis requesting a special day



NATIONAL GRANDPARENTS PILGRIMAGE. Eric Hynes and GGA Founder, Catherine Wiley, carry Pope Benedict XIV's Prayer for Grandparents.

to honour their role. Their prayers were answered in 2021, when the Pope not only granted the request but included the elderly, creating a lasting spiritual legacy now celebrated around the globe.

In her powerful address, CGA founder Catherine Wiley reminded pilgrims of their

enduring mission and God-given purpose:

“We’re not getting older — we’re getting braver. Grandparents are the original influencers — not of trends, but of the heart.”

She went on to say:

“You won’t find our tools on TikTok — you’ll find a pot of soup waiting for the prodigal grandchild. This is the kind of intelligence no AI algorithm can replicate: love that stays when the world walks out.”

Wiley also echoed Pope

Francis’ call for Grandparents’ ministries in every parish, encouraging the Church to walk hand in hand with Grandparents, whose love, prayers, and witness help pass on the faith to future generations.

The Catholic Grandparents Association continues its founding mission: “To help Grandparents pass on the faith and keep prayer at the heart of family life.” As the World Day continues to grow worldwide, CGA invites every parish and family to join in honoring Grandparents — the quiet, steady bearers of love and hope in our Church and homes.

This Pilgrimage, and World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, takes place on the fourth Sunday of July every year — closest to the feast day of Saints Joachim and Anne the Grandparents of Jesus.

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Oct. 10-12
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PATRONS*cont. from pg. 14*

One evening, after another brainstorming session, a simple idea came to me: "What about my sister?"

She was working toward a master's degree online and feeling frustrated in her part-time job. I called her and floated the idea—would she consider moving in with us, rent-free, and receiving pay to help care for the kids while finishing her degree? She was intrigued. After a couple of weeks of thought and prayer, she said yes.

It wasn't until after the birth of our second daughter, as my maternity leave was ending, and my sister was about to move in, that the realization hit me.

My sister's name is Therese Rose.

Her patron Saint is Thérèse Martin, more commonly known as Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower.

Her parents, Saint Louis and Saint Zélie, had answered our prayers and sent us our own Therese to help our little family.

When Saints Send Family

It wasn't the solution we envisioned, but it was exactly what we needed. Since then, we've come to understand more fully that life itself is a sacred invitation to trust—sometimes blindly—in God's provision.

More than that, we were reminded that we are never really alone. In the family of God, help sometimes comes from the Saints in Heaven. Sometimes it comes from the sister who says yes. Sometimes, if you're lucky, it comes in both forms at once.

If you're in the thick of it, I hope our story reminds you of the solidarity which exists between Heaven and earth. Saints walk with us—a gift from our Heavenly Father. Grace envelops us. And sometimes, Heaven answers with a sibling named Therese.

EMPOWER*cont. from pg. 17*

throughout the year. A major new initiative launching in 2026 is the Group Leader Playbook—a resource packed with ready-to-use conversation guides, practical tools, and spiritual

encouragement for those leading teens to the Steubenville South Conference.

The Playbook is just one step in a larger effort to ensure that youth ministers, DREs, and volunteers never feel like they are "winging it" or walking alone. Empower reminded us that when we invest in those who serve teens, the ripple effects reach classrooms, youth groups, parish families, and the very heart of our Church.

A Call to the Whole Church

While Empower was designed for those directly involved in youth ministry, its message is for all of us. The Church's future—and its present—depends on our willingness to champion young people. Teens don't need watered-down faith or flashy gimmicks. They need adults who believe in Jesus Christ, who live that belief with joy, and who are willing to walk with them in the messy, beautiful journey of discipleship.

Every parishioner has a role to play. Pray for your parish youth. Encourage your youth ministers. Show up to parish events. Let young people see

that their presence matters to the whole community.

Hope on the Horizon

The success of Empower Day is just the beginning. With Steubenville South 2026 on the horizon and new tools for group leaders in development, there is so much hope for the future of youth ministry in our diocese.

If you walked into Empower skeptical about whether the next generation still cares about faith, you walked out convinced: they do. And with leaders who are equipped, encouraged, and set ablaze, the future is bright.

As St. Catherine of Siena once said: "If you are what you should be, you will set the world ablaze." Empower reminded us that the spark has already been lit in our youth—and it's our joyful task to help it grow into a flame.

Steak Night Fundraiser**Oct. 4**

Come have an enjoyable night at St. John the Baptist Church, Cloutierville. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and dinner is served 6:00-7:00 p.m. followed by Music and dancing until 11:00 p.m. Menu includes: steak, baked potato, green beans, dessert and drink. Cost is \$25 per ticket and must be pre-purchased. Contact Elizabeth Metoyer at 318-792-5442; Catrell Sanders at 318-518-0064 or Nazy Metoyer at 757-323-9401 to buy tickets. All proceeds benefit St. John the Baptist Church, Cloutierville, LA.

Jesus, guard my children as they step into this new year. In classrooms and cafeterias, at desks and on playgrounds, let Your truth steady them. Strengthen me in the daily fight - packing lunches, checking homework, whispering prayers. May our family's ordinary rhythm beat with heaven's victory.

Mama's Prayer

Praise the Lord, my soul!

Psalm 146: 1 | Responsorial Psalm for September 28
Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Gift of Life Banquet
September 18**

Thursday, September 18
Randolph Riverfront Center
Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

Guest speaker for the evening is J.J. Jasper, author of the book, "Losing Cooper: Finding Hope to Grieve Well." He is a veteran morning on-air radio personality, comedian, dedicated Christian, and devoted family man.

To purchase tickets, visit <https://lovelifecenla.com/banquet>.
For more information, visit www.cenlapc.com, or call 318-314-3061.

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**DIOCESE OF ALEXANDRIA
NON-DISCRIMINATORY SCHOOL POLICY | July 2025**

The Diocese of Alexandria School System re-affirms its non-discriminatory policy on the basis of race, sex, color, national and ethnic origin in its educational programs, activities and employment policies in accordance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments and Sections 4.03(a) and 4.03 (c) Revenue Procedure 75-50.

All students, faculty members and staff, without exception, are admitted to all rights, privileges and activities generally accorded or made available at the schools which do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its employment policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs.

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| • St. Anthony of Padua School, Bunkie | • Holy Savior Menard Central High School, Alexandria |
| • St. Joseph Elementary and High School, Plaquemine | • Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, Alexandria |
| • St. Mary Assumption School, Cottonport | • St. Frances Cabrini School, Alexandria |

— Most Rev. Robert W. Marshall, Jr.,
Bishop of Alexandria

Equipped for the mission: Empower training day inspires youth ministers across the diocese and beyond

“Teens today just aren’t interested in faith anymore.” How many times have we heard that line? Yet anyone who has been in a room with a group of young people who are praying, worshipping, or seeking God knows the truth: our youth are hungry for Christ.

That truth came alive at our recent Empower Training Day, sponsored by the Steubenville South Conference Office. Over 60 youth ministers, catechists, DREs, and volunteers gathered for a day of prayer, formation, and practical training to help them step more fully into their role as guides and mentors for the next generation of disciples.

The energy was unmistakable. From the first chord struck by worship leader Grae McCullough, to the last prayer offered, Empower was less about “filling a calendar” and more about rekindling the fire of mission.

A Day of Inspiration

Our keynote speakers, Kelly Simpson and Kyle Melancon, challenged participants to look with fresh eyes at the young Church in front of us. Kelly



EMPOWER TRAINING DAY. Over 60 priests, deacons, youth ministers, directors of religious education, and youth ministry volunteers attended the recent Empower training day to receive training and resources for their parish ministries.

reminded us that every teenager we encounter is not just a student to be taught, but a soul thirsting

for Jesus. Kyle shared moving stories from his own years in ministry, highlighting how small, faithful acts of love and consistency can break through the noise of a distracted culture.

Both emphasized that youth

ministry is not about entertainment or quick fixes. It’s about showing up, living authentic discipleship, and creating spaces where teens can encounter Christ personally.

Why Training Matters

Sometimes in parish life,

those who work with youth are asked to do so simply because they’re willing. But willingness doesn’t always equal preparedness. Empower Day is designed to bridge that gap.

Workshops and talks provided concrete tools: how to lead small group discussions, how to walk with teens through difficult questions, how to navigate the balance between structure and spontaneity in ministry. More than strategies, though, the day was about vision: seeing youth ministry not as an extra program but as an essential mission field of the Church.

Because the truth is, teens are not walking away from the Catholic faith because they’ve examined it and found it lacking. More often, they’ve never encountered its beauty in the first place. Empower equipped leaders to be those door-openers, those living witnesses who help teens encounter the love of Christ in a way that is real, compelling, and life-changing.

Looking Ahead

This training is not a one-time event. The Steubenville South Conference Office is committed to continuing to equip and encourage parish leaders

See **EMPOWER**, pg. 16



2401 S. MacArthur Dr. • Alexandria, LA

Ph: (318) 767-8596

Dine in or Take out . . . order from our extensive menu or enjoy our all-you-can-eat buffet.

CLOSED TUESDAYS

Lunch: Mon.-Sat. 11 a.m. - 3:30 pm.

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.

Campus Ministry:

LSU of Alexandria:
LSUA Catholic Student Organization, 318-447-2956.
Follow us on Facebook or Instagram @lsuacatholics

Northwestern State University:
NSU Catholic Student Organization
FOCUS Ministries.
Contact Holy Cross Church:
(318) 352-2615

Louisiana Christian University:
LCU Catholic Student Organization
“Wildcat Catholics”
318-447-2956.
Follow us on Instagram
@wildcatcatholics

save the date

Beyond the Limits
Jr. High
Conference,
Saturday, Dec. 6

registration
opens
September 16

steubenvillesouth.com

Upcoming VIRTUS Sessions

Wednesday, Sept. 17
6:00 p.m.
St. Peter Church
Bordelonville, LA

Saturday, Sept. 20
9:00 a.m.
St. Michael the Archangel
Leesville, LA

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.

Women's faith formation group 9-week session: She Shall Be Called Woman - first meeting Sept. 2

This session meets every Tuesday, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the OLPS Divine Providence Center. "She Shall Be Called Woman" is a transformative journey designed to be a sanctuary for women seeking to be truly seen, known, and loved as they grow in their relationship with the Lord. Our gatherings blend insightful video presentations with intimate small-group discussions, fostering a supportive environment for growth. 9-week sessions are scheduled every Fall and Spring. To register for this 2025 Fall session, please visit: <https://programs.paradisusdei.org/join/26ECB7>

Faith of the Fathers: Discovering the Early Church - Sept. 3-Nov. 19

Join us as Fr. Thomas Kennedy explores the lives and teachings of the Early Church Fathers—those saints and scholars who laid the foundations of Christian doctrine. Classes meet Wednesday evenings from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Alexandria, LA. All are welcome!

Beginning Experience - Sept. 12-14

Widowed, separated, or divorced? Don't know where to turn? Struggling with grief or loss? Beginning Experience of Alexandria is registering now for a weekend away that provides an opportunity to encounter one's self and to grow with a purpose to achieve inner peace. The experience is to help close the door gently on the past and move on with renewed hope and purpose. To be held at Maryhill Renewal Center. The cost is \$185, includes two nights' lodging and meals. For more information, please visit: www.beginningexperience.org or to register, contact Anna at (318) 448-1990 or (318) 452-2678, email: asweat7@aol.com

Genesis of Eve Women's Conference: "Be the One" - Sept. 12-14

Join us for a weekend of spiritual renewal, personal growth, and community, centered on becoming the women God calls us to be. Throughout the weekend, you'll hear from nationally recognized speakers who offer inspiring and practical insights for deepening your faith journey. There will be opportunities to participate in Mass, Confession, and Eucharistic Adoration. At the Randolph Riverfront Center in Downtown Alexandria, LA. Tickets available now! <https://bit.ly/GenesisofEve2025>

Discalced Carmelites - Sept. 13

The Order of the Discalced Carmelites holds its monthly meeting at 9:00 a.m. every second Saturday, at

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

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. **If you plan to attend.....Please call Mary Jo McCoy at the numbers listed above OR Deacon Bill Travis at 318 640-2827 or 318 664-7069 and someone will meet you at the Maryhill gate.

Catechist Enrichment Day - Sept. 20

Now that school has begun and CCD is soon to be underway, don't forget to register to attend Catechist Enrichment Day, Saturday, Sept. 20, 8:00 – 3:30 p.m., at Maryhill Renewal Center. Don't miss this opportunity to begin the catechetical year with renewed insight into the Sacraments, OCIA/Tribunal process, how to make scripture come alive, and more. If your role involves sharing the faith with others, please join us for this day of relational ministry enrichment. There is no cost to attend but please register no later than September 10 to reserve your space. https://form.jotform.com/dcnjlavergne/2025_Catechist_Day Or contact Deacon Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org

Annual Echo Church Fair - Sept. 27-28

Saturday, Sept. 27: Gumbo served at 5:00 p.m.; Bingo 5:30-9:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 28: Dinner served at 10:30 a.m.; Bingo begins at 10:30 a.m. and plays until 1:30 p.m. To buy Raffle Tickets call Brigitte Kelso (318) 452-6615. Bingo Information call Charisa Bernard (318) 792-8454. Dinner Tickets call Erica Ducote (318) 264-5615 or buy from all Knight of Columbus members.

All other fair information please call Mark Gauthier (318) 787-3252; Cory Bernard (318) 308-1359; Randy Guillory (318) 709-0443; Austin Ducote (318) 264-2816. Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council #9294.

Retrouvaille Weekend: Marriage Help - October 3-5

Restore. Refresh. Renew. Retrouvaille is a Christian marriage program, Catholic in origin. A team of three couples and a clergy member team present the Retrouvaille weekend. The presenting team members have grown through serious disillusionment, pain, and conflict in their own relationships. They offer hope as they share their personal stories of struggle, reconciliation, and

healing. Our next Weekend Program will be held at Grand Coteau Retreats in Grand Coteau, LA on October 3-5. BatonRougeCoordinators@helpourmarriage.org

Silent Retreat - October 10-12

The Discalced Carmelite Community of Alexandria invites you to attend a Silent Retreat at Maryhill Renewal Center on October 10-12. Retreat master will be Fr. Jorge Marie Cabrera, OCD. The theme for the retreat is "Our Lady in Sacred Scripture". For more information please contact Mary Jo McCoy at (318) 346 6860 or (318) 481 9638.

SAVE THE DATE! Cabrini Fest - Nov. 1

St. Frances Cabrini School is dedicated to making a Catholic education possible for everyone. We depend greatly on our sponsors and fundraisers to help keep tuition costs low while providing the best education possible. Cabrini Fest is a major event we sponsor every year. It's a fun community-wide event that includes booths, raffles, bingo, talent show, live entertainment and a take-out dinner at the end of the day. This year, 2025 Cabrini Fest will be held on Saturday, Nov. 1, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE! What is my Vocation? Vocations Panel - Nov. 8

Do you want guidance in learning about God the Father's specific plan for you? Do you feel called to give more and be more? Do you have questions about how to discern your Vocation? Join us on Saturday, Nov. 8 at St. Mary's Assumption Church, Cottonport.

The day will include an extensive panel of vocations experts made up of religious brothers, sisters, and priests. Open to ALL YOUTH and anyone discerning his/her vocation. More details to follow.

SAVE THE DATE! Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference - Dec. 6

For all students in grades 6-8. Get ready for a powerful one-day event just for middle schoolers! The 2025 Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference is happening Saturday, Dec. 6 and you won't want to miss it. This year's theme is "Ablaze" taken from Deuteronomy 4:24: "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire."

The day will include talks, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, live worship, lunch and dinner, epic games, and a few surprises along the way.

Hosted by Paul Hood; Keynote Speaker: Christ Padgett; Worship Leader: Grae McCullough; plus special guest speakers throughout the day!

Registration opens September 16, 2025.

Come encounter Jesus in a new way, make new friends, and fan the flame of faith into something unforgettable.

Church Today News Deadlines

September 22
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Sept. 12

October 27
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Oct. 16



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September 2025

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<p>SEPTEMBER 1</p> <p>LABOR DAY PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Women's Faith Formation Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m. OLPS Divine Providence Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. M. GUIDRY</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Faith of the Fathers Series 6:30-7:30 p.m. OLPS Church, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. D. HART</p>	<p>4</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. R. HUMPHRIES</p>	<p>5</p> <p>FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. H. IMAMSHAH</p>	<p>6</p> <p>FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. R. JOHNSON</p>	<p>7</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. S. JONES</p>
<p>8</p> <p>When You Pray series 6:00-7:30 p.m. St. Rita Holy Family Center, Alexandria</p> <p>FEAST of the NATIVITY of the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PRAY FOR FR. T. KENNEDY</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Women's Faith Formation Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m. OLPS Divine Providence Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. P. KULIGOWSKI</p>	<p>10</p> <p>GIVE BACK night at Outback Steakhouse 4:00-10:00 p.m. benefiting St. Frances Cabrini School, Alexandria</p> <p>Faith of the Fathers Series 6:30-7:30 p.m. OLPS Church, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. P. KUNNUMPURAM</p>	<p>11</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. L. LAFLEUR</p>	<p>12</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. M. LAIRD</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Disalced Carmelites Monthly Meeting 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center</p> <p>Beginning Experience -- Maryhill Renewal Center</p> <p>Genesis of Eve Women's Conference -- Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. P. LAPALME</p>	<p>14</p> <p>FEAST of the EXALTATION of the HOLY CROSS PRAY FOR DCN. J. LAVERGNE</p>
<p>B.R.E.A.T.H.E. Grief Support 6:00-7:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria</p> <p>When You Pray series 6:00-7:30 p.m. St. Rita Holy Family Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. G. LEBLANC</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Women's Faith Formation Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m. OLPS Divine Providence Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. V. MANUEL</p>	<p>17</p> <p>VIRTUS Training 6:00-9:00 p.m. St. Peter Church, Bordelonville</p> <p>Faith of the Fathers Series 6:30-7:30 p.m. OLPS Church, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Gift of Life Banquet 6:00 p.m. Randolph Riverfront Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. R. MATHEWS</p>	<p>19</p> <p>5th Annual Bishop Bowl Football Game St. Mary's vs. HSM 7:00 p.m. Holy Savior Menard, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. P. MCCUSKER</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Catechist Enrichment Day 8:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center.</p> <p>VIRTUS Training 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon St. Michael the Archangel Church, Leesville</p> <p>SPANISH Womens ACTS Retreat hosted by Our Lady of Guadalupe-- Maryhill Renewal Center</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. D. MEADE</p>	<p>21</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. L. MELCHER</p>
<p>B.R.E.A.T.H.E. Grief Support 6:00-7:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. J. MICHALCHUK</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Women's Faith Formation Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m. OLPS Divine Providence Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. K. MICHIELS</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Faith of the Fathers Series 6:30-7:30 p.m. OLPS Church, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. R. MITCHELL</p>	<p>25</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. C. MORGAN</p>	<p>26</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. D. MOREAU</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Church Fair -- St. Francis de Sales Church, Echo</p> <p>Womens ACTS Retreat hosted by St. Mary's Assumption -- Maryhill Renewal Center</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. L. MOREAU</p>	<p>28</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. T. MOULARD</p>
<p>B.R.E.A.T.H.E. Grief Support 6:00-7:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria</p> <p>When You Pray series 6:00-7:30 p.m. St. Rita Holy Family Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. A. MULLOTH</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Women's Faith Formation Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m. OLPS Divine Providence Center, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR DCN. S. NEWBURY</p>	<p>OCTOBER 1</p> <p>Faith of the Fathers Series 6:30-7:30 p.m. OLPS Church, Alexandria</p> <p>PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL</p>	<p>2</p> <p>MEMORIAL of the HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS PRAY FOR FR. M. NOEL</p>	<p>3</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. K. OBIEKWE</p>	<p>4</p> <p>OLPS Fall Festival 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, Alexandria</p> <p>Retrouvaille Marriage Help Weekend -- Grand Coteau</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. J. O'BRIEN</p>	<p>5</p> <p>PRAY FOR FR. D. O'CONNOR</p>

2025 Back-to-School!



ALEXANDRIA. Holy Savior Menard Junior High students excited to be on Campus, some for the first time and some returning as 8th graders!



BUNKIE. Each class took a group photo in the gym on the first day of classes at St. Anthony School in Bunkie.



ALEXANDRIA. Fr. Chad Partain blesses staff and classrooms to begin the school year.



PLAUCHEVILLE. Students at St. Joseph Elementary School, Plaucheville are ready to begin classes.



ALEXANDRIA. Our Lady of Prompt Succor School staff attended the Back-to-School Mass celebrated by Bishop Robert Marshall at St. Rita Church in Alexandria.



NATCHITOCHES. Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated Back-to-School Mass with students and staff at St. Mary's Catholic School in Natchitoches.



MOREAUVILLE. The staff and faculty of Sacred Heart School, Moreauville, attended the Back-to-School Mass celebrated by Bishop Robert Marshall at St. Rita Church.



COTTONPORT. Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated Back-to-School Mass for St. Mary's Assumption School in Cottonport.