



Ascension of the Lord

Jesus said to his disciples, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" Then he led them out as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God.

Luke 24:46-53

Pentecost Sunday with Bishop Braxton

LAKE CHARLES -- The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton will host an informal discussion with interested Catholics of the Diocese of Lake Charles on Sunday, May 30, 2004, Pentecost Sunday, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Daily Mass Chapel of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

"Pentecost Sunday is the day that the church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles," Bishop Braxton said. "The Coming of the Spirit is appropriately described as 'The Birthday of the Church.'"

The event provide an opportunity for members of the local church to ask the Bishop questions about any aspect of the life of the Church - Scripture, Liturgy, Doctrine, Pastoral Practices, Ecumenism, Parish Life, Vocations and other topics. The gathering will not be a lecture but a dialogue and conversation.

"I want to create an environment where the People of God of Lake Charles will feel free and comfortable to express their thoughts, feelings and suggestions about any Church related topic that is important to them," Bishop Braxton said.

The Bishop is confident that the Holy Spirit will be present in such a gathering of the church. He trusts in the words of Jesus himself who told us "where three or more of you are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst."

All are welcome, according to the Bishop. He especially invites the newly baptized, the newly confirmed and those who have been received into the Catholic Church as well as members of parish leadership organizations, such as parish pastoral councils, liturgy committees, religious education coordinator, catechists, lecturers and eucharistic ministers.

Vocation retreat June 11-13 at Maryhill Retreat Center

PINEVILLE - A vocation retreat, jointly sponsored by the Dioceses of Lake Charles, Lafayette, Alexandria and Baton Rouge will be held June 11-13 at Maryhill Retreat Center.

The retreat is intended to assist young men, 16 years or older, who are seriously discerning a call to diocesan priesthood. It invites participants to look at their spiritual journey in light of the Lord Jesus' call to a life of personal holiness.

The retreat will help a young man to reflect on and judge how best to respond to God's call to the priesthood. Bishops and Vocation Directors of the dioceses are scheduled to be in attendance. The retreat is staffed by seminarians from all four dioceses.

For more information contact your church pastor or call the Rev. Timothy Goodly, Director of Vocations, at 436-8093.

LC native Bishop Olivier retires

WASHINGTON -- Pope John Paul II accepted the resignation of Washington, DC Auxiliary Bishop Leonard Olivier, S.V.D. on Tuesday, May 18. Bishop Olivier is a Lake Charles native.

Bishop Olivier was born October 12, 1923, in Lake Charles. He attended Sacred Heart School in Lake Charles and then St. Augustine's Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 29, 1951. He served in a variety of positions with the Missionaries of the Divine Word and was Vicar for Black Catholics in the Dio-

cese of Lafayette when he was appointed Titular Bishop of Legia and Auxiliary Bishop of Washington on November 10, 1988.

The Holy Father appointed Father Martin Holley, pastor of Little Flower Church, Pensacola, Florida, as Titular Bishop of Rusubisir and Auxiliary Bishop of Washington.

Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, made the announcements.

Bishop-designate Holley was born on December 31, 1954, in Pensacola, Florida.

Our Teenagers are the Hope of the Church: A Reflection Amidst the Spring Confirmations

During the nearly three and one-half years that I have served as Bishop of Lake Charles, I have spent a great deal of time with teenagers. I make a special effort to talk to them when I am on a Parish Visitation or when I see them at Books-a-Million or at the movies. I visit with them at various public high schools in Southwest Louisiana. I see them often at St. Louis Catholic High School. I continue to seek out funds for the benefit of St. Louis's *Opening Windows* Capital Campaign which is transforming the physical campus in order to make it a better setting for the personal and spiritual transformation of the students. This year I began the practice of inviting small groups of seniors to my Residence for Saturday or Sunday evening Mass in the chapel followed by pizza dinner and lively, informal discussion around the dining room table. I have continued my custom of celebrating the Graduation Mass for the seniors, presiding at their Commencement and giving the St. Louis Commencement Address.

In this year's address I reminded them that diligence and hard work are necessary if they wish to achieve lofty goals and make genuine contributions to the community as Christian ladies and gentlemen with these words:

"The heights by great men (and women) reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight. But they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night." -Longfellow, "The Ladder of St. Augustine"

My primary and most intense contact with teenagers in the Diocese of Lake Charles, however, has been in all of the activities associated with the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation which takes place when our teenagers are juniors in high school. Confirmation is the sacrament in which the Church prays fervently that the Holy Spirit (the Love of God the Father and God the Son) will enter the lives of the *confirmandi* (those about to be confirmed) in a new and radical way and the Bishop anoints them with oil. It is also, unfortunately, the last formal contact that many of these teenagers will have with the Church until they present themselves for the sacrament of Christian Marriage.

I have spent a great deal of time working with Mrs. Sandy Gay, Secretary for Christian Formation, Msgr. Jace Eskind, Director of Liturgy, pastors, catechists, parish music ministers, parents, sponsors and the Confirmation candidates themselves radically restructuring the Confirmation preparation program in our Diocese. This has meant reminding everyone involved that Confirmation (the last of the three Sacraments of Initiation after Baptism and Eucharist) is a very important and very serious step in the spiritual journeys of those being confirmed, their sponsors and their parents. (It is not primarily about dressing up, receiving gifts and getting your photograph taken with the Bishop.) It is about a deeper commitment to being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ for the newly confirmed, their sponsors and their parents. To the extent that this is not the case the ceremony is little more than a long night in Church.

We have developed a core curriculum of the themes of the Catholic Faith that must be studied. We have also designated specific catechetical texts that must be used in the program. We have insisted that teenagers who can memorize the lyrics of popular music can memorize the fundamentals of their Faith. We have made it clear to all that families wishing their children to be confirmed must make their sacramental preparation a HIGH priority. This means that parents are expected to participate in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist with their children regularly, make sure their

children take part in all of the confirmation classes, the service projects and participate with them at the Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil). It also means that parents and sponsors should participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation with them and set for them an authentic example of Christian living. Furthermore, pastors are expected to personally oversee and be



Bishop Edward K. Braxton

involved personally in their parish Confirmation program. This means securing a commitment from Confirmation candidates, parents and the sponsors to fulfill all the requirements of the Confirmation Program; making certain that the Catholic faith is being taught correctly; getting to know the candidates personally and assessing their preparedness.

I have personally shown my added support for Confirmation preparation by meeting with the *confirmandi*, their sponsors, parents and teachers in three locations in the Diocese at the beginning of their program and sharing with them my own vision of the life in Christ that is generated by the sacrament and the Church's call to holiness of life. I also read carefully each of the personal letters I ask the students to write to me in which they ask to be confirmed (not "to confirm"), share their personal faith, and explain why they have chosen a particular confirmation patron saint as a role model for their Christian life (not because they are the patron saint of music, sports, or travel). I urge them to learn about contemporary saints (such as St. Katharine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, who actually walked the streets of Lake Charles as an educator of the poor) whose lives have had an impact on our own time.

Confirmation is always celebrated during this Easter season between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday. Since I have Confirmation almost every evening during this time I am very mindful of our teenagers in my prayers each day. As the day of Confirmation approaches I join the candidates at their day of recollection at Burton Coliseum. On the day of Confirmation itself, I arrive at the parish early in the evening in order to have dinner with the pastor and catechists. During this meal I thank them for their generous service to the youth of their parish and I invite an in depth discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the program so that it can be made even better next year.

About twenty minutes before the ceremony I meet with all of the *confirmandi* and their sponsors. I visit with them informally so they can relax and I explain that the questions I ask are not a test but a conversation between them and their Bishop. I pray with them and I urge them to participate prayerfully in the Easter liturgy in which they will be confirmed. I stress the importance of listening to the scripture readings and thinking about their meaning and relevance to their lives. When the Confirmation begins I try to celebrate enthusiastically and prayerfully as if it is my very first Confirmation. During the homily I walk among the candidates in the church and carry on an always-interesting conversation about the Catholic faith with them. I address them only by their saint's name (a name for life not

for an evening). I never rush through these dialogues since for most of them this will be their only conversation with their Bishop.

I stress with them the importance of following Jesus of Nazareth and not the crowd. I plead with them not to follow those who lie, steal, cheat, belittle others because of their religion, race or nationality, disobey their parents, use deadly drugs, abuse alcohol, and smoke cancer causing cigarettes. I entreat them not to use the mystery-gift of sexuality as simply a source of Saturday night recreation. I remind them that the sexual expression of love belongs in marriage and the family. I beg them not to join the growing numbers of babies having babies. (This year I talk to them about their contemporary, Andrew Weekley, 16, who I should have confirmed on April 13th at St. Joseph's Church in DeRidder. But, sadly, he was killed in an automobile accident on April 5th. I urge them to wear their seat belts, follow the speed limit and not to drink and drive. I remind them of "sister death." "We know neither the hour nor the day.")

I call upon their relatives to put down their cameras and video recorders and actually pray for their dear ones. I warn them that the sacrament is not magic. Their children and grandchildren will follow their example. If they do not pray, go to Mass faithfully, read the Scripture, learn about and live their faith, participate



in the sacrament of Reconciliation, forgive those who offend them and take up their cross and follow Christ, the newly confirmed will not do so either. They will imitate their parents!

After the Confirmation Liturgy is over, I join the newly confirmed and their families at the reception. Instead of posing for photographs, I ask all who wish to take pictures to do so while I am talking to the newly confirmed about Jesus and about their patron saint. I visit with each one of them and urge them not to wash away the Sacred Chrism with which I anointed their forehead. Let it sink in to remind them they have been anointed in Christ.

As I make my way home, the fragrance of the perfumed Chrism is still on my hands. I remember the faces and the names of those I have confirmed. Thomas More, Catherine of Siena, Anthony of Padua, Elizabeth Anne Seton, Francis of Assisi, Edith Stein, Charles Borromeo, Bridget of Erin, Charles Lewanga, Josephine Bakhita, Maximilian Kolbe and Mary, the Mother of Jesus...I pray again that the Holy Spirit will pour out on them the gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Right Judgment, Courage, Knowledge, Reverence, and Wonder and Awe in the Presence of God.

I fall asleep thinking of these dear young people and their families. Through my ministry has God touched the heart of even one of them? Are there future religious Sisters and Brothers, Deacons and Priests among them? Are there saints among them?

Whether they know it or not, they are the hope of the Church!

John Paul II marks his 84th birthday with a day of work

VATICAN CITY — John Paul II observed his 84th birthday on Tuesday, May 18, with a full day of work, though he did make time for a luncheon with his closest aides.

The highlight of this birthday was the publication in Spanish, Italian, Polish, German and French of his new book "Arise! Let Us Go!" about his experiences as archbishop of Krakow, Poland. The book will soon be published in English and Portuguese.

"It has been an ordinary day of work, although not totally ordinary, because it was a very intense day, full of appointments," said Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

"The Pope does not have the habit of celebrating his birthday, but rather his saint's day," Nov. 4, the feast of St. Charles Borromeo, added the director of the Vatican press office.

The Vatican spokesman told Vatican Radio today:

"One sees greater recollection in the Holy Father and a sense of thanksgiving to God for the gift of life. No public celebration was established in the whole of the Vatican. Perhaps, the sole particularity is that the Holy Father invited his closest collaborators of the Curia to dine with him."

Navarro-Valls revealed that the Vatican was inundated by messages of congratulations sent to the Pope, including from non-

Catholics.

"They are heads of state, of government, personalities of politics, art, above all persons who want to express their affection and gratitude to the Pope," the spokesman said.

"Sometimes they send a message written as a letter or sometimes they go to the Bronze Door to leave a message of congratulations for the Holy Father, according to what I was told this morning," he concluded.