



Diocese to celebrate feast of Patron, St. Peter Claver, today

LAKE CHARLES - The Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Administrator of the Diocese of Lake Charles, will lead a prayer service today, Sept. 8, at 6:30 p.m. in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception celebrating the feast day of St. Peter Claver, the patron of the Diocese.

Peter Claver, the son of a Catalan farmer, was born at Verdu, in 1581; he died September 8, 1654. He obtained his first degrees at the University of Barcelona. At the age of twenty he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Tarragona. While he was studying philosophy at Majorca in 1605, Alphonsus Rodriguez, the saintly doorkeeper of the college, learned from God the future mission of his young associate, and thenceforth never ceased exhorting him to set out to evangelize the Spanish possessions in America. Peter obeyed, and in 1610 landed at Cartagena, where for forty-four years he was the Apostle of the Negro slaves. Early in the seventeenth century the masters of Central and South America afforded the spectacle of one of those social crimes which are entered upon so lightly. They needed labor-

ers to cultivate the soil which they had conquered and to exploit the gold mines. The natives being physically incapable of enduring the labors of the mines, it was determined to replace them with Negroes brought from Africa. The coasts of Guinea, the Congo, and Angola became the market for slave dealers, to whom native petty kings sold their subjects and their prisoners. By its position in the Caribbean Sea, Cartagena became the chief slave-mart of the New World. A thousand slaves landed there each month. They were bought for two, and sold for 200 écus. Though half the cargo might die, the trade remained profitable. Neither the repeated censures of the pope, nor those of Catholic moralists could prevail against this cupidity. The missionaries could not suppress slavery, but only alleviate it, and no one worked more heroically than Peter Claver.

Trained in the school of Père Alfonso de Sandoval, a wonderful missionary, Peter declared himself "the slave of the Negroes forever", and thenceforth his life was one that confounds egotism by its

superhuman charity. Although timid and lacking in self-confidence, he became a daring and ingenious organizer. Every month when the arrival of the Negroes was signaled, Claver went out to meet them on the pilot's boat, carrying food and delicacies. The Negroes, cooped up in the hold, arrived crazed and brutalized by suffering and fear. Claver went to each, cared for him, and showed him kindness, and made him understand that henceforth he was his defender and father. He thus won their good will. To instruct so many speaking different dialects, Claver assembled at Cartagena a group of interpreters of various nationalities, of whom he made catechists. While the slaves were penned up at Cartagena waiting to be purchased and dispersed, Claver instructed and baptized them in the Faith. On Sundays during Lent he assembled them, inquired concerning their needs, and defended them against their oppressors. This work caused Claver severe trials, and the slave merchants were not his only enemies. The Apostle was accused of indiscreet zeal, and of hav-

ing profaned the Sacraments by giving them to creatures who scarcely possessed a soul. Fashionable women of Cartagena refused to enter the churches where Father Claver assembled his Negroes. The saint's superiors were often influenced by the many criticisms which reached them. Nevertheless, Claver continued his heroic career, accepting all humiliations and adding rigorous penances to his works of charity. Lacking the support of men, the strength of God was given him. He became the prophet and miracle worker of New Granada, the oracle of Cartagena, and all were convinced that often God would not have spared the city save for him. During his life he baptized and instructed in the Faith more than 300,000 Negroes. He was beatified July 16, 1850, Pius IX, and canonized January 15, 1888, by Leo XIII. His feast is celebrated on the ninth of September. On July 7, 1896, he was proclaimed the special patron of all the Catholic missions among the Negroes. Alphonsus Rodriguez was canonized on the same day as Peter Claver.

Summer is time of learning for Scott Conner

LAKE CHARLES - Summer in Southwest Louisiana is hot, sometimes very wet, and, for college students, a time for some work, perhaps summer school, and during down time, fun. Summer for Scott Conner, a seminarian of the Diocese of Lake Charles going into his second year Theology studies at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, this summer was a time of learning in a real life parish setting.

Under the supervision of the Rev. Daniel Torres, pastor of St. Joseph Church in DeRidder and Director of Vocations for the Diocese, Conner spent his time working with the many ministries of the DeRidder church.

"It was my first time to have an extended period in that part of the Diocese," Conner said. "There were so many things that we would be doing. I was involved with prison ministry, youth ministry, sick and homebound ministry and just watching him as he took care of the administration of his parish."

Of the many experiences of his summer, Conner found the prison ministry at C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center in DeQuincy the most interesting.

"I think as far as just personal enrichment, the prison ministry is what I enjoyed the most, because it was something new to me," Conner said. "I had had limited experience. A few of us had gone to Angola and spent the day there with some of our friends in the seminary from the Baton Rouge diocese and that day left a pretty significant impression on me. It was something that I found not only enriching but felt comfortable doing and enjoyed."

"It is not every day where you are in a setting like that, and I found that it was remarkable the faith that a lot of the inmates have," he continued. "There was a receptivity to the Gospel that you don't encounter at that high of a level, and that surprised me. On the flip side there was also a lot of despair. So I thought that I would like to do because of those two reasons. Because of the people who were hungry for the faith and the people who seemed to be in need of something to give them hope."

"It was challenging because at some point you felt that you didn't have the answers and you just had to be Christ at that moment, to just help them to understand that time brings the answers rather than you or I," Conner said. "And that it is just through persevering and



Scott Conner

prayer and continually trying to understand the Faith. The prison ministry was very satisfying and it is something I look forward to doing in the future."

Along with the prison ministry, Conner found working with the youth of St. Joseph to be the most satisfying.

"We worked with the youth program," Conner said. "Father Torres had me actively involved with the youth doing weekly activities. Sometimes we just did fun things and then sometimes we were learning about the Faith. Slowly it started to re-emerge and I said on my last weekend there that I think that I learned just as much from them as they learned from me."

"That was the area that I was hoping to get some more experience with, because my experience previously had been in nursing homes and hospitals and things like that," he continued. "I hadn't done a lot of work with young people in the diocese or even at seminary."

"Those are the things that really stand out," Conner said. "They left me feeling really refreshed and looking forward to ordination. It was a good experience being in a parish because it reflected the life of a priest, living there and ministering in different types of ministry. Seeing something different from the daily activities at the seminary."

Back at Notre Dame now Conner is taking a full load of classes. "It will be a pretty heavy load. I try to take an extra class or so just because I enjoy the extra course work."

Along with classes he will be anticipating next summer's Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) component of his training, an 11-week stint in a hospital setting serving as a chaplain.

Summer for seminarians is not just for fun, it's for continued learning.

Catechetical Conference set Sept. 30

LAKE CHARLES -- The Office of Religious Education of the Diocese of Lake Charles will host its annual Catechetical Conference Saturday, Sept. 30, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at St. Louis Catholic High School, 1620 Bank Street.

Mike Carotta, a catechetical consultant for Harcourt Religion Publishers, will be the keynote speaker. He has worked with the spirituality of adolescents for over 35 years in education, pastoral and clinical settings and teaches courses at Boston College, Creighton University, The University of San Francisco, St. John's School of Theology and Loyola University of New Orleans.

For more information call 337-439-7426, Ext. 19.



Nearly 2,000 young people, children and adults attended the recent daylong Proud 2B Catholic Music Festival held at the Sulphur High School Freshman campus. The faith-filled event for the entire family featured celebration of the Eucharist, pictured here, along with a variety of Christian music, motivational speakers, and ministry talks. The Second Annual Proud 2B Catholic Music Festival is scheduled for September 8, 2007.

Even in the heat they "SHINE" d on

LAKE CHARLES - In the heat of the Louisiana summer they came. They traveled from the far north (Wisconsin and Minnesota), the not so far north (Dallas) and the near north (Moss Bluff). They came to Southwest Louisiana, where the high temperature reaches the middle to upper 90s, the relative humidity lurks at the 50 percent mark and the heat index spikes between 105 and 110 degrees. They came because they saw those who were in need of help and they followed Christ's admonition to give of themselves.

"Extreme Work Groups" from SHINE, an acronym for Serving Him In the Needy and the Elderly, were in numerous areas of the Diocese of Lake Charles in early August. Teams of young people worked at Abraham's Tent, St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School, and at sites cleaning up storm debris, sanding, and painting homes in Lake Charles, Hackberry, Creole, Cameron, Starks, Welsh, Sulphur, Moss Bluff and Grand Lake.

SHINE, now in its seventh year of summer work camps around the country, began in the Archdiocese of Houston. A husband and wife team of youth ministers, Dawn and Augie Leal, saw the need to

teach the youth by experience when they began traveling to communities where people were in need.

The volunteers who came to Southwest Louisiana began each day with morning Mass and then "they went out to be Christ in service," Dawn Leal said. "Each evening they get together in a retreat format and one night during the camp we have Eucharistic Adoration."

Teresa Seale of Austin, who came with a group from Dallas, was making her first trip with SHINE. "I could have spent a lot of time this summer, just laying out and being at home but what has really made me happy is doing something to help others, to see their faith," she said. "I am happy to serve God by serving others."

Another first time SHINE worker, J.D. Kooistra, a high school freshman from Rochester, Minn., said, "I had heard about it from other kids in my class who went last year and thought it would be a lot of fun to come and help people."

Kooistra thought the heat had been pretty rough during the week but was quick to note that back home, "We have had temperatures over 100 this past week," a circumstance not that well

known to Minnesota.

Shelley Funderburk, who graduated from Sam Houston and will be at McNeese this fall, has been working with SHINE for the past three years. "It's been exciting being able to serve our own community," she said. "It feels really good."

Shauna Maney, who lives just outside Milwaukee, Wis., worked with SHINE in New Mexico last summer. "I had such a good experience last year that I came down here with 20 of my best friends because Louisiana seemed to need a lot help, so we chose to come."

Stephen Schweitzer lives in Appleton, Wis., which is about 30 minutes from Green Bay, is in his first year with SHINE but has taken part in a program called Young Neighbors in Action in St. Louis, working in a food pantry and clothes closet.

"I came to help but also to get away from cell phones and other summer time distractions," Schweitzer said. "I wanted to focus on God through helping here and I really think we did that. A lot of good people are part of SHINE. We saw the life in others, young kids my age really came to be close together."

Tony Vasinda is an adult

leader with SHINE who has been involved with youth groups like this for 12 or so years. "I have been involved with SHINE for six years," Vasinda said. "I was very impressed with Dawn and Augie. This provides kids with a lived experience, a life of lived service, and special encouragement. They are a great group of kids."

At one location where the group worked, the desperation of a small child caused the young people to give not only of their time and talent but of their resources as well.

"There was this little girl at a house we painted who was very emotional each day when we left, thinking we wouldn't come back," he said. "She had very little as far as real toys, having lost everything in the storm so our group and a number of other groups as well raised over \$80 to buy toys for her to play with."

"You can't teach kids something like this in a classroom setting," he concluded. "They can see the face of Christ much better this way. They have been impressed by the spirit of the people, even those who don't have many material possessions any longer."