



Workers begin unloading a truckload of food from Second Harvest at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Lake Charles. The Catholic Service Center will receive food from the group to aid those in need in Southwest Louisiana. Helping with the job were, from left, Alvin Elzy, Calvin Greene, Able Powers, Mary Ann Johnson, and Filmore Johnson.

## Appeal helps insure "safe environment"

**LAKE CHARLES** - Making certain the Diocese of Lake Charles continues to comply with the mandates of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, approved by the Bishops of the United States on June 14, 2002 as a result of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, was Bernell Ezell's primary role when she came to the Diocese more than two years ago to head the Office of Child and Youth Protection. Since July she has the added responsibilities of directing the Office of Evangelization and coordinating the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

The operation of these offices relies in no small measure on the Diocesan Services Appeal, formerly known as the Bishop's Services Appeal, which begins this weekend. Your contributions to the Appeal make the administration of these programs more effective, enabling Ezell to serve more people.

The main role of the Ezell's office is to provide training for those people who work with minors, affording a "safe environment" for the youth.

"We must comply with all of the mandates of the Charter," Ezell said. "Everyone who has regular contact with minors whether they are employees, volunteers, or clergy must be trained annually on the subject of child safety and child protection. They must be criminally background checked and reference checked. We have to have documentation that this has been done on everyone with regular contact with minors.

"Many of our parishes have been wise in assuming that anyone who works in a reception area or as a maintenance person, even though their ministry is not ministering to children, could at any time have contact with minors, even on a daily basis when families come or groups come," she said. "Many parishes have included those personnel in the training.

"This office needs to not only be consistent with Charter requirements but be open and inviting to parishes, so that they will call us with any questions about screening," she continued. "I want them to not feel threatened that we are an enforcement tool only. We are here to discuss things and help them come up with the best and safest solution."

The training program begins with a two-hour live class, usually facilitated by Ezell. Each person must be re-certified each year by taking a one-hour refresher course. To make this easier, people can use the Diocesan web site, [www.lcdiocese.org](http://www.lcdiocese.org), to go through the re-certification process.

"We issue passwords and logins after they have completed the initial process," Ezell said. "Then they go online, read articles, answer questions, and they can be updated."

Reports can be generated to keep track on who has completed re-certification.

The Diocese is fully compliant with the Charter and has gone through three audits of its "safe environment" program.

"Audits are part of the Charter," she said. "We have had three. The first audit was light because the Charter had only just begun to be implemented here. So there wasn't that much but there were lot of corrections because it was very new. Just about every diocese across the country had things to work on. I have been here for the last two and we did fine."

A fourth audit is expected soon but no firm date has been given, according to Ezell. One of the most important things that the auditors look for is an open line of communication with the public.

"We have to periodically say to the community "if anyone has been hurt in the name of the Church, please contact us, we care," Ezell said. "That is the biggest issue, telling the public that we care and we are willing to help you heal."

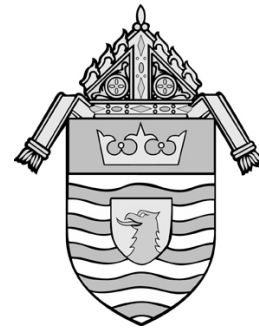
Another mandate of the Charter is for the Diocese to have a victim's assistance coordinator, who is there to help them heal and to help them with counseling. Father Whitney Miller serves in that role for the Diocese. He can be reached at 337-436-7275, Ext. 238 or via e-mail at [whitney.miller@lcdiocese.org](mailto:whitney.miller@lcdiocese.org).

"It is important that contact numbers and contact information always be available to the public," Ezell continued. "We have a brochure that goes to the parishes and that I give out anytime I do training. It not only has diocesan numbers but also civic numbers, such as local child protective services in each parish. We encourage people to report any incidents."

Ezell's work with Evangelization and RCIA is just getting off the ground, but she has some pretty strong feelings.

"Evangelization has to blend with all other offices," she said. "Evangelization is a tool to bring people to the Church. We have a couple of ideas we would like to promote. We are working on possibly restarting the "Welcome Home" program, although we will probably wait until Lent. We must be really sure that we keep the people who are already going to Church well maintained and fed spiritually. Through their example others see the peace of Christ in them and they will want that and that's the biggest invitation for me, to witness the people and how they live and say, "I want that."

**The gifts made to the annual Appeal by the many generous Catholics in the Diocese of Lake Charles make it possible for the programs of this Local Church to continue. Please remember the many people who are aided by the ministries offered by the Diocese and consider your own gift, whether large or small, to the 2006-2007 Diocesan Services Appeal.**



## DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

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Dear People of God of the Diocese of Lake Charles,

I recently came across the following story. A farmer vowed to give God one of two calves his cow delivered. His wife asked, "Which calf is God's?" He said, "It doesn't matter. I'll give the Lord one when they are grown." A few weeks later, he came into the house looking very sad. "What's wrong?" asked his wife. He replied, "The Lord's calf died last night." We smile at that story, but it illustrates a typical attitude. Rather than facing the fact that God owns everything, we see earnings as ours and give God what's left over, if anything. Giving is not returning a portion of our resources to God - it is acknowledging His ownership of all we have and are! The article concludes, "Does your giving reflect God's ownership of your resources?"

The generosity you have shown to the Bishop's Services Appeal over the years has been greatly appreciated and your continued support at this time to the Diocesan Services Appeal reflects your belief that God is the "owner" of all you have and shows the love you have to share from your blessings with the people of Southwest Louisiana. Your monetary gift to this endeavor is an expression of your sacrifice and your willingness to help others.

Your financial support of the services of the diocese will continue to provide for the operation of the Offices of Catholic Schools, Religious Education, Youth Ministry and Adult Education, and Evangelization. They will make possible the ministry to the hungry, the homeless, and others less fortunate, through the Catholic Service Center. Retreats and spiritual programs at Tabor Retreat House and the Saint Katharine Drexel Conference Center at Saint Charles Center cannot take place without your help. The important Offices of Vocations and Seminarians will be able to increase their efforts to seek men and women considering the call of the Holy Spirit to serve the Church as priests and sisters, so urgently needed in our Diocese. Because you are willing to show your love of Christ by giving The Seafarers' Center at the Port of Lake Charles will be able to aid thousands of sailors visiting our region and the Office of Family Life will help hundreds of couples prepare for the life-long commitment of Christian marriage. The Office of Communications will be able to continue publishing the *Catholic Calendar*, produce and air our hour-long program on Sunday mornings, *Glad Tidings*, and air the 9:30 AM Sunday Mass on the radio from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception with your support.

We tell people we love them all the time. Our annual Appeal provides each of us with an opportunity to put those words into action. Remember your gifts, no matter what size, provide for the continuation and growth of the many programs and ministries provided through the Diocese of Lake Charles. Please continue to provide support to the "larger church" by making a selfless gift to the 2006-2007 Diocesan Services Appeal. Your action will make the work of the Church possible. Thank you for your generosity.

Devotedly yours,

Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig

Diocesan Administrator



The priests of the Diocese of Lake Charles recently attended their semi-annual retreat at Tabor Retreat House of Saint Charles Center. Rev. Don Piraro, the Director of Continuing Formation of Clergy, is shown speaking to the group following Morning Prayer. Msgr. Chester Borski, a priest of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston seated at Fr. Piraro's right, served as retreat master.

## Family Life operates more effectively with your gifts

**LAKE CHARLES** - The Office of Family Life of the Diocese of Lake Charles, overseen by Kathy Owen, is responsible for providing marriage preparation programs for Catholic engaged couples. Owen also works with programs aimed at marriage enrichment as well as working with the singles ministry. She also heads the Office of Pro Life for the Diocese, whose aim is to safeguard the sanctity of all life from conception to the time of natural death.

Without contributions to the Diocesan Services Appeal, which begins this weekend, Nov. 4-5, Owen's job would be much more difficult. The Diocesan Services Appeal, formerly known as the Bishop's Services Appeal which had been held in the Diocese since our establishment in 1980, provides funding for Owen's ministries and in whole or in part every program operated under the auspices of the Diocese.

Couples who want to marry in the Church must contact their parish priest six months prior to the wedding date. The priest will counsel them on many things but in most cases the preparation for marriage comes from programs run by Owen.

"They will meet with the priest," she said. "Some parishes also have mentor couples. This gets the engaged couple involved with a married couple in the parish who they can turn to in the future, when disillusionment

happens, which it always does."

Many parishes are doing more to aid their engaged parishioners with marriage prep, according to Owen. She sees that trend particularly in larger parishes in the Diocese

Marriage enrichment is also an important aspect of Owen's ministry. She provides a marriage enrichment day each year for married couples.

"We don't serve marriage at all like I think we should," she said. "Parishes are strapped doing many different things. I believe there would be a lot less divorce if we served couples a little better, offering them opportunities for enrichment. Maybe once a year a parish does something but it's not ongoing and it's not in depth like it needs to be."

The "singles' ministry is another aspect of the Family Life Office that helps the divorced, separated, and widowed as well as those who have never married.

"I use a number of nationally used programs, Beginning Experience and Coping," Owen said. "They are successful and very beneficial."

"Being single again, following a divorce or death is a grief process," she continued. "You have to work through the grief. These programs are excellent, very healing, and healthy."

"Coping is the first and the introduction,

then there is Beginning Experience," Owen said. "People have to have been single for six months to take part in Beginning Experience while Coping is for anyone at any point in the process."

Owen also works with Baptismal Preparation programs as that is a great time to do marriage enrichment with couples that is missed a lot to help with parenting skills, marriage enrichment, or just welcoming them back to church.

"Every program and ministry of the Diocese serves as evangelistic outreach for the Church," Owen said. "I use the time I have with engaged couples, about 250 a year, to definitely welcome them to the Church. We know that 50 percent of them or more are living together. We talk about that at the class. It increases their chance of divorce and it is not good, but we don't want to shame them. We want to welcome them, because they are making the right decision now coming to the Church to get married. I really try to give them a good experience of Church in that class."

Once a year Owen puts on a class for validation - for couples who are civilly married that are getting their marriages blessed, or validated by the Church. She notes that in many parishes she is preparing these couples but she likes to offer the class to those who need it.

The Pro Life Office came under her area of responsibility in 2004. The Office is a resource center that also provides hands-on programs and training. Working Parish Coordinators and organizations like New Life Counseling Owen provides information and aid for pro-life activities.

While for most people the abortion issue is seen as the main priority, there are many other areas of the Pro-Life movement that must be taken into consideration.

"In many people's minds today pro-life involves a single focus," Owen said, "But it is much more than fighting abortion."

**The people of the Diocese of Lake Charles are generous people. They have proven that generosity for 26 years by supporting the programs and ministries of the Local Church of Southwest Louisiana. Once again this year please consider making a gift, no matter what the size, to support the Office of Family Life and the Office of Pro-Life, just two of the many programs and ministries provided through the Diocese and maintained by gifts to the Diocesan Services Appeal.**

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