



Elton Louviere, right, and his wife Pat, behind him at left, work on the design of the mural being painted at St. Eugene Catholic Church in Grand Chenier. The mural will span 24 feet wide and 30 feet tall and replaces another mural severely damaged by the wrath of Hurricane Rita in September 2005.

## Louviere creating mural at St. Eugene; repairs continue at other Cameron Parish churches

LAKE CHARLES – While the work of reconstructing and rebuilding the Catholic faith communities in Cameron Parish devastated by Hurricane Rita continues, the efforts of a local artist will make one of them even more of a sight to behold.

Elton Louviere of Moss Bluff was commissioned to paint a mural behind the altar of St. Eugene Church in Grand Chenier, a job that presents the well-known artist with a huge canvas – 24 feet wide and 30 feet high. Louviere's work replaces a previous mural severely damaged by the storm and its aftermath.

At the other churches, work goes on in various stages. Last December construction began at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Cameron while work continues at St. Peter the Apostle in Hackberry. Architectural and engineering plans for Sacred Heart of Jesus in Creole are nearing completion. On-site preparatory work has been nearly completed.

St. Mary of the Lake in Big Lake was rededicated in mid-December by the Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig, pastor and Diocesan Administrator. The chapel at Johnson Bayou, Our Lady of the Assumption, had been repaired in time for Easter 2006.

Damage at St. Patrick Chapel in Sweetlake was slight following the storm and parishioners from the three coastal parishes continue to worship there.

One of Louisiana's most respected artists, Louviere was raised among French-speaking Louisiana sugarcane farmers near Franklin, with a background rich in Southern Cajun culture.

A contemporary realist, Louviere has been praised for his outstanding ability to capture and manipulate light in his paintings. His reputation for accuracy and meticulous detail in his landscapes and wildlife has earned him countless awards at state, regional and national levels, as well as the respect and admiration of collectors and fellow artists.

His one-man shows include an exhibit in the Russell Senate Building in Washington, D.C., and a retrospective of his work in 1991 at the prestigious Norton Museum and Gallery in Shreveport, which included 60 of his major works. He was also declared, by a rare unanimous decision of the judges, the winner of the 1990 Louisiana Duck Stamp competition.

Three books of his paintings have been published: the first, "Images of Louisiana," which is now sold out, and the current offerings, "Louisiana Backroads and Bayous" and "Louviere's Louisiana."

According to Gayle Zembower, the architect for the St. Eugene project, when he saw the mural and how much damage had been done to it and that Father Vincent Vadakkedath, St. Eugene's pastor, wanted a similar image in the repaired church he thought about Louviere.

"The church was so badly damaged," Zembower said. "Wood that had been knocked off from inside had been thrown into back wall. I think the mural was aged a lot more than from normal wear and tear. I talked to Elton and he was enthusiastic about it. He made a sketch and we showed it to a number of people who liked it."

The mural, originally designed by St. Eugene's Rev. Vincent Vadakkedath, was Trinitarian in nature.

"I thought it should be that way," Fr. Vadakkedath said. "You had the Son of God on the cross and above it you had God the Father sending down the Holy Spirit to Jesus. I wanted it to show that the Son was not abandoned by his Father, then I wanted some angels, praising and glorifying God. At the base of the cross, there was Mary, the mother of Jesus, on one side and the Apostle John on the other."

"At least that is the way I wanted it," he said. "In the actual painting of the mural, however, both figures appeared to be female." The idea for the original mural had been in Fr. Vadakkedath's mind since 1994 when first assigned to St. Eugene by Bishop Jude Speyrer.

"We didn't have much money then but later we were able to afford such an image," Fr. Vadakkedath said. "I think Elton will do a fine job on the new mural."

The original images of God, the people, the dove and the cherubs on that mural, executed five or six years ago, were painted on canvas and glued to the wall.

Louviere's depiction will still include Mary, as well as Mary Magdalene, and others standing on a rocky foreground with foothills and mountains in the background. It will also retain the depiction of God the Father and the Holy Spirit as well as the cherubs. Louviere will paint the images directly onto the wall.

Previously the mural ended about six or seven feet above the floor but Louviere's effort will extend from the floor to the ceiling.

Much preparation work goes into such a project, such as getting the exact measurements of the wall – Louviere's canvas for this project. His canvas is 24 feet wide and 30 feet high, after all.

For measuring the large space wall as well as painting it Louviere, assisted by his wife and fellow artist Pat in the project, is using an electric boom lift.

One of the preparatory steps was to clean the wall and smooth the surface with sandpaper. When that began the duo found something interesting on the wall

"When we began just wiping the wall off, we found small pieces of grass stuck to it that must have been blown onto the surface by the storm," said Pat Louviere.

The artist estimates the completion of the new mural will take approximately a month.

## Lenten Regulations

Every Catholic, even children and older adults, should participate in some way in the spiritual disciplines and penitential practices of Lent in order to go up to Jerusalem with Jesus. These are the regulations in the United States.

"Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. This means that we do not eat meat and we have only one full meal. Concerning the Good Friday feast, the Second Vatican Council teaches: "Let the Easter fast be kept sacred. Let it be celebrated everywhere on Good Friday and, where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, so that the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection may be attained with a clear and uplifted mind."

"The other Fridays of the season of Lent are also days of abstinence from meat. The obligation to abstain from meat binds Catholics 14 years and older. The obligation to fast, limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals in the course of the day, binds Catholics from age 18 to 59. Those who are younger or older may freely embrace these disciplines. But, Lenten disciplines should never endanger your health.

"The Friday's of the year outside Lent are also days of penance. Abstaining from meat is the traditional way of observing these days of penance. However, each person is free to replace the traditional abstinence from meat with some other practice of self-denial or personal penance. It is obvious that abstaining from meat is meaningless for vegetarians, who must choose some other form of abstinence. It is equally obvious that replacing meat with a gourmet seafood meal is not in keeping with the spirit of Lent. Abstaining from meat may be replaced on Fridays during the year with abstaining from some other food. It may also be replaced with time spent reading and studying the Scriptures, special prayers, such as the rosary or visits to the Blessed Sacrament, acts of thoughtfulness and charity to those in need, or acts of personal witness to one's faith, such as teaching a religion class or speaking out on the sinfulness of abortion, euthanasia, racism, and other social ills.

"While the season of Lent is the primary period of Catholic penitential practices, these regulations are not intended to limit the occasions for Christian penance. The practice of spiritual discipline is always appropriate during periods of special need for the individual and the larger community.

The Catholic faithful should be reminded of the teaching of Pope Paul VI concerning the seriousness of being faithful to Lenten disciplines. He said that the obligation to follow these disciplines in solidarity with the Church is a serious one. However, Catholics should not become scrupulous in this regard. Failure to observe individual days of penance is not considered a serious matter. However, the faithful should look for ways to do more rather than less. Fast and abstinence on the days prescribed, and works of religion and charity on the Friday's outside Lent, should be considered a minimal response to the call of Jesus to go up to Jerusalem with Him in order that we might experience true Christian conversion in our lives.

DERIDDER – The 2007 Abrazando Cristo mission trip to Managua, Nicaragua will be June 27 through July 4, according to the Rev. Daniel Torres, pastor of St. Joseph Church and Director of Abrazando Cristo.

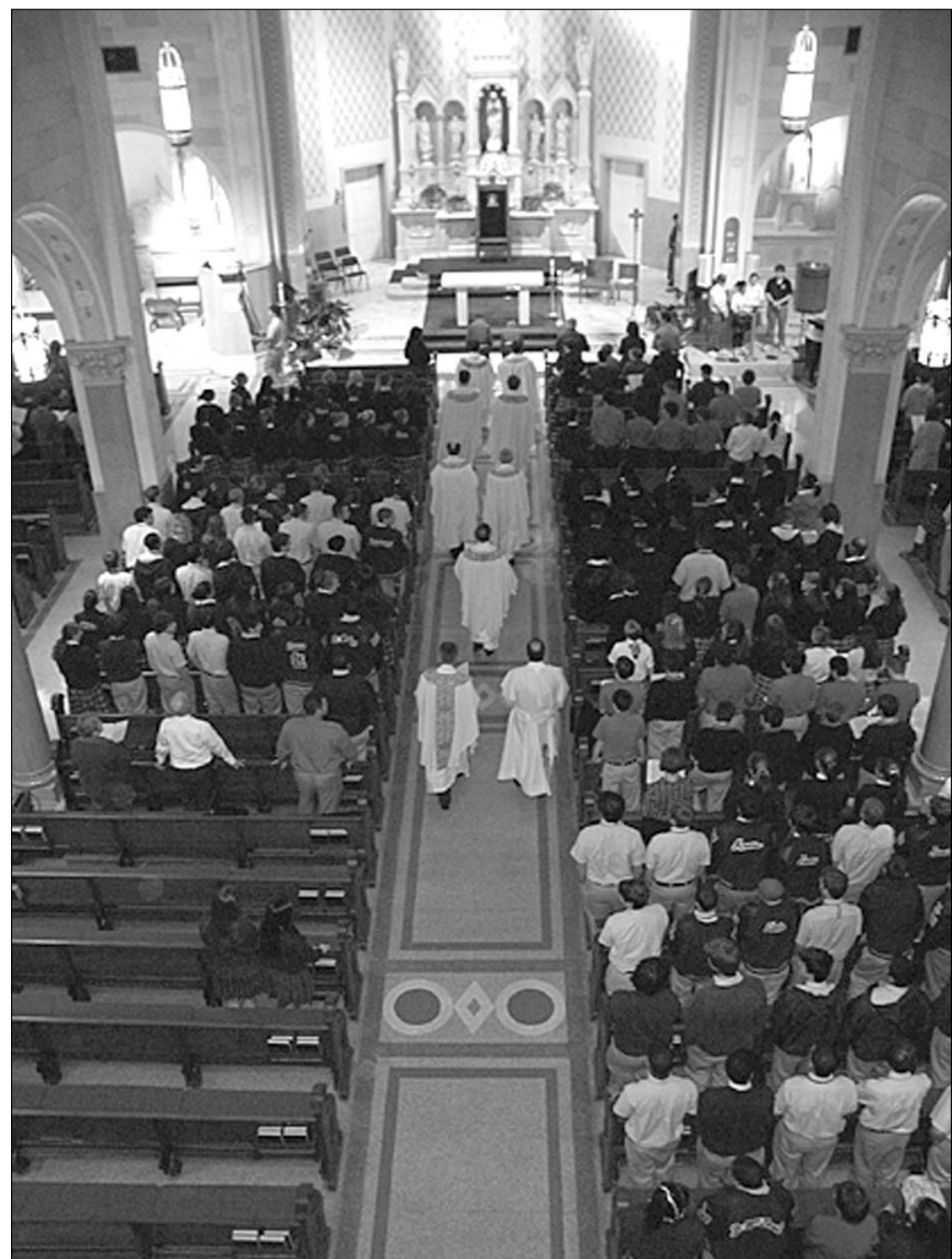
The cost of the trip is \$1,500 per person. The tour price includes all bus transportation, roundtrip airfare from Houston, motel, food,

tips and a shirt.

"If you have always wanted to visit the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, see the face of Christ, and pray, cry, work, sing, laugh and grow with God, then this is the trip for you," Father Torres said.

For more information or to register call Father Torres at St. Joseph Church, 337-463-6878.

Abrazando Cristo mission trip set June 27-July 4



Eighth grade students from the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Lake Charles attended Mass on Wednesday, Jan. 31, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, as part of Catholic Schools Week festivities. Following the Mass, the students visited St. Louis Catholic High School and a tour of the school. The Rev. William Miller, pastor of St. Margaret of Scotland, was the main celebrant of the Mass.