

“A Pilgrimage to the Tomb of St. Peter”

By The Most Reverend Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

“A Pilgrimage to the Tomb of St. Peter” is what the Vatican called my last visit to Rome, beginning Monday, September 17. All of the bishops nominated—that is the official word used—during the last year were to meet for what the Vatican called “an encounter of reflection for the new bishops.” So, I along with approximately 101 new bishops traveled to Rome for seven days of talks and discussions on various topics. We came from Australia, the Philippines, Central and South America, Europe, Lebanon, Iraq and the Ukraine. We spoke German, French, Italian, Arabic, Armenian, English, Spanish, and Polish. We had been pastors of parishes, professors, monks, missionaries, and officials in chanceries. Some were older, some younger. Some were tall, others short, from dozens of different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds. It was the Catholic Church in all of its universality. We all shared one thing in common, our faith in Jesus Christ, in the Church He had founded, and our call by Pope Benedict XVI to serve the Church as shepherds. Praised be Jesus Christ who brings together such an array to remind us of the unity of the Body of Christ in the Church.

The location of the lectures, meetings, and our lodgings was the Center for Studies of a religious society, the Legionaries of Christ. Various speakers, all experts in their fields, gave us usually four, one and a half-hour presentations a day. The titles of the topics com-

municate the wide-range of subjects considered: “The Bishop As a Man of Prayer and the Spiritual Life”, “The Bishop As Father, Brother and Friend to His Priests”, “The Bishop and the Promotion of Vocations and the Care of Seminarians”, “The Bishop and Social Communications”, “Bioethics Today”, “The Bishop and Modern Culture”, “The Parish and the Scarcity of Priests”, and “The Bishop and the Administration of His Diocese”—to name a few.

We always began our day with prayer. Gathering in the Chapel with over three hundred men preparing for the priesthood, the bishops sang Morning Prayer and con-celebrated Mass. A short breakfast followed and soon led us to our busy day. Lectures were mostly in Italian, simultaneous translations in five languages being provided by the men of the Legion. After lunch, we paused for a rest before returning to chapel for sung Evening Prayer and the two concluding lectures of the day. Dinner was served at eight in the evening.

Some have asked me, “What was the highlight?” The lectures were certainly informative, but by far the highlight of the weeklong conference was the audience with Pope Benedict XVI. At the end of the summer the Pope resides at Castel Gandolfo, a small Italian town in the beautiful hills outside of Rome. A bus took us there on Monday morning, September 22, so that we could greet Our Holy Father. Ushers escorted us into a grand room overlooking a lake where we awaited



His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI greets Bishop Provost during an audience at Castel Gandolfo at the end the Bishop's recent visit to the Holy See.

Photos courtesy of Fotografia Felici, Rome.



The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, is seated at left, right behind His Eminence Giovanni Battista Cardinal Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and across from the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. Bishop Provost was among 101 Bishops from around the world named during the past year. The group attended a weeklong series of talks and discussions on various topics at the Vatican in September.

the Pope. He entered to our applause and was seated. The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops introduced us to him, as protocol would dictate. The Pope then addressed us with words of encouragement and exhortation. He told us that our experience with one another should show us that we are not alone in our ministry. “To be in the center of Catholicism, in this Church of Rome, opens your souls to a more lively perception of the universality of the People of God and revives in you care for all the Church,” he reminded us. Inspired by the Gospels and the example of Jesus in prayer (Luke 6:12), the Holy Father exhorted us above all to be men of prayer and contemplation.

When the Pope's remarks were finished, he introduced a blessing, saying, “With these sentiments I give to each of you, your priests, your religious, your seminarians, and your faithful laity in each of your dioceses a special Apostolic Benediction.” Every moment of prayer converged. At every altar I visited, in every Mass I celebrated, I had remembered the intentions of the Diocese of Lake Charles, and now the Vicar of Christ, the Successor of St. Peter, our link with the very historic roots of our Church at its beginnings, raised his hands and gave to each a sign of God's blessing and his love.

Then Gentlemen of the Papal House, a group of men who belong to ancient families who gave popes to the Church, directed us to come forward in single file. The Pope greeted each bishop, saying a few words, asking us about our diocese, receiving our own pledges of devotion and fidelity. Then, we were each given a special cross to wear, as a bishop

does, on his chest, a memento from the Pope, a reminder of Christ's redemptive sufferings. A group photograph was then taken. I had the good fortune, quite by accident, to be seated directly to the side of the Holy Father. He rose, gestured “arrivederci”, and departed the room.

It had been a rare moment. The bishops seemed not to want to leave. They lingered, visited with one another, marveled at the magnificent view of the lake from the windows, considered what a profound privilege it was to be part of the Church in this ministry of service for the Kingdom of God. We would return to our dioceses, take up our duties, and recommit ourselves to the task of the Apostles.

If one theme stood out throughout the “pilgrimage”, it was prayer. On Sunday all of the Bishops joined to celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. Here almost 36 years ago to the day, I had been brought as a young seminarian to Rome to pray at the tomb of St. Peter, and now with 101 bishops I celebrated Mass at the same spot. We descended into the crypt, prayed at the tomb of the “rock”, and paused to pray at the tomb of Pope Paul VI, who had ordained me a priest. It was a powerful and moving moment. Prayer too had been the theme of Pope Benedict's words to us. The Holy Father quoted a famous line from another bishop who lived almost 1900 years ago, St. Ignatius of Antioch. “If the prayer of one or two has such strength, how much more the prayer of a Bishop and all of the Church!”

The Diocese of Lake Charles was with me on that day and on every other day of that “pilgrimage” of faith.

CATHOLIC CALENDAR. page celebrates 25 years

By Morris LeBleu
Editor, Catholic Calendar

The celebration of a Silver Anniversary is represented in today's publication of the Catholic Calendar, having been published for the first time in the American Press on October 15, 1982.

That printing of the full page which now is published every other week, was the reinstatement of a venerable tradition, which actually was begun in March 1897. The Rev. Cornelius Van de Ven, then pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Lake Charles, launched the first Catholic newspaper in Southwest Louisiana, “The Catholic Calendar.” According to an editorial in the October 15, 1982 edition of the Calendar, “It was a monthly newspaper, and was certainly the first Catholic newspaper west of the Mermentau, and most probably the first west of the Atchafalaya.”

In 1902, Father Van de Ven was transferred to Baton Rouge and the editorship of the paper fell to the new pastor of the parish, the Rev. Hubert Cramers. Several issues of the paper followed under Father Cramers but the closing date of publication is uncertain. Father Van de Ven would in 1904 be named Bishop of Natchitoches, which would become the Diocese of Alexandria in 1910.

The reinstatement of The Catholic Calendar came under the watchful eye of the First Bishop of the Diocese, The Most Reverend Jude Speyrer. The donation of 25 issues of the original “Catholic Calendar” invigorated the idea of renewing Father Van de Ven's journalistic efforts, even to the point of using the original masthead, something that has continued through today.

“At my first Spring meeting of Bishops, I happened to overhear Bishop René Gracida describe what he was doing in the Diocese of Pensacola,”

Bishop Speyrer said. “It was then and there that I conceived the idea of similarly using the existing area newspaper and began formulating plans for what eventually became today's Catholic Calendar.”

“My sincere congratulations to Bishop Provost, to the editor and to the staff who continue for Catholics of Imperial Calcasieu what that great Dutch clergyman launched over a hundred years ago,” Bishop Speyrer concluded.

Those 25 issues of the publication were donated to the Diocese of Lake Charles by Mrs. Ethel Doucet of Big Lake, the grand-

daughter of Necesses Reon, an original subscriber. On that October 15, 1982 page is a photo of Mrs. Doucet and Truman Stacey, the director of the Office of Communications, with an original “Catholic Calendar.” The 25 issues, out of a possible 132, rest still in the Archives of the Diocese.

That October 15 issue of the “Catholic Calendar,” Vol. 7, No. 1, featured a travelogue by Bishop Speyrer and a “question and answer” column by the Rev. Sam Jacobs along with an editorial comment. On the page was a story about Father Marshall Boulet explaining the “newly adopted” Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to the East Deanery Pastoral Council. Also the upcoming October 24 initiation of eight deacon candidates into the Ministry of Acolyte, a story about the newly elected Supreme Knight of the Knights of Peter Claver, Lake Charles resident Chester Jones, and a piece about an upcoming presentation of the Separated and Divorced Ministry of the Diocese filled the page.

All our Bishops have written columns in various forms for the Catholic Calendar and the “question and answer” column first written by Father Jacobs, over the years was also penned by Msgr. Ronald Groth, Rev. Fred Russi, and Rev. Herbert May.

The Catholic Calendar had been published on the second and fourth Friday of each month, except in January, July and August, since 1982. The passage of Hurricane Rita changed its frequency to every other week. Diocesan Administrator Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig saw the publication as an excellent method to get out news of the assistance being provided by the Diocese to those in need as well as the stories of the rebuilding of our faith communities. The Catholic Calendar is now published in three other newspapers in Southwest Louisiana in addition to the American Press – The Beauregard Daily News, The Jennings Daily News, and the Cameron Pilot

Twenty-five years - a quarter century! In the grand scheme of the Universe not a long period of time but in those two and one half decades the news of the Diocese of Lake Charles has been provided to all through the regular publication of the Catholic Calendar. We look forward to many more years of providing “a page devoted to local Catholic interests” to the Catholic faithful as well as all other faith traditions.

Did you know that...

- the patron saint of Athletes is St. Sebastian (Jan. 20)
- the patron saint of Altar Servers is St. John Berchmans (Nov. 26)
- the patron saint of bankers is St. Matthew (Sept. 21)
- the patron saint of cancer patients is St. Peregrine of Auzerre (May 16)
- the patron saint of eye diseases is St. Lucy (Dec. 13)

Next Issue: Do you know ... the Patron Saint of the Diocese of Lake Charles?

Catholic Daughters, Habitat building home in Cameron

CAMERON - Officials with Habitat for Humanity, the Louisiana State Court, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, and the National Office of Catholic Daughters will take part in a groundbreaking for a Habitat for Humanity home at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 21.

According to Vickie Broussard, a National Director of Catholic Daughters and Supervisor for Louisiana, the funds for the home, to be owned by Mary Clark have come from a \$25,000 grant from the National Habitat Office, \$10,000 from the National Office of Catholic Daughters, \$15,000 from the Louisiana State Court, and \$25,000 through the local office of Habitat for Humanity.

“The idea was to help a fellow Catholic Daughter who had lost her home to Rita,” Broussard said. “Mary is vice regent of Our Lady Star of the Sea Court 1898 and lost her home to the storm.”

“First Friday Men's Prayer Breakfast” with Bishop Provost begins Nov. 2

LAKE CHARLES - Since his ordination and installation as the Third Bishop of Lake Charles, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost has made it known that evangelization is of great importance. To further his program, he will institute the “First Friday Men's Prayer Breakfast with the Bishop” on Nov. 2 at 7 a.m. in the Chancery Building at 414 Iris Street. His talk at this inaugural breakfast will be “Union and Unity in the Bible.”

In order that adequate planning can be arranged, please call Gaynell Carrier at 439-7400 to register. The event will continue on each First Friday. “This will be a meeting of Catholic men to reflect on the Scriptures within a Catholic context to proclaim the message of the Gospel,” Bishop Provost said. “I want to get out the message of the Gospel as preached by the Catholic Church and to base that proclamation on the scriptures and the tradition of the Church.”

Holding the event on the First Friday of the month is also very important, according to the Bishop.

“The First Friday devotion began centuries ago to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart at a time in the history of the church and world when people felt a

certain distance from God,” Bishop Provost said. “Devotion to the Sacred Heart reminded them of God's love for them through Christ's heart and the Church began to promote it through the efforts of saints such as Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and others.”

St. Margaret Mary received a revelation from God in 1675, which included 12 promises to her and to those who practiced a true devotion to His Sacred Heart, whose crown of thorns represent his sacrifices.

“Primarily, it was a devotion fostered on Friday to recall the passion of Christ at which one was reminded of, in Margaret Mary's words in her vision - “the heart that so loved the world that it spared nothing,” Bishop Provost said. “In these first Friday breakfasts we hope to delve into that mystery of God's love through Christ and his heart. I thought first Friday was a good way to do it.”

While the Bishop foresees other such evangelization events in the future he pointed out that events like the recent Proud2BCatholic Music Festival and events of the Office of Religious Education are all part of the process of evangelization.