



## Louisiana bishops support repeal of state's death penalty law

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops (LCCB) released a statement - "It's Time to Affirm Life Without Exception: The Death Penalty is Not Acceptable" – on Tuesday, April 18.

Members of the Board of Directors of the LCCB include The Most Rev. Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans; The Most Rev. Robert W. Muench, Bishop of Baton Rouge; The Most Rev. Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles; The Most Rev. Michael G. Duca, Bishop of Shreveport; The Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre, Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux; The Most Rev. J. Douglas Deshotel, Bishop of Lafayette; The Most Rev. David P. Talley, Bishop of Alexandria; and The Most Rev. Fernand J. Cheri, Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans.

The statement reads as follows:

Three centuries ago in the year 1722 our state of Louisiana performed its first recorded legal execution. Since that act we have dealt with this stain of the death penalty carried out by our state in the names of its citizens. This current legislative session allows us in a renewed way to move beyond this dark reality of our state's history and toward a state that affirms life without exception. Therefore the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops unequivocally supports both Senator Claitor's SB 142 and Representatives Landry and Pylant's HB 101.

Saint Pope John Paul II, in his historic papal encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), discussed at great length the distinction between a culture of life and a culture of death. In truth, our culture oftentimes mirrors a culture of death rather than one of life. It is clear that the use of the death penalty does not serve as an instrument to address the deep-rooted issues that are the cause of widespread violent crime within our society. Instead it is a "solution" that seduces us into believing that the taking of a life solved a problem,

and in fact forces us further into a culture of death.

Saint Pope John Paul II proclaims "that not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, as God himself pledges to guarantee this. For this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself" (*Evangelium Vitae*, #9). In making this statement, Saint Pope John Paul II reminds us of our call to the foundational theme of Catholic Social Teaching—The Life and Dignity of the Human Person—and that we are to uphold human dignity which does not discriminate between the innocent and guilty. Given that life is valued above and beyond all else, we must advocate for an alternative to the death penalty.

Strong statements of Pope Francis echo the foundational principles laid out by Saint Pope John Paul II's, *Evangelium Vitae*. In a 2015 letter to the president of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty, our Holy Father stated that the death penalty "is an offense against the inviolability of life and dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society...It does not render justice to victims, but rather fosters vengeance. For the ruler of law, the death penalty represents a failure, as it obliges the state to kill in the name of justice. Justice can never be wrought by killing a human being." To this end, we must ask ourselves whether or not there is vengeance in our hearts. In many ways that which we fear—violence itself—has forced us to become proponents of violence. Just as the pursuit of justice should never be perverted by vengeance, fear should never darken the ever-shining light of life.

We remain deeply aware of the pain and grief that victims suffer, especially those who have lost a loved one through the crime of murder or crimes of violence. We pledge to deepen our commitment to persons who have suffered such violence, anguish and pain. Our opposition to the death penalty is not intended in any way to diminish what victims and their fami-

lies have suffered. On the contrary it is a statement which affirms the lives of those lost and the ultimate value of life in general. The stark reality is that capital punishment fails to bring back life that has been lost. It does not provide healing, reconciliation, or even peace to those impacted. Our merciful heavenly Father does provide such things to us when we turn to Him and ask for his love to be poured out onto us.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls us to recognize the balance that must exist between a state which needs to protect its citizenry as well as the appropriateness of the punishment it uses to do so. "If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means...Today...the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically nonexistent" (CCC 2267). We believe that in Louisiana, a just alternative to the death penalty already exists. In 1979, Louisiana adopted a statute requiring all persons convicted of first degree murder to serve a life sentence without benefit of parole if they were not executed for such crimes. Therefore life imprisonment is the appropriate alternative given that it reflects a culture of life by valuing life itself.

The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops asks all men and women of good faith, especially those members of the Louisiana legislature, to search their heart in an effort to seek mercy and love to support the repeal of the death penalty and aid in building a culture of life. We renew the call issued in our 1994 statement *Violence in Our Society: Death is Not the Answer*. "We must believe in the all-powerful redemptive love of God which can change hearts, convert people, and renew all things...We must be a people who see the value of a human life that others might think to be worthless. We must be a people who give praise to the God of all possibilities whose powerful Spirit of Love can renew.

## National Maritime Day, blessing of fleet May 21

LAKE CHARLES – The Apostleship of the Sea and the Seafarers Center of the Diocese of Lake Charles will celebrate National Maritime Day on Sunday, May 21, with the blessing of the fleet at the Lake Charles Civic Center Seawall, according to Deacon Patrick Lapoint, Director of the Seafarers Center.

Deacon Lapoint urges the captains of all size craft to take part in this annual event and have their vessel blessed.

The Rev. Rommel Tolentino, chaplain of the Center, will preside at the memorial prayer service and then bless each craft as they pass the reviewing stand.

National Maritime Day came into being on May 22, 1933 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a joint resolution of Congress designating that day to remember the first transoceanic crossing by the steamship *The Savannah*, which happened in 1819.

In 2005, the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea was designated by the United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops to encourage Catholics in the United States to support and participate in prayer services and remembrance of those who work in the maritime world. The event coincides with National Maritime Day in the United States of America

There are 47 archdioceses and dioceses around the United States with Apostleship of the Sea facilities, which coordinate care at maritime ports in 61 American seaports and waterways.

The President of the United States is authorized and requested annually to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such National Maritime Day by displaying the flag at their homes or other suitable places.

The Merchant Marine has over many years been the backbone of the distribution of goods over the seas of the world.

During World War II, some 6,000 American seafarers and more than 700 U.S. merchant ships fell to enemy action. No branch of the Armed Forces, except the Marine Corps, suf-

fered a higher casualty rate.

Merchant mariners also played a vital role in the Korean Conflict, especially in the rescue of 14,000 Korean civilians by the *SS Meredith Victory*. During the Vietnam War, ships crewed by civilian seamen carried 95 percent of the supplies used by U.S. Armed Forces.

For generations, merchant marines and commercial sailors have assisted in the defense of the Nation. More than 5,000 merchant mariners supported Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom by serving aboard 157 ships moving essential supplies to the troops.

Since 1775, the United States Merchant Marine has served the U.S., helping America become a great maritime power. National Maritime Day pays tribute to these heroes who answered the call to serve when the Nation needed them most.

Today, merchant mariners continue to protect the U.S. homeland, including their support of American troops doing hazardous duty overseas.



Each year on National Maritime Day, the Seafarers Center of the Diocese of Lake Charles, located at the Port of Lake Charles, sponsors a blessing of boats – commercial and private of all sizes – off the Lake Charles Civic Center Seawall. This year's event is scheduled for 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 21, according to Deacon Patrick Lapoint, director of the Stella Maris Seafarers Center of the Diocese. Pictured here is Father Rommel Tolentino, the chaplain of the Center, along with Deacon Lapoint, blessing vessels as they passed during a previous year's ceremony. The captains of vessels of all types and sizes are invited to attend and have their crafts blessed.

## National Shrine of St. Katharine Drexel will close

By Jim Graves  
Our Sunday Visitor  
(Read more at [www.lcdioocese.org](http://www.lcdioocese.org))

The National Shrine of St. Katharine Drexel in Bensalem, Pennsylvania, which houses the remains and relics of the saint who the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in 1891, will permanently close on Dec. 31, Sister Donna Breslin, president of the community, announced recently. The shrine is located at the community's motherhouse on a 44-acre site just outside of Philadelphia; the community also announced that it would sell a 2,200-acre property in Virginia, which was once the site of two schools for black students.

While it's a sad announcement for local Catholics who have long admired Mother Drexel and her nuns, the remaining months of the year offer pilgrims a final opportunity to visit and enjoy the site St. Katharine once called home.

Father Stephen Katziner, parochial vicar at Bensalem's St. Ephrem Church, said that it was a "shock" to learn that the

sisters were leaving. "They've given such a wonderful example to our community," he said.

Father Katziner added that St. Ephrem's priests have been frequently called upon to provide Mass and the sacraments to the large number of elderly sisters who had been living at the motherhouse, and many parishes have served as volunteers at the shrine. The parish also had frequently used the motherhouse facilities for marriage preparation and confirmation retreat days.

"They're really beloved in the community," Father Katziner said. "It's a great loss that they're moving."

In a statement, Sister Donna explained that chief among the reasons for the sale of the properties is the sisters' lack of vocations; the community once had more than 600 sisters, whereas today there are around 100, the majority of whom are retired. The motherhouse site has 10 buildings, five of which are not in use.

Most of the sisters have left the facility, but a few have re-

mained to keep the shrine open to visitors through the end of the year. The dual components of the shrine include a chapel, once used solely by the community, and a crypt underneath where Mother Drexel's remains are interred.

Mother Drexel oversaw the building of the motherhouse in 1891, as the Drexel family had a summer home nearby and was familiar with the area. It was farmland at the time, and offered a quiet, private place for young sisters to be trained and formed for their work in the missions.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Saint Katharine Drexel, the only canonized saint to visit Lake Charles, provided funding for the operation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School and her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were teachers and administrators there for many years. Her enormous contribution to the education of African-Americans and Native Americans in this country was immeasurable and occurred at a time when very few were taking initiative.

## Diocesan Briefs.....

### St. Philip Neri Golf tournament May 6

KINDER – St. Philip Neri Catholic Church hosts its Third Annual Golf Tournament on Saturday, May 6, at Koasati Pines Golf Course.

The four-person scramble begins with a shotgun start at 8 a.m. Prizes to be awarded include third, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth places along with the straightest drive on Hole One and closest to the hole.

Individuals are \$125 each and a team is \$500.

Registration fees include green and cart fees, range balls, breakfast, lunch, drinks on the course and a golf shirt. Registration and practice is from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

Mulligans, up to three per team, may be purchased for \$10 each, a five iron blast is \$5 per person on hole ten along with many door prizes.

Contact St Philip Neri Catholic Church, P.O. Box 146, Kinder, LA 70648 for more information and to register.

### Big Cash Giveaway underway

LAKE CHARLES – The Abrazando Cristo Mission Program has tickets available for its annual fundraiser benefitting the work of the mission in Nicaragua.

Only 750 tickets will be sold at \$100 per ticket. First prize is \$5,000.00; second is \$1,000; and third is \$500.00.

To purchase a ticket, please mail your check, made payable to Abrazando Cristo Mission Program to Monsignor Daniel A. Torres, 414 Iris Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601.

The drawing will be June 18 at the Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church Rectory.

Call 337-439-7400 for more information.

### Luncheon and breakfast dates

LAKE CHARLES – The final Women's Luncheon and Men's Prayer Breakfast with Bishop Glen John Provost for this cycle of teachings will be Wednesday, May 3 and Thursday, May 4, respectively, in Ave Maria Hall of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Office Building.

Women should send a check for \$15, payable to the Diocese of Lake Charles, to Women's Luncheon Tickets, 411 Iris Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601 and include a stamped self-address envelope.

The breakfast starts at 7 a.m. and is preceded by Mass beginning at 6:30 a.m. in the Cathedral. Men should call 337-439-

7400 to register.

### Next Marriage Preparation class June 24

LAKE CHARLES – Openings for the next Marriage Preparation class, offered by the Office of Family Life of the Diocese, is Saturday, June 24.

The class is from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Chancery of the Diocese, 414 Iris Street. Registration is \$100, which includes the Prepare/Enrich online assessment, lunch, and materials. It can be accomplished online at [www.lcdioocese.org](http://www.lcdioocese.org) by clicking the Event Registration button, then the Marriage Preparation link.

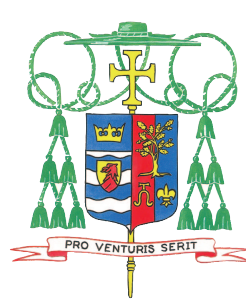
A registration form can also be printed by going to Marriage Preparation under the forms link on the website.

### Johnnie Thibodeaux Memorial Golf on May 27

LAKE CHARLES – The annual Johnnie Thibodeaux Memorial Golf Tournament will be Saturday, May 27, at Mallard Cove Golf Course.

Tournament proceeds benefit several projects of the Abrazando Cristo Mission Program in Nicaragua.

For more information, contact Johnnie and Susan Thibodeaux at 337-478-4095 or Will Fruge at 337-540-0410.



## Fatima Centennial celebration at Cathedral

LAKE CHARLES – The Fatima Centennial Celebration in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception will begin at 6 a.m. each day Friday, May 5 through Friday, May 12 with a Novena and Rosary Procession, followed by Low Mass in the Cathedral.

On Saturday, May 13, a Novena and Rosary Procession with the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima begins at 6 a.m. It will be followed at 7:30 a.m. with a Solemn High Mass in the Cathedral and a reception in the Ave Maria Hall.

The viewing of “The 13th Day” movie will take place in Ave Maria Hall beginning at noon.

Other important dates throughout the remainder of the centennial year of Our Lady of Fatima’s appearance to the seers includes the “Finding Fatima” documen-

tary in Ave Maria Hall on Saturday, August 12, at 5:30 p.m., and a Rosary Procession with the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima from the Immaculate Conception Cathedral School up Ryan Street to the Cathedral at 8:15 a.m. on Friday, October 13. Holy Mass at 9 a.m. in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary will follow the procession.

Bishop Glen John Provost will celebrate the 12:05 p.m. Mass on October 13, which will be followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until 4:30 p.m. Benediction. The Pilgrim Statue will remain in the Cathedral until 4:30 p.m. with the Cathedral open all day.

The Diocese of Lake Charles opened the Fatima Centennial celebration last year in December with the visit of the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima.

Several parishes hosted the International Pilgrim Virgin with a special celebration at the Cathedral and a Marian Procession on December 8. Bishop Provost consecrated the diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary following the noon Mass that day.

The world-famous International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, traveling worldwide since 1947, is on an historic two-year journey across America, which began March 2016 and concludes in December 2017, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima. It will have visited more than 100 dioceses in all 50 states upon the completion of its journey.

Parishes that hosted the tour last December included St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in Carlyss; Our Lady of Prompt Succor and Our Lady

of LaSalette in Sulphur; Our Lady Queen of Heaven in Lake Charles; the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception; and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Jennings.

The goal of the Fatima Centennial U.S. Tour for Peace is to allow Our Lady of Fatima to claim her dominion over America through her Immaculate Heart, and to bring the urgent Message of Fatima—the Peace Plan from Heaven—to a world in need. It also encourages devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which was the mission given to Lucia, the seer at Fatima, by Our Lady and Our Lord. Jesus relayed to Sister Lucia in 1936 that he wished to establish devotion to the Immaculate Heart in the Church next to His Sacred Heart, and that He had placed the peace in the world in her Immaculate Heart.

The International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima was sculpted in 1947 by famous sculptor José Thedim, upon the precise instructions of Sister Lucia. On October 13, 1947, the statue was blessed by the Bishop of Fatima and commissioned to serve as the Pilgrim Virgin that would carry the blessings of Fatima throughout the world. The Bishop prayed that Mary herself accompany the statue wherever it goes.

Many graces and favors, including cures, and countless conversions have been associated with the precious image. The statue has traveled around the globe many times, visiting more than 100 countries, including Russia and China.



Our Lady of Fatima statue

## Catholic Charities Jazz Brunch set May 21

LAKE CHARLES – The annual Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana Jazz Brunch is set for Sunday, May 21, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Lake Charles Country Club.

Doors open at 10:30 a.m. to browse and bid on numerous silent auction items with a welcome and blessing of the meal at 11:30 a.m. It is a wonderful opportunity for good food, great music, and lively conversation for a good cause. The Jazz Brunch is the

sole fundraising effort of the year for Catholic Charities.

Awards will also be given to volunteers for the wonderful and diligent work they perform on behalf of those most in need in Southwest Louisiana through Catholic Charities.

Tickets are \$75 each and a table for eight may be purchased for \$700.

Sponsorships at the Friend and Disciple levels, which include a table for eight and acknowledgement in the pro-

gram, are available for \$1,000 and \$1,500, respectively.

For tickets contact Sr. Mary Vianney Walsh at Catholic Charities, 1225 Second Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601 or call 337-439-7436. Purchasing tickets safely with a credit card or e-check online is available by going to the Diocese of Lake Charles website – [lcdiocese.org](http://lcdiocese.org) – and clicking on the event registration button on the left side of the page.

## Bishop Provost’s visits to Catholic schools in the Diocese



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With the month of May beginning next Monday, students in Catholic schools located in the Diocese of Lake Charles are looking forward to their summer vacation. During the past term, Bishop Glen John Provost visited each of the seven schools in the Diocese, something he does each year. His first visit was to St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School in September. In photo 1, the Bishop talks with some of the students are just beginning their school experience. Accompanying the Bishop on the visit were principal Wendy Wicke, Sr. Mary Elizabeth McCullough, RSM; and Father Vijaya Prakash Peddoju, HGN, along with the pastor, Very Reverend Marcus Johnson. The Bishop answers questions from middle school students in Photo 2. At St. Theodore Holy Family Catholic School, in Photo 3, Bishop Provost listens to renditions from the Holy Family choir and, in Photo 4, is besieged by questions from Holy Family students. Smiling and inquisitive faces show on kindergarten students as they meet Bishop Provost in Photo 5 at Immaculate Conception Cathedral School. Art students at Immaculate Conception, in Photo 6, show off some of their work. At Our Lady’s School in Sulphur, Photo 7, the Bishop visits with students working in the computer lab. Students studying music and chorus in Photo 8, listen as Bishop Provost plays the piano at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School. In Photo 9, also at Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Bishop Provost explains to a class the term etymology, the derivation of words. The art class at St. Louis Catholic High School, Photo 10, presented Bishop Provost with an etching of the school’s mascot while later, the Bishop sits with a religion class at St. Louis in Photo 11. In an eighth grade Louisiana History class at Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School in Jennings, Bishop Provost glances over the current textbook being used in the course.