



Pastoral Letter for Lent 2019: On Prayer

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I was asked recently to make a presentation to "Truth Poured Out," a group of young adults in the Diocese of Lake Charles. The topic was to be my choice. So I decided to share some thoughts on "What Really Matters." Why? Because every day the challenges of life and society, the growing disaffection, the violence, the fragmentation, the abuse, and the futile measures to address these issues remind me that we place too much confidence in human efforts. No new procedures, policies, government programs, laws, and "think tank" conferences—however well intended and necessary—will permanently "solve" anything. They may give us some false satisfaction that "now we're finally doing something about it," but they are truly bankrupt if we pursue these solutions without faith in God. Hence, I ask myself the question, "What really matters?" And the answer continually comes back, "God."

I am writing to you to address the topic of prayer. Prayer is simply our conversation with God, and we desperately need to have a vibrant prayer life. Let us first briefly mention what prayer is not. When we make a decision to pray, we often turn to a technique. This is not the best approach. As a matter of fact, it has never been the approach of our finest Catholic spiritual writers. The great Catholic masters of the spiritual life would have denied emphatically that their teachings or writings on prayer could be reduced to a technique. Prayer is not a program for human development, a self-help approach to make us better human beings, or simply a good way to start our day. Prayer is life, a relationship, and an intimacy with God that no one can interrupt or deprive us of, except we who stubbornly maintain a self-willed independence in the face of our Creator.

So, where do we begin? With God, of course. The Master Himself begins here when He teaches His disciples to pray: "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). They must be the first words in our mind, on our lips, and in our hearts. God is a Father. His name is holy, and we should keep it so. We want His kingdom to come and His will to be done "on earth as in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10).

I wish to delve into that petition of the Our Father—"thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." What I am about to say is based on a personal experience from many, many years ago. So often when we go to prayer, it is because we are having a difficulty that seems insurmountable. Some of us face these challenges more often than others, but they confront all of us regardless of our feeble human efforts. Here is where "thy will be done" made a profound impression upon me. When we say those words to God the Father, in effect we are saying, "Here is a problem I cannot solve. As a matter of fact, I can never solve any of my problems. Submitting to Your Will is a supreme act of freedom. In pro-

feffing faith in Your Will to be done on earth and in heaven, I am saying, "You know what is best and what happens must be and will be Your Will." I must simply submit, something that we resist in this modern with its obsession over egotistical independence, but this submission is to a God who loves us and is love itself. In being selfless this submission resists the ego. In this lies the essential difference. God is and should be everything for the Christian.

In this simple realization about God's Will being done, I find a great deal of freedom. In embracing this trust in God's loving Will, we are freed to act as we should, as we must. I am reminded of the insight of St. Thomas Aquinas, quoting another great Catholic saint, St. Gregory the Great: "We pray not that we may change the divine disposition, but that we may impetrate [obtain by asking] that which God has disposed to be fulfilled by our prayers, in other words, 'that by asking, man may deserve what Almighty God from eternity has disposed to give'" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa, II, IIae*, q. 83, a. 2, quoting the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great). That quote is so rich in meaning and significance that it requires we dwell on it a while. It deserves more than just one meditation.

As "Our Father in heaven," God has charted a course which is moving towards a final consummation in Him. Our imperative, what we must do, is join ourselves to that course which leads to that good. The Sacred Scriptures speak abundantly about this, but one passage from St. Paul, a favorite of mine, stands out: "We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). That conclusion of St. Paul is the same as that of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Gregory the Great. It should be ours also.

Why do we act contrary to this Divine Will? We all know the answer to this question. St. James explains it this way: "Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:1-3). The human will that is consumed with its passions, that covets what it cannot possess, seeks happiness in the wrong places and fulfillment in empty pursuits, can find satisfaction in nothing and finally ends by rejecting the Divine Will.

The "Our Father" introduces a world and an approach that is transforming because it frees us. Prayer is the entry point to this world. For this reason, Christians down through the centuries have acknowledged the Lord's Prayer as the most perfect prayer. The "Our Father" is our blueprint for prayer, as our Lord Jesus Christ intended.

What really matters? The answer is simple—God.

Prayer is important because it is our conversation with our Father, our Creator, the Origin of everything that is. He is even the Origin of our interior life. Pope Francis made a Christmas gift to his cardinals a long-neglected classic, *The Spiritual Life* by Adolphe Tanquerey. Inspired by his gesture, I revisited this powerful work and came across the following quotation: "Gathering all that is found here and there in the Scriptures, we can say that God through grace is present within us as a father, as a friend, as a helper, as a sanctifier, and that in this way He is truly the very source of our interior life, its efficient and exemplary cause" (Tanquerey, Chapter 2, no. 92). This is quite a profound observation.

If God is "the very source of our interior life," then we discover Him by navigating the interior life by means of prayer. He helps us, just as certainly as the life by means of prayer. A mighty river awaits the explorer who travels its waters. Take the plunge. Discover the source.

Do not allow your sins to get in the way. Confess them and be reconciled. For this reason Jesus Christ gave us the Sacrament of Penance. Then, turn off the computer, the radio and television, stop the electronic communications, omit Facebook, and seek the silence of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and, in its absence, the quiet place which can serve as your refuge. Begin with the "Our Father." What does it say? What are you refusing to hear? And most importantly, what is it saying to you?

When I issued my message on the First Sunday of Advent last year, I had the Blessed Sacrament on my mind, as we all should. I insisted on Adoration weekly in our parishes. I wanted Eucharistic processions. These are not ends in themselves. The Church gives them to us for a reason. They are means to the end of enriching our experience of Christ in His Eucharistic Presence and the celebration of Holy Mass. Is Christ not the "daily bread" for which we pray in the Our Father?

I will return to you on this topic of prayer in the future. As I said in the letter that accompanied my Advent decree, there is more to come, and I am pleased to share it with you.

With prayers for a holy Lent and extending my blessings to you for the pursuit of "what really matters," I remain

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

✠Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

Lenten giving program highlighted, capital campaign progress told

(Special to the Catholic Calendar)

In the spirit of the Lenten emphasis on Prayers, Fasting, Almsgiving, and Evangelizing, the Diocese of Lake Charles has initiated a small charitable giving challenge to support some of the diocesan endeavors that best mirror these pillars of faith.

Entitled the #IGiveCatholic \$20 Lenten Challenge, parishioners are simply asked to make a small one-time donation in special envelopes at a weekend Mass of the pastor's choosing during the season of Lent, selecting Catholic Charities, Seminarian Education, Communication or all three as recipients of their generosity. For those who prefer electronic giving, visit <http://www.lcdioocese.org/resources/support-the-diocese> and select the #IGiveCatholic \$20 Lenten Challenge.

In the true spirit of Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana's annual Jazz Brunch fundraiser will be Sunday, April 28, amidst the sound of music and the beautiful lake view backdrop of the Lake Charles Country Club.

The doors will open at 10:30 a.m. for hors d'oeuvres and silent auction viewing and bidding, with The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, offering the Blessing Before Meal at 11:30 a.m. A lovely southern brunch will follow.

Sister Miriam MacLean, RSM, Director of Catholic Charities, will talk on the past year of agency services and introduce honorees that have made a significant difference in the lives of others. Funds raised from this event support the many works of mercy of Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana.

To purchase a table, tickets or make a donation, as well as offer a silent auction item, call the Catholic Charities office at (337) 439-7436. An electronic option is also available at <http://www.lcdioocese.org/resources/event-registration> by selecting "Catholic Charities 2019 Jazz Brunch."

As stunning progress continues on the restoration of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the seminarians returned to their studies after a short holiday break, retired priests continue serving the Lord and God's people in a multitude of ways, progress continues on Camp Karol that will serve the spiritual needs of our youth in a very unique way, and Catholic Charities meets the varied and growing needs of our brothers and sisters, the latest Return to the Parish Share to the parishes of the Diocese of Lake Charles has reached \$2,663,127.79 in total payments.

The fifth payment, issued in February, totaled \$576,048.61, and covered payments on pledges made from January 1 through June 30 of 2018. Four parishes, specifically Our Lady of the Lake, St. Mary of the Lake, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and St. Pius X have payments that have exceeded



Monsignor James Gaddy, Pastor of St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church, presents the final payment on his personal pledge to the Diocese of Lake Charles' Return to the Lord Capital Campaign to Stephanie Rodrigue, Director of Development whose office manages the Campaign. St. Mary of the Lake is one of parishes that have payments that have exceeded their goal and are now receiving 80 percent of all payments made by their parishioners.

their parish goals during this time span, so their payments are now at 80 percent. Other parishes will meet the 80 percent criteria with the next Parish Share payments in July of 2019 that will cover the June 30 through December 31, 2018 timeframe.

"By all accounts, the 80% return to the parishes concept is virtually unheard of in other dioceses and is a testament to the diligence of the Priests' Advisory Council and the approval of Bishop Provost in making these payments a reality", according to Stephanie Rodrigue, Director of the Office of Development for the Diocese of Lake Charles.

Lenten REGULATIONS

Every Catholic, to enter more deeply into the life of Christ, is to participate in some way in the spiritual and penitential disciplines of Lent. The regulations for the Catholic Church in the United States are as follows: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. The other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat.

The obligation to abstain from meat binds Catholics 14 years of age and older. The obligation to fast, limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals during the day, binds Catholics from the age of 18 to 59. Those younger or older are encouraged to voluntarily embrace these disciplines in so far as they are able.

Divine and Natural Law holds that all the faithful are morally bound to do penance.

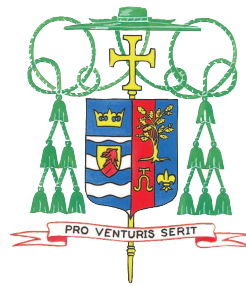
The Fourth Precept of the Church obliges Catholics to observe the discipline of fasting and abstinence for Lent.

Fridays outside of Lent are also days of penance and spiritual discipline. Abstaining from meat is the traditional way of observing these days of penance. The Bishops of the United States have granted permission for abstinence from meat on Fridays outside of Lent to be replaced with some other self-denial or personal penance. However, Friday remains a day of some penitential practice. As Bishop Provost stated in a recent pastoral letter: "The idea of sacrificing something is countercultural to the 'throwaway' mentality that plagues us today and of which Pope Francis has time and again warned us" (September 3, 2015).

Fasting should never endanger one's health. Avoiding some form of permissible entertainment or performing sacrificial acts of charity, for example, could replace the fasting when health is a consideration.

Finally, with any penitential discipline, both the letter and the spirit are to be maintained. For example, replacing meat with a gourmet seafood meal is not in keeping with penitential practice. Also, the increasingly popular practice of hosting "crawfish boils" and entertainments on Good Friday is highly inappropriate. Good Friday remains an extraordinary and solemn day on which we recall the suffering and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Good Friday should remain a day of fasting, abstinence, prayer, penance, and interior and exterior quiet.

Calendar



The Most Reverend Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

March 15, 2019



As it happened ...

Events occur every week in the local Church of Southwest Louisiana and with these images above, you can see some of them as they took place. In photo 1, Bishop Provost presents gifts to the deacons (here Deacon George Stearns) of the Diocese of Lake Charles during the Gaudete Sunday luncheon held for priests, deacons (and their spouses) and religious women on the Third Sunday of Advent. The Bishop Jude Speyrer Chapter of the Pontifical Knights and Dames presents awards each year during Advent. Photo 2 shows the two 2018 awardees along with Bishop Provost and officers. From left, are Janet Stoma, vice president/president elect; Mary Sue Bryan Munchrath of the Diocese of Lafayette, *Pro Deo et Pontifice* Award recipient (the award is given to a Knight or Dame of another diocese who has rendered outstanding service to the Church and to mankind); Bishop Provost; Jeanne LeBato, the 2018 recipient of the Monsignor Irving A. DeBlanc Fellowship Award. Knight of St. Gregory, Chester Jones, treasurer; and Knight of St. Sylvester Gayle Marshall, secretary. Three chartered buses brought pilgrims from the Diocese of Lake Charles to Washington, DC for the National March For Life in January. In photo 3, diocesan pilgrims are in front of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Back at home, photo 4, hundreds marched in the Louisiana March For Life from the Veterans' Memorial on the grounds of the Lake Charles Civic Center through the streets of the city to the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse for a candlelight vigil supporting pro-life. Bishop Provost joined other speakers in this pro-life stance. Father Brian King, shown in photo 5 and seated at right, during the celebration of one of the four Special Needs masses held each year offered as an opportunity for all to worship despite difficulty, frustration and without embarrassment, in St. Charles Chapel in the Commons of St. Louis Catholic High School. In a celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Liturgy in Latin, photo 5, held in St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Oberlin, Msgr. Arthur Calkins (with censer) is flanked by Rev. Rommel Tolentino, left, and Rev. Jacob S. Conner, right. The Mass was celebrated on the Saturday following the Feast of St. Lucy. This was one of the Ember Days, a special time of prayer and fasting that Bishop Provost has decreed Catholics should observe during the four times that they fall during the year. In photo 7, Bishop Provost stands with representatives of Catholic schools of the Diocese of Lake Charles - Mallory Gallemore, Andrew Castle, Avery Meche, Camille Karkier, Julia Walker, Lauren Couste, Emma Findley, Ella Segura, and Hannah Williams - before the Catholic Schools Week Mass in St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church. The Bishop is shown in photo 8 blessing Saint Hubert's Convent, the home of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, who serve in the diocese. After a prayer service the Bishop went throughout the complex sprinkling holy water. Five representatives of the order minister in the Diocese. Scout Sunday, represented by photo 9 of scouts and adult leaders that attended Mass on February 3, was celebrated at St. Margaret of Scotland by Bishop Provost and concelebrated by Father Trey Ange, diocesan scout chaplain. The Scout Law says that a "Scout is Reverent" and Scouts of all ages promise to do their "Duty to God". The Mass is a tradition that allows Scouts to live out their "Duty to God" pledged each week.

Diocesan Briefs.....

Saint Charles Center program schedule

MOSS BLUFF - Spring events at Saint Charles Center continue with "Lenten Private Directed Retreats" with Msgr. Ronnie Groth, Fr. Whitney Miller, Fr. Marshall Boulet, Deacon Brian Soileau, Judy Savoie and Gloria Villegas will be Monday, March 18 to Sunday, March 24.

For more information or to register, call the Center at (337) 855-1232. For this retreat, you must call the Center to register and cannot do so online. Suggested donation is \$350.00 for three days or \$475.00 for five days.

The "Lenten Introduction to the Directed Retreat" is from Thursday, March 21 to Sunday, March 24 with Msgr. Groth, Fr. Miller, Fr. Boulet, Deacon Soileau, Ms. Savoie and Ms. Villegas. Call the Center to register at (337) 855-1232. Registration for this retreat is not available online and one must call the Center. Suggested donation is \$350.00 per person.

Deacon Soileau will present "The Existence of Angels - A Truth of Faith" from 6 - 9 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26. Deadline to register is Friday, March 22 with a suggested donation of \$20 per person.

Sr. Diane Depwe will present "Spiritual Spring Cleaning" Tuesday, April 9, from 6 - 9 p.m. Registration deadline is Friday, April 5, with a suggested donation of \$20 per person.

"Sisterhood of Saints: Guidance and Inspiration from Holy Women Along the Way of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection," the Annual Women's Lenten Silent Retreat, sponsored by Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish and presented by Fr. Miller, is Friday, April 12 to Sunday, April 14. Suggested donation for the retreat is \$225.00 for a private room and \$205.00 each for shared accommodations. Contact Andrea Blanchard at (337) 794-9679, the Center at (337) 855-1232, or at stcharlescenter.com to register.

OLQH Lenten Mission March 18-21

LAKE CHARLES - The Lenten Mission at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church, set beginning at 6:30 p.m. each day, Monday through Thursday, March 18-21, will be led by Father William Casey, CPM, and held in the church at 3939 Lake Street.

During the Mission he will challenge the parish community to make a stronger, deeper personal commitment to Christ and His Church.

Monday's presentation topic is Prayer-The Power of Prayer-The Life of the Soul while Tuesday's is The Foundation of Virtue-Humility vs. Pride; Wednesday - The Divine Mercy and Confession-The Holy Eucharist; Real Presence and Power; and Thursday - To Love Christ Is To Love the Church.

St. Joseph Table on March 24

LEBLEU SETTLEMENT - St. Joseph Catholic Church, located at 2110 Claude Hebert Road, hosts its annual St. Joseph Table on Sunday, March 24, with blessing at 11:30 a.m. followed

by the viewing of the Table.

All are invited to partake in the breads, fruits, vegetables, and desserts from The Table. A meatless spaghetti meal will also be served.

St. Henry Lenten Mission slated

LAKE CHARLES - St. Henry Catholic Church will host its Lenten Mission - "A Sin-cere Mission: A Lenten Mission on Sin, Forgiveness, & Reconciliation" - from March 25-27, Monday through Wednesday, led by Father Taj Glodd, the pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Plaisance.

Each day's mission begins at 6 p.m. with the Sacrament of Penance being available.

On Monday, there will be Mass for the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the homily on the nature of sin. On Tuesday, the homily will be about the meaning of mercy and forgiveness. On Wednesday there will be a Eucharistic Holy Hour and the homily on the Sacrament of Penance.

Southern Charismatic Renewal Conference

METAIRIE - The annual Southern Regional Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal will be held March 29-31 at the Copeland Tower Suites and Conference Center in Metairie. The conference theme is "The Spirit of Truth: Signs, Wonders, Miracles."

Conference speakers include Dr. Mary Healy, a seminary Scripture professor who travels widely with a ministry of praying for charismatic healing; Father Mathias Thelen, a pastor and theologian with Encounter Ministries; and Barbara Heil, a former Pentecostal evangelist who converted to the Catholic Church.

Others featured will be Deacon Larry and Andi Oney, who have an international ministry, and Casey Sprehe of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

The conference begins March 29 at 7 p.m. and concludes March 31 with an 11 a.m. Mass, and attendance at single sessions is available.

Early registration is encouraged and discounts are available for pre-registration.

The fee schedule is as follows: individual adult, \$60 (\$70 on-site); married couple, \$80 (\$90 on-site); family, same household, \$90 (\$100 on-site); single sessions, \$25 on-site; youth participation to age 30, apart from family registration, only \$20; All-Day Saturday, \$50.

For additional information on the schedule, contact the Conference Office at (504) 828-1368 or email: info@ccrno.org. The website is www.ccrno.org.

Social Teaching Workshop March 29-30

BEAUMONT - A Catholic Social Teaching Workshop, "Two Feet of Love: Our Faith in Action," will be presented by the Pax Christi USA team of Sr. Patty Chappelle, SNDdeN, and Sr. Anne-

Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN, on Friday and Saturday, March 29-30, at St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church, 6825 Gladys Avenue.

The workshop will be 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Sr. Patty is Executive Director of Pax Christi USA while Sr. Anne-Louise is Program Director.

Register for the event at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/two-feet-of-love-faith-in-action-tickets-56579275135>.

For additional assistance, call 409-924-4333.

Bishop's breakfast, luncheon dates

LAKE CHARLES - Bishop Glen John Provost will meet for the First Friday Men's Prayer Breakfast on Friday, April 5, in the Assembly Room of the Chancery Building, located at 414 Iris Street, at 7 a.m.

Mass, celebrated in Ave Maria Hall, will precede the breakfast starting at 6:30 a.m. Men should call 337-439-7400 for register.

The next Ladies Prayer Luncheon will be Wednesday, April 10, also in the Assembly Room. Women should send a check in the amount of \$15, payable to the Diocese of Lake Charles, to Victoria Walter, 411 Iris Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601 and include a stamped self-addressed envelope with payment.

The final luncheon date and topic is Wednesday, May 1 (II Corinthians, 11). The last breakfast and topic of this cycle of presentations is Friday, May 3 (II Corinthians, 11-13).

"Come and See" Retreat April 12-14

ST. BENEDICT - Men, 16 years and older, are invited to a "Come and See" Retreat on April 12-14, at St. Joseph Abbey and Seminary College. The weekend is about how to discern God's call for your life, according to Father Jeffrey Starkovich, Director of Vocations and Seminarians.

There is no cost to attend the retreat and transportation will be provided from Lake Charles and return.

Those interested can register at vocations@lcdioocese.org or Fr. Starkovich at 337-725-3719.

Catholic mission trip July 5-14

LAKE CHARLES - The *Abrazando Cristo* Mission Trip for 2019 will be July 5-14 to Puerto Rico, according to Monsignor Daniel Torres.

The cost of the trip will be \$2,200, which covers all air and ground transportation, meals, lodging, trips, taxes, retreat, and mission shirts.

For an information packet/registration form contact Felicia Borel at 337-477-1236 or by e-mail at [Felicia.borel@lcdiocese.org](mailto:Felicia.borel@lcdioocese.org).

A \$300 non-refundable deposit with the registration to secure a seat. Only 25 seats are available.