



Pastoral Letter: On the Sunday Obligation

February 21, 2021
First Sunday of Lent

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Out of concern for public health, on March 17, 2020, I dispensed Catholics in the Diocese of Lake Charles from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Because Louisiana remains in modified to Phase of the government directives and our church parishes work diligently to protect our parishioners with sanitary measures, I removed that dispensation effective November 29, 2020. In doing so, I made clear that those who are ill, immune deficient, symptomatic, in a state of anxiety over contracting illness, or at high risk due to a chronic condition are already dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass. Given the lengthy period of the dispensation and our return now to normative practice, I am issuing this pastoral letter as a reminder of the importance of worshipping our Creator as a Catholic Community, especially on Sundays and Holy Days.

We must first recognize that the sanctity of the Lord's day finds its origin in the work of God at the creation of the world. As we read in the Book of Genesis, "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation" (Genesis 2:3). This "seventh day," then, became for the Jews a holy day of rest to share with God His wonder and awe over the work of Creation and to worship the Creator Himself. By keeping holy "the seventh day," we share in the work of God. Every good and honest work we do during the week is a share in God's creating work. So then, we also follow God's example of resting, and through our worship of Him, who is the origin of everything we are and have, we enter and share in His Life.

This reverence for the "seventh day" becomes even more emphatic when the Hebrews are freed from slavery at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. The Book of Deuteronomy expresses the day's importance for them in this way: "For remember that you too were once slaves in Egypt, and the Lord, our God, brought you from there with his strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the Lord, your God, has commanded you to observe the sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15-16). Therefore, in "the seventh day" we find themes of rest, freedom, creation, re-creation, deliverance, celebration, worship, and covenant. "The seventh day" is holy because God has made it so. The comment of our Lord Jesus Christ, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27), is even more understandable given this context. This holy day is indeed made for man because it calls men back to God, his Creator and Liberator. In Him we are freed from sin's slavery, we rest from sharing in His work, we rejoice in His goodness and the beauty of His Creation, and, as Christians, we celebrate the fullness of His Revelation in Jesus Christ the Lord and the deliverance He won for us through His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Sunday is the Lord's Day for us, as Christians, because on that day the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. From the earliest recorded history of Christian witness and life in the Sacred Scriptures, Christians

gathered on Sunday to worship. The inspired author of the Acts of the Apostles writes, "On the first day of the week when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them because he was going to leave on the next day" (Acts 20:7). Repeating the very words of the Eucharistic Prayer (Matthew 26: 26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24), "to break bread" referred clearly and simply to the Eucharist. It was this gathering of the first Christians that is described in the Acts of the Apostles, when it reads, "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42). From this moment onwards Sunday was the "Lord's Day." It is to this that some of our earliest Christian witnesses testify, such as St. Justin the Martyr. Writing in approximately the year 155 to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D.) to explain how Christians lived, St. Justin writes the following: "On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read...." and the one presiding "over the brethren... takes [bread and wine] and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks [in Greek eucharistian]..." after which the bread, over which "thanks" [eucharist] has been prayed, is distributed (St. Justin, Apologia 1, 65-67). And Sunday held pride of place in worship, not only as the first day of the week, but also the first day of creation, the new creation in God through Jesus Christ, a new life in Grace, the victory of Life over death in the Resurrection.

This, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is what we do in keeping holy the Lord's Day. It is God's Will that it be so. It is found in Sacred Scripture and our Sacred Tradition. The dress and language of those participating may have changed since the First Century, the accompanying gestures and customs may have adapted themselves over the centuries, but what we do today is what our forebearers in the faith did two thousand years ago. As St. Paul said to the Corinthians in describing the Eucharistic celebration, "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you" (I Corinthians 11:23). What we, as Catholics, do on Sunday resonates from the Last Supper in the upper room, from Calvary and from the empty tomb, to the Sunday gatherings described in the Acts of the Apostles, to the "house churches" of the earliest persecuted Christians in Rome, down through the ancient basilicas and the Medieval cathedrals, to the simplest mission chapels in Africa, and to the parish churches in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

Should we be surprised that the teaching authority of the Church would enshrine in its law what we refer to as the "obligation" to attend Mass on Sundays and certain other days which celebrate the saving work of our Lord and God? Also, associated with this obligation is the requirement to refrain from unnecessary work. This rest from work is intimately connected to our worship. The Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses the connection in this way: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder

the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body" (CCC, 2185). The Church has seen from Apostolic times that Sunday is a fulfillment of the Sabbath Day. What was and still remains a day of rest (cf. Exodus 20:8-10) for the Jews on the Sabbath, sharing in God's rest from Creation, has become for Christians the Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection, a sharing in God's new Creation in Jesus Christ.

In mentioning the new Creation, we immediately think of Adam who for St. Paul was "the first man" (I Corinthians 15:45). Now we have "the last Adam a life-giving spirit" (I Corinthians 15:45), who is Jesus Christ. "The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven. As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one" (I Corinthians 15:47-49). We rest, rejoice, and refresh ourselves from the dead on the first day of the week. We participate now in the new Adam. This is our dignity, and this dignity lies at the very heart of our Sunday observance. God calls us to holiness, and to put it simply, the Lord's Day—Sunday—is to be kept holy.

No one can "do away" with or dispense from the Divine mandate to keep holy the Lord's Day. How tragic would it be if a dispensation, however well-intended, became an occasion for complacency and indifference. We should always keep Sunday holy, refraining from unnecessary work, increasing our devotion and prayer, performing works of mercy, and joining each other at Sunday Mass. We return to our "obligation," not with a sense of burden but with thanksgiving, rejoicing, and happily reuniting with our brothers and sisters around God's altar, while respecting their health and well-being during this time of pandemic.

May we all rejoice one day at the worship of the Eternal God in the wedding feast of the Lamb, foreseen in the prophecy of St. John (cf. Revelation 21) and anticipated in the most holy Eucharist (cf. I Corinthians 11:26).

With prayers for your intentions, safety and health, I extend to you my blessings and remain

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

✱ Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

Blessing of St. Francis de Sales statue at Cathedral reminder of church's origin

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — The connection St. Francis de Sales has to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception dates all the way back to 1858 as the first Catholic church in Lake Charles — first as a mission, then later as a parish in 1869. Now, more than 160 years later, a statue serves as a visible reminder of that connection of the church's first patron saint.

On Sunday, January 24, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, blessed a newly installed statue of St. Francis de Sales outside the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at 9:30 a.m. Mass. Among those present included the Very Rev. Rommel Tolentino, pastor of Immaculate Conception, the Rev. Sam Bond, Master of Ceremonies; the Rev. Canon Jean Marie Moreau, a priest from the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest; and Deacon Christopher Fontenot.

The blessing and dedication of the statue was originally planned as part of the Cathedral's parish sesquicentennial (1869-2019) celebration in 2019. Because of unforeseen delays, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and then two hurricanes, the dedication finally took place more than a year later coinciding with the feast day of St. Francis de Sales.

The statue of the "Gentleman Saint" was dedicated by the Knights of

Columbus Council 1207 and Catholic Daughters Court Lady of the Lake 695 to the parishioners of Immaculate Conception. Made of marble, the statue is 48 inches tall and weighs approximately 1,800 pounds. The Knights of Columbus also donated the plaque placed on the base on which the statue stands.

At the foot of the base is a marker representing the approximate location of the first Catholic Church in Lake Charles. It reads:

This marks the approximate location of the first Catholic Church in Calcasieu Parish. Built by — Fr. Francois Raymond, first pastor, a missionary from Opelousas, La. — Dedicated Sept. 26, 1858.

Through the efforts of Father Raymond, a lot on the corner of Ryan and Kirby streets was purchased in 1857 for \$375, and a chapel was built. The church, constructed for \$900, was dedicated to St. Francis de Sales on Sept. 26, 1858, thus making Lake Charles a mission of St. Landry Parish in Opelousas.

On Dec. 8, 1869, missionary status came to an end when The Most Reverend Jean-Marie Odin, Archbishop of New Orleans, established the Parish of St. Francis de Sales. The region is recognized today as the Diocese of Lake Charles.

A new church was built and dedicated under the name Immaculate Conception on Oct. 2, 1881. Following the Great Fire of 1910, a



Bishop Glen John Provost blesses the newly installed statue of St. Francis de Sales at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, January 24. (Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

third church was built and dedicated on Dec. 18, 1913, by Archbishop James Blenk of New Orleans. This is the church that stands today on the corner of Kirby and Bilbo streets.

One of the first priests who helped parish life flourish at Immaculate Conception was Monsignor Hubert Cramers, a Dutch priest assigned to the parish in 1902. He would spend the remainder of his life there as pastor. He died on Aug. 10, 1935, and his body is interred in a special vault just outside the sanctuary in the main aisle of the

Cathedral.

Other key figures include Monsignor J. A. Vigliero, assigned as pastor in 1935; and Monsignor Louis H. Boudreaux, the first native-born priest, serving Immaculate Conception from 1940-1974.

Following the blessing of the statue, an open house of the Cathedral rectory, built in 1913, was held. Refreshments were provided by the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Daughters. Free copies of the book, "Introduction to the Devout Life," by St. Francis de Sales, were available for guests.



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.

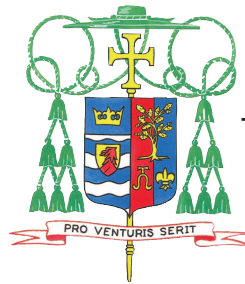
The Fourth Precept of the Church obliges Catholics to observe the penance of fasting and abstinence for Lent.

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 'throw-away' 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

FEBRUARY 19, 2021



The rain did not deter a large crowd from gathering on Jan. 22 at the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse on the 48th anniversary of Roe v. Wade. They stood in solidarity to make their voices heard in defense of the sanctity of life, especially for the millions of innocent lives lost to abortion.
(Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

New Deaneries Decreed by Bishop Provost



Whereas can. 374 §2 of the Code of Canon Law establishes that to foster pastoral care through common action several neighboring parishes can be joined into special groups known as vicariates forane or deaneries;

Whereas the pastoral response to the destruction wrought by Hurricane Laura in August 2020 urges a restructuring of the current parish groupings;

Whereas having heard the Presbyteral Council on October 2, 2020, regarding the decisions contained herein;

His Excellency

The Most Reverend Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

DECREES

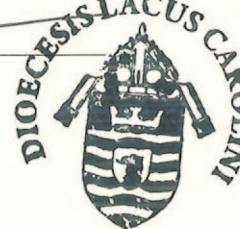
that, effective February 2, 2021, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the two deaneries previously known as the Central Deanery and the South Deanery shall henceforth be denominated the North Central Deanery and the South Central Deanery, respectively;

that the North Central Deanery shall be comprised of the following parishes: St. Theodore, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sacred Heart of Jesus in Lake Charles, St. Henry, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, St. Margaret of Scotland, and St. Raphael; and its first Dean shall be the Very Rev. Matthew Cormier;

that the South Central Deanery shall be comprised of the following parishes: Our Lady of Good Counsel; Our Lady Queen of Heaven, St. Martin de Porres, Christ the King, St. Mary of the Lake, St. John Vianney, and Sacred Heart of Jesus on the Coast; and its first Dean shall be the Very Rev. Rojo Koonathan, HGN.

Given at Lake Charles on day 26 of January in the year of our Lord 2021.

Glen John Provost
*Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles



Ruben Villarreal
(Very Rev.) Ruben Villarreal
Vice-Chancellor

Annual pro-life prayer vigil honors lives of the unborn

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — A rainy evening on January 22 did not interfere with a message many are determined to make clear every year on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade: Every life matters.

The 25th annual candlelight memorial prayer vigil, hosted by New Life Counseling, coincided with the 48th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision legalizing abortion in the United States. The event took place on the front steps of the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse with more than 100 in attendance, despite the gloomy weather.

The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, led the opening prayer asking God to help all to realize the sacredness of human life and to respect it from the moment of conception until the last moment of death.

This year's event almost did not happen because of COVID-19 restrictions, but in her new role as executive director of New Life Counseling, Tabitha Dugas said she was determined to honor the tradition of those who came before her.

"When I received word that the typical March for Life events would not be possible this year, if there was one event I felt determined to make happen, it was this event," said Dugas. "We gather here tonight to honor the lives of those who were never given a chance at life."

Since the passing of Roe v. Wade, nearly 62 million lives have ended in the United States through legal abortion. Dugas said that nationally there are close to 2,300 abortions performed daily, and in Louisiana, it is estimated that 22 lives are lost to abortion every day.

Marcia Schexnider served as guest speaker sharing her experience of choosing abortion

49 years ago. She has since been a "true warrior for the unborn" and plays a key role each year in organizing the prayer vigil.

"I know firsthand what it's like to be on the other end of the number of babies that we mourn and memorialize, because I was one of those moms who made that horrific choice," Schexnider said. "There has never been a day that I have not been affected by my decision. There has never been a day that it is not right there in my mind."

Schexnider said progress is being made among advocates for the unborn.

"Louisiana is now the most pro-life state in the nation. We have more restrictions on abortion than any other state, and we are working on being a state with no legal abortion clinics open," said Schexnider.

In November of 2020, Louisiana voters passed Amendment #1, known as the Love Life Amendment, keeping abortion out of the state Constitution. It also makes sure all policy making remains in the hands of duly elected state legislators.

Among those standing in unity for the sanctity of life as candles were lit was Anna Reyes, of Lake Charles, who said she has been attending the prayer vigil for many years.

"This is such an important part of my faith. These babies are just as important as our elderly people," said Reyes who just started working at a local nursing home. "They all mean so much to me. Every life is important."

Wanda Carnahan, of Lake Charles, said she was grateful to have the opportunity to be there despite the rain and chilly night.

"I wanted to thank God that He is the giver and the creator of life," she said. "I wanted to be here tonight to say I believe in life."



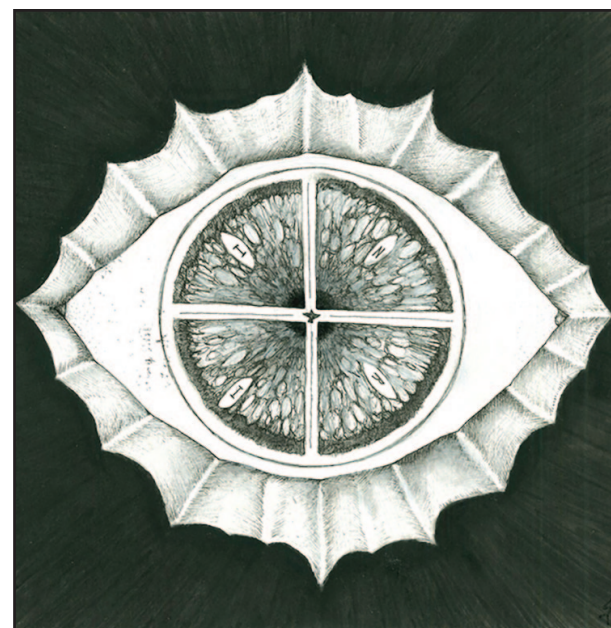
Masses celebrated for Catholic Schools Week

In celebration of National Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 31-Feb. 6, Bishop Glen John Provost officiated two special Masses in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception — one on Feb. 3 for seniors of St. Louis Catholic High School and another on Feb. 4 for eighth-grade students of Immaculate Conception Cathedral School, Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School, St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School, Our Lady's School in Sulphur, and Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School in Jennings.

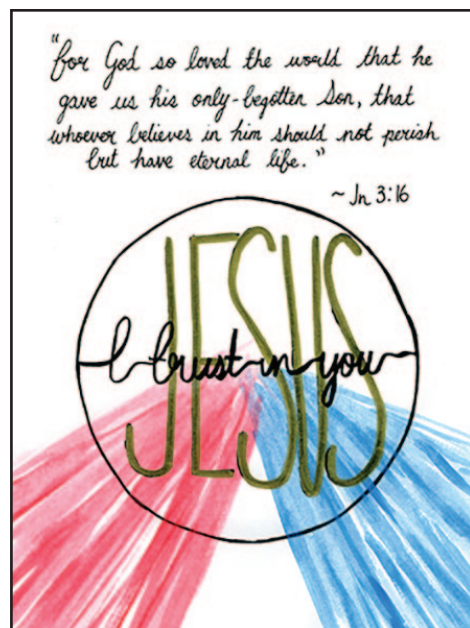
Two Masses were celebrated this year to allow for social distancing among the students. School representatives joining Bishop Provost on the front steps of the Cathedral before the Mass on Feb. 4 are back row, from left, Owen Schwem (ICCS), Andrew Wang (SLCHS), Taylor Myers (SLCHS); and front row, from left, Laney Durio (OLS), Kyndal Goodwin (OLQH), Abbie Mire (SMCS), and Madeleine Person (OLI). Bishop Provost commended the six Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lake Charles for opening so quickly after Hurricanes Laura and Delta. He reminded the students that they are all part of the mission to spread the message of Jesus Christ.

(Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

"True Presence: The Eucharist in Art" — Adults



"The Eye of God"
by Sydney Thomas, first place



"Jesus, I Trust In You"
by Sister Anne Miriam Crouche, RSM, second place

The winning artwork for the adult category in the "True Presence: The Eucharist in Art" contest was submitted by Sydney Thomas of Lake Charles. Her artwork is titled "The Eye of God." Sister Anne Miriam Crouche, RSM, placed second with her artwork titled "Jesus, I Trust In You."

Life is centered inside the Eye of God, the Father and Godhead. The Holy Spirit is rising from the very center or pupil to emphasize the Three in One. The Trinity is placed in front of the vast ocean of God's Infinity and is brought in by a shell, which represents baptismal rites of passage.

The contest was presented by the Diocese of Lake Charles as a way for students in grades K-12 as well as adults to creatively portray their Catholic belief in the Eucharist. Today's issue completes the publication of winning artwork from the True Presence contest. Winning entries from the writing category will be published in future issues of the Catholic Calendar.

Youth events around the diocese

The following events for teenagers are sponsored by the Diocese of Lake Charles Youth Ministry:

• **Candlelight Youth Mass:** 7 p.m. every Monday at Saint Charles Center, 2151 Sam Houston Jones Parkway, Moss Bluff.

• **Eucharistic Adoration:** 7-8 p.m., second and fourth Thursdays of every month at Saint Charles Center, 2151 Sam Houston Jones Parkway, Moss Bluff

• **P3 (Pizza, Prayer & Penance):** 7-8:30 p.m., first and third Thursday of every month at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church, 1109 Cypress Street, Sulphur

• **Gal Pal & Guy Talk:** Monday, March 22, following the 7 p.m. weekly candlelight Mass, Saint Charles Center, 2151 Sam Houston Jones Parkway, Moss Bluff

• **Coffee with Clergy:** 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, April 6, Camp Karol in Moss Bluff, 1087 Bozo Road

• **High School Game Night:** 5-7 p.m. Sunday, April 18, St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Kinder

• **Chips and Dip after-school hang-out and more:** 3:45-5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 5, Camp Karol in Moss Bluff, 1087 Bozo Road