



Bishop Provost's Christmas 2021 Homily

"There were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock." Luke 2:8

Shepherds in the days of that first Christmas, in the days of Caesar Augustus, did not always enjoy a favorable reputation with their fellow Jews. Their work often kept them from attending to religious duties and observing the Law precisely. So, for many, they were ranked with sinners (cf. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 541). Their work was relentless, tiring and always vigilant for predators that would devour their sheep. But God chose them to be the first, apart from the Blessed Mother, to hear the "good news."

The noted biblical scholar, Xavier Léon-Dufour, proposes a most charming explanation for the place of Jesus' birth. He suggests that the Savior of the world was born on that first Christmas night in a stable belonging to these same shepherds who were "living in the fields and keeping the night watch" (ibid., p. 542). When "the angel of the Lord appeared to them" (Luke 2:9), they were justifiably afraid. But the angel points them home. The heavenly messenger reassures them and announces, "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). They go in haste to Bethlehem, with no further directions than that they will "find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). The shepherds' own stable is the refuge for the family turned away at the inn.

And, so, the Savior of the world, who will preach a message of repentance and mercy to sinners, is born in the stable of poor shepherds. The glory of the Lord appears to them in the fields of their work, accompanied by the bleating of sheep and goats, the howling of wolves hiding in wait, still darkness and a silent moon arising from the horizon. It was the night of the Savior's birth. How appropriate that shepherds

would be the first to see a Redeemer who would live and die for the sinner.

And like the tax collectors and lepers, the Gentile soldier and Samaritan woman, the shepherds would be messengers of the Good News. "When they saw" the infant just as the angel had described they would, "they made known the message that had been told them about this child" (Luke 2:17). While we call Mary the first apostle, we must see the shepherds as the first evangelists.

Christmas belongs to shepherds, the shepherds of grassy hills and chilly nights. They tend their flocks and protect their sheep. They are the guardians of their terrain. Only an unexpected tumult of angels could frighten them. Only a babe in swaddling clothes could comfort them.

Christmas reassures not only the shepherds but also those who are innocent enough to see bands of angels, to believe, and to run in haste to Bethlehem. Such purity of heart that conquers the world is what perhaps inspired Shakespeare to pen those words spoken by another frightened watchman in *Hamlet*. Having seen the ghost of a murdered king, Marcellus strives to invoke the victory of good over evil that Christmas represents. He speaks thus:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.
(*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene I, Marcellus to
Horatio and Bernardo)

The world today desperately needs to hear this message of "so gracious [a] time." As mankind loses

balance and forgets God, it takes flight into passing fads and material things which offer no hope. We seek diversion in things that cannot last. Happiness eludes us because we look for it in the wrong places. We are, in the words of the great Louisiana writer, "lost in the cosmos" (cf. Walker Percy).

The shepherds keep calling us back to Bethlehem. They point the way to the manger in their stable. They point us to the changeless, and away from the transitory. Why do we maintain the delusion of creating a world without God and in so doing create instead a world to destroy man (cf. Henri de Lubac)?

The shepherds appear at our door and announce, "good news of great joy." The humble shepherds! Really the least likely of messengers. Perhaps that is why today the "good news of great joy" becomes endangered. This secular and materialistic world ignores humble messengers. So accustomed are we to noise, the screaming commercials, the alluring enticements, the pursuit of pleasure, the constant assault of electronic gadgets-the "good news of great joy" does not have a chance. It is drowned out.

There is a reason the "good news of great joy" is first proclaimed to shepherds. The meek will inherit the earth. The poor will become rich. The hungry will be well fed. Maybe we should return home and be surprised by what we find.

May God grant us simplicity of heart. Like lowly shepherds, may we be innocent enough to hear angels and hasten to Bethlehem. And may we like them, never be the same again because we have seen the "infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Merry Christmas!

Upcoming events in the Diocese

Teachings of Catholicism focus of online course

"The Faith Clarified," an online Zoom course offered through the Center for Catholic Studies, begins Wednesday, Jan. 12. The five-week course, instructed by Sister Maura Clare Mayock, R.S.M., will cover basics of the Catholic faith.

Sister Maura Clare, a Religious Sister of Mercy, is serving as Director of the Office of Religious Education for the Diocese of Lake Charles. She brings her insights gained from a non-practicing Catholic upbringing and personal discovery of the Church's richness as an adult, as well as her formal study of theology and the scriptures.

Topics for the live Zoom course include Salvation, Old Testament, Happiness and Morality, Confession, the Eucharist, the Church, Pope, and the Practice of Prayer. The course will be 6:30-7:30 p.m. every Wednesday, Jan. 12 through Feb. 9. Zoom meeting link will be provided for all who register. Class will include lecture time and a period for questions and discussion. Cost is \$15.

There are no required textbooks, but it is recommended that you have a copy of the bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd Edition (1997 or newer).

For more information and to register, visit lcdioocese.org/resources/event-registration under Center for Catholic Studies; or call 337-439-7400, ext. 309; or email victoria.walter@lcdioocese.org.

Roe v. Wade Mass, Candlelight Vigil is Jan. 22

Bishop Glen John Provost will celebrate Mass at 4:00 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 22, the 49th Anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to legalize abortion. The Mass will be in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Bilbo Street, followed by the March for Life and Candlelight Memorial Prayer Vigil.

Exhibit features history of Hispanic community

The Bilingual Art, History, and Science Exhibition of the Virgin of Guadalupe & Hispanic Community is on display in the Catholic Charismatic Center, 2409 Second Street. The exhibit is part of the 25th Anniversary of the Hispanic Community at St. Henry Catholic Church.

Remaining dates and times to view the exhibit are Sunday, Dec. 26, 1:30-2:30 p.m.; Monday, Jan. 3, 1-3:30 p.m.; Wednesday, Jan. 5, 1-5 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan. 9, 9-10:30 a.m. and 1:30-2:30 p.m. For more information, contact Ricardo Ruvulcaba at St. Henry Parish, 337-436-7223. Read full story at www.lcdioocese.org.

Religious Sisters of Mercy leads "Cor ad Cor" on Jan. 4

The Religious Sisters of Mercy will host "Cor ad Cor," a ministry for unmarried women ages 18-39, from 5-8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 4, at their convent, 1414 Martha Street. The monthly gathering, which has been moved to the first Tuesday of the month, is for women who want to deepen their capacity to hear and respond to God's voice.

The evening begins with a Holy Hour, followed by dinner and discussion, then Scripture reading, and ending with night prayer. It is not necessary to be discerning religious life to attend.

For more information or to RSVP, call 337-564-0030 or email saintmartindeporresconvent@gmail.com.

Marriage enrichment conference planned March 5

MOSS BLUFF — Registration is open for *Together in Holiness*, a one-day marriage enrichment conference presented by the St. John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Lake Charles. The conference scheduled 9:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, March 5, at Camp Karol, 1087 Bozo Road, is a series for dioceses inspiring spouses to grow together in holiness and empowering parents to form their children in the Catholic faith.

The Most Rev. Glen John Provost, D.D., M.A., Bishop of Lake Charles, will be the celebrant for the Mass and Marriage Blessing at noon. Conference topics include: The Holy Eucharist, a Nuptial Sacrament; The Eucharistic Mission of the Family; and Liturgical Living in the Home. The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will be offered during the day, and exhibitor booths will be available throughout the conference.

Early bird discount of \$54 per couple, or \$35 per individual through Jan. 17 includes a box lunch and light afternoon snack for each registrant. After Jan. 17, registration fee is \$64 per couple and \$40 per individual. Partial or full scholarships are available for the cost of registration.

The full schedule and registration form is available at togetherinholiness.org. You can also contact Mylinh Vo, conference coordinator, at mylinh@forlifeandfamily.org or 832-779-1070, for more information.



Office of Vocations honors Prayer Warriors

Priests and Religious, as well as those who pray for vocations, were honored during the annual Serra Club of Lake Charles Recognition Dinner at Treasures of Marilyn's on December 2. Father Michael Caraway, Director of the Office of Vocations for the Diocese of Lake Charles recognized several Vocation Prayer Warriors from the Lake Charles Serra Club, as well as the East Deanery Serra Club. During National Vocation Awareness Week (Nov. 7-13), the Lake Charles Serra Club had 1,583 rosaries prayed for vocations. Kim Scroggs, pictured with Father Caraway, commissioned 265 rosaries, followed by Geri Landry with 150, and Nila Halloran with 116. The East Deanery Serra Club had 1,617 rosaries prayed during the same period with Bill Caraway, far right, commissioning 380 rosaries. Charles and Dee Dee Savoy, also pictured, commissioned 250 and 100 rosaries respectively. Serrans are dedicated Catholics who pray for the increase and perseverance of vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life.

Bible Study on Genesis to continue

LAKE CHARLES —Bible Study classes on the Book of Genesis, hosted by Bishop Glen John Provost for both men and women, will continue in February of 2022. The separate events take place in the Ave Maria Hall of the Cathedral Office Complex,

935 Kirby Street. The first women's luncheon of the new year will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 2. Reservations should be made prior to each luncheon by sending a check in the amount of \$12.50, payable to the Diocese of Lake Charles, to

Victoria Walter, 411 Iris Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601. A stamped self-addressed envelope should be included with payment. For more information, call 337-439-7400, Ext. 309. The remaining luncheons are scheduled for March 9, April 6, and May 4.

The bishop will present his talk to the men on Friday, Feb. 4. Mass, celebrated by the bishop, takes place in the Cathedral beginning at 6:30 a.m. with the presentation following at 7 a.m. Remaining dates for the men are March 4, April 1, and May 6.

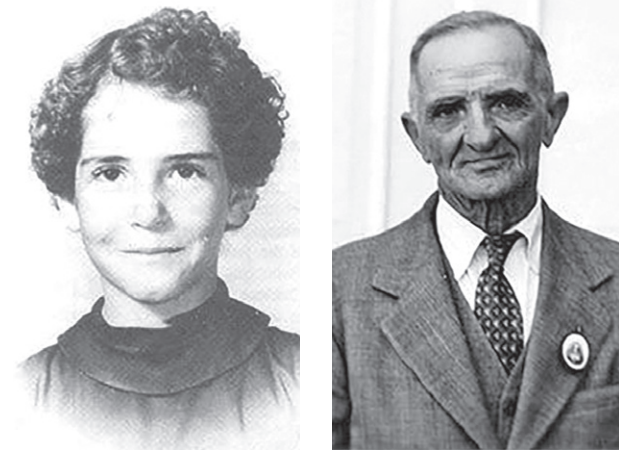
Diocesan offices closed until Dec. 31
The offices of the Diocese of Lake Charles remain closed through Friday, Dec. 31, before reopening on Monday, Jan. 3, for regular office hours – 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. The next Catholic Calendar will be published Friday, Jan. 21.



Bishop Glen John Provost, left, meets with Sir Knight Paul Reed, middle, the new president of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, a Catholic order of knighthood under the protection of the Holy See with the pope as the sovereign of the order. Along with the other papal equestrian orders, for example, the Teutonic Order and Sovereign Military Order of Malta, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre counts among the orders of chivalry that are currently under the auspices of the Holy See. Pictured at right is the immediate past president, Sir Knight Clarence Prudhomme. The main goal of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is to help maintain a presence in the Holy Land, done through donations. It is the president's job to offer the names of potential new members to the bishop and push for more involvement by members in work in the diocese and the Southeastern Lieutenancy of the EOHS. Mr. Prudhomme served in the leadership role for the past nine years.



U.S. bishops support two causes for sainthood from Lafayette diocese



Charlene Marie Richard Auguste Robert Pelafigue

conditions he always declined, saying that it was his way of doing penance for conversions and for the poor souls in purgatory. Pelafigue is said to have lived a life of radical simplicity, reluctantly accepting only the most rudimentary forms of electricity and plumbing.

In 1953, Pope Pius XII awarded Pelafigue with the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* medal in recognition for his dedicated and humble service to the Catholic Church. For 24 more years, until he died, Pelafigue continuously spread devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In total, over the 68-year span of his apostolate, he promoted the intentions of 6 popes, until the day he died on June 6, 1977, which was that year the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On June 6, 2012, the 35th anniversary of his death, the Auguste "Nonco" Pelafigue foundation was born with the mission of providing religious, educational, and charitable programs to continue his work, and to explore the possibility of his beatification and canonization by the Roman Catholic Church in recognition of his tireless commitment to it.

At their annual Fall Plenary Assembly in Baltimore in November, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops advanced the causes of three laypeople toward sainthood by their respective dioceses. Two causes, those of Charlene Marie Richard, often called "The Little Cajun Saint," and Auguste Robert "Nonco" Pelafigue, were presented by Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel of Lafayette.

Pelafigue and Richard now join Lt. Fr. Verbis Lafleur as three candidates from the Diocese of Lafayette on concurrent paths to canonization. Fr. Lafleur's cause was similarly ratified by the U.S. Bishops earlier this year during their 2021 Spring Plenary Assembly.

The bishops' vote represents the second step of the three-step journey toward canonization. The process now moves to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican in Rome which will document, in detail the lives of the candidates and investigate any miracles attributed to their intercession.

Here's a look at the new candidates for sainthood:

Servant of God Charlene Marie Richard

Charlene died of leukemia at the age of 12 on August 11, 1959, just two weeks after the chaplain at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Lafayette delivered the news of her terminal diagnosis. She was the second oldest of ten children born to Joseph Elvin and Mary Alice Richard from the community of Richard, La.

Though the illness was painful, Charlene remained cheerful, meekly accepted her fate, and offered up her suffering to God. While dying, the young girl prayed for other individuals to be healed or to be converted to Catholicism.

The chaplain and the hospital's Director of Pediatrics maintained that those for whom Charlene Richard prayed recovered from their illnesses or converted to Catholicism.

In 1975, a series of articles about Charlene Richard in the newspaper of the Diocese of Lafayette increased interest in her story and were republished in a booklet, *Charlene, A Saint from Southwest Louisiana*, in 1979. Testimonials by individuals who believed that they had benefited by prayer to Charlene were added and then published as a book in 1988 entitled, *Charlene: The Little Cajun Saint*. A widespread belief formed in the area that Charlene would intercede in heaven in answer to the prayers directed to her.

By 1989, devotion and confidence in Charlene Richard's intercession had spread outside the southwest of Louisiana with hundreds of people visiting her grave each week. On the thirtieth anniversary of her death in 1989, an outdoor Mass was celebrated by then Bishop Harry J. Flynn and was attended by more than four thousand people. Media coverage of the Mass expanded interest in her to a global audience and thousands visit her grave each year.

Servant of God Auguste Robert Pelafigue

Pelafigue, a longtime resident of Arnaudville, died in 1977 at the age of 89. He was an unmarried man of the Catholic lay faithful who, by his profound simplicity of life and apostolic zeal, spread devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and participation in the Apostleship of Prayer to well over a thousand men, women, and children in his community.

Many people who recalled seeing him distribute monthly Sacred Heart leaflets in their communities are said to have offered him a ride, but even in the poorest of weather

Camp Karol dedication honors Pope Saint John Paul II

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

The infectious love Pope Saint John Paul II had for the youth during his nearly 27-year papacy will live on through a Catholic youth camp in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

What started out as a vision by Moss Bluff native David Grove and his late wife Tammy (Duhon) to help young people grow in their faith, became a reality when Camp Karol Catholic Retreat Center was dedicated on October 23, 2021.

The Mass and Blessing was officiated by the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles. He was assisted by Deacon Brian Soileau, director of the youth facility and Saint Charles Center, also in Moss Bluff.

Camp Karol is named in honor of Saint John Paul II whose birth name was Karol Wojtyla. In Polish, his native language, Karol means Charles, which underscores the strong link Camp Karol has to Saint Charles Center.

Grove, who was present at the dedication, wants people to know that you can never outdo God.

"I worked a lot of youth camps over the years through Legionaries of Christ," he recalled. "When I would go to the camps, I somehow knew this (Camp Karol) was going to happen one day. I hunted, fished, and trapped on this land almost every day with 10 other guys. I knew Bear Island would be a great place for a youth camp."

Grove said he tries to live by Saint John Paul II's first words as pope: Be not afraid. "It was a big leap of faith when I purchased the property," he said. "It was the only mortgage I ever had in my life."

After 10 years of independent effort, 89 acres of Bear Island, along with its assets and equipment was donated to the Diocese of Lake Charles in November of 2015. The vision evolved into Camp Karol with an additional 12 acres purchased by the Diocese to build bungalows for overnight retreatants.

"The project of Camp Karol eventually became one of the goals of the Return to the Lord Capital Campaign conducted by the Diocese in 2016," said Bishop Provost. "We are grateful to Camp Karol Inc. for their generosity, leadership, vision, and cooperation. It is due to their incentive and the incentive of so many others during the Capital Campaign that we were able to build what we have here today."

Situated on more than 100 acres along the Calcasieu River between Saint Charles Center and St. Theodore Catholic Church, Camp Karol allows for a broadening of programs with the young people of the Diocese in mind.

"When I came to the Diocese in 2007, more than a few approached me with a request saying that the Diocese of Lake Charles needed a youth camp," said Bishop Provost. "Without this facility, they had to book events and camps further north and sometimes outside the Diocese."

The bishop noted that the

inspiration of Camp Karol is the result of the genius of Saint John Paul II, a great visionary for whom evangelization was so important.

"As a bishop, I have stopped counting the number of priests ordained in the 80's, 90's, and the first decade of the new Millennium who have said the following to me: I am a priest today because of Pope Saint John Paul II," he said. "The youth sensed his love for them, and his ability to communicate to them was electric."

During Mass, Bishop Provost blessed the reliquary holding a first-class relic of Pope Saint John Paul II. A first-class relic is something from the body of a saint and can only be requested by a bishop. This relic is a cutting from his hair and is permanently housed in the chapel of the Lodge at Camp Karol in a reliquary resembling leaves.

A life-long outdoorsman and athlete, as a parish priest Karol Wojtyla was known for taking young people on hiking retreats, and for his love of kayaking and skiing.

"While I was in Rome, I had the chance to go to some very fine craftsmen called the Savi brothers," the bishop said. "I found this custom-made reliquary that looks like something you would see in the woods around here. It is quite appropriate to have the foliage embracing and holding the first-class relic of Pope Saint John Paul II."

Bishop Provost expressed his appreciation to Deacon Brian Soileau and his staff as well as Father Whitney Miller who served as the previous director of Saint Charles Center and helped with much of the design of Camp Karol. Special thanks were given to the membership of Camp Karol Inc.; contractors, James and Alfred Palma; architects, Steven Hotard and Bridget Evans; and project manager, Therese Bourque.

In his closing remarks, Bishop Provost asked for the intercession of Pope Saint John Paul II for the success of every activity that will take place on the grounds and in the buildings of Camp Karol.

"May the youth who come here be inspired and never be afraid, but with courage enter the world to meet its challenges," he said. "It is our prayer that Camp Karol will offer a home to the youth of our diocese and others who will use these facilities. We pray that they will draw closer to Christ and to His Church."

For more information on ways to contribute to Camp Karol or to make reservations, please call Deacon Brian Soileau, director, at 337-855-1232. Camp Karol is located at 1087 Bozo Road.



Bishop Glen John Provost is joined by Deacon Brian Soileau, left, director of Saint Charles Center and Camp Karol; and Rev. Whitney Miller, the previous director of Saint Charles Center, who assisted with much of the design of Camp Karol in the beginning stages of the project.



The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, second from left, accepts a check in the amount of \$2,000 from the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Diocesan Coordinator I. J. Tarou, left. The contribution comes from the Fourth Degree Assemblies domiciled in the Diocese of Lake Charles – Msgr. Hubert Cramers #320 of Lake Charles, Fr. Eugene Veillard #2087 of Sulphur, Fr. James Shahrigan #2182 of DeRidder, and Msgr. Peeters #332 of Jennings – to aid in the continuing excellence in religious education program of the Diocese. Others pictured include, second from right, Past Faithful Navigator Darryl Fontenot, Fr. Shahrigan Assembly, Past Faithful Navigator; and District ERE Program Director Peter Snatic, right, Msgr. Cramers Assembly.



Bishop Glen John Provost places a first-class relic of Pope Saint John Paul II in its permanent home in the chapel of the Lodge at Camp Karol following the dedication and blessing of Camp Karol Catholic Retreat Center in Moss Bluff.