



APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

Stella Maris Seafarers Center to celebrate 60 years

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles



STELLA MARIS

“What complicated matters is that the death happened at the beginning of September 2001, and the September 11 terror attacks happened less than two weeks later,” he continued. “The body could not be returned to the family until the end of October. I stayed in touch with the family for a year making sure they received all their insurance money.”

In most recent weeks, Deacon Lapoint, along with Associate Director Ray Fontenot, has been visiting ships with Ukrainians and Russians. When their contracts end, they must figure out how they are getting home because of the difficulties amid the war in Ukraine.

“The sailors are worried about their families, and there is nothing they can do. We just listen to them with compassion,” Lapoint said.

Port Chaplain

In his role as port chaplain, Father Rommel Tolentino is reminded often of what it is like to be far from his homeland in the Philippines. Ministering to people of the sea is an opportunity to offer hope and joy.

“The Catholic Church is bigger than just my parish or our local diocese. The ministry of the Seafarers Center is to reassure those at sea that they are not forgotten by the Universal Church,” said Father Tolentino.

“Whenever I get requests to celebrate Mass on the ships, I know the sailors are always very appreciative. Nourishing their faith is so important because the strength of their faith in God can help them deal better with the many challenges and disappointments they face,” he continued.

Since many seafarers are Filipinos, Father Tolentino said he always makes it a point to sing Filipino hymns during Mass. “It makes them feel close to home,” he said.

Star of the Sea

Stella Maris is Latin for Star of the Sea, a title often given to the Virgin Mary under the title Our Lady. Deacon Lapoint credits the Blessed Virgin for guiding him to the Seafarers Center 25 years ago.

“Making rosaries is what led me to the Center and eventually as director. A friend of mine and I belonged to Our Lady’s Rosary Makers. A list was published every quarter of who needed rosaries and where to send them,” Lapoint recalled. “When the Seafarers Center in

Lake Charles was listed in 1997, I brought the rosaries to the Center myself.”

Looking back, he can see God’s hand at work.

“I was making rosaries to share with people around the world and was led here through a request in a newsletter. That was God opening a door to get me here,” said Lapoint. “Once I saw what the ministry was about, it inspired me to start volunteering. It instilled a love for people from around the world who are at sea.”

Joyful Celebrations

The centennial of the Apostleship of the Sea was one of many highlights over the years for the Seafarers Center.

On October 3, 2020, Bishop Provost celebrated Mass in the Cathedral, followed by a Marian and Eucharistic Procession to the Civic Center seawall and back to the Cathedral.

The event was quite an accomplishment considering Southwest Louisiana was picking up the pieces from Hurricane Laura that struck just five weeks earlier and Hurricane Delta that would make landfall in the same area six days later.

The Center also helped organize a tri-parish celebration in November of 2019.

“The Cathedral celebrated 150 years, while Sacred Heart of Jesus in Lake Charles and Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Sulphur were both marking 100 years. We had a beautiful boat procession around the Lake and called it a Fete-Dieu,” said Tolentino.

Community Support

The community is incredibly supportive of the Seafarers Center, especially at Christmastime, Lapoint noted.

“Year round we collect prayer cards, rosaries, and medals to give to everyone on the ships. During the holiday season, we collect cards, pens, envelopes, socks, wool caps, toiletries and washcloths,” he said, noting that enough items are usually collected to make up 900 gift ditty bags. “The most we ever distributed one year was 1,200 bags.”

The donations usually come from area churches and organizations, but in 2021, Westlake Chemical sponsored a drive, marking the first time a local industry contributed to the Christmas project. Volunteers help with the packing and wrapping.

“Our goal is to make sure we visit every ship at Christmastime, many years as much as 50 ships. It helps to make the holidays special for those who are so far from home. Of all the compliments we get from the sailors, the biggest one is that the people in Lake Charles are so friendly,” Lapoint continued.

“This is a ministry, not a job. God is so good to us that he allows the Diocese to pay us so we can continue to do our



Deacon Patrick Lapoint, Sr.
Director



Raymond Fontenot
Associate Director



Rev. Rommel Tolentino
Chaplain

work through this ministry of hospitality.”

Following the Mass on April 19, a celebration will take place 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Port of Lake Charles board meeting room, 1611 W. Sallier Street. All are welcome. Please RSVP by Saturday, April 9, to Deacon Patrick Lapoint, 337-436-1315, or email stella.maris@lcdioocese.org.

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Stella Maris Prayer

O Mary, Star of the Sea, light of every ocean, guide seafarers across all dark and stormy seas that they may reach the haven of peace and light prepared in Him who calmed the sea.

As we set forth upon the oceans of the world and cross the deserts of our time, show us, O Mary, the fruit of your womb, for without your Son, we are lost.

Pray that we will never fail on life’s journey, that in heart and mind, in word and deed, in days of turmoil and in days of calm, we will always look to Christ and say, “Who is that that even wind and sea obey him?”

Our Lady Star of the Sea, pray for us. Amen.
Pope Saint John Paul II



Herman C. Verkruijsen, first director of the Lake Charles Seamen’s Center (now known as the Stella Maris Seafarers Center), and Reverend Theodore Hassink, the first port chaplain of the Center, discuss the business of the day in this circa 1962 photograph.



Bishop Glen John Provost assists Deacon Patrick Lapoint Sr., Director of the Stella Maris Seafarers Center, in filling Christmas ditty bags in 2021 for mariners aboard ships that unload at the Port of Lake Charles and along the Calcasieu Ship Channel during the holidays. A ditty bag is a small token of appreciation for their sacrifice to work at sea and the many months spent away from their families.



Father Theodore Hassink, the first port chaplain of what is known today as the Stella Maris Seafarers Center in the Diocese of Lake Charles, visits members of a ship crew in the Diocese of Lafayette, and while serving in Lake Charles, he saw a need to minister to the people of the sea.

Penance Nights scheduled April 4-7

Penance Nights have been scheduled throughout each of the four Deaneries Monday-Thursday, April 4-7, in the Diocese of Lake Charles. The following church parishes will be open from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on each designated day:

Monday, April 4

West Deanery — Immaculate Conception, Maplewood; Our Lady of LaSalette, DeQuincy; Our Lady of LaSalette and Our Lady of Prompt Succor, both in Sulphur; St. John Bosco, Westlake; St. Joseph, DeRidder; St. Joseph, Vinton; St. Peter the Apostle, Hackberry; St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Carlyss; and St. Pius X, Ragley.

Tuesday, April 5

South Central Deanery — Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, St. Martin de Porres, and Christ the King, all in Lake Charles; St. Mary of the Lake, Big Lake; St. John Vianney, Bell City; and Sacred Heart of Jesus, East Cameron.

Wednesday, April 6

North Central Deanery — Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Henry, and St. Margaret of Scotland, all in Lake Charles; St. Raphael, Iowa; and St. Theodore, Moss Bluff.

Thursday, April 7

East Deanery — Our Lady Help of Christians, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Immaculate Conception, all in Jennings; Our Lady of Seven Dolours, Welsh; Our Lady of the Lake, Lake Arthur; Sacred Heart of Jesus, Oakdale; St. Charles Borromeo, Fenton; St. Joan of Arc, Oberlin; St. Joseph and St. Paul, both in Elton; St. Joseph, Welsh; St. Lawrence, Raymond; and St. Philip Neri, Kinder.



Couples learn ways to grow in holiness

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

MOSS BLUFF — Blake and Kelli Brignac will be the first to admit that life moves fast when you are raising three young children while juggling busy careers. That is one reason the couple, who will be married nine years in May, signed up for “Together in Holiness” held at Camp Karol on March 5.

They joined 46 other couples for the one-day marriage enrichment conference presented by the St. John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Lake Charles. Couples ranged from newly married to nearly 50 years.

The second annual event featured a mix of guest speakers with a focus on the theme, “Family as Community Prayer.” Mass was celebrated by Bishop Glen John Provost, and time was set aside for Eucharistic Adoration, confession, and private time for the couples.

Kelli learned about the conference through St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church where she and Blake are parishioners.

“I was familiar with the St. John Paul II Foundation, but I had not heard of Together in Holiness,” Kelli said. “What interested me was how it is meant for people who are in the throes of a busy life. My husband’s business has been growing a lot, and I just had a major career change. I wanted time for us to be able to talk without all the daily distractions.”

Blake said the day was a good reset for them to focus on their faith regarding each other and their three children.

“As time evolved, we got away from the path we discussed early on when we were planning to have a family. This time together gave us a chance to think about things and what we can do to get back on track,” said Blake.

Together in Holiness is a marriage conference and formation series inspiring spouses to grow together in holiness and empowering parents to form their children in the Catholic faith.

Bishop Provost emphasized that the couples should never underestimate what they do as a parent or as husband and wife.

“God wants us to cooperate with him in a complementary work where we are jointly engaged in something particularly important. Married couples perform a great service to God in what they do, and they contribute a great deal,” Bishop Provost said during his homily.

“You can have an argument or disagreement, which in modern society can be misinterpreted as the end of the world. It is not the end of the world if you have your relationship anchored in the Faith, which is God present in your midst. It is the way a married couple is to live the Sacrament of Matrimony,” he continued.



Bishop Glen John Provost delivers his homily to 47 couples during the “Together for Holiness” marriage enrichment conference held March 5 at Camp Karol in Moss Bluff. (Photo credit: Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

Randall and Melissa Edwards, who have been married two years and are expecting their second child, attended so they could grow together in their young marriage.

“We pray daily as a family, but sometimes it is hard with a baby,” said Melissa regarding their 1 ½-year old. “It was nice to hear that we should do what we can and just keep trying.”

The presentation on liturgical living resonated with Randall, who serves as Campus Minister for Cowboy Catholics at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church.

“I liked hearing ways to make the family dynamic holier and incorporate good practices of sacrifice in our children, even while they are so young, to be able to grow with that,” said Randall.

Derrell and Jill Feverjean, parishioners of St. Theodore Catholic Church, were glad to learn about things they can add in their marriage more than just going to Mass on Sundays.

“I was attracted to the spiritual component of the conference and how we can incorporate things with our 6-year-old and in our marriage,” said Jill. “I enjoyed listening to the speakers and then having time for spouses to have one-on-one time throughout the day.”

Roland Millare, STD, Vice President of Curriculum and Director of Shepherd’s Heart, said the goal of Together in Holiness is to help couples not just survive but to thrive in their marriages. Millare presented a talk, “The Holy Eucharist, A Nuptial Sacrament.”

“We want couples to realize that marriage vocation is a means by which they can answer the call to holiness,” he said.

“The day offers time with the Lord and time with your spouse. For married couples, a day-long commitment is much easier to make than a whole weekend.”

Returning participants Wayne and Amanda Jeffries are encouraged by so many other couples trying to live a life of holiness. They know all too well the importance of making time for each other. Now parishioners of Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, their marriage is the second for both.

“We already have commitments that we try to live out in our daily lives being part of the Domestic Church. Coming here helps to reignite that spark and recenter us on God’s will for us in our marriage and God’s will for us as parents, and helps us to prioritize,” said Amanda. “It is a wonderful opportunity to be around other like-minded couples and to be reminded that we are not alone in this journey toward Heaven.”

In addition to Millare, other topics and speakers included “Liturgical Living in the Home” by Michael and Erin Fontenot, of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church in Jennings; and Sister Mary Benedicta Maier, R.S.M., co-director of the Offices of Marriage, Family Life, and Pro-Life Ministries for the Diocese of Lake Charles; and “The Eucharistic Mission of the Family” by Damon Owens, founder of Joyful Ever After.

Learn more about the St. John Paul II Foundation and its initiative, Together in Holiness at <https://forlifefamily.org/together-in-holiness/>

Bishop Provost to preside at Sacred Triduum in Cathedral

LAKE CHARLES – The Most Reverend Glen John Provost will celebrate the Sacred Triduum – Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil – in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Bilbo Street. On Palm Sunday, April 10, Bishop Provost will bless the palms before the 9:30 a.m. Mass in the Cathedral. Palms will also be blessed at the 4 p.m. Extraordinary Form Mass that day.

The Bishop will be the celebrant of the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, April 13, with the priests of the Diocese as concelebrants. At this Mass, the Holy Oils – Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens, and the Oil of Chrism – used during the year are prepared and blessed.

The Mass of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated on Holy Thursday, April 14, at 7 p.m. It is at this Mass that the commemoration of Christ’s washing the feet of His Apostles occurs. Following the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament will be available for Eucharistic Adoration in St. Bernadette Oratory until midnight. Earlier in the day, at 8 a.m., there will be morning prayer in the Cathedral.

The Commemoration of the Lord’s Passion will take place on Good Friday, April 15, at 3 p.m. The service begins with the Liturgy of the Word, followed by Veneration of the Cross with the faithful recognizing the “Cross of Christ” as their only hope of salvation. The celebration concludes with Holy Communion.

On Good Friday, in the Cathedral, there will be morning prayer at 8 a.m. followed by a Walk with Christ to the Old Catholic Cemetery and back, praying the Stations of the Cross, the Holy Rosary, and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

The Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 16, will begin at 8 p.m. in the Cathedral with the Service of Light outside the church.

Cathedral Mass times for Easter Sunday, April 17, are 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11:15 a.m., with Mass in the Extraordinary Form at 4 p.m.

Diocesan office hours for Holy Week are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Monday through Wednesday, April 11, 12, and 13. Offices will be closed on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, April 14 and 15, as well as Easter Monday, April 18, reopening on Tuesday, April 19, at 8:30 a.m.



Bishop blesses St. Bernadette Oratory

Bishop Glen John Provost blessed the St. Bernadette Oratory in the annex of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception following the 9:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday, March 6. The oratory was entrusted under the patronage of St. Bernadette, to whom Our Lady revealed herself as The Immaculate Conception – patroness of the Cathedral. Renovation efforts were led by the Knights of Columbus Council 1207. Countless parishioners volunteered their time, talent, and treasure to convert the former day chapel into an oratory that will be used primarily for Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Hours of adoration are 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours until midnight on Thursdays. To sign up for a Holy Hour, call Mandy Robichaux at 337-794-3619. (Photo credit: Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

Rites of Acceptance and Welcome



The Rite of Election and Rite of Continuing Conversion were held last month for those preparing to receive the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. Both took place in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles. **PHOTO AT LEFT:** On March 6, the First Sunday of Lent, Bishop Provost celebrated the Rite of Election welcoming 59 Catechumens who will celebrate the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 16. Their names were recorded in the Book of Elect, a designation which reflects that the bishop, in the name of the Lord and the local Church, is electing them to share in the Easter sacraments. This rite closes the period of the Catechumenate and marks the beginning of the final period of more intense preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation. **PHOTO AT RIGHT:** On March 13, the Second Sunday of Lent, Bishop Provost presided over the Rite of Continuing Conversion. This rite is celebrated for baptized Candidates – those preparing for full reception into the Catholic Church, at which time they will receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. A total of 70 Candidates will enter the holy Catholic Church this Easter. As we draw closer to the celebration of Easter, please keep all the Catechumens and Candidates in your prayers as they continue their journey during this season of Lent. (Photo credit: Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)