



Bishop Provost's Christmas Message 2022

"And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God." Luke 2:13

Aren't music and singing always a part of Christmas for us? Gathered around the piano as a family, we sang carols. Each had a favorite. "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem" was my mother's. For me it was "Oh, Holy Night," especially sung in French to a Cathedral lit only by candles before the Midnight Mass. In my first pastorate of a parish with a predominantly German history, the carols were sung in that language: "Stille Nacht" and "Ihr Kinderlein kommet." When I returned to the parish of my childhood as pastor, the Cathedral in Lafayette, I could still hear "Il est né le divin Enfant" and "Quelle est cette odeur agréable." Is there any season more than Christmas for which a song or piece of music can conjure such sentiments of peace, quiet, and happiness?

The Word of God became flesh! "O, magnum mysterium! O, what great mystery it is, that God would descend, empty Himself out in the words of another ancient hymn recorded by St. Paul (cf. Philippians 2:7), and become a little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes—for us, for you and for me, to live, to die, and to redeem. Spoken words are not enough to express so great a mystery. We must sing.

Many years ago, I read an account by a Jewish professor of an experience at Christmas towards the end of World War II (cf. Memory Fields by Shlomo Breznitz, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1993, pp. 77-81). The gentleman's parents smuggled his sister and

himself into a Catholic orphanage run by nuns in their native Czechoslovakia. When the Nazis had occupied that country, Catholic nuns gave them false identities and the children remained undetected, safely hidden, until just before the end of the war. What happened? The German commander came to visit the orphanage at Christmas bearing a gift for the children and asked them to sing. The young Jewish boy understood very well the menace and the threat to their concealment. All the orphans sang carols in Latin and their native Czech. At the end of the performance, the commander asked whether anyone could sing "Silent Night" in German. The Jewish boy was older and knew that in this region of Czechoslovakia German was not a language well-known except by the Jewish population. So, the boy thought it best not to volunteer. However, his younger sister, not realizing the peril, naively advanced toward the German officer. Her brother, not wanting her to be alone in this moment of revelation, joined his sister. In effect, singing a German song could mean a death warrant. For some four years they had remained undetected, until now, this Christmas night, the last of the war. But something mysterious happened. When the children had finished "Silent Night," the commander beckoned them to come closer. With his sister the trembling boy approached, convinced of their inevitable fate. The German commander bent over and said quietly in German, "Don't be scared, your mother and father will come back." This Christmas was indeed to be a silent one. "Sleep in heavenly

peace" silenced war, murder, hatred, and conflict.

Spoken words just do not express adequately the joy of what is happening here. Yet, words are all we have to express the truth and the joy of what we celebrate. Better yet if they are sung. If angels can break open the heavens to rejoice, cannot human beings respond in kind? Angels appear to poor shepherds and proclaim, "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). Cannot we do the same? Where are our voices in witness to the Christian message of great joy? Where indeed are the voices? Put to rest anger and resentment. Begone hatred and revenge. Banish the vulgar and flee the crude and tasteless fashions of the current world. How can we on so sacred a night not be resolved to put aside the idols of the age, the distractions from the Word of God made flesh? When will we learn the lesson? Why do we prefer chaos over order, war over peace? Have we not paused at the manger to hear the message? Stand in awe as the heavens opened to reveal angels?

And so, we break into song. The family gathers around the piano. Out of the darkness and silence of a great Cathedral, a melodious voice announces holiness and peace. The Christmas carolers bring some joy to the otherwise lonely. And even the commander of an occupying army is silenced, so sacred is the moment, so profound the mystery, so deep the joy, and so holy the night.

May God grant you and your families the grace to silence the troubles of this world that oppress you and to instill in your lives the peace of God's Will and the quiet of His presence. Merry Christmas!

Cathedral to host monthly series on Eucharistic Adoration

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

St. Teresa of Calcutta once said: "Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration."

To help people foster a habit of spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception will kick off a monthly series, "An Afternoon with Christ," beginning Sunday, January 15, 2023, as part of the National Eucharistic Revival.

The afternoon will begin at 2:30 p.m. with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by a reflection presented by a priest or deacon at 3:00 p.m., and ending with Benediction to conclude at 3:30 p.m.

"This is an opportunity to increase Eucharistic

piety in the Diocese of Lake Charles," said Very Rev. Ruben Buller, Vicar General and Rector of the Cathedral. "The Eucharist is how Christ decided to remain with us. Adoration offers us the chance to sit with Christ, to be with Christ."

So far, the schedule of presenters through June of 2023 will be as follows, all on Sundays at 2:30 p.m.:

- **January 15** — Rev. Jeffrey Starkovich, Pastor, St. Pius X Catholic Church
- **February 12** — Very Rev. Edward Richard, M.S., Pastor, Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church
- **March 19** — Rev. Joseph Caraway, Parochial Vicar, St. Henry Catholic Church
- **April 16** — Very Rev. Matthew Cormier, Pastor, St. Henry Catholic Church
- **May 21** — Very Rev. Daniel Torres, V.G., Pastor, Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church
- **June 11** — Very Rev. Ruben Buller, V.G., Rector,

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

One of the goals of the National Eucharistic Revival is to spark personal conversions through the joyful discovery of a relationship with Christ by encountering the love of God present in Jesus in the Eucharist.

"We are all called to develop a friendship with Christ, and Eucharistic Adoration can help in this regard," said Father Buller. "The more time we spend visiting the Blessed Sacrament, graces from God flow through our fidelity." Father Buller likened visits at Eucharistic Adoration to Moses going on top of Mount Sinai.

"God spoke to Moses as one man speaks to his friend. Hopefully, when we go before Our Lord in the Eucharist, we will be able to hear Christ speaking to us in that same way," he said.

Father Buller encouraged

those who don't know what to do during Adoration to simply focus on being silent with a friend.

"Don't be afraid of silence," he said. "Even in a good relationship with someone, silence is part of that friendship, when we can sit in the company of a friend and not have to entertain or be entertained."

Following the advice of St. Catherine of Labouré, "Whenever I go to the chapel, I put myself in the presence of our good Lord, and I say to him, 'Lord, I am here. Tell me what you would have me to do' And then, I tell God everything that is in my heart. ... and then I listen. If you listen, God will speak to you. God always speaks to you when you approach him plainly and simply."

For more information on "An Afternoon with Christ," call the Cathedral office at 337-436-7251. The Cathedral is located at 935 Bilbo Street in Lake Charles.



Rev. Jeffrey Starkovich
Pastor, St. Pius X Catholic Church



Red Mass celebrated for legal profession

Judges and attorneys attended the annual Red Mass on Friday, September 9, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The Mass coincided with the Feast Day of Saint Peter Claver, Patron for the Diocese of Lake Charles. His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost, was joined by the Very Rev. Edward Richard, M.S., V.F., who served as homilist and is Chaplain to the Saint Thomas More Society. The annual Mass is sponsored by the Diocese of Lake Charles and the Saint Thomas More Society, Judge Henry Yelverton Chapter, and requests guidance from the Holy Spirit for all who seek justice. The liturgy focuses on wisdom, understanding, counsel and fortitude for those in attendance. (Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

Pontifical Solemn Mass Dec. 29

SULPHUR — A Pontifical Solemn Mass is planned for 5:30 p.m. Thursday, December 29, in the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales, 802 South Huntington Street. The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, will celebrate the Mass for the 5th Day in the Octave of Christmas.

Office closures, publication date

The offices of the Diocese of Lake Charles are closed for the Christmas and New Year holidays through Monday, January 2, 2023, reopening for regular business hours — 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. — on Tuesday, January 3. On Monday, January 16, in honor of the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the diocesan offices will be closed, returning on Tuesday, January 17, for regular business hours Tuesday through Friday of the week. The first *Catholic Calendar* of 2023 will be published on Friday, January 20.



Land purchase for St. Louis next step in storm recovery

LAKE CHARLES — Land has been purchased for a new home for St. Louis Catholic High School — the next step in its recovery from the 2020 hurricanes. The new site is a 47-acre tract on Corbina Road in east Lake Charles.

St. Louis Catholic, the Diocese of Lake Charles' lone Catholic high school, was largely destroyed by Hurricane Laura in 2020. It has operated as a temporary campus in modular buildings in the time since.

"We are excited to announce this purchase for several reasons," said the Rev. Nathan Long, rector of St. Louis Catholic High School. "Practically, because this means we can begin adding structures the very moment the funding becomes available. Symbolically, because this means the future is wide open to St. Louis Catholic. We will have 47 acres on which to grow and form lifelong Saints."

With the school's current storm-damaged campus limited to approximately 15.5 acres, the new, larger property offers opportunities to expand.

"Curriculum development requires the right facilities, ministry opportunities call for a beautiful worship space, and reaching more students means more classrooms," Long said. "All of this will soon be possible. We will all be blessed to have a school that truly addresses future needs: one that can navigate the tough cultural waters ahead, allow for growth over time, and honor God through worship in a full-sized chapel."

The recovery process has taken more than two years to reach this milestone. "Just as with our black-eyed Saint mascot, it's not the challenges and obstacles that define us — it's how we refuse to give up the fight," said Mia Touchet, principal. "That's what makes this place so special."

In the new year, the milestone — the acquisition of the property for the new campus — will be commemorated with a "ground blessing" and community celebration at the site.

"While this process has not been comfortable or easy, I believe that in the end it will have been worth the wait and challenges," Long said. "No longer will we have doubts such as 'Can we do it?' now that we have the space. We would always much rather say yes to our students' educational and formational needs."

Touchet said, "Future Saints and their families will look back and recognize the dedication and perseverance of this school community in making this project become a reality. Like the leaders from our three founding schools in 1971 — St. Charles Academy, Landry Memorial and Sacred Heart High School — we envision a bright future for generations to come."

DIOCESAN RECOVERY UPDATE No. 6

Recovery continues in multiple stages across the Diocese of Lake Charles. Many of the churches and schools are in the design stage of recovery with several permanent repairs in active construction and new construction in various architectural stages.

The Federal assistance claim is laborious, as the Diocese Recovery Teams works with FEMA to validate damages and costs for restoration or replacement of the severely damaged parish and diocesan facilities and schools. Over the past few months, more than 20 in-person site inspections with FEMA have been conducted to validate damages. Specialists in roof and structural damages have been contracted to assure the most comprehensive position possible. Negotiations are actively underway to agree upon FEMA Damage Description and Dimensions (DDD) which results in the bottom line amount of FEMA financial participation. There are 11 FEMA Grant Projects in this finalization process which will then result in Obligated Funds. In this past month, the damages at St. Louis Catholic High School have moved through this process and an obligated bottom line is expected soon.

For answers to **Frequently Asked Questions**, visit <http://www.lcdioocese.org/3-news/3475-faq-disaster-recovery>

Figures below illustrate the current monthly snapshot highlighting the ongoing recovery in the Diocese of Lake Charles as of December 1, 2022:

DIOCESAN EXPENDITURES	through Oct 2022	November 2022	through Nov 2022
Emergency Work (Category B)	\$8,011,775.88		\$8,011,775.88
Emergency Work (Insurance Contractors)	\$13,829,967.75		\$13,829,967.75
Permanent Work Repairs	\$9,882,792.04	\$2,119,950.57	\$12,002,742.61
Temporary Facilities (See below)	\$9,063,826.99	\$236,169.02	\$9,299,996.01
Restoration Design (Architects) and PM	\$4,839,176.88	\$657,005.87	\$5,496,182.75
Insurance Consultants	\$440,459.15		\$440,459.15
FEMA Consultants	\$1,318,013.61		\$1,318,013.61
TOTAL Expenditures to date:	\$47,386,012.30	\$3,013,125.46	\$50,399,137.76

TEMPORARY SITES (Expenditures to date)

Our Lady's School Temp Facility	\$2,644,540.05	\$49,708.98	\$2,694,249.03
St. Louis High School Temp Facility	\$3,571,221.24	\$64,301.70	\$3,635,522.94
St. Margaret School Temp Facility	\$2,712,584.94	\$103,560.84	\$2,816,145.78
Christ the King Church	\$95,122.90	\$2,400.00	\$97,522.90
DOLC Storage	\$40,357.86	\$16,197.50	\$56,555.36
	\$9,063,826.99	\$236,169.02	\$9,299,996.01

PROJECTS COMPLETED / PROJECTS IN DESIGN

A total of 72 DOLC project sites impacted by Hurricane Laura.
A total of 32 DOLC project sites are under active design or specifications development for repairs / restoration.
A total of 25 DOLC project sites have a combination of active work and/or active design for repairs / restoration.
A total of 15 DOLC project sites, restoration is complete.

TOTAL INSURANCE PROCEEDS	\$30,000,000.00
FEMA OBLIGATIONS TO DATE	\$20,011,227.21
FEMA REIMBURSEMENTS TO DATE	\$7,372,973.69

Data as of 1 Dec 2022



Artist renderings of the future home of St. Louis Catholic High School illustrate the front elevation (left image) and aerial view of rosary garden (right image).

Relics of Padre Pio bring hope to believers in Diocese

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

Among Aaron Richard's collection of nearly 400 rosaries are two rosaries blessed by Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (1887-1968), whose famous motto was, "Pray, hope, and don't worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer."

It was only natural that Aaron took advantage of an opportunity to venerate the Italian Franciscan Capuchin priest's relics during a recent tour at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church on Tuesday, October 4.

The Padre Pio Relics Tour, sponsored by the Saint Pio Foundation, is a chance for many to experience a spiritual encounter with St. Pio who was canonized by Pope John Paul II on June 26, 2002.

Known for being the first priest in the history of the Roman Catholic Church to receive the stigmata (the five wounds of our Lord's passion appeared on his body on September 20, 1918), countless people were attracted to his confessional over the years. St. Pio spent up to 14 hours a day in confession offering his saintly counsel and spiritual guidance.

"I obtained the two rosaries from a man in Rome whose family knew Padre Pio personally," said Aaron, a parishioner of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. "The man was getting up in age, so the family decided to re-distribute many of his blessed objects."

Padre Pio suffered from poor health his entire life, but he never became discouraged, instead offering all his bodily sufferings to God as a sacrifice, for the conversion of souls.

While venerating the first and second-class relics of Padre Pio — which included a cotton gauze bearing Saint Pio's blood stains, crusts of his wounds, and a lock of his hair, all encased in glass — Aaron prayed for healing for himself as well as

family and is confident his prayers will be heard.

"I prayed for the intercession of Padre Pio the entire time I had prostate cancer, and I made it through that," said Aaron who graduated from high school in 1968, the same year St. Pio died. "I have cystic lesions on my left kidney and possibly a tumor. I will be going to Houston for more scans and pray for good results. I prayed for everybody and anybody I could think of today."

Aaron said visiting the relics made him feel like he was in the presence of St. Pio.

"I could have stayed here all day," he remarked. "Padre Pio is one of my favorite saints. I really like St. Benedict and St. Anne, too."

It is important to note that according to Canon Law, any religious object that touches the reliquary holding a first- or second-class relic becomes a third-class relic.

During one of two presentations given by Monsignor Daniel A. Torres, V.G., on the life of St. Padre Pio, he mentioned how the saint, much like the faithful flocking to see the relics, found himself being lured to the love and mercy of Christ.

"The grace of the Holy Spirit has brought us here today that as we come to see the relics of this great saint, and through the prayers of St. Francis of Assisi (whose Feast Day is October 4) and the prayers of St. Padre Pio, they are praying for all of us that we can be brought closer to the love and mercy of Christ and that we can find healing," said Monsignor Torres, Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Heaven.

"We pray for our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, and for our family members, for our enemies, for our coworkers, for the people who are sick, and for those who have left the Church. We ask these great saints to pray and bring them back," Monsignor continued before leading those gathered in the Prayer of Saint Francis.



Sister Monica Okeke, Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy, is assisted as she touches religious items to a reliquary holding a relic of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, also known as Padre Pio, at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church on October 4. (Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

"Festival of Nations" on Jan. 7 will celebrate Feast of Epiphany

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — The Diocese of Lake Charles will host "Festival of Nations: Celebrating the Epiphany of the Lord" on Saturday, January 7, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church.

With a special focus on the National Eucharistic Revival, the event will offer families an opportunity to embrace traditions of other countries, but more

importantly, to come together to adore the Lord.

The Guadalupe Dancers from the Hispanic community at St. Henry Catholic Church will kick off the festivities followed by a colorful entrance of flags representing nearly 30 countries inside Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Founders' Hall.

"Two thousand years ago, the Three Kings followed the star of Bethlehem to adore the Lord. In doing so, they were blessed," said Very Rev. Rojo

Koonathan, HGN, V.E., committee chairman for Ethnic Communities for the Eucharistic Revival. "The Three Kings are going to lead us with the star as we process to the church for Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction."

While celebrations vary from one country to another, the tradition of the Wise Men giving gifts will be carried out by distributing toys to all children attending the event.

"The main focus is spending time adoring the Lord," said Father

Koonathan, "so before the gifts are given to the children, we will spend time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction."

Entertainment will feature a cultural show including an array of talent, with traditional songs, regional costumes, and traditional dances from countries such as the Philippines, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Mexico.

Guests can take their tastebuds on a tour with cuisine from Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, India, Venezuela,

and even a mix of Cajun and African American flavor to spice things up.

"The Catholic Church is made up of different ethnicities around the world," said Father Koonathan. "We will have different nations all coming together to represent the nations of the Gentiles. The hope is that people who attend the Epiphany celebration will in turn share their blessing with others," Father Koonathan said.