



Diocese Reacts to News of Pope Benedict's Death

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

The death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on Saturday, December 31, 2022, has given many in the Diocese of Lake Charles a chance to reflect on the impact the German-born pontiff had on their lives in one way or another.

The faithful in Southwest Louisiana joined with others from around the world in praying for His Holiness after Pope Francis announced on Wednesday, December 28, that his predecessor was "very sick" following a deterioration in his health. The former pope was 95 years old.

In 2013, Benedict XVI resigned from his position as pontiff citing his "advanced age." His reign lasted exactly seven years, ten months, and nine days (2005-2013). This marked the first time a pope had stepped down in nearly 600 years. The last pope to resign before his death was Gregory XII in 1415.

At the end-of-the-year celebration of Vespers and the *Te Deum*, Pope Francis remembered Pope Benedict recalling his great kindness, witness of faith and prayer.

Bishop's Appointment

Closer to home, His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, remembers receiving a personally signed letter when Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Bishop of Lake Charles in 2007.

"Much to my surprise and unlike many of his predecessors, he personally signed letters of appointment for bishops," he said. "Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI took his vocation as Vicar of Christ and Bishop of Rome very seriously."

Bishop Provost said that he had the "great privilege" of meeting Pope Benedict a few times. "He was transparently kind and had a splendid sense of humor," he noted.

Working for Ratzinger

Born Joseph Ratzinger in Germany in 1927, Pope Benedict was ordained as a priest in 1951, made a cardinal in 1977, and later served as chief theological adviser to Pope John Paul

II. At age 78, he was elected as the 265th pope in April 2005, following John Paul II's death.

It was Cardinal Ratzinger who was once the boss of Reverend Monsignor Harry Greig — a longtime priest for the Diocese of Lake Charles — when he worked at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome (1988-1991). Monsignor Greig said he appreciated the way the office was run with German efficiency.

"Cardinal Ratzinger was very personable when you encountered him, a kind man, a private man of faith, highly competent, and with many responsibilities," Monsignor Greig recalled.

He observed that part of the Cardinal's job was to take the hard line and enforce what Saint Pope John Paul II wanted.

"Cardinal Ratzinger was criticized at times, but he was really doing what the Holy Father wanted," Greig said. "In my opinion, he was the logical successor of Pope John Paul II because of his having been part of the Curia for so long and understanding the working of the Church in Rome."

Monsignor Greig considered the late pontiff a mentor.

"I have admiration, respect, and only high regards for Pope Benedict. His example of living his priesthood has always inspired me," Monsignor remarked. "I am grateful for my association with him in Rome and for his leadership of our Church through the years."

Impact on Seminary Formation

Reverend Jeffrey Starkovich, Pastor of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Ragley, was a seminarian in his first few years of formation when Pope Benedict XVI was elected as Bishop of Rome.

"When I was assigned to study in Rome at the Pontifical North American College, Pope Benedict was a central figure to our formation," said Father Starkovich. "As I continued in seminary, Pope Benedict's leadership of the Church continually

pointed to the beauty of God's transcendence."

Father Starkovich, a priest now for nearly 12 years, recalls attending the Angelus in St. Peter's Square most Sundays at noon to pray with Pope Benedict XVI and listen to his reflections. He is eternally grateful for all Pope Benedict did to guide him to the Lord of light and love.

"As a seminarian nearing my ordination to the priesthood, I was reading Pope Benedict XVI's marvelous encyclical *Spe Salvi* (Hope Saves). I had come to the end of this beautiful document on hope sitting in the North American College's chapel of the Immaculate Conception one evening," he said thinking back.

"I put the book down and wept. It was the first time I can recall weeping at the beauty and power of hope," Starkovich said. "Because of him, I hope to give others a similar encounter with the beauty and power of hope."

Starkovich also had the privilege of serving at a Good Friday liturgy presided by Pope Benedict in St. Peter's Basilica.

"His pontificate deeply affected me," he said. "I am very grateful for the ways that he has shaped my priesthood. I pray that the Lord give him a beautiful reward for the goodness of his life, leadership, and holiness."

Leading by Example

Reverend Nathan Long, Pastor of St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church, said that Pope Benedict was perhaps the smartest man in the world, but preferred to remain small and hidden. He was a real-life example of how we can get out of the way and let Christ be seen more fully.

"Pope Benedict was like a John the Baptist," said Father Long. "He (Christ) must increase; I must decrease. He was helping the Church by interceding quietly."

"This is an example that I believe is pertinent for the priesthood today," Father Long continued. "The Mass, the parish life, the practice of our faith should never be about the priest's personality. It is always about Christ."

Pope Benedict's writings also come to mind for Rev. Long.

"I have always enjoyed his books, especially his *Jesus of Nazareth*, his interviews with Peter Seward, and his *Spirit of the Liturgy*," he said. "I still turn to his old homilies, especially for Lent and Easter, for inspiration."

Gentle, Gracious Encounter

Reverend Monsignor Arthur Calkins, a retired priest in residence at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur, worked for more than 21 years as an official of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei." There were many occasions when



Bishop Glen John Provost celebrates a Solemn Memorial Mass for the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on Thursday, January 5, 2023, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. He is joined by several clergy for the Diocese of Lake Charles. Seminarians also assisted with the liturgy, which took place on the same day as Pope Benedict's funeral in Rome earlier in the morning. (Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

he encountered then-Cardinal Ratzinger since their offices were in the same building.

After Ratzinger was elected pope, there were fewer occasions, but Monsignor Calkins recalls an encounter with Pope Benedict XVI that will forever be etched in his memory.

"I was formally presented to him by Cardinal Levada, his successor as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, identifying me as an official of the Pontifical Commission 'Ecclesia Dei.'"

"When he introduced me to the pope, Benedict graciously looked at me and stated, as he shook my hand and put his left hand on my arm: 'I know Monsignor Calkins.' It was only a moment, but so gentle, gracious, and kind that I will never forget it — and happily there is a photo that records that brief event," Calkins recalled.

For many years on Thursdays, Monsignor Calkins celebrated Mass for a small community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist. As he crossed Saint Peter's Square, Cardinal Ratzinger would be passing in the opposite direction to celebrate Mass at the German Collegium Teutonicum.

"I would nod or call out, 'Buongiorno, Eminenza.' On other occasions, a few more words might be exchanged," said Calkins.

From brief encounters over the years and during Benedict's papacy, Monsignor Calkins said he can testify not only to the late pontiff's loving and gentle demeanor as the Vicar of Christ, but also to his kindness and graciousness to all that he met, the great and the small.

Humbled by Honorary Title

The Very Reverend Daniel A. Torres, Vicar General of the Diocese of Lake Charles and Pastor

of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church in Lake Charles, recalls how he felt when he was conferred with the title *Chaplain to His Holiness* by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011.

"I was deeply humbled when Bishop Provost told me in his office that Pope Benedict XVI had named me *Chaplain to His Holiness* with the title to be called Monsignor," said Torres. "My eyes teared up. In reading of Pope Benedict's death, I once again shed some tears."

Chaplain to His Holiness is an honorary office given at the request of his bishop to a priest by the Vatican, in the person of the Holy Father's Secretary of State.

Stability for Young Seminarian

The Very Reverend Ruben Villarreal, Judicial Vicar, was ordained to the priesthood in 2015, two years after Pope Benedict XVI resigned from the papacy. He studied in Rome as a seminarian at the Pontifical North American College during Benedict's reign as pope, and before that at St. Joseph Seminary College in Saint Benedict, La.

"As a young seminarian at St. Ben's, Pope Benedict gave me a sense of stability in the Church. One could feel at ease knowing that we had a Pope who knew what he was talking about and deeply understood changes in the Church and the world of the last several decades," said Father Villarreal.

"When he wrote something, we wanted to read it. When he said something, we wanted to hear it," he continued. "He set an example of priestly life, intellectually, pastorally, spiritually."

In 2013, Father Villarreal served as the eyes and ears in the Eternal City for the Diocese of Lake Charles, providing reports, during the *interregnum*, the time between the end of Pope

Benedict XVI's papacy and the beginning of the reign of Pope Francis.

"When Pope Benedict resigned from the papacy, we (seminarians) were stunned, to put the matter lightly," said Father Villarreal. "For us, the (metaphorically) strongest person we knew was stepping down. We had taken solace in the fact that the man in whom we put so much confidence and trust was at the helm. For my part, it was this trust that also reassured me when I learned of his decision to resign."

Father Villarreal said that he knew Pope Benedict never acted in his own self-interest. He knew that if he was doing this, it was the right thing to do.

"I trusted him. I am grateful for the ways that he remains with us — in the example he set for us, in his writings, in the many decisions he took as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and in the work he did for us as Pope," said Father Villarreal. "He will be missed; he has been missed."

Inspiration, Example the Faith

Very Reverend Matthew Cormier, Dean of North Central Deanery and Pastor of St. Henry Catholic Church:

"Pope Benedict XVI was pope for most of my time in seminary. He helped shape my theological formation. He is quoted in my homilies more than anyone else. His humble example of faith and trust in God's providence has always inspired me. His passing leaves a hole in my heart and in the heart of the Church that he led for nearly eight years and for which he has spent his entire life. May he now receive his eternal reward and rest from his labors. May he hear those words 'well done, good and faithful servant.'"



Bishop Glen John Provost was greeted by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI in the pontiff's library during Bishop Provost's ad limina visit to the Holy See in 2012. The centerpiece of any ad limina is an audience with the Pope. The visit is required every few years for each bishop in the Roman Catholic world. (Photo used with permission of L'Osservatore Romano Photographic Service)

Bishop Provost's Statement on Death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has returned to His Lord. As a man of faith, a scholarly teacher, and a keen observer of world events, this servant of God understood the sweep of history and our place within it.

He will be the last pope who experienced the horrors of World War II. He was a formidable theologian and played a pivotal role at the Second Vatican Council. For this reason, he understood what the Council had hoped to accomplish and what in the future the Church needed to communicate to the world.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's writings left their

mark. His *Jesus of Nazareth*, for example, gave us a fresh understanding of the Sacred Scriptures as a living and historical proclamation of Redemption. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was a gentle shepherd, at heart a pastor, with a refreshing way of making the most difficult concepts comprehensible. His *motu proprio*s, 4 apostolic exhortations, numerous sermons, 66 books, catechetical instructions, and 3 encyclicals were cogent and well-written. They exhibited a clarity that a confused and unstable world desperately needs.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI took his vocation as

Vicar of Christ and Bishop of Rome very seriously. He appointed me Bishop of Lake Charles in 2007. Much to my surprise and unlike many of his predecessors, he personally signed letters of appointment for bishops. I had the great privilege of meeting him a few times and twice having a brief conversation on a topic of interest to him. He was transparently kind and had a splendid sense of humor. He valued truth and beauty.

We will miss this faithful servant but know that he left behind a legacy that remains for our benefit and cannot be ignored or forgotten. Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.



NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK: JAN. 29 – FEB. 4

Celebrating generations of Catholic education

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

National Catholic Schools Week is the perfect time to celebrate the gift of a Catholic education. Now entering its 49th anniversary year, the annual weeklong observance will be January 29 through February 4.

It has been more than 210 years since Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton established the nation's first Catholic school in 1809. Many families in the Diocese of Lake Charles still recognize that gift and have been choosing Catholic schools for multiple generations.

"There is a long, rich tradition of Catholic education in Southwest Louisiana, with the first Catholic school built in 1882 (St. Charles Academy), followed by an all-boys school in 1902," according to the Diocese of Lake Charles' Cognia Candidacy Review Report, November 2022.

Today, schools in the Diocese of Lake Charles include St. Louis Catholic High School, Immaculate Conception Cathedral School, St. Margaret Catholic School, and Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School, all in Lake Charles; Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School in Jennings; and Our Lady's Catholic School in Sulphur.

Four generations at OLI

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School has been part of Darla Hine Bertrand's family for four generations since it opened in 1958. Darla's great-grandchildren are now a part of that legacy.

The roots go deep to continue building on a strong foundation that will last for years to come.

"My grandfather instilled the importance of embracing the Catholic faith, which impacted my mother's decision to send us to OLI," said Darla, who lists several benefits of Catholic schools. "We are given the opportunity to express our Catholic faith as it is included in the educational process along with discipline, manners, respect, responsibility and accountability," she said. "We are prepared mentally, emotionally and spiritually to handle life's challenges."

After Darla's children started school, she volunteered for many years before becoming employed in 1990 as athletic coordinator and P.E. aide.

"I felt that my vocation was to return to my alma mater and devote my time helping future generations to become good Catholic, Christian members of society," she said.

Family tradition at ICCS

The Solari family can trace their Catholic education back to 1935 with first-generation Sherman J. Solari Jr. starting at St. Charles Academy for grades 1-2, before transferring to Landry Memorial in 1937 and remaining there through 1945.

Between the years of 1966-1992, Sherman and his late wife, Joyce, provided a Catholic education for their three children — Mike, Tom, and Suzy — who attended Immaculate Conception Catholic School and St. Louis Catholic High School. Their daughter, Suzy, now teaches third grade at ICCS.



Catholic Schools
Faith. Excellence. Service.

The tradition of Catholic education continued with Sherman's grandchildren between 1996-2014.

The patriarch said he is reminded of the sacrifices the Religious Brothers made to give him the education that they did.

"In later years, my Catholic education helped me to move forward through the memory of their sacrifices," said Sherman. "A Catholic school plants a seed for growth in your faith. It places you among people who think the same and gets parents involved in the Church."

Attending Mass as a school community is one thing Suzy missed most after graduating from St. Louis in 1992. It is one reason the Masses at Immaculate Conception Cathedral School are so special to her now.

"The Sacraments help us to reflect on God's will in our lives. It was the call of the Holy Spirit that led me to return to ICCS as a Catholic educator, and my 16 years teaching have been a true blessing," she said.

Suzy recognizes the privilege of being able to talk about God and to call on Him at any moment in a Catholic school environment.

"I treasure the many holy moments that I share with my students and my ICCS family. This is the gift of a Catholic school," added Suzy.

OLQH legacy since 1965

Gloria C. Hebert's eight children were the first of three generations in her family to attend Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School between 1965-1981. Her grandchildren followed from 1991-2016, and her great-grandchildren began their education in 2018. In total, 17 students from the Hebert family have spanned 58 years.

The matriarch's husband Roland J. Hebert died when their youngest son was 4 years old. Despite this hardship, Gloria — who was 35 years old at the time — chose to keep all her children in Catholic school because it was so important to her.

Being part of a close-knit community with lasting friendships has impacted the life of Gloria, and her family.

"Our children have been able to develop a deep-rooted understanding of the Catholic faith that they can continue to foster and share with their families," the 90-year-old matriarch said.

Gloria said she appreciates the morals and values that are incorporated through religion and education.

"Children are taught a consistent message of loving Christ and knowing His word and guidance," she said. "Catholic teachers bring light to each child's day with prayer, learning, and reflection."

Six decades at SMCS

Carla Fontenot David, the oldest of nine children, was the first of three generations in her family to begin a legacy at St. Margaret Catholic School in 1963. Now, her youngest sibling, Daniel Fontenot, has two of his three children enrolled.

From the first generation to the third, there has been at least one Fontenot every year for the past six decades.

Daniel said a Catholic education is important to him for several reasons.

"Integrating a great academic education with a faith-based curriculum provides a solid foundation in a world today that has more questions than answers," he said.

Daniel added to that, "Smaller student-to-teacher ratio, teachers who go the extra mile and genuinely care about your children, and an atmosphere where everyone from the higher grades to the lowest grades know your name and greets you with a smile also carry value."

Through daily themes and various events, the six Catholic schools — with a combined enrollment of 2,308 students — will focus on the value Catholic education provides to students and its contributions to our local communities, state, and nation.

To highlight Catholic Schools Week, Bishop Glen John Provost will be the celebrant for a school Mass for St. Louis Catholic High School seniors and eighth graders at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 1, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

An Afternoon with Christ

2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Sunday, February 12, 2023

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Bilbo Street, Lake Charles



Father Edward Richard
Pastor of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church



PRAISE · ADORE · REFLECT

Very Rev. Edward Richard, M.S., V.F., Pastor of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur, will lead the second session of "An Afternoon with Christ," 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, February 12, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The afternoon will begin with the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by a reflection by Father Richard, and conclude with Benediction. The monthly series is part of the National Eucharistic Revival to help people foster a habit of spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. For more information, call the Cathedral office at 337-436-7251.

DIOCESAN RECOVERY UPDATE No. 7

Recovery continues across the Diocese of Lake Charles, in multiple stages, amidst ongoing negotiations in terms of validating the actual costs of damages and destruction, a task that is projected to take place over an extensive period of time. Diocesan architects continue to design permanent repairs and new structures with attentiveness to the need for hardened and, in some locations, elevated structures, along with other new design features to further mitigate against future destructive events.

Negotiating with FEMA for such mitigation funding is another task of the Recovery Team and their consulting partners. The other significant component is working toward FEMA eligibility of structures for which said purposes do not readily align with Houses of Worship FEMA policy, but for which the need for repair or replacement is necessary.

Figures below illustrate the current monthly snapshot highlighting the ongoing recovery in the Diocese of Lake Charles as of January 1, 2023:

DIOCESAN EXPENDITURES	through Nov 2022	December 2022	through Dec 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	\$12,002,742.61	\$841,023.45	\$12,843,766.06
Temporary Facilities (See below)	\$9,299,996.01	\$2,700.00	\$9,302,696.01
Restoration Design (Architects) and PM	\$5,496,182.75	\$28,772.71	\$5,524,955.46
Insurance Consultants	\$440,459.15		\$440,459.15
FEMA Consultants	\$1,318,013.61		\$1,318,013.61
TOTAL Expenditures to date:	\$50,399,137.76	\$872,496.16	\$51,271,633.92

TEMPORARY SITES (Expenditures to date)		
Our Lady's School Temp Facility	\$2,694,249.03	\$2,694,249.03
St. Louis High School Temp Facility	\$3,635,522.94	\$3,635,522.94
St. Margaret School Temp Facility	\$2,816,145.78	\$2,816,145.78
Christ the King Church	\$97,522.90	\$1,200.00
DOLC Storage	\$56,555.36	\$1,500.00
	\$9,299,996.01	\$2,700.00
		\$9,302,696.01

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	\$7,408,145.30

Data as of 1 Jan 2023

'Arte Hispano' on display at Historic City Hall

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — "Arte Hispano," an exhibit featuring more than 100 pieces of art from the Hispanic community at St. Henry Catholic Church, remains on display through February 4 at the Lake Charles Historic City Hall Arts and Culture Center, 1001 Ryan Street.

The inaugural exhibit opened on December 9, the feast day of Saint Juan Diego, attracting hundreds of guests for the liveliest opening night reception on record.

Featured artists representing five countries — Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico — include **Patricia Suárez Villalobos** (Venezuela), **Gisselle González** (Bolivia), **Samantha Espinosa** (Ecuador), **Martín Garzón** (Colombia), and from Mexico — **Luciano Neira**, **Jesús Neira**, **Eli Vargas**, **Sofía Legros**, **Erik Guerrero**, **Badiha Galeazzi**, and **Ricardo Ruvalcaba**.

Among the works of art are paintings in acrylic, oil, and pencil; photography and multi-medium sculptures.

Ahead of the festive entertainment on opening night, Father Matthew Cormier, Pastor

of St. Henry, prayed, "May we always strive to bring Christ to the world with the gifts and talents he has given us. May this exhibit be a way to show your beauty to the world, O Lord."

Sharing God's beauty is exactly what Ricardo Ruvalcaba, Spanish Pastoral Assistant in the Diocese of Lake Charles, had in mind when he was approached by Matt Young, director of Historic City Hall, to work on the project.

"Artists are called to be messengers just like Saint Juan Diego when he saw the Virgin of Guadalupe," said Ruvalcaba. "Our message is more art, less cell phone; more dancing, less idleness; more singing, less complaining; more contemplation, less noise. Art is a vitamin for our peace and a strength for our soul."

Of special note is exceptional artwork created by four artists with disabilities, according to Ruvalcaba.

Arte Hispano can be viewed between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday on the first-floor gallery of Historic City Hall. Admission is free.

To read the full story with comments from the artists, visit <http://www.lcdiocese.org/3-news/3525-hispanic-community-shares-god-s-gifts-through-art>.



Artists from the Hispanic Community in the Diocese of Lake Charles featured in the exhibit "Arte Hispano" at Historic City Hall Arts and Cultural Center are, from left, Ricardo Ruvalcaba, Badiha Galeazzi, Martín Garzón, Eli Vargas, Erik Guerrero, Gisselle Gonzalez, Luciano Neira, Patricia Suarez, Sofia Legros, Samantha Espinosa, and Jesús Neira. (Photo credit: Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)