



Bishop Provost's Christmas 2023 Homily

"I proclaim to you good news of great joy." Luke 2:10

The story is told that on the day of Christ's birth the Emperor Augustus consulted a prophetess, the Tiburtine Sibyl. The Roman Senate wished to name the Emperor a god because under him peace, in the estimation of many, had come to the world. The shrewd Emperor, knowing he was only a man, asked the prophetic Sibyl whether the world one day would see the birth of one greater than he. At this moment, the prophetess saw a golden ring surrounding the sun and in the center of the circle stood a beautiful Virgin with a Child at her bosom. A voice was heard to say, "This woman is the Altar of Heaven." Then, the Sibyl spoke to the Emperor, "This Child will be greater than you" (cf. 13th century, Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* for the Feast of the Nativity).

Here in this story, poetry and the facts of history meet. Indeed, Caesar Augustus ruled at the time of Christ's birth. To this, St. Luke testifies in his Gospel. Whether he consulted the Sibyl may be fanciful, but in fact Augustus had been proclaimed a god and a temporary peace had descended upon the Roman Empire. Historians tell us the Romans called this time the *Pax Romana*. At this historic moment, in fulfillment of Jewish prophecies and the intent of God from the fall of Man, the true King, from whom a lasting peace will come, was born in Bethlehem of Judea. The story of the Sibyl is poetry to highlight what indeed happened: a Savior of the world, greater than any king, president, emperor, or earthly ruler was born. The wonder and awe of the birth of Jesus Christ remind us that God makes His greatness known first in the humblest of forms. The Son of God is born to a Virgin and placed in a feeding trough for animals, because "there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). From what the world would consider insignificant would come the greatest of all.

When the angels appeared to the shepherds on that first

Christmas night, they proclaimed "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). What is that good news shrouded in great joy? It is the Divine paradox—that from something so small comes something so great. This astounding truth has inspired countless artists, poets, composers, philosophers, and holy men and women for centuries. Angels burst forth from heaven, like a roaring army on a battlefield, and cry out, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14). The joy of that moment cascades down the centuries to us on this holy night—in music, painting, and verse.

Such a moment of Divine paradox moved Shakespeare to write the following in one of his greatest plays:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,
The 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 hallowed and so gracious is that time.
(Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 1)

The spirit that brought Shakespeare to pen those words is the Christian spirit that moved the imagination of many a creative mind throughout the centuries to express the unfathomable. God takes what the world considers the least of all and by it transforms the world.

Thanks be to God! "[A] savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" (Luke 2:11). He is a Savior to rescue us from this world of corruption. He brings us hope, He strengthens faith, and He instills love, all of which we so desperately need now in this time of war, animosity, and confusion. He is our joy, "so hallowed and so gracious."

The Augustans of this world still have problems with this joy. To them the Divine paradox is a stumbling block for their pride. They relegate Christ to myth, seek to rob us of our happiness, and call false what is true and evil what is good. It is the sort of cultural and historic amnesia that prompts an Office of Diversity and Inclusion at a major university in this country to issue a "best practices" directive ... to "ensure your holiday party is not a Christmas party in disguise" (WSJ, "The Year Christmas Died," A9, Thursday, December 24, 2015). In the old Soviet Union, celebrating Christmas could find you jailed. In this country today it might find you unemployed, or at least reprimanded. The old tactics never die. Caesar Augustus still walks his gardens marveling at being called a god only to be shocked by the truth, that he is not. The conceit of worldly princes takes different forms, but they remain merely conceits. The celebration of Christmas is more than parties, Santa costumes, and egg nog. Customs and "best practices" come and go. The truth, however, remains. Christmas is the Divine paradox, and it is we who must remove the veil from our eyes to see the elegant truth of its richness in poverty and elegance in simplicity.

The paradox comes from God Himself. He proclaimed it one night in Bethlehem of Judea, when a Virgin named Mary wrapped a small child "in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). God offered the world His final Word in the wordless crying of a baby. "So hallowed and so gracious" was the night that nothing more was said. The angels left, the shepherds came, and stillness descended on the world. The Word had spoken. All was silent, "so hallowed and so gracious" was the night. May it be so for you and your families, as I wish you a Merry Christmas!

International Day of Cultures and Prayer planned Jan. 13



The Three Wise Men follow the Star while leading a procession to Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church during the International Day of Cultures and Prayer on January 7, 2023. The event was a meaningful way to celebrate the Magi's adoration of the baby Jesus while serving as a reminder of the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

LAKE CHARLES — The Diocese of Lake Charles will host the second annual "International Day of Cultures and Prayer" celebrating the Epiphany of the Lord on Saturday, January 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 2031 Opelousas Street. The bilingual event is one of the first pilgrimage sites on the Diocesan Camino of St. Peter Claver as part of the National Eucharistic Revival.

During this time of revival, the Epiphany celebration is a meaningful way to celebrate the Magi's adoration of the baby Jesus while serving as a reminder of the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

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, and the Three Wise Men with the Star making their entry into Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Founders' Hall.

Entertainment will feature a cultural show including an array of talent, with traditional songs and dances, and regional costumes from countries such as the Philippines, Venezuela, Nigeria, France, and Mexico. Guests can take their tastebuds on a tour with cuisine from Honduras, Mexico, India, Venezuela, and even a mix of Cajun and African American flavor to

spice things up.

Following the food and entertainment, The Three Kings will lead participants in a procession to the church for Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction. Before the conclusion of the event, toys and candy will be distributed to all children attending.

Make plans to join us for this exciting journey along the Diocesan Camino of St. Peter Claver and collect your first passport stamp. It is a special opportunity to embrace traditions of other countries, but more importantly to come together as one faith to adore the Lord just as the Three Wise Men did more than two thousand years ago.

FEMA approves repayment for repairs to St. Margaret school

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has obligated \$1,608,031.43 as part of hurricane recovery efforts for the Society of the Roman Catholic Church (Diocese of Lake Charles).

The funding, made available through the major disaster declaration for Hurricane Laura (DR-4559-LA), is for repayment of the first phase of repairs at St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School in Lake Charles.

Diocesan funds totaling \$1,786,702 were used to pay for the project in the middle school portion of the school, so the reimbursement is good news as the Diocese continues to rebuild from the catastrophic hurricanes of 2020.

The announcement was made by U.S. Congressman Clay Higgins, R-La., on November 6. The federal grant is the single largest reimbursement for a repair project since the Diocese of Lake Charles began recovery efforts.

The reimbursement of diocesan funds will be made at 90% federal cost-share and authorized under Section 406 of the Robert T. Stafford Act.

Once a project is obligated by FEMA, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) will work closely with the Diocese to finalize the grant and begin the reimbursement process.

The Diocese continues to fund the temporary school campus of St. Margaret being used by elementary grade level students. In addition to this and other ongoing major repair projects, the Diocese also funds the temporary campuses at Our Lady's Catholic School in Sulphur and St. Louis Catholic High School in Lake Charles.

FEMA has regularly obligated funds for the temporary campuses, as well as temporary storage for several schools and churches, all at 90%.

Pending additional significant reimbursements from FEMA for work that the Diocese of Lake Charles has funded, there are many churches, parish halls, administrative and other ancillary structures that are waiting to begin the repair or rebuild processes.

An Afternoon with Christ

2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024

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



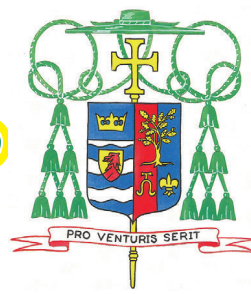
Father Trey Ange
Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Jennings



PRAISE · ADORE · REFLECT

Rev. Trey Ange, Pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Jennings, will lead the next session of "An Afternoon with Christ," 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, January 14, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The afternoon will begin with the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by a reflection by Father Ange, 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.

Calendar



The Most Reverend Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

December 22, 2023

Medical professionals receive blessing at annual White Mass

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, was the principal celebrant for the fourth annual “White Mass for Medical Professionals” in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, October 22. Concelebrating with Bishop Provost at the 9:30 a.m. liturgy was Very Rev. Edward Richard, M.S., Chaplain of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) St. Luke’s Guild of Southwest Louisiana for the Diocese of Lake Charles; Rev. Brian King, Director of Spiritual Care Services and Chaplain at Christus Ochsner St. Patrick Hospital; and Rev. Felix Okey Alaribe, Vice President of Integration for Christus Ochsner St. Patrick Hospital.

The White Mass receives its name from the white coats traditionally worn by those in the healing profession of medicine. It is often celebrated on or near October 18, the Feast of St. Luke, patron saint of physicians, to invoke God’s blessing upon the patient, doctor, nurse, and caregiver alike.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Bishop Provost prayed a blessing asking that God grant to physicians, nurses, and all health care professionals, wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience; keeping them safe and preserving them from all contagion.

Following the Mass, the St. Luke’s Guild of Southwest Louisiana hosted a brunch and presentation for medical professionals and their families in the Ave Maria Hall. Presenter was Father Whitney Miller, PhD, LPC, who spoke on “Tools, Techniques and Treatment for Trauma Recovery: Toward a Restoration of Self, Sanity, and Serenity in Southwest Louisiana.”

Acknowledging that the local community is in the midst of a post-trauma recovery season since Hurricane Laura, Father Miller emphasized that so many are in need of healing emotionally.

“One of the things uniting us as people of Southwest Louisiana is that we have all been traumatized, each and every one of us, and we continue to live in a state of trauma,” said Father Miller about the devastation caused by Laura and multiple natural disasters in the weeks and months following.

“If we could see each other and relate to each other with a sense of understanding, then our healing as a community and our recovery from the trauma that we have experienced together would be quicker and easier on us all,” he continued.

Father Miller said people experience trauma in any situation when they fear for their life or the life of someone they love, as was the case with Laura.

There are visible reminders still today across the five-parish region of the catastrophic storm that made landfall in August 2020.

“The challenge for us as a community of Southwest Louisiana now is to continue to truly help one another recover from these experiences of trauma, grief and loss,” said Miller while reminding those in attendance that, “Hurricane Laura is over. We survived. Now it is time to thrive.”

He went on to say, “What happens psychologically with trauma and with grief and loss is that if it is not dealt with sufficiently and emotionally when we experience it, then the next time a traumatic experience comes along, what is unresolved resurfaces.”

Father Miller told the medical professionals that it is important in the healing process for them to encourage their patients to get plenty of rest.

“Resting is important for the psyche to recover,” he said.

Father Miller also stressed the importance of giving people permission to “return home” to the heart of God.

Home for Father Miller is his interior home with God and said that those in the healing profession “need to encourage folks to return home as much as possible.”

One example he shared is the way he releases negative thoughts on his afternoon drive back to his rectory from Lake Charles to Sulphur.

“I allow myself to have all the negative thoughts of the day run through my mind until I reach the top of the Interstate 10 bridge,” Father Miller said. “Then I roll down my front passenger window and let all my negative thoughts out. The next morning, guess who is waiting for me at the top of the bridge,” he said drawing laughter from the audience.

Father Miller also encourages recreation and staying in routines to help keep people in a healthy state of mind.

While many at the brunch were familiar with the *Serenity Prayer*, Father Miller shared the long version that most had not heard of before. The second part of the prayer encourages people to live one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, and accepting hardships as the pathway to peace.

“If we accept hardship as the pathway to peace,” said Father Miller, “when we do experience hardship, we don’t think something has gone wrong.”

He ended his talk praying that “we all come home once again to the heart of our God as we walk together in healing and recovery.”

For more information on St. Luke’s Guild of Southwest Louisiana or becoming a member, email Dr. Kipp Ardoin, President, at kardoin@ccswla.com. Other officers are Dr. Adrienne Breaux, vice president; Dr. Bryan Barrilleaux, secretary; and Chad Hobgood, PharmD, treasurer. More information on the Catholic Medical Association is available at www.cathmed.org.

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A Morning of Reflection for Medical Professionals is planned for 9:00 a.m. to noon Saturday, February 24, 2024, at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church, 1109 Cypress Street, Sulphur. Retreat Master will be Father Edward Richard, Pastor and medical guild chaplain. For more information and to register, email andrea.ward@lcdiocese.org, or call Sister Maura Clare Mayock, RSM, Bishop’s liaison to the guild, at 337-439-7400, Ext. 305.

Office closures, publication date

The offices of the Diocese of Lake Charles will close for the Christmas and New Year holidays at the end of business today, Friday, December 22, and reopen for regular business hours - 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. - on Tuesday January 2. The diocese will honor the memory and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., closing on Monday, January 15, and reopening on Tuesday, January 16. The next *Catholic Calendar* will be published on Friday, January 19.

The Diocesan Camino of St. Peter Claver

EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL 2023-2025

November 25
December 24-25
January 13
February 8
March 7
April 16
May 2
June 2

Go in peace. The journey you are making is under the eye of the Lord. — Judges 18:6

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- November 25, 2023:**
The Diocesan Camino Kickoff at West Cal Events Center
- December 24-25, 2023:**
Christmas Masses throughout the Diocese of Lake Charles
- January 13, 2024:**
International Day of Cultures and Prayer, 10:00 a.m., Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 2031 Opelousas Street, Lake Charles
- February 8, 2024:**
Evening of Prayer, 6:30 p.m., Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church, 710 N. State Street, Jennings
- March 7, 2024:**
Mystery of the Shroud of Turin, 6:30 p.m., St. Louis Catholic High School Pavilion, corner of Kirkman and Ninth Streets, Lake Charles
- April 16, 2024:**
Evening of Prayer, 6:30 p.m., Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 2700 Maplewood Drive, Sulphur
- May 2, 2024:**
Evening of Prayer, 6:30 p.m., St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church, 5495 Elliott Road, Lake Charles
- June 2, 2024:**
Afternoon of Prayer and Concert, 3:00 p.m., Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Bilbo Street, Lake Charles

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

Images above show the front (top) and back (bottom) of the Diocesan Camino of St. Peter Claver passport that will be available at all church parishes for Christmas Eve/Day Masses. The front of the passport has spaces to be stamped for events scheduled over the next several months as part of the National Eucharistic Revival. A fully stamped passport will be entered into a drawing on June 2 for a chance to win an all-expense paid trip to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis planned July 17-21, 2024.

Local pilgrimage kicks off with Diocesan Camino of St. Peter Claver

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

A Dominican friar, a Catholic radio talk show host, a nationally recognized concert choir, and hundreds of people inspired by the Eucharist all gathered for the kick-off of the Diocesan Camino of St. Peter Claver on November 25.

Leading up to the first National Eucharistic Congress in 83 years, the Diocesan Camino banquet took place at the West Cal Events Center in Sulphur amid an exhibit featuring Eucharistic miracles.

The local pilgrimage is an initiative of the Diocese of Lake Charles to help parishioners take a spiritual journey to experience the beauty of the Roman Catholic faith, most importantly, through the Eucharist — the True Presence of Jesus Christ.

The journey invites the faithful to other church parishes in the upcoming months as well as to consider attending the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis July 17-21, 2024, where an expected 80,000 Catholics will be united in a movement to restore understanding and devotion to this great mystery of the True Presence.

The banquet featured National Eucharistic Revival speakers, Father Patrick Mary Briscoe, O.P., and Katie Prejean McGrady.

Father Briscoe, a Dominican friar and editor of “Our Sunday Visitor” and host of the podcast “Godsplaining,” gave a presentation before he and Katie sat down for a conversational dialogue. Katie, who makes her home in Lake Charles, is host of the “The Katie McGrady Show,” a daily

radio program on The Catholic Channel on Sirius XM 129.

The nationally recognized St. Louis Catholic High School Concert Choir, under direction of Colette Bulber Tanner, provided entertainment during the evening. Guests were also able to tour an extensive exhibit by Blessed Carlo Acutis who documented Eucharistic miracles from around the world. Blessed Carlo is the patron saint of the national event.

Before the evening concluded with a blessing by Bishop Glen John Provost, guests were given specially designed Diocesan Camino passports to help keep people energized during this local phase of the National Eucharistic Revival. Passports will also be available at Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses throughout the Diocese.

At the conclusion of the Camino on June 2, a drawing will take place for people who have gone to all the events and filled their passports with stamps. One lucky pilgrim will have a chance to win an all-expense paid trip to the 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. The trip will include free airfare, hotel accommodations, and registration for the historic five-day event.

More details will be announced for the pilgrimage sites as they become available. Stay connected to www.lcdiocese.org and church parishes throughout the Diocese of Lake Charles. Also, follow the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles on Facebook.

DIOCESAN RECOVERY UPDATE No. 15

The Diocese of Lake Charles continues to address more than \$150,000,000 worth of damages as a result of Hurricane Laura’s destruction on August 27, 2020, exacerbated by Hurricane Delta’s arrival a few weeks later, an atypical hard winter freeze, followed by the historic flooding of May 2021. The numbers below indicate current statuses. Currently, the majority of projects are either in Environmental and Historical Preservation assessments or negotiation of damages — a detailed and extensive process that results in obligation numbers. As demolition clearances are received, asbestos and other testings are initiated and the bid/quote processes are handled by the respective architects.

Figures below illustrate the current monthly snapshot highlighting the ongoing recovery in the Diocese of Lake Charles as of December 10, 2023:

DIOCESAN EXPENDITURES	through Sept. 2023	Oct./Nov. 2023	through Nov. 2023
Emergency Work (Category B)	\$10,351,279.01		\$10,351,279.01
Emergency Work (Insurance Contractors)	\$13,829,967.75		\$13,829,967.75
Permanent Work Repairs	\$26,006,253.34	\$401,130.74	\$26,407,384.08
Temporary Facilities (See below)	\$10,618,600.01	\$143,860.55	\$10,762,460.56
Restoration Design (Architects) and PM	\$9,140,718.46	\$74,858.16	\$9,215,576.62
Insurance Consultants	\$440,459.15		\$440,459.15
FEMA Consultants	\$2,515,840.30	\$4,021,395.00	\$6,537,235.30
TOTAL Expenditures to date:	\$72,903,118.02	\$4,641,244.45	\$77,544,362.47

TEMPORARY SITES (Expenditures to date)			
Our Lady’s School Temp Facility	\$2,938,287.88		\$2,938,287.88
St. Louis High School Temp Facility	\$4,086,686.97	\$35,649.71	\$4,122,336.68
St. Margaret School Temp Facility	\$3,387,742.90	\$103,560.84	\$3,491,303.74
Christ the King Church	\$104,746.90	\$1,200.00	\$105,946.90
DOLC Storage	\$101,135.36	\$3,450.00	\$104,585.36
	\$10,618,600.01	\$143,860.55	\$10,762,460.56

PROJECTS COMPLETED / PROJECTS IN DESIGN
A total of 65 DOLC project sites impacted by Hurricane Laura. (DOLC Misc properties consolidated into 1 project)
A total of 27 DOLC project sites are under active design or specifications development for repairs /
A total of 20 DOLC project sites have a combination of active work and/or active design for repairs /
A total of 18 DOLC project sites, restoration is complete.

TOTAL INSURANCE PROCEEDS	\$30,000,000.00
FEMA OBLIGATIONS TO DATE	\$25,679,351.21
FEMA REIMBURSEMENTS TO DATE	\$11,442,787.14
FEMA REIMBURSEMENTS PENDING	\$216,879.46

Data as of 10 Dec. 2023