



CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEY WITH JESUS

Diocese welcomes Pilgrimage with southern hospitality

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

Jesus Christ did not come to be served but to serve. This act of humility was on full display as members of the Hispanic Community at St. Henry Catholic Church washed the feet of Perpetual Pilgrims on the Juan Diego Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage passing through the Diocese of Lake Charles on June 4.

The seven young pilgrims, along with four Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, arrived on June 3 at Camp Karol in Moss Bluff after beginning their historic cross-country journey with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament from Brownsville, Texas, on May 19. They were making their way by foot and a 12-passenger van to Indianapolis, Indiana, for the 10th National Eucharistic Congress — the first gathering of its kind in nearly a century — to join 60,000 Catholics from across the nation July 17-21.



At Camp Karol in Moss Bluff: Youth Adoration Night with National Eucharistic Pilgrimage traveling across the country with Jesus.

More than 100 youth and young adults, along with diocesan seminarians, gathered at Camp Karol for an evening of fellowship and Eucharistic Adoration. Perpetual Pilgrim, Shayla Elm, from the Archdiocese of Denver, said Jesus was inviting her to experience “childlike joy” on her journey.

“This means having a posture of the heart that is totally receptive to God,” said Shayla, encouraging the youth to share their heart with Christ truly present in the Eucharist. “The Lord delights in each of us and wants to answer our prayers of childlike faith.”

Mass at St. Theodore Catholic Church

The pilgrims kicked off a full day of activities on June 4 with 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Theodore Catholic Church in Moss Bluff. Father Aubrey Guilbeau, pastor, was joined by Father Stephen Dufrene, CFR, one of the Franciscan Friars on the pilgrimage.

The nearly full church on a Tuesday morning was not lost on Dylan Young, a pilgrim with the Archdiocese of Washington, who said he was touched by the strong faith of the people.

“The damage from the hurricanes (of 2020) was still present, yet there were so many people coming out for daily Mass. Seeing everyone remaining faithful despite the storms and hardships was really encouraging for me to witness,” said Dylan, who just finished his first year of seminary studies.

Janie Marin, Nancy Simmons, and Lisa Thompson traveled from St. Joseph Catholic Church in DeRidder to be a part of the historic journey with Jesus.

“It is a blessing seeing the youth on fire bringing Our Lord throughout the southern part of the United States,” said Nancy.

“When I first heard about the national pilgrimage, I was inspired that the youth would do this, so I wanted to make an effort to be a part of it and earn a Plenary Indulgence,” Lisa commented.

Procession from Cathedral to Catholic Charities

Following Mid-Morning Prayer in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Lake Charles, local pilgrims joined in the Eucharistic Procession by walking to Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana where they helped bag groceries for those in need.

Sister Marie Josepha Kluczny, R.S.M. Director, shared the mission of Catholic Charities, which is service of others.

“The work that Catholic Charities does is not just a nice thing that we do as Catholics. It is not an optional extra to serve our neighbors,” she said. “It is a Divine Commandment. Each of the faithful should hear in the words of Our Lord a call to service which flows from the Eucharist.”

Walking on holy ground at Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Procession with the Blessed Sacrament continued to Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church (Lake Charles) where the pilgrims found themselves walking on the same holy ground where the founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Saint Katharine Drexel, once walked. Deacon Harold Nixon, Deacon Erroll Deville, and Sacred Heart parishioner Charles Honore shared some history of the church and former school.

Mr. Honore reminded those on the national pilgrimage



At Sacred Heart of Jesus (Lake Charles): Pilgrims participating in the historic journey with Jesus walked on the same holy ground as Saint Katharine Drexel.



NATIONAL Eucharistic Pilgrimage

of comments once made by Bishop Glen John Provost: “Everything we have here at Sacred Heart and at other parishes in Lake Charles, including Immaculate Heart of Mary, began with two women. One was Mother Katharine Drexel who has been canonized as a saint. The other was Eleanor Figaro, who should be canonized as a saint.”

The Perpetual Pilgrims were given booklets on the history of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish as well as a copy of a deed signed by Katharine Drexel when she provided financial assistance in 1910 for land to be purchased and a school built.

From Immaculate Heart of Mary to St. Henry Catholic Church

The journey moved on to Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church where the pilgrims prayed before walking with Jesus across an overpass and through neighborhoods until the Eucharistic Procession reached St. Henry Catholic Church with loud cheering and clapping by the crowd as Jesus arrived.



Arriving at St. Henry Church: Father Stephen Dufrene, CFR, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal, arrives at St. Henry Catholic Church with the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage monstrance carrying the Real Presence of Jesus.

The pilgrims were greeted with hospitality fitting for those carrying Our Lord and Savior across the country. Members of the Hispanic Community washed the feet of the Perpetual Pilgrims after a long day’s journey in the summer heat and humidity. After praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, they were entertained with the festive Mexican dance, Jarabe Tapatio.

Issy Martin-Dye, a Perpetual Pilgrim from the Diocese of Cleveland, said a highlight for her was being at St. Henry Parish.

“Seeing those ladies and children dance was my favorite part of the day. It was impressive to see,” said Issy. “Ricardo (Ruvalcaba) and his family seem like powerhouses yet are very humble.”

Issy said she will always remember the washing of their feet at St. Henry. “The people at that parish were very hospitable, even giving us gift bags of candy and snacks. It was very moving.”



At St. Henry Catholic Church: Washing of the Pilgrims’ feet.

Prayer and fellowship at Our Lady Help of Christians

After eight hours of bringing Christ to others, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage made its way east to Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church in Jennings for Vespers (Evening Prayer), followed by a delicious jambalaya dinner, compliments of the Knights of Columbus, before departing to its next destination in the Diocese of Lafayette.

People near and far were excited to be a part of the unprecedented outpouring of grace happening across our nation.

Armando and Maria Olguin with their son, Mathew, traveled from San Antonio, Texas, to the Diocese of Lake Charles to walk with the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.

“We attend Adoration weekly in my home parish, so I see the importance of this mission we are on,” said Armando. “I will go to extremes to be with Our Lord.”



At Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception: The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage exits the Cathedral with Jesus as it continues its journey in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

Praying with Ainsley on the journey

Just like she does for many diocesan events, Ainsley DeSonier participated in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage as it passed through the Diocese of Lake Charles. She followed along the Juan Diego Route with her parents, Dr. Keith and Dale DeSonier of Lake Charles.

Ainsley, who is 45 years old, was born with cloverleaf syndrome, also referred to as Pfeiffer syndrome Type 2. She has battled more than 50 surgeries to be alive.

Upon seeing her at St. Henry Catholic Church — the final stop on Ainsley’s journey — Father Stephen Dufrene, CFR, bent down to her wheelchair and said, “I bet your prayers are very powerful.”

Ainsley’s mother replied, “Yes they really are.”

Then Father Stephen asked Ainsley, “Will you pray for my mother, Mary Margaret, who is in the last stages of Alzheimer’s? She wanted to have a very good confession.”

Ainsley was happy to honor Father’s request.

The St. Juan Diego Route will converge with the other three routes in Indianapolis for the five-day National Eucharistic Congress July 17-21. Ainsley will be there.

She is looking forward to seeing Dr. Tim Gray, president of the Augustine Institute and a well-known Catholic speaker and author. She watches him on FORMED.org.

“This is my first pilgrimage. I really liked the dancers at St. Henry,” Ainsley said as she clapped with “child-like” joy!



Praying with Ainsley: Father Stephen Dufrene, CFR, visits with Ainsley DeSonier, who participated in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage as it passed through the Diocese of Lake Charles.



At Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church: Perpetual Pilgrims pray before the Blessed Sacrament before heading to their next destination in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

WORKING IN THE DICASTERY OF EVANGELIZATION

Reverend Ruben Villarreal to take up post in Rome

Reverend Ruben Villarreal, who has served as Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Lake Charles since 2020, will soon take up residence in Rome to begin his five-year term of service in the Dicastery of Evangelization at the Vatican.

Bishop Glen John Provost had previously released Father Villarreal at the request of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-prefect of the Dicastery of Evangelization. He remains a priest of the Diocese of Lake Charles and will continue to serve as a consultant to the Bishop in Canonical matters.

At the Dicastery, Father Villarreal will be assigned to missionary territories in Asia and Africa. "I will be responsible for monitoring the territories assigned to me," he said. "I will also work on canonical cases coming from these countries."

Father Villarreal, a native of Hathaway and the son of Ruben Villarreal Sr. and Lisa Grace Fontenot, was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Lake Charles on June 27, 2015 by Bishop Provost in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. He had been ordained to the Diaconate by His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C., in the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome on October 31, 2014.

He attended St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict, LA, (2006-2008) and Catholic University of America (2008-2010) graduating with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree.

Continuing his graduate studies (2010-2011) at CUA, Fr. Villarreal earned a Licentiate in Theology in 2011. Following additional studies in Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (2011-2014) he earned a Bachelor of Theology degree in 2014. He earned a Licentiate in Canon Law in 2017 from the Pontifical Gregorian University (2014-2017).

Since he studied in Rome he noted the "walkability" of the city was enjoyable.

"Before my ordination as a priest, when I lived at the seminary, I would walk thirty minutes to the university each morning and thirty minutes back each afternoon," Father Villarreal said. "I look forward to similar walks.

"I'm also very much looking forward to being near St. Peter again," he continued "I used to give Scavi Tours, tours of the excavations under St. Peter's Basilica, where St. Peter's tomb is. It's a long and funny story, but on a trip to Rome in 2020, security officers confiscated my Scavi security badge, which I was supposed to turn in when I left Rome. I'm very much looking forward to getting it back and giving the tour again!"

He expects to hit the ground running upon his arrival, saying, "As I understand it, I report for duty the day after I arrive. I did a virtual orientation at the end of June, and my first responsibilities were given to me at that time. On day one, I'll be doing one of my favorite things—editing English documents, which will be sent to various English-speaking countries."

Pastoral assignments have included the Tribunal — Judge (2017-2024) and Judicial Vicar (2020-2024). He also served as vice-chancellor from 2019-2023.

He was also assigned to Sacramental Ministry at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Sulphur (2017-2018) and as Administrator at St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church (2019-2020).

Father Villarreal was chaplain to St. Louis Catholic High School (2018-2022) and served as a faculty member (2018-2024) along with Dean of Philosophy of Academics (2022-2024).

Additionally, he was the chaplain for the Lake Charles Chapter of Legatus International. He is a member of the Canon Law Society of America (2017-2024) and Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland (2018-2024).



Reverend Ruben Villarreal

TOGETHER IN HOLINESS

Couples learn ways to practice virtue in marriage

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

MOSS BLUFF — It was Jason and Kelly Vines' first time attending the *Together in Holiness* marriage enrichment day on April 13 at Camp Karol. Presented by the St. John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Lake Charles, the Vines — who are parishioners of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Ragley — were among 45 couples who took time to learn about ways to foster virtue in their marriage.

"Jason and I have good communication with each other, but we can still learn better ways of doing it," Kelly said of their five-year marriage. "Making a conscious effort to communicate effectively is important to us. We are always focused on trying to improve our marriage."

The fourth annual conference in the diocese featured national author, speaker, and podcaster Danielle Bean, with a focus on "Family, a School of Virtue."

Mass was celebrated by Bishop Glen John Provost, and time was set aside for Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and one-on-one time for couples.

Virtue defined in the classical sense of Catholic theology is that habit of goodness, Bishop Provost noted in his homily. "When we live a life of virtue, we catch people's attention," he said. "Whether those virtues are generosity, chastity, understanding, knowledge, courage, strength, fortitude, and so forth, we want to make it habitual where we do it without being aware."

The bishop continued, "When someone does good without realizing they are doing good because it is second nature to them, is what virtue means. They did it because it was part of them. They don't have to say anything. They just act."

Bean reminded the couples that we are all learning to be virtuous and that it is something that takes practice in their marriages.

"In the family, you can be living out that practice of virtue every single day in ways the world will never see, or applaud, or understand," Bean remarked. "It is such a beautiful, holy, and sacred thing that we do in our family lives. If it is hard, that is part of the deal."

This was the fourth year for Lamar and Adrienne Mayo to attend *Together in Holiness*. Parishioners of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church, they celebrated their 10th anniversary on May 3 and are the parents of three children between the ages of 9 and 4 years old.

"Every year I walk away with one or two things I take with me to reflect on," said Lamar. "It is an opportunity to get away with your spouse and the topics offer conversations starters to talk about later, maybe things you never thought about that can help you both grow in holiness as a family."

The format of the day is doable for couples with busy family schedules, and the childcare option is an added bonus.

"I enjoy attending this marriage conference year after year because it is only one day, making it easy to fit in," said Adrienne. "I like the retreat atmosphere in a relaxing setting. I also enjoy seeing and visiting other couples we know who are on the same journey."

Returning for their second year were Dr. Brian and Becky Clements from St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church. Married for 34 years now, the empty nesters raised three children and have four grandchildren with one on the way. They both agree that they are experiencing more joy in their lives now than they ever have.

"Our lives are not as hectic in many ways, so it is nice to listen to the speakers and think about how we did things and watch our children getting to that stage of life," Brian remarked.

Even though Becky said she grieved as each of her children left home, having an "empty nest" has given her the opportunity to "reconnect with the person who I fell in love with without all the daily tasks of taking care of children."



A local panel for the *Together in Holiness* Conference featured Rev. Whitney Miller, PhD, LPC, Director of Diocesan Counseling Services; and Katie and Tommy McGrady, hosts of Family Mass Prep on Hallow. The McGradys are parishioners of St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church. The trio offered advice on "Thriving, Not Just Surviving: Virtues of a Joyful Marriage."

She was glad to see so many younger couples making time for each other by attending the conference.

"Danielle spoke about the family unit reflecting the love of God. That is where children learn that God is merciful and forgiving," Becky said. "I am glad to see the younger couples here who are hearing that message at a younger age than we ever heard it. It is nice to step back and observe the new families forming and growing."

A local panel featured Tommy and Katie McGrady, hosts of Family Mass Prep on Hallow, and Rev. Whitney Miller, PhD, LPC, Director of Diocesan Counseling Services. The McGradys are parishioners of St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church. The trio offered advice on "Thriving, Not Just Surviving: Virtues of a Joyful Marriage."

Tommy emphasized that effective communication, thriving in marriage and finding joy comes out of authenticity with one another. He remarked, "That requires continual self-reflection which happens from your prayer life."

Katie said a good question for couples to ask themselves is "What are we doing to foster joy in our marriage and in our home?"

"Jesus doesn't call us to stay in survival mode, he calls us to thriving mode," she said. "To move from survival to thriving requires making joy with each other in your home the priority."

Days like *Together in Holiness* remind couples that they are not alone in their struggles.

"If you are struggling to live out an authentically Catholic marriage and family life, there is nothing wrong with you. Everybody struggles," said Bean. "We all face different challenges, but there are things we have in common. It is so important to not go through it alone."

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

Prayer for Protection during Hurricane Season

Bishop Provost has asked that during the Hurricane Season of 2024, the faithful of the Diocese of Lake Charles pray the following prayer, composed in 1957 by the Most Reverend Maurice Schexnayder, Second Bishop of Lafayette, following Hurricane Audrey:

O God, Master of this passing world, hear the humble voices of your children. The Sea of Galilee obeyed your order and returned to its former quietude; you are still the Master of land and sea.

We live in the shadow of a danger over which we have no control. The Gulf, like a provoked and angry giant, can awake from its seeming lethargy, overstep its conventional boundaries, invade our land, and spread chaos and disaster. During this hurricane season, we turn to You, O loving Father. Spare us from past tragedies whose memories are still so vivid and whose wounds seem to refuse to heal with the passing of time.

O Virgin, Star of the Sea, Our Beloved Mother, we ask you to plead with your Son in our behalf, so that spared from the calamities common to this area and animated with a true spirit of gratitude, we will walk in the footsteps of your Divine Son to reach the heavenly Jerusalem where a stormless eternity awaits us. Amen.

John Halloran earns Scouting's highest honor; named Serra USA Council President-Elect

Col. (Ret) John J. Halloran, Jr., was recently honored with the National Catholic Committee on Scouting's highest honor, the Br. Barnabas F.S.C. Founders Award. This was given for long and meritorious service in the spiritual growth of Catholic youth through scouting under Catholic auspices. The second recognition was his recent election to be the Serra USA Council President-Elect. Serra takes its name from St. Fr. Junipero Serra and its mission is to promote and foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life.



Col. (Ret)
John Halloran