



13th ANNUAL VERITAS CONFERENCE

Father Aquinas connects virtue to the Christian life

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — Dominican Priest Father Aquinas Guilbeau, O.P., traveled to his home state of Louisiana to talk about the “Life of Virtue” at the 13th annual *Veritas Conference* in the Diocese of Lake Charles on Saturday, September 21. The event was hosted by the Office of Religious Education.

A native of Carencro in the Diocese of Lafayette, Father Aquinas is a friar of the Dominican Province of Saint Joseph. He holds the distinction of being the first Vice President of Mission and Ministry for Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he also serves as University Chaplain and Director of Campus Ministry.

“It is great that we have opportunities like this,” Father Aquinas told the nearly 300 attendees — many of them catechists — in Our Lady Queen of Heaven Family Life Community Center. “It is important to step out of our usual routines and schedules, even if only for a day, to be together to talk about God and the things of God, and to reflect on his good providence for our lives.”

The conference opened with Mass celebrated by His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, in Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church.

In remarks ahead of his keynote, Father Aquinas said it was a beautiful sign of God’s providence that he and Bishop Provost would cross paths many years later with the missions they both share.

“When I entered St. Joseph Seminary College in Covington in the mid — 1990s, Bishop Provost was rector at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette. For us who were young seminarians and later young priests, Bishop Provost was always a model for us,” said the friar preacher. “We always looked forward to when we might spend some time with him at the Cathedral or later at Our Lady of Fatima before his being appointed bishop for the Diocese of Lake Charles.”

Virtues help in race to Heaven

Father Aquinas’ talk “looked under the hood” of the human person discussing, by virtue, how all three parts of the soul — intellect, will, and appetite (desires) — work together so that we can run well the race toward Heaven.

“Christian life is not simply running from sin the whole of our lives. Yes, that is part of it, but we run

from sin in order to run to the Lord,” said Father Aquinas. “That running to the Lord is where the virtues come in.”

“Running so as to win is where Faith, Hope, and Charity (Theological Virtues); Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude (Cardinal Virtues); the Fruits of the Holy Spirit; the Beatitudes and the Sacraments come into play as integral parts of the life of grace,” he continued. The friar also discussed the Intellectual Virtues of Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom.

Father Aquinas touched on the Virtue of Religion, which he said draws everything together — all the graces, all of the gifts, and all of the virtues — in a united way that is ordered to God.

“I have something that has been given to me that I didn’t merit. I didn’t ask for it, but I am glad I have it — my life, my existence,” he said. “What do I owe to the One who gave it to me? Religion is that natural virtue and aspect of justice that renders to God the debt that we owe him.”

Prayer and sacrifice, noted Father Aquinas, are the two principal acts of religion that help reckon our debt to God.

Conference reaction

Hearing religion described as virtue of justice is something that clicked for Angie Dupuis, a catechist for first graders at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Sulphur. It was her first time attending *Veritas*.

“It is justice that we need to serve the Lord because it is just. He has given us everything. We need to give him all of us, our soul and our body,” she remarked. “Without him, we would not be here.”

Dupuis said she was interested in attending the conference simply because of the theme on virtue. “I always need to be learning more about the Catholic faith so I can pass on knowledge to my students,” she said.

Sister Maria Howell, RSM, a catechist at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Lake Charles, attended a morning breakout session by Father Jeff Starkovich, Pastor of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Ragley, and an afternoon breakout session by Ann Vincent, a parishioner of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Talking with Teens about Difficult Moral Topics



Father Aquinas Guilbeau, O.P., gave the keynote speaking on “The Life of Virtue” at the 13th annual *Veritas Conference* in the Diocese of Lake Charles on Saturday, September 21.

was the topic of the morning session. “I took notes and would like to hear more of Father Starkovich’s talks on related topics because I teach eighth graders. How do I reach them so that I can help them with their relationship with Christ?” said Sister Maria.

“Ann was fabulous! What struck me in her talk is that it is God’s Will be done. We cannot get enough being reminded of that,” she said. “Mama Mia, what a beautiful testimony!”

Vincent’s session was called *Lord, Can You Write That Down?*, sharing personal experiences that helped her to trust God with every aspect of her life. “I appreciated her reiterating in her talk that it is God who we need to trust, not ourselves,” Sister Maria emphasized.

This was Brittany Foreman’s second year attending *Veritas*. She is the Parish Catechetical Leader at St. Henry Catholic Church in Lake Charles. Foreman said she was drawn to Vincent’s talk by the title alone.

“I always want to know the answer from God

to questions I have. Instead of just listening and waiting patiently, I want him to hit me in the face with what it is I need to know,” said Foreman.

“I enjoy Eucharistic Adoration but admit that I don’t go as often as I should. It is easy to feel like you are alone, especially during times of trouble, like when I was diagnosed with cancer last year,” she said. “It was inspiring to hear that we are never alone and that we should be more grateful for everything that God has given us.”

Other breakout sessions presented were:

- *Creation, Law, Conscience, and Freedom* by Father Edward Richard, M.S.
- *A Doctor of Divine Love: Saint Francis de Sales* by Canon Jean—Marie Moreau
- *Intimacy with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration* by Deacon Brian Soileau
- *Embracing the Sacred: Understanding the Virtue of Religion* by Justin Sittig

There were also two breakout sessions presented in Spanish by Father D.B. Thompson and Father Levi Thompson.

Diocese announces new CFO

LAKE CHARLES — The Most Reverend Glen J. Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, accepted the recommendation from the Diocesan Search Committee and the Finance Council to appoint Mrs. Robin L. Austin, CPA, CGMA, as the new Chief Finance Officer for the Diocese of Lake Charles effective Tuesday, October 1, 2024.

Mrs. Austin accepted the position Monday, September 9, on the Memorial of Saint Peter Claver, the patron saint for the Diocese.

Reverend Monsignor Daniel A. Torres, Vicar General and Chair of the Search Committee, stated, “I am grateful to the Roman Catholic Lay members of the Search Committee, who are experienced business leaders, financial investors, insurance consultants, and CPAs who assisted me in vetting 18 applicants for the person to lead the fiscal office. After several meetings, research on the needs of the fiscal department of the diocese, church parishes, and helping the diocese move forward from the aftermath of many natural disasters, the committee narrowed the field of



Robin L. Austin

candidates before making a unanimous choice of Mrs. Austin.”

Monsignor Torres also expressed his gratitude for the intercession of Saint Peter Claver for assisting the Search Committee in its work and finding the right person to recommend to Bishop Provost.

A parishioner of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles, Mrs. Austin is married and has three children. Her experience includes 17 years as a CFO/Controller of Polaris EPC,

Inc., a locally owned international corporation; and serving as accounting manager of Community Coffee. She has also filled the roles of senior auditor and controller with companies based in Houston and Alabama. She has received certificates as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA).

Mrs. Austin has worked within Polaris devising a complete “hands on” approach with her in—house personnel dealing with FEMA claims and accounting for each transaction.

“Mrs. Austin’s expertise in creativity, communication skills, problem—solving, as well as the desire to mentor and teach will benefit all fiscal personnel throughout the diocese for the enjoyment of being good stewards of the finances the faithful have entrusted to the care of the Church,” said Monsignor Torres. “This is a testimony of her love for God and His Church.”

Saint Peter Claver, pray for us!

Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church
Music Ministry & Friends
presents
“In the Footsteps of the Saints”
Choral Concert
26 October 2024 at 7pm
Consolata Cemetery Chapel
Free and Open to the Public

Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church Music Ministry & Friends will present “In the Footsteps of the Saints” at 7:00 p.m. Saturday, October 26, in the Consolata Cemetery Chapel. The Choral Concert is free and open to the public. A Book of Remembrance will be present where people may list the names of loved ones who have passed. The book will be placed on the altar while the concert is being presented in prayer through the music. The selection of songs represents the writings of certain saints who are important to our diverse community. Saints represented will include St. Patrick, St. Ignatius, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila to name a few. Special guests from other parishes — St. Martin dePorres, Christ the King, St. Raphael, and the Cathedral — will be singing with Our Lady Queen of Heaven Music Ministry. Consolata Cemetery is located at 2300 Country Club Road in Lake Charles.

Upcoming Events

Rosary at the Lake

LAKE CHARLES — Rosary at the Lake to pray for the nation is planned for Sunday, November 3, beginning at 2:00 p.m. at the Lake Charles Civic Center Amphitheater (southwest end by Millennium Park). The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, will lead the recitation of the Apostles Creed.

Mary Wilkinson, coordinator of the event, is seeking students from elementary and middle school grades to be Hail Mary leaders, and high school students to lead the prayers in between each decade. For any questions or information, contact Mary Wilkinson at mgwilkinson7@gmail.com.

All Halo’s Eve

MOSS BLUFF — The fourth annual All

Halo’s Eve for trick—or—treaters of all ages will take place from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, October 26, at Camp Karol, 1087 Bozo Road. Entry and participation are free of charge.

Come dressed as your favorite saint and join the fun of games, candy, activities, food and more! For more information on All Halo’s Eve, contact Saint Charles Center at 337-855-1232.

Tolton Musical Masterpiece

LAKE CHARLES — A *Tolton Musical Masterpiece* will be performed at 6:00 p.m. Saturday, November 16, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 2031 Opelousas Street, featuring the Lake Charles Community Choir. Musical Director is Don McZeal, with Hearnest Arvie as Minister of Musicians. All are welcome.

St. Philip Neri Golf Tournament

KINDER — The eighth annual St. Philip Neri Catholic Church Golf Tournament will be held at Koasati Pines Golf Course of Coushatta Casino Resort in Kinder on Saturday, November 16, with shotgun start at 8:00 a.m. Registration and practice will be 7:00 a.m. to 7:50 a.m.

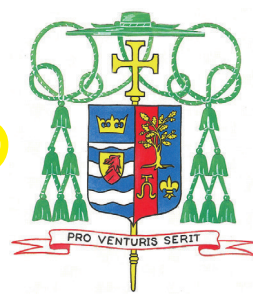
Fees are \$150 per individual or \$600 per four—person team. Fees include: green fees, cart fee, range balls, lunch and drinks, and golf shirt. Make checks payable to St. Philip Neri Golf Tournament and mail to P.O. Box 146, Kinder, LA 70648.

The event’s proceeds will provide needed funds to maintain the enduring quality and beauty of the historic church building and property of St. Philip Neri Parish. For more information, call 337-738-5612.

Sabine River Eucharistic Flotilla

The Diocese of Lake Charles will participate in the second annual Sabine River Eucharistic Flotilla hosted by the Catholic Diocese of Beaumont on All Souls Day, Saturday, November 2. The stops include: Bridge City, Texas — 8:30 a.m., Mass on Cow Bayou; Orange, Texas — 10:45 a.m., Adoration and Rosary, Orange Boat Ramp, 408 Pier Road; Vinton, Louisiana — 1:00 p.m., Adoration, Benediction and Mass at Nibletts Bluff Park, 3409 Nibletts Bluff Road.

Recreational boat owners are invited to participate in all or part of the procession, according to Father Sinclair Oubre. Registration information can be found at www.dioceseofbmt.org/flotilla. For more information on the Sabine River Eucharistic Procession, contact Father Oubre at 409-749-0171 or sinclair.oubre@stellamarismail.org.



Ten seminarians studying for priesthood for Diocese of Lake Charles

The 2024-2025 school year is well under way for 10 seminarians studying for the Diocese of Lake Charles. Two are just starting their seminarian formation while eight are continuing at different stages of their journeys to the priesthood.

Hunter LaRocca entered his fourth year of Configuration Stage at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans as he prepares for his ordination to the diaconate. His home parish is Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Lake Charles.

Also at Notre Dame are **Philip Seilhan** of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church in Jennings, and **Cameron Fontenot** of St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Lake Charles. Seilhan is in his second year of Configuration Stage, while Fontenot is in his second year of Discipleship Stage.

Returning seminarians to St. Joseph Seminary College in Saint Benedict near Covington are **Michael DesOrmeaux**, **Justin Fontenot**, **Logan Guillot**, and **Seth Rodriguez**.

DesOrmeaux is in his fourth year of Discipleship Stage while Fontenot is in his third year of Discipleship Stage. Home parishes are the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception for DesOrmeaux and St. Pius X Catholic Church in Ragley for Fontenot.

Both in their second year of Discipleship Stage are Guillot, a parishioner of Our Lady of LaSalette Parish in DeQuincy and Rodriguez, a parishioner of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish.

Liam Leonard is a fourth-year Discipleship Stage student at Theological College in Washington, D.C. His home parish is Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur.

Two first-year seminarians began their studies at St. Joseph Seminary College and Notre Dame Seminary.



Riley Edwards of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Jennings is in his first year of Propaedeutic Stage at St. Joseph Seminary. **Luka Hagen** of Our Lady of LaSalette Parish in DeQuincy entered his first year of Discipleship Stage at Notre Dame.

Please pray for these 10 men in seminarian formation

for the Diocese of Lake Charles as they discern their call to the priesthood.

For more information on the Office of Vocations, visit www.lcvocations.com or call Rev. Michael Caraway, Director of Vocations and Seminarians, at 337-439-7400, ext. 226, or email michael.caraway@lcdioocese.org.

FROM ST. HENRY TO ST. JOSEPH Hispanic Ministry expands to West Deanery

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

The Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Lake Charles has expanded to the West Deanery at St. Joseph Catholic Church in DeRidder.

The first monthly Sunday Spanish Mass was celebrated by Rev. Wayne LeBleu on July 28, 2024, making history as St. Joseph Parish received a “new life” in the Diocese. The Mass also included the Sacrament of Baptism for a baby.

Since December 1996, St. Henry Catholic Church in Lake Charles was, for the most part, the only Parish to have an active Hispanic community. It will now serve as an “older brother” to the Hispanic community at St. Joseph.

Following the Mass, the Guadalupana Dancers led everyone to a fiesta in the church hall featuring Latino food, St. Henry Folkloric Ballet, live music, and an evangelization drama.

“Let us ask God so that every year a new Hispanic community is born in a different deanery of our Diocese,”

said Ricardo Ruvalcaba, Spanish Pastoral Assistant. “I trust that the Holy Spirit is leading us in that direction.”

Leading others to Christ

When Ricardo was appointed Spanish Pastoral Assistant for the Diocese of Lake Charles in July 2021, he had one goal in mind: to bring people to Jesus Christ.

“My priority has always been to follow the same program for the sacraments that the American community does,” he said. “We know the sacraments are a great way to arrive to Jesus.”

Ricardo led a three-day Spanish Retreat at St. Joseph the weekend of April 26-28, 2024, to introduce Spanish ministries and apostolates to parishioners. The Hispanic Ministry at St. Joseph was officially born on April 28 at the conclusion of the retreat.

“I was told that many Catholics had abandoned their Catholic faith because other churches offered religious worship in Spanish,” said Ricardo.

“Father Wayne LeBleu, Pastor of St. Joseph, is the answer to many prayers. He is willing to evangelize and help the Hispanic community grow and will be a great blessing for the Diocese of Lake Charles.”

Father LeBleu said that many Hispanics in DeRidder are going to Mass who do not speak English.

“They know I speak somewhat broken Spanish and seek me out for confessions,” he said, noting that he studied Spanish on his first mission trip to Saltillo, Mexico, as a seminarian in 1990. “I fell in love with the excitement of them in the faith.” Father LeBleu was ordained to the priesthood in 1995.

To better serve the newly formed Hispanic community, Father LeBleu recently returned from a month-long sabbatical in Costa Rica to brush up on his Pastoral Spanish. Father Levi Thompson, Parochial Vicar at St. Henry Catholic Church, also took part in the Spanish immersion program.

Ricardo said that the Church is missionary

by nature, and we are all called to evangelize.

“When I know that our priests are traveling to learn Spanish, that fills me with joy and hope and reminds me of the great missionaries who learned languages to evangelize more souls,” said Ricardo. “Every time we talk about Jesus to another person, our Church grows.”

Forming apostolates, ministries

By the end of the weekend retreat in DeRidder, Ricardo had formed six apostolates, four ministries, one formation class, and one monthly Mass in Spanish. These 12 activities — 100 percent in Spanish — will be the foundations for the new Hispanic community.

A total of 43 Latino adults who took part in the Spanish retreat represented 11 countries: United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, and the Philippines. Ricardo said that the intercession of Saint Joseph and the Virgin of Guadalupe was evident throughout the weekend.

“Apostolates and ministries are the best way for Hispanics to become more committed to their Catholic faith. For Hispanics, sacramental life and participation in parish life is essential,” Ricardo said, encouraging all who are baptized to take part in an apostolate.

St. Henry Parish carries out 95 activities each year, including ministries, apostolates, and cultural or social activities among Hispanics. Ricardo remarked that one of several priorities is to offer retreats in Spanish.

“In 2025, we will do the first True Presence Retreat 100 percent in Spanish. We are working on it with a lot of support from our priests and deacons,” he noted.

Traditions preserve identity

A Hispanic Community that does not celebrate or share its traditions is in danger of extinction, according to Ricardo, so it is important to experience growth throughout the Diocese of Lake Charles.

“The Hispanic community is called to know, respect, and live the traditions of Louisiana, and at the same time to preserve its own traditions,” he said. “Americans who have experienced Hispanic traditions grow culturally and become fond of the Hispanic charisma.”

Under Ricardo’s leadership, a few traditions shared by the Hispanic community include:

- The live performance of the Luminous and Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary
- The festive celebration of the Three Wise Men for the Feast of the Epiphany
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass and Fiesta on December 12

Monthly Spanish Masses

Father LeBleu said he is “extremely grateful” to Ricardo for assisting him and encouraging him to serve those who feel they are on the fringe of society.

“This is an exciting time for St. Joseph Parish in DeRidder. I hope we can continue to collaborate with St. Henry Hispanic community,” said Father LeBleu.

St. Joseph Catholic Church (1125 Blankenship Drive) will celebrate Spanish Mass at 5:00 p.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month with confessions at 4:00 p.m. for 45 minutes.

For those who have been looking for a place of Catholic worship in Spanish, Father LeBleu shares this message: “Bienvenido! Come and join our Community for Mass and join us in fellowship.”

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.



Father Wayne LeBleu, Pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in DeRidder, celebrates the first monthly Sunday Spanish Mass on July 28 since the Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Lake Charles has expanded to the West Deanery.