



'HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT'

Diocese celebrates opening of Jubilee Year 2025

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost officially opened the Jubilee Year 2025 in the Diocese of Lake Charles on Sunday, December 29, 2024, coinciding with the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. It was a joyful celebration made extra special with all 11 of the diocese's seminarians home for Christmas.

"I was born just months before the Jubilee Year of 1950 and ordained a priest during another Jubilee Year of 1975," Bishop Provost remarked during his homily. "Now I find myself a bishop of what will doubtless be my last Jubilee Year of 2025. The holy year gives me a door that opens to possibilities."

His Holiness Pope Francis called for the Jubilee Year — the 2,025th year since the Birth of Jesus Christ — inviting the faithful around the world to be "Pilgrims of Hope" and turn to the generosity of God's mercy.

Moments before the opening Mass at 9:30 a.m. in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop Provost celebrated the Rite of Opening for the Jubilee Year in the Ave Maria Hall surrounded by several clergy and the seminarians.

The rite included a reading from the Gospel of John and a selection from Pope Francis' Papal Bull of Indiction — *Spes non confundit* — "Hope does not disappoint" — (Romans 5:5).

A procession with the Jubilee Cross commenced across the street to the Cathedral as the faithful joined in singing the Litany of the Saints. The sprinkling of holy water for the Rite of Commemoration of Baptism followed as the celebration of Mass continued.

Bishop Provost explained that a holy year is associated with spiritual benefits given by God to those who participate in pilgrimages, acts of devotion, and works of mercy.

"In Rome, there is a sealed door located at each of the four major basilicas," he said. "Opened every 25 years for the Holy Year, these doors represent the opening of God's grace to thousands who will participate in the spiritual blessings offered by the Church and the Lord."

For pilgrims who cannot travel to Rome, bishops around the world have designated their cathedrals, churches and Catholic shrines as special places of prayer offering opportunities for reconciliation and indulgences intended to strengthen and revive faith.

In a Decree issued on December 1, 2024, Bishop Provost designated four pilgrimage churches and two pilgrimage holy sites in the Diocese of Lake Charles. They are:

- The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles
- Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Lake Charles
- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur
- Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church in Jennings
- Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea in Cameron
- Parochial Shrine of Our Lady of LaSalette in Sulphur

The Jubilee Year of Hope, which will conclude on December 28, 2025, offers the faithful opportunities to gain a Plenary Indulgence by making a pilgrimage or pious visit to these churches and shrines.

The faithful can also obtain a Plenary Indulgence by performing an act of charity to include visiting the sick, imprisoned, lonely elderly, and the disabled. In the Diocese of Lake Charles, the faithful are encouraged to offer an act of charity by volunteering at Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana.

This special time of reconciliation and renewed efforts in restoring peace begins with peace in our families, remarked Bishop Provost.

"During a holy year, we celebrate our oneness with God as his adopted sons and daughters. We renew our commitment as brothers and sisters in Christ. In effect, we strive to live better our baptismal promises by which we profess our faith and renounce sin," the bishop said.

"This Holy Year of 2025 is appropriately being termed the Year of Hope. ... We must see this holy year as an opportunity to rekindle our faith and thus reinforce our hope," Bishop Provost continued.

Asking the question, "Why do human beings continue to look for comfort and satisfaction in the wrong places?" His Excellency reminded the faithful that things of lasting value are found in the eternal, not in the transitory.

"We must look for the Lord in the place where he can be found. There, for us, the door opens."

- For more information about Jubilee 2025, visit <https://www.usccb.org/jubilee2025>
- To learn more about the Jubilee Year in the Diocese of Lake Charles, visit <http://www.lcdioocese.org/3-news/3879-decree-for-the-jubilee-year-2025>
- For instruction on how to obtain a Plenary Indulgence, visit http://www.lcdioocese.org/images/pdfs/2025-Decree_Instruction.pdf



Bishop Glen John Provost uses the Baptistry in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception to prepare Holy Water for use in the Sprinkling Rite.



Here, Bishop Provost sprinkles the congregation in the Rite of Commemoration of Baptism.



Logan Guillot, a seminarian for the Diocese of Lake Charles, leads the procession into the Cathedral carrying the Jubilee Cross.

Photos By: AmyCeceliaPhotography

The Jubilee Prayer
Father in heaven, may the *faith* you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of *charity* enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed *hope* for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

Franciscus



Bishop Provost will celebrate Catholic Schools Week Mass on Jan. 29

LAKE CHARLES — The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, M.A., D.D., Bishop of Lake Charles, will celebrate the annual Catholic Schools Week Mass at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, January 29, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Concelebrating will be pastors of parishes with Catholic schools.

In attendance will be the senior class of St. Louis Catholic High School and eighth graders from Immaculate Conception Cathedral School, St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School, and Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School, all in Lake Charles; Our Lady's Catholic School in Sulphur; and Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School in Jennings.

The Catholic Schools Week (CSW) 2023 – 2026 theme is "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community." Catholic schools have an irreplaceable role in the Church's evangelizing mission. Building on the central goal of Catholic schools to form saints, Catholic schools teach and embrace the whole person, body, mind and spirit. The fact that all members of a Catholic school community share the Christian vision of faith that Christ is the foundation of Catholic education is what unites the school as a faith-filled community.

While faith is the binding element in Catholic schools, the Church reiterates that parents are the first teachers of their children. Holding this tenet, Catholic school communities expand beyond the walls of school buildings to envelop the family as an integral part of the school community. Together teachers, administrators, staff, students and parents fuel the light of faith by integrating culture with faith and faith with living.

Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community is a theme on which to build a spirit of the gospel to benefit the human family.





Our Lady of Seven Dolors spreads Christmas cheer

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

WELSH — A tug at Betty LaBouve's heart four decades ago has grown into a Christmas tradition at Our Lady of Seven Dolors Catholic Church making spirits bright for countless families.

In December, nearly 100 Community Christmas Baskets were prepared with food and other essentials, along with hundreds of wrapped gifts for children. Among the presents too big to wrap were 30 bicycles on many "wish lists."

LaBouve was inspired to start the Community Christmas program during her first year as Director of Religious Education at Our Lady of Seven Dolors. She was 33 years old at the time. Now, she is 73 and said, "It is still very rewarding and fulfilling 40 years later."

As the holiday season was approaching, LaBouve recalls hearing the students talk to each other about the gifts they wanted and reminded them that Christmas was about Jesus and not the presents.

"A student, probably in the first or second grade, was telling his friends he did not think he would be getting anything for Christmas that year because his family had to take care of his momma," she said, recalling that the child's mother was sick. "I walked away because I wanted to cry."

At the time, there was nothing like the Community Christmas program in Welsh and LaBouve said that there were many people in need.

"I felt God calling me to do something to help. If you listen, God does speak to you," she said. Through

LaBouve's actions, Our Lady of Seven Dolors is spreading the love of Christ through His humanity to those around them.

"We started out doing five or six baskets in that first year, and it grew and grew. The past 20 years it has gotten bigger. I remember about five years ago collecting enough to fill 123 baskets," said LaBouve.

A "giving tree" goes up at the church two weeks before Black Friday for parishioners to select families who have registered for the Community Christmas Baskets. They do not know who they are buying for. The tags on the tree list only gender, age, clothes size and top three gift items for each person.

Donations of food come from Our Lady of Seven Dolors parishioners, Welsh Elementary and Roanoke Junior High schools. Area businesses donate money to buy the meat (sausage, fryers, roast, turkey, ham, and Cornish hens) for the food bags.

"Forty-five baskets were distributed to shut-ins (many of them delivered to their homes) with the remaining 52 baskets given to families with children," said LaBouve. "Everyone will receive nonperishable items."

A few days before the distribution of gift baskets on Saturday, December 21, a dozen volunteers spent



Rev. Rojo Koonathan, the administrator for Our Lady of Seven Dolors Catholic Church, helps volunteers load a bicycle to be delivered to a family receiving Community Christmas baskets.

four hours wrapping several hundred gifts for children. LaBouve said that you are never too old to lend a helping hand.

"One of the volunteers this year — a 91-year-old lady who helped wrap gifts — told me, 'I never realized how much work y'all put into the program. This is unreal,'" said LaBouve, who works closely with Charlotte Berken and Jacquetta Navarre through the process.

Grand Knight Melward J. Doucet and Greg Saulnier, both members of the Knights of Columbus Rev. Monsignor Jules O. Daigle Council 2855, traveled many miles around Welsh and as far as Roanoke to

bring the true meaning of Christmas to the elderly and shut-ins. They were greeted with big smiles and wishes of Merry Christmas! Saulnier has been volunteering for nine years while this was Doucet's second year to spread some Christmas cheer.

"We are with the Knights of Columbus and that's what we do, take care of those in need," Doucet said without hesitation. "I have helped in other ways before, but this is my second year being Santa Claus."

LaBouve also gives credit to the community for the growing success of the Christmas program.

"Our community supports us so well,

including the students at Welsh Elementary School," she said. "Instead of the third, fourth, and fifth graders exchanging gifts with each other, they contributed items for the Christmas baskets."

Acknowledging that she is very blessed, LaBouve said, "I know that the Lord sent me on this journey for a reason."

Soon after the Christmas season is over, planning will begin for the 2025 Community Christmas Baskets. Anyone wanting to donate or volunteer their time may contact Our Lady of Seven Dolors Catholic Church office at 337-734-3446.



Grand Knight Melward J. Doucet and Greg Saulnier, both members of the Knights of Columbus Rev. Monsignor Jules O. Daigle Council 2855, deliver Christmas gifts and food to help bring the true meaning of Christmas to the elderly and shut-ins.

Bishop dedicates new altar at St. Joseph in Vinton

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

VINTON — The Most Reverend Glen John Provost dedicated the new altar in the sanctuary at St. Joseph Catholic Church on Saturday, November 16, during the 4:00 p.m. Anticipated Sunday Mass. As the congregation sang "Gather the People" during the entrance procession, they had much to celebrate as they gathered in their newly restored church.

Concelebrating with Bishop Provost was Reverend Carlos Garcia, Pastor. They were joined by the Very Reverend Joseph Caraway, Master of Ceremonies, and Deacon Jesse Menard.

In remarking on the beauty of the 94-year-old church, Bishop Provost said, "I have always thought this church was among the prettiest in the Diocese of Lake Charles. I am glad to see that the restoration is in keeping with the lovely architecture of the building."

"The sanctuary is meant to have a permanency to it, and I think that is what this restoration has achieved,"

the bishop continued, offering his congratulations to Father Garcia and all the parishioners who helped make it possible.

Features of the church's restoration include a new main Altar and High Altar, communion rail, new ambo, statues on both sides of the High altar, new flooring, and a new roof.

The project began on April 10, 2023, and was nearly complete by September 21, 2023. Father Garcia said he is still waiting on the stained-glass windows and the front windows to be repaired.

The bishop sprinkled the people with holy water that was also used during the Rite of Dedication of the Altar.

"All the ancient duties of the temple priests, the actions of offering, the slaying of the sacrificial victim, and the renewal of an eternal covenant reach fulfillment in Christ, here on this altar that I will consecrate," Bishop Provost said moments before the consecration.

"God's new gift is the eternal making that itself

is present here and now on this altar, here in this church of St. Joseph in Vinton," he continued.

"Every important sacrament of the church is accompanied by an anointing with blessed Chrism, reminding us that this is set aside for one purpose and one purpose alone — that is to represent the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ to us," said the bishop.

Following the solemn Litany of Saints, Bishop Provost poured sacred Chrism in the middle of the altar and on each corner spreading it with his hand as he completely covered the surface.

He then lit a fire on the altar and walked around the altar using incense to serve as reminder that the sacred space is now consecrated and ready for worship.

Father Garcia, who has served as pastor since July 1, 2014, expressed his gratitude at the end of the liturgy.

"I think everybody agrees with me that this was a beautiful, beautiful rite," he said. "Thank you, His Excellency, for being here with us today to celebrate this special occasion." Father Garcia also extended his appreciation to Father Joseph Caraway for his role as Master of Ceremonies.

Following the nearly two-hour liturgy and Rite of Dedication, parishioners gathered for a meal in the parish hall.



Bishop Provost pours sacred Chrism in the middle of the altar and on each corner spreading it with his hand as he completely covers the surface.



Tolton Ambassadors – Louisiana



Barbara LeBlanc
Diocese of Lake Charles



Joseph Rochelle
Diocese of Lafayette



Linda Polk
Diocese of Lake Charles



David Bellow
Diocese of Lake Charles

Four newly commissioned Tolton Ambassadors will join in the work for the canonization of Venerable Father Augustus Tolton through Prayer, Catechesis, Evangelization, and to encourage support for all programs and events that promote the cause. Venerable Augustus Tolton (1854-1897) is the first recognizably Roman Catholic priest of African descent in the United States. On June 11, 2019, Pope Francis advanced Father Tolton to the title "Venerable" along the process for his canonization to sainthood.

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