CHURCH TODAY

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The Steubenville South High School Youth Conference was held June 21 - 23 at the Randolph Riverfront Center in downtown Alexandria. This year's conference hosted 2,200 teens, adults, priests, and volunteers, and focused on John 1:5, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." See pages 12 - 13 for pictures from the weekend.

INSIDE

Diocese of offer Marriage Prep workshops

Preparing for your wedding day can be a momentous task. The Diocese of Alexandria is here to help guide you through this period of preparation. Beginning Oct. 12, marriage preparation workshops are returning to the Diocese of Alexandria. See page 5.

Catechist Enrichment Day set for Sept. 28

Calling all Catechists entrusted with handing down the faith to the youth and adults in our Diocese! We invite you to join us for a Day of Enrichment! Registration opens on Tuesday, July 30, and closes on Friday, Sept. 20. Space is limited. See the story on page 8.

Catholic Charities offers grief support

Beginning Aug. 13, CCCLA certified Christian Life Coaches will lead a grief support program developed by Pat Sheveland, the founder of The International Academy of Grief (IAFC), the B.R.E.A.T.H.E Coaching Model for Grief. See page 12 for details.

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Genesis of Eve conference theme: "Be Open"

by Hannah Morgan
Executive Assistant
Office of Development and Public Affairs

When I first heard of the Genesis of Eve women's conference, I was both surprised and excited to hear that something so needed was being offered here in Central Louisiana. As a woman who has intentionally sought out opportunities to surround herself with like-minded women, I was ecstatic that here and accessible to us in our own Diocese, was the Genesis of Eve Women's Ministry. Women are social creatures; we both need and crave community. And just as vital, if not more, is the spiritual support that we find in our sisters in Christ.

The Genesis of Eve Women's Ministry was founded here in the Diocese of Alexandria. The five founders who are local to Central Louisiana, saw this vital need and came together to fill it. The primary ministry of Genesis of Eve is through the Genesis of Eve Women's Conference. The conference is an annual event held at the Randolph Riverfront Center in Alexandria. This will be the third year of the conference, and it has been met with a tremendous response since its formation.

The mission of Genesis Eve is to, "Help women who have a deep yearning desire to find meaning in their lives, to find themselves in their faith, and in their relationship with Christ." By taking this statement and putting it into action, they provide women with the opportunity to come together and find that fulfillment we so often seek. Utilizing the pillars of their ministry, their core values such as unconditional love, devotion to family, unwavering faith, and being a selfless servant, they are able to foster this unique environment where a true encounter can occur. These moments of true Encounter, alongside our sisters in Christ, are what ignite the spark that inspires us to go deeper. We are invited to be open, and allow Jesus to Empower us to be the women we are called to be. Then equipped to Evangelize, we are ready and able to take that flame into our homes, lives, and communities.

As women, we have a huge impact on the people and the environment around us, as we so often give of ourselves to others. The Genesis of Eve conference provides women with the rare opportunity to come and receive. In the first year, they offered for women to "Come to The Well", where they built the bridge between what was available locally and what women in our church communities were looking for. In the second year,

they expanded upon that bridge with their featured saint, Joan of Arc, reminding us to stand fast and "Be Not Afraid". This year's conference is expected to be the best yet, and how could it not be with Mother Mary as the featured saint! The theme this year invites us to "Be Open". For it is when we are open to listen, that we are open to hear the voice of Jesus and through Him live out the special calling that each of us has on our lives.

The conference weekend will be full of opportunities to listen and encounter, as women of all ages gather to expand their community and deepen their personal relationship with Christ. Each day will include talks from nationally recognized Catholic Speakers including Beth Davis, Jackie Francois Angel, Kathryn Whitaker, and Fr. Justin Brady. Worship will be led by Kelley Pease Lombardi and include music by Laura Huval, with the closing Mass to be celebrated by our own Bishop Robert Marshall. With the schedule also including time for Confessions and Adoration, it will be a true time of spiritual nourishment.

The incredible Genesis of Eve founders did not neglect to consider our physical needs as well. Meals during the conference time are included in your ticket purchase. For those who are not local to the area or who simply want to embrace the spirit of a retreat, Genesis of Eve has arranged for a special hotel rate with the Hotel Bentley which connects directly to the conference center. Genesis of Eve does not want anyone to have to miss out on the conference, especially those new moms who need community more than ever. Which is why they even have a Mother's Lounge available for use for moms and their infants, sending the message loud and clear that all are welcome and wanted!

Of course, what would a women's conference be without shopping? The conference Vendors are hand selected, and carry a variety of artisanal items that help bring the faith into your home including sacramentals, gifts, décor, and more. The famous Genesis of Eve storefront will also be there, complete with merchandise themed to this year's featured saint, Mother Mary.

This year's conference is quickly approaching with the 2024 conference dates set for Sept. 6-8. It's not too late to plan to attend, and tickets are available now on Eventbrite. This event is open to women of all faiths who are ages eighteen and older, so plan to come and bring a friend! The weekend promises to be one to remember, filled with spiritual encounters, intellectual empowerment, and apostolic evangelization. I know I will be there this year, and I hope to see you there too!

More information on Genesis of Eve can be found on their website at genesisofeve.com.

Scan the QR code below to purchase your tickets today!

Diocese of Alexandria Website
www.diocesealex.org

Diocese of Alexandria Facebook
facebook.com/DioceseofAlexandria

Diocese of Alexandria Instagram
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DIOCESE REPRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS. Fr. Anthony Dharmaraj, and a group of pilgrims from the Diocese of Alexandria, attend the National Eucharistic Congress being held at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis this week.

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MARSHALL AT THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS: Greetings from the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis! Today is a day of lines and registration, figuring out the schedule and scouting out the various locations. May our focus on the Eucharist strengthen us to bring the saving message of Christ to our troubled and often-misguided world.

Vatican condemns violence at Trump rally, offers prayers for victims, peace

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Vatican expressed its concern about the violence waged at a political rally in the United States and it offered its prayers for the nation, the victims and peace.

In response to queries about the shootings at a rally involving former U.S. President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, the Vatican press office released a statement July 14 expressing its "concern about last night's episode of violence, which wounds people and democracy, causing suffering and death."

The Holy See is "united in the prayer of the U.S. bishops for America, for the victims, and for peace in the country, so that the motives of the violent may never prevail," the statement said in Italian.

Gunshots were fired at a Trump rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, July 13, injuring Trump who said on social media that a bullet "pierced" his right ear. One person attending the rally was killed and two others were critically injured, The Associated Press reported July 14.

The U.S. Secret Service said it killed the suspected shooter who had attacked from an elevated position outside the rally venue.

Law enforcement was investigating the shooting as an attempted assassination of the former president and presumptive Republican presidential candidate, AP reported.

USCCB CONDEMNS POLITICAL VIOLENCE. Supporters of Republican presidential candidate and former U.S. President Donald Trump comfort each other after Trump was grazed by a bullet during his campaign rally at the Butler Farm Show in Pennsylvania July 13, 2024. A local prosecutor says the gunman and one attendee are dead. (OSV News photo/Brendan McDermid, Reuters)

U.S. Bishops' President Condemns Political Violence and Calls for Prayers for Peace

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a written statement July 13, "Together with my brother bishops, we condemn political violence, and we offer our prayers for President Trump, and those who were killed or injured."

"We also pray for our country and for an end to political violence, which is never a solution to political disagreements. We ask all people of goodwill to join us in praying for peace in our country. Mary, Mother of God and Patroness of the Americas, pray for us," the archbishop said.

Trump names Vance, Ohio's Catholic senator, as his 2024 running mate

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Former President Donald Trump on July 15 named Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance, a Catholic, as his running mate on the Republican ticket in November.

Trump was widely expected to name his running mate at the Republican National Convention, which began the same day.

"After lengthy deliberation and thought, and considering the tremendous talents of many others, I have decided that the person best suited to assume the position of Vice President of the United States is Senator J.D. Vance of the Great State of Ohio," Trump wrote in a post on his social media platform Truth Social. "J.D. honorably served our Country in the Marine Corps, graduated from Ohio State University in two years, Summa Cum Laude, and is a Yale Law School Graduate, where he was Editor of The Yale Law Journal, and President of the Yale Law Veterans Association."

TRUMP CHOOSES CATHOLIC RUNNING MATE. Senator J.D. Vance of Ohio and his wife, Usha Vance, appeared on the Republican National Convention floor to be nominated for vice president on the first day of the convention in Milwaukee. (Photo/Haiyun Jiang for The New York Times)

Vance, author of "Hillbilly Elegy," was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2022 after a contentious primary election in the Buckeye State, in which he got Trump's endorsement. Vance, who is Catholic, is married to Usha Vance, a litigator. The couple has three young children.

Trump said Vance "will be strongly focused on the people he fought so brilliantly for, the American Workers and Farmers in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, and far beyond."

If elected, Vance would be just the second Catholic to serve as vice president in U.S. history.

Pope recognizes miracle for church's first 'millennial' saint

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

ANTONIA SALZANO ACUTIS, MOTHER OF BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS, prays in the shrine dedicated to her son at St. Dominic Church in Brick, N.J., Oct. 1, 2023, the day it was dedicated by Bishop David M. O'Connell of Trenton, N.J. (OSV News photo/Mike Ehrmann, Diocese of Trenton)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis formally recognized a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian teenager whose birth in 1991 will make him the first "millennial" to become a saint.

In a meeting May 23 with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for Saints' Causes, the pope signed decrees advancing the sainthood causes of Blessed Acutis, as well as one woman, and six men.

The Vatican announced May 23 that the pope had signed the decrees and that he would convene a consistory to set a date for the canonization of Acutis and other future saints: Blesseds Giuseppe Allamano; Marie-Léonie Paradis of Québec, Canada; Elena Guerra; and eight Franciscan friars and three Maronite laymen who were martyred in Damascus, Syria, in 1860.

Blessed Acutis was born and baptized in London to Italian parents in 1991, but the family moved back to Milan, Italy, while he was still an infant.

After he started high school, he began to curate, create or design websites, including one for a local parish, for his Jesuit-run high school and for the Pontifical Academy "Cultorum Martyrum," according to the saints' dicastery. He also used his computer skills to create an online database of Eucharistic miracles around the world.

He volunteered at a church-run soup kitchen, helped the poor in his neighborhood, assisted children struggling with their homework, played saxophone, soccer and videogames, and loved making videos with his dogs and cats, according to carloacutis.com, the website dedicated to his cause for canonization.

"To always be close to Jesus, that's my life plan," he wrote when he was 7 years old.

He was devoted to Our Lady, praying the rosary every day, and to the Eucharist.

"The Eucharist is the highway to heaven," he wrote. When people sit in the sun, they become tan, "but when they sit before Eucharistic Jesus, they become saints."

When he was only 15, he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia and died Oct. 12, 2006. He had said, "I'm happy to die because I've lived my life without wasting even a minute of it doing things that wouldn't have pleased God," according to carloacutis.com.

His mortal remains were moved to the municipal cemetery in Assisi in 2007 to fulfill his wish to be in the city of St. Francis. Then his remains were moved to the Shrine of the Renunciation at the Church of St. Mary Major in Assisi in 2019. He was buried wearing Nike sneakers, black jeans and an athletic warmup jacket -- clothes he was used to wearing every day.

In February 2020, the pope formally recognized a miracle attributed to Acutis' intercession and in October that year, the teen was beatified during a Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis. An estimated 117,000 pilgrims visited the teen's tomb in just the first year after his beatification, the Diocese of Assisi said the day before his feast day, Oct. 12, 2021.

The two miracles attributed to the intercession of the teen involved alleged miraculous recoveries for a young boy in Brazil in 2013 and a young woman in Florence in 2022.

The miracle Pope Francis recognized May 23 that paves the way for the blessed's canonization involved a young woman who was born in Costa Rica in 2001 and moved to Florence in 2018 to study.

The woman fell from her bicycle at 4 a.m. July 2, 2022, and suffered a serious head injury, according to the dicastery website. Even after emergency surgery removing part of her skull to reduce severe intracranial pressure, doctors warned her family she could die at any moment.

An associate of the young woman's mother began praying to Blessed Acutis the same day, and the mother went to Assisi and prayed at the blessed's tomb July 8 -- the same day the young woman began to breathe on her own again. She slowly recovered basic mobility and a CT scan showed the hemorrhage was gone. After a period of rehabilitation therapy and a complete recovery, she and her mother visited his tomb Sept. 2.

Pope Francis has urged young people to learn about Blessed Acutis, who "did a great deal of good things," despite his short life.

"Above all, he was impassioned by Jesus; and since he was very good at getting around on the internet, he used it in the service of the Gospel, spreading love for prayer, the witness of faith and charity toward others," the pope told young Italians Jan. 29.

"Prayer, witness and charity" were the hallmarks of Blessed Acutis' life and should be a key part of the life of every Christian, he said.

HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTIONS
for August 2024

For political leaders:

We pray that political leaders be at the service of their own people, working for integral human development and for the common good, especially caring for the poor and those who have lost their jobs.

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PUBLISHED ARTICLES: "The Worn-Out Worker Rule Revisited", "Significant Work-Related Limitations of Function under SS 12.05C", "Questionable Retirement and the Small Business Owner", "Crisis of Confidence: The Inadequacies of Vocational Evidence Presented at Social Security Hearings", "An Unsolved Mess: Analyzing the Social Security Administration's Methodology for Identifying Occupations and Job Numbers".

(318)717-1995

Diocese to offer marriage preparation classes

Congratulations on your engagement!

Preparing for your wedding day can be a momentous task. Securing the church and celebrant, finding the perfect dress or suit, the accompanying attire for the wedding party, picking the reception venue and caterer to finding a photographer who will capture those special moments that you can relive for ages to come. All the particulars that go with planning this special day are both tedious and at times can be overwhelming and stressful. Your wedding day is a special moment in your life but please realize it is also a special day in the life of the church.

Pope Benedict carefully reflected on the decision to marry as something more than the act of falling in love: "The emotion of love must be purified. It must undertake a journey of discernment in which the mind and the will also come into play…. In the rite of Marriage, the Church does not ask whether you are in love but whether you want, whether you are resolved. In other words, falling in love must become true love; it must involve the will and the mind in a journey (which is the period of engagement) of purification, of greater profundity so that it is truly all of man, with all his capacities, with the discernment of reason and the force of will, who says: 'Yes, this is my life'."

In preparation for marriage, a couple must look at the sacramental component of marriage and not simply the wedding day. The Catholic Church understands marriage to be a life-long commitment. As a couple lives their marriage vocation out, they will experience "joys and hopes and sorrows and anxieties." (Gaudium et spes 1.) These experiences are not isolated in the couple's relationship, but with their fellow Christians as well.

Secular society says the period of your engagement is a time of preparing every detail of your wedding day and to a large extent, the honeymoon. But the Church encourages couples to use this time to prepare for a life-long marriage. The engagement period is a time in which you should take time to deepen your faith, both personally and interpersonal spirituality.

As you prepare to offer yourself as a sign of God's grace in the world, the Diocese of Alexandria is here to help guide you through this period of preparation. Beginning Oct. 12, marriage preparation workshops are returning to the Diocese of Alexandria. Having been offered at the parish level for some years, these one-day workshops will be hosted at the St. Joseph Catholic Center at 4400 Coliseum Blvd in Alexandria. Designed to engage couples preparing for a life-long marriage, the workshop will cover topics that are critical for couples to discuss and reflect upon. For a list of all upcoming workshops, please visit our website at diocesealex.org.

We are thankful for upcoming sacramental union and your witness of the love of God to the world. If you have any questions, please contact your preparing minister or the Diocese of Alexandria Office of Religious Education and Faith Formation, at (318) 445-6424 ext. (207) or by email dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org.

Upcoming VIRTUS Sessions

Monday, Aug. 12, 6:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Church,
MARKSVILLE

Monday, Aug. 19, 6:00 p.m.
St. Anthony of Padua,
BUNKIE

Wed., August. 21, 6:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Catholic Center,
ALEXANDRIA

NOTE: Minors are not allowed to attend because of the adult content of the videos and discussions.
To register, go to www.virtus.org.
For more information,
call 318-445-6424, ext. 213.

See the latest news from around the Diocese at www.diocesealex.org

Upcoming Retreats:
August 8 - 11, 2024
Men's Acts Retreat
for more information
OLPS at (318) 445-3693

All retreats are held at Maryhill Renewal Center.

The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

Psalm 78: 24
Responsorial Psalm
for August 4
Eighteenth Sunday in
Ordinary Time

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This summer, take kids deeper in faith

By Kay Fuller
Risen Motherhood

Our family values often drive our summer bucket list. We may value education, shared experiences, athletic and skill development. These are all great things, but the greater thing is "the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).

Just as we prepare nutritious meals to sustain and grow our kids, we should also plan for their spiritual nourishment. By summer's end, we want them taller and deeper, smarter and wiser. If they feast on the "solid food" of the word this summer, Lord willing, they'll grow deeper in spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 3:2). Memorizing scripture on road trips, learning the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22–23) on picnics, or honing in on one passage for our summer theme are all doable, yet depth producing.

"Depth" in the child-rearing years may seem elusive. But, mommas, take heart—depth and dishes are not mutually exclusive. See, spiritual depth isn't about staying up on current events, engaging in drawn out discussions, or even being intellectual. Spiritual depth is about a faith that runs deep.

This summer, imagine if we added "go deeper" to the top of our summer bucket list and intentionally planned ways to guide our children toward a deeper walk with Christ. How might our families grow in spiritual depth this summer?

Deeper in Prayer

At the end of every family dinner, the voices of our preschool grandchildren unite in a familiar request: "Let's wrestle!" But, there's another form of wrestling we ache for them to learn—an ever-increasing practice of wrestling in prayer. Paul describes Epaphras as "always wrestling for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills" (Col. 4:12, italics mine).

If we want our kids to be Epaphras pray-ers, always wrestling in prayer, summertime affords excellent "practice" opportunities. There are lots of ways we can lead our kids to grow deeper in prayer this summer. We might design our own family prayer calendar where we pray for pre-determined people or things each day or week. We can take prayer walks, praying out-loud together, thanking God for his creation, and praying for each other and our neighbors. We can walk around our church building on a summer night and pray for our church. Consider creating a summer prayer journal or chalkboard where both prayers and answers are recorded. Or, enjoy weekly family campfires where each person prays for the person on their left.

Deeper in Service

Authentic depth is not only inward, it also looks outward and points others to the love of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16–17 we're reminded that "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (italics mine). Spiritual depth is a "so-that" depth. As our family grows deeper, so should our service.

Summertime can lend itself to an inward family focus as we strive to complete our bucket list. To maintain an outward and others-focused mindset, we might hold a family brainstorming session about ways to serve this summer, and—to tie spiritual growth together—we can pray for God to guide us to specific opportunities.

Consider making a meal or baking cookies for someone who had surgery, helping with yard work for someone who is elderly or widowed, creating cards or letters for someone who is home-bound or grieving, or checking with local organizations about service opportunities that are suitable for kids. Options abound for guiding our kids toward loving their neighbor with a "so-that" depth.[1]

Deeper in Love

As moms, we pour out love in overseeing our kids' spiritual growth while simultaneously seeking to grow deeper ourselves. It's encouraging to remember that we, too, have an overseer—Christ is the "Overseer of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). Moms oversee vacations, education, meals, finances, ever-changing wardrobes, playdates, screen time, and medical needs. But, Momma, take heart! You too have an overseer—not only an overseer of the events of your life, but of your very soul.

When we submerge ourselves in the depths of the One who oversees our soul, we will instinctively lead our children closer to the Overseer of their souls. For a short time, we can oversee multiple facets of our kids' lives, and so we should. But, only God can oversee their souls. Mommas can rest easier in a restless world when we spend time with our Lord and are "able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love" for us and our children (Eph. 3:18).

Deep living requires intention, strategy, and patience. But, it's worth employing every bit of our God-enabled, mom-creativity into guiding our children to a deeper walk with Christ. This summer and beyond, may our families transition to deeper waters where our faith grows and beckons others to join us.

ST. JAMES MEMORIAL CHURCH BREAKS GROUND ON NEW BUILDING. On Sunday, June 30, parishioners gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony for the new parish office and meeting rooms for St. James Memorial. Participants in the ceremony were, Very Rev. Craig Scott, pastor; Deacon Tommy Robichaux; Cendi Coutee Carpenter trustee; Quentin Price, chair of the St. James Pastoral Council; Elaine Price, trustee; Becky Crooks of Red River Bank and Most Rev. Robert W. Marshall, Bishop of Alexandria.

(above and below) ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ST. JOSEPH, LA hosted sisters and brothers from the religious family of the Institute of the Incarnate Word during a summer camp for kids held June 17-30.

THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS #3200, ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHEDRAL, officer installation for the 2024 Fraternal year. Pictured bottom row, left to right: District Deputy Robbert Michiels; David Lacaze; Sr. Grand Knight Gerard Abair; Greg Campo; Tim Ledet, Sr.; Michael Jeansonne. Second row: Mike Ferguson, Gary Bonnette, John Tumminello, Lee Jeansonne, Octavio Gomez and Msgr. James Ferguson in the very back.

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ALL MENS CHOIR. On Sunday, July 8, the Followers of Jesus all mens choir paid a visit to St. John the Baptist Church in Moncla to sing during Sunday morning Mass. The choir is composed of men from across Avoyelles parish and is based out of St. Joseph Church in Marksville. St. John the Baptist in Moncla is a mission church of St. John the Baptist in Deville, Fr. Albi Mulloth, pastor.

MATER DOLOROSA CHURCH IN PLAUCHEVILLE, with the help of the Alliance of the Holy Family International (AHFI) Brothers and Sisters, was blessed to host 80 children for a summer camp held July 1-3. Forty-one children ages 4-7 attended the morning session and 39 children ages 8-1 in the afternoon. The focus was on the true presence of the Eucharist. Activities incorporated the rosary, eucharistic miracles, and puppet shows of important saints. AHFI missionary teens and local teens helped with the event.

See more photos from across the diocese at www.diocesealex.org/our-diocese/all-photo-galleries/

Catechetical Formation Enrichment Day set for Sept. 28

Calling all Catechists entrusted with handing down the faith to the youth and adults in our Diocese! We invite you to join us for a Day of Enrichment!

As you undertake this momentous task of teaching the faith to those in your parish, we aim to support you and provide you with tools to enrich your ministry further. Please join us on Saturday, Sept. 28 at the LSU-Alexandria campus Brumfield Caffey Ballroom to dive into the vision for the ministry God has placed you, the community around you, and the tools you'll need to get to work.

The day is free of charge and will consist of engaging talks, a panel Q&A, lunch, and more, all led by host Paul George and speaker, David Calavitta. Learn more at diocesealex.org, steubenvillesouth.com, or follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates on this Catechetical Enrichment Day.

All are invited who are involved in handing down the faith: priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, as well as parish catechists and school religion teachers, parents and volunteers.

Registration opens on Tuesday, July 30, and closes on Friday, Sept. 20. To register visit www.diocesealex.org. Space is limited. Join us as we discuss how to best accompany those around us in their encounters with Christ and His Church.

Email Hannah at the Diocese of Alexandria office at hmorgan@diocesealex.org or Steubenville South at hello@steubenvillesouth.com with any questions.

Religious education assessment an ongoing process

The Diocese of Alexandria's Office of Catholic Schools along with the Office of Religious Education, has partnered with ARK (Assessment of Religious Knowledge) for the last two years in evaluating the religious education of our students. The goal of the assessment is to help us identify our strengths and weaknesses in building the Catholic faith in our children.

ARK is the only comprehensive online assessment of Catholic Religious Education to date that assesses religious knowledge in students from 2nd to 12th grade, both in our Catholic schools and in parish religious education settings.

During the first half of 2024, ARK was administered in eighty-four Dioceses nationwide with over 275,000 Catholic school students/faculty taking part in the assessment. The Diocese of Alexandria had over 2000 students and over 200 faculty participate in this year's testing period, March through May.

The data gained from annual ARK tests are a valuable source for religion teachers and directors and coordinators of religious education programs in developing their teaching tools for the upcoming school year and for years to come.

If you would like more information about ARK, please visit https://arktest.org/ or contact the Office of Religious Education at (318) 445-6424 ext. 207 or by email at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org

ASSESSMENT of RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Spiritual Direction Training Informational Meeting

Do you have a desire to journey and help others grow in their faith with God? Do you have a love for the Lord and a desire to share the gifts that HE has given you?

On Aug. 15, 6:00 p.m., at the St. Joseph Catholic Center in Alexandria, LA, an informational session will be held on the process of becoming a Certified Spiritual Director. If you are a practicing Catholic, have a love for the Lord, a desire to journey with others, or possibly discerning a call, please come and join us. Please register at www.diocesealex.org.

If you have any questions, please contact Dcn. Jason Lavergne at (318) 445-6424 or by email at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org

VIRTUS Facilitator Training

A VIRTUS Facilitator Training series will be held

July 30-Aug. 1
5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria. Materials/binders and a light evening meal will be provided. **No cost.** The Safe Environment program is important for our children and other vulnerable people. Please consider donating your time to this important ministry.

For more information, please contact **Kecia Coco at (318) 445-6424, ext. 213 or kcoco@diocesealex.org**

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 34: 9
Responsorial Psalm
for August 11
Nineteenth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

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A FAREWELL CELEBRATION was held Sunday, June 23 for Fr. Abraham Varghese by the parishioners of Holy Ghost Catholic Church and St. Richards Chapel. In appreciation for his 12 years of service and commitment serving as a good Shepard over his flock, a certificate was presented to him for his leadership of the parish. Everyone who came out expressed their love and support through their kind words. Fr. Abraham's new assignment is at Immaculate Conception Church in Dupont.

AVOYELLES DEANERY PRIESTS ENJOY EVENING ON THE BAYOU. On Monday, June 24, the current and some former priests, deacons and seminarians of the Avoyelles Deanery gathered at the home of Don and Janice Brevelle in Marksville for a pontoon boat cruise on the river and dinner afterward. Those attending were: Fr. Ramji Shoury, Fr. Joy Antony, Fr. Abraham Varghese, Fr. Jose Pallipurath, Fr. Abraham Palikkattuchira, Fr. Charles Ray, Fr. Bino Jacob, Fr. Rusty Rabalais, Fr. Kenneth Obiekwe, Fr. Jacob Thomas, Fr. Paul Kunnumpuram, Fr. Dwight DeJesus, Fr. Albi Mulloth, Dcn. Jason Lavergne, Dcn. Doug Moreau, Dcn. Ken Primeaux, Dcn. Ted Moulard, Dcn. Reggie Ducote, Seminarians Gabe Dowden and Matthew Kramer. Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Brevelle for opening your home so graciously.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CHURCH IN WINNFIELD welcomed Deacon Lee Moreau to the parish community with a dinner on Sunday, July 7, following 10:00 a.m. Mass. A beautiful statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was presented to Deacon Moreau by Father Louis Sklar, pastor. The gathering of parishioners enjoyed a delicious meal and great fellowship.

Supper with the Seminarians is taking a break this summer

We will be back next Summer! The Seminarians are extremely grateful for the generous support. If you would like to support their education this year, you can send donations by check to:

Seminarian Education Fund
ATTN: Sandi Tarver,
Special Events Coordinator
P.O. Box 7417
Alexandria, LA 71306

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 34: 9
Responsorial Psalm for August 18
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Seminarian Burses

June 2024 Donations

Mr. and Mrs. Silton Innerarity $25.00
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Knights of Columbus Council #9217 ..... $25.00
Father Adrian Molenschot Burse
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Vanderlick $100.00
Monsignor Julius G. Walle Burse
Mr. and Mrs. Marian French $100.00
Father Gus Voltz Burse
Mrs. Patricia Vandersypen-Basco $100.00
Jerome and Audrey Vandersypen Burse
The Robichaux Children $2,000.00
Mary Lee and Gerald Robichaux, Sr., Burse
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph G. Descant III $3,000.00
Deacon Raymond J. Dunn Burse

Total $5,350.00

A Seminary Burse is an invested sum of money, the interest of which is used in perpetuity to help fund the education of men to the priesthood. A Seminary Burse may be names of anyone - bishop, priests, religious, or lay person - chosen by the original donor, and may be added to and allowed to grow. A burse is completed when it reaches $15,000.00 but another burse of the same name can be started. Contributions to any of the burses or to establish a new burse should be sent to:

Chancery Office,
Post Office Box 7417, Alexandria, LA 71306-0417.
--- Very Reverend M. Craig Scott, Chairman

Gracious and loving God,
we thank you for the gift of our priests.
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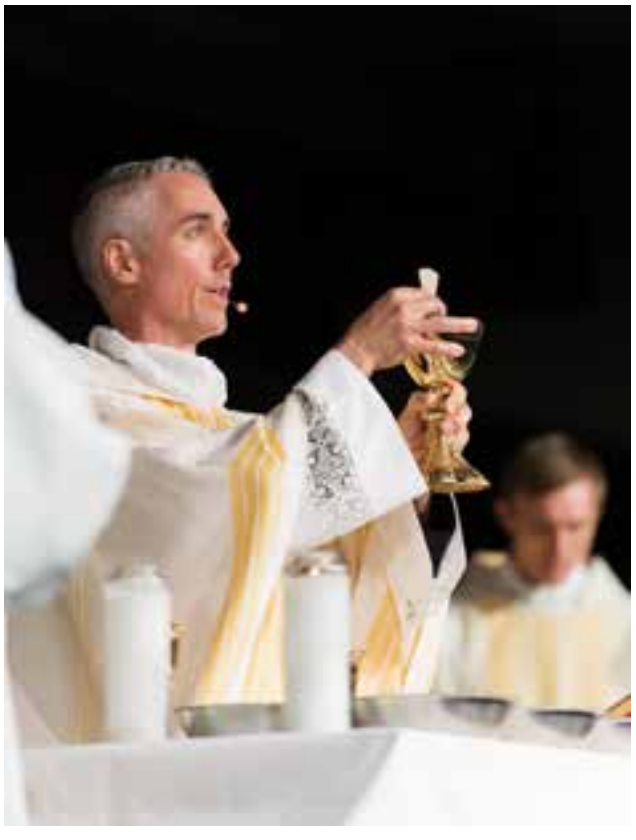
your presence in the sacraments.
Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.
Set their souls on fire with love for your people.
Grant them the wisdom, understanding,
and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of
Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom.
Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel.
Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.
Help them to become instruments of your divine
grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives
and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

// prayer for priests

2024 Steubenville South Catholic Youth Conference, Alexandria



Catholic Charities offers support: Breathing through Grief

By Cindy Hawthorne, Christian Life Coach for the Grief and Loss Support group

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana (CCCLA) supports the Diocese of Alexandria in bearing "witness to the charity of Jesus Christ, in both work and deed" by serving as the arm of social welfare through the many and diverse services offered. Disaster relief has recently been highlighted as Central Louisiana prepares for the immediacy of summer related events caused by hurricanes, wildfires, and related calamities of nature. "Basic Needs" support is foundational to assistance provided by CCCLA, as there are perpetually families and individuals in the Central Louisiana community who find themselves in unexpected financial situations and require aid for fundamental necessities and education to strengthen future responses to setbacks.

"Mental Health" is the third, but certainly not last nor least, in the trifecta of equally weighted services. CCCLA offers counseling, Christian life coaching, vaping and tobacco cessation as well as support groups. In response to an expressed need for a community to process grief, CCCLA is offering a seven-week program that will provide a unity of support kinship that encourages growth and forward motion. The experience of "grief" conjures many different thoughts. The most common is related to the bereavement of a loved one through death. However, loss within the context of divorce, empty-nest, illness, job loss, and even pet loss emotes grieving emotions and responses.

Beginning Aug. 13, CCCLA certified Christian Life Coaches will lead a grief support program developed by Pat Sheveland, the founder of The International Academy of Grief (IAFC), the B.R.E.A.T.H.E Coaching Model for Grief. The steps are designed with actions that will meet the recipient in their grief journey regardless of the circumstance.

"After saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." – John 20: 22

B.R.E.A.T.H.E sessions will be Tuesdays beginning Aug. 13 with the last session Sept. 24 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. in the Diocese of Alexandria Conference Room, 4400 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria

Registration is through the CCCLA website: cccenla.org under the Mental Health Services/ Christian Life Coaching. For more information, contact CCCLA at info@cccenla.org.

Services Offered by Catholic Charities of Central LA

Visit www.cccenla.org to take advantage of a variety of resources:

Counseling Services ***For professional therapy***
By appointment only.

Christian Life Coaching ***For personal life changes***
By appointment only.

Peace in the Midst of Crisis Divorce Support
By appointment only.

Vaping/Tobacco Cessation
For teens and adults | Group or individual sessions
By appointment only.

SNAP Enrollment Assistance
Over the phone enrollment
By appointment only.

Emergency Basic Needs Assistance
Utilites, rent, fire, information and referral
By appointment only

Budget Class ***Facilitated by Ramsey Solutions Financial Coach***
2nd Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m.
Westside Library, Alexandria
By appointment only

Disaster Relief
Catholic Disaster Preparedness
If interested in supporting preparedness in your parish, please email info@cccenla.org or visit www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/resource/cdpp/

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Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana "Christmas in July" Raffle

All proceeds from this raffle will help fund our programs: mental health, disaster relief and basic needs. Tickets are $10 each or 3 for $20. The raffle will be drawn on August 5, 2024. **You have 5 chances to win!!!!!**

- **LSU Pkg. #1** - 3 tickets to LSU vs. South Alabama & LSU cooler (lower bowl - section 422, row 4, seats 9 - 11)
- **LSU Pkg. #2** - 2 tickets to LSU vs. South Alabama & a parking pass (lot 108) (lower bowl – section 422, row 5, seats 3 – 4)
- **5 gift cards** to local grocery stores (VALUE: $170.00)
- **Segmart Golf Rangefinder** (VALUE: $199.00)
- **Framed "Jazz" Watercolor print** by artist, Tommy Faulk

Contact Heidi Wampler at 445-2401 ext. 510 or a Catholic Charities board member to purchase tickets.

KCs DONATE TO MISSLOU PREGNANCY CENTER. The Knights of Columbus Council #1034 of St. Mary's Basilica in Natchez, has members from both St. Patrick Church in Ferriday and Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Vidalia. Grand Knight, Cam Huff, presents a check to the staff of the MissLou Pregnancy Center in Vidalia. The Center offers confidential counseling services, pregnancy tests, ultrasound tests performed by medical professionals, community referrals and post childbirth support to women with unplanned pregnancies. The donation was from the KCs Baby Bottle Campaign from the church parishes of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Natchez, St. Mary's Basilica, St. Patrick Church and Our Lady of Lourdes. From left to right are Stacey Burnham, Naomi Guillory and Kim Lyons, the director of the center. For more information about the services of the center call (318) 248-8889.

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National Tekakwitha Conference draws Native Americans to North Carolina

by NC Catholics Magazine for the Diocese of Raleigh

RALEIGH, N.C. (OSV News) — The Tekakwitha Conference "is the world's largest gathering of Catholic, Native Americans," said Jody Roy of Chicago, who was in Raleigh to attend the 85th annual conference.

"We represent more than 500 different tribes in the United States. Here, we share how we integrate our traditional culture with Catholic faith," she told NC Catholics, the magazine of the Diocese of Raleigh.

Roy, who attended her first Tekakwitha Conference in 2005, was among people from states such as South Dakota, New Mexico, Colorado, New York and Louisiana who gathered July 3–7 at the Raleigh Marriott City Center for the 2024 conference

The conference offered attendees sunrise services, a trip to Fourth of July fireworks at nearby Dix Park and sacraments such as reconciliation.

It also presented an opportunity to focus on the life of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, known as Lily of the Mohawks. She was born in 1656 in an area known today as Auriesville, New York. The first North American, Indigenous saint in the church, she was canonized in 2012.

Among the speakers was Deacon Larry Deschaine of the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina, a descendant of multiple tribes, who discussed the Truth & Reconciliation Meditation Garden at Mepkin Abbey, the Trappist monastery in Moncks Corner, South Carolina. The garden is described as "an opportunity for visitors of different views and backgrounds to reflect on our shared past, shared pain and shared desire for reconciliation."

Julienne Montour, a Mohawk from Michigan, spoke about boarding school healing. Between 1819 and 1969, there were more than 523 government-funded, and often church-run, boarding schools across the U.S. that separated Native children from their families, depriving them of their languages, cultures and identities to forcibly assimilate them into the dominant white culture.

Workshops included Native inculturation of the Roman liturgy, which was led by Father Michael Carson, assistant director for Native American Affairs at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Four bishops and 12 priests and deacons joined attendees in the celebration of Mass July 5. Bishop Chad W. Zielinski of New Ulm, Minnesota, chairman of the USCCB's Subcommittee on Native American Affairs, was present, as were Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, California, Bishop Ramon Bejarano of San Diego and Bishop Luis R. Zarama of of Raleigh.

Bishop Zarama encouraged those gathered to share their time with Jesus, believe in the transformative power of love and to be examples of living faith.

Prayers of the faithful included intentions for those who feel isolated or bullied because of their heritage as well as prayers for harmony and the canonization of the Florida martyrs.

During Mass, three beats of a hand drum marked the moment just before consecration. In addition to the drum, musicians playing a keyboard and a Native American flute made of rosewood added to the celebration.

Father David Miller, chaplain to the Native American Catholic community in the Raleigh Diocese, said the annual gathering is an important event for faith, culture and awareness and is for all "friends," Native American and non-Native American.

It's ecumenical in nature, like a Kateri Circle, is welcoming and seeks to bring cultures together for understanding, the priest added.

According to the Tekakwitha Conference organization, based in Alexandria, Louisiana, a Kateri Circle is a group of faithful Catholics, non-Catholic Christians "and/or seekers who desire to be in community with one another through a lifestyle of prayer, service and worship."

Father Miller, who is pastor of St. Mildred Parish in Swansboro, North Carolina, was ordained in Raleigh in 2019. Originally from Oklahoma, he's a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

During their spring general assembly in June, the U.S. bishops approved a new pastoral plan for Indigenous Catholics, "Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise: A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry." The 56-page text was developed by the USCCB's Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church and its Subcommittee on Native American Affairs.

Along with acknowledging and apologizing for the church's role in decimating Indigenous cultures in the U.S. — particularly through the boarding school system — the five-part plan focuses on calls for healing, mission, reconciliation, holiness and transformation in ministry to the nation's Indigenous Catholics, whose "journey … in the United States of America has been marked by moments of great joy but also of profound sorrow," the document states. "Through this pastoral framework, we … hope to begin anew a journey of mutual accompaniment with the Catholic Indigenous Peoples of these lands," states the document.

NC Catholics is the magazine of the Diocese of Raleigh.

THE NATIONAL TEKAKWITHA CONFERENCE was held in Raleigh, N.C. July 3-7. Deacon Richard Mitchell representing the Diocese of Alexandria, attended the conference. Pictured with him are Father Michael Carson the assistant director of Native American Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington D.C. He serves as the staff person to the USCCB Subcommittee on Native American Affairs and Father M. Henry Sands the Executive Director of the Black and Indian Mission Office in Washington, D.C.

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION THIS HURRICANE SEASON

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 of 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.

Composed by Most Rev. Maurice Schexnayder (1985 - 1981)
Second Bishop of Lafayette (1956 - 1973),
following Hurricane Audrey in 1957

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Blessed Chats: Single women and prayer

By Beth Davis
Blessed Is She

I sat somewhat uncomfortably beneath the shade of tall pine trees, a gentle wind rustling the canopy and my hair. My journal rested in my lap. I was on a leadership retreat in high school, just learning that I could have a personal relationship with God in prayer. I fidgeted on the cold, hard ground and leaned in hard to hear Him.

Like a pen pal catching up with a beloved friend after months of missing each other, I poured out my heart in those pages. My monologue of fears and failures, dreams and desires spilled over from one page to the next. But one question, one hope, dominated the landscape of my heart and the contents of that letter: my vocation.

A Longing

I longed for romantic love, and was preoccupied with it. In every elementary school class I had a crush. Next I fell deeply in love with my junior high best friend. And in between classes as I walked my high school campus, my eyes and heart were always searching for someone. The one.

I always imagined having a love that spanned my whole life, so I was eager to get started. After sharing my perfect plan for a Perfect Marriage™, I put the question to Him. Would He send me this man?

And for the first time, I heard the Voice of the Lord in prayer. One clear, pure word settled in my heart: wait.

Looking back, I still marvel at the peace I felt in the moment. I wasn't dejected or discouraged, instead I was elated that the Lord listened to my prayer and responded. Waiting didn't have a terrible, long-suffering connotation. I felt no fear or resentment. In fact, as I made my way back to the hall for our next session, my steps were lighter. God heard me, He loved me, and He wanted the best for me. After all, I reckoned, 17 is still young.

Years ticked past and my hopes continued, deferred. The boys I liked never invited me to a dance. My not-so-secret college crush never asked me on a proper date. There was no post-grad office romance, especially since the only man I worked with as youth minister at my new parish was the priest.

But still, I prayed. I hoped. And contrary to Padre Pio's sage advice, I worried.

Peace in Eucharistic Adoration

Having encountered Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament on another high school retreat, I sought Him out in Eucharistic Adoration. In those early years of ministry, I cried to Him on lonely Friday nights and pre-gamed with Him before youth group every Sunday. I stopped in when I was having a bad day and needed a Friend. The chapel became my safe place, my second home. In it, I filled many more journals recording conversations with the One I had come to know so well.

Spring, summer, fall, and winter, morning, noon, and night, I visited Him. Even when I was angry at God about my self-imposed vocation deadlines, I showed up. When I felt unseen, I punched in the little code and sat down before His Eucharistic face. When there was no one and nothing, when there was and then there wasn't, when my heart broke and I thought I messed it all up, I cried and raged and finally, blessedly, came back to peace in that still, small chapel.

Keep Showing Up

This devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist changed my life. Like the sinful woman in Luke 8, I daily poured out my heart at His feet. In His True Presence, He purified and rightly-ordered my desires, restored my dignity, and revealed the Love I was longing for.

I've spent the last twenty years kneeling before Him in dozens of similar chapels, and still my hope for my vocation has not yet been realized. Still I wait. But in those twenty years, I have been deeply loved. The Lover of my soul pursued my heart and called me Beloved and told me again and again how beautiful I am to Him (Song of Songs 4:1).

See CHATS, next page

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GOD'S WILL

by Marcus Descant

Our Lord and Savior gave us a new start,
uniting our wills with a gentle heart.

Uniting our wills is the only way,
we must try and do this every day.

His love for us is ever so great,
if you follow His will, it will never be too late.

His holy spirit dwells in us,
to Jesus alone, who we can always trust.

So if we unite our wills in every way,
we can always find in Him a place to stay.

lizdescant@gmail.com
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CHATS

Continued from previous page.

An Invitation

Jesus walked with me through those desert years of waiting, grasping, and longing. But as I turn to assess all the ground we've covered, I find that the cracked and parched earth has begin to bloom where His footsteps landed. His presence floods the dryness, giving grace to past seasons.

And that same grace is available to you, sweet friend.

Can I ask you to do one thing as you wait for the desires of your heart? Commit to a weekly Holy Hour.

Go to Him no matter the weather or circumstances or emotions that may try to deter you. In His Presence, that seemingly insatiable desire for understanding, acceptance, healing—for love—will be satisfied by the Living Water.

Because beneath the very real call and desire for your vocation lies the ultimate call, the deepest desire of your heart: Love Himself.

We weren't made for marriage, or religious life; we were made for Jesus Christ.

(above and far right) VBS OLPS ALEXANDRIA. Vacation Bible School was held at Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, Alexandria, from July 10-14. This year's theme was "SCUBA - diving into friendship with God!" Over 100 kids attended!

School Start Dates 2024-2025

Tuesday, August 6
• St. Mary's Assumption School, Cottonport

Thursday, August 8
• Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria
• St. Frances Cabrini School, Alexandria
• Sacred Heart School, Moreauville
• St. Anthony of Padua School, Bunkie
• St. Joseph Elementary and High School, Plaucheville
• St. Mary's Catholic School, Natchitoches

Friday, August 9
• Holy Savior Menard, Alexandria

ST. MARY'S TRAINING FACILITY RESIDENT WORKS LIONS CLUB CAMP PELICAN. Alicia Bourgeois is currently enrolled in St. Mary's work readiness program. Pictured with her are campers at Camp Pelican. It is truly a blessing for St. Mary's to have helped her reach this position where she is well-loved and appreciated.

SAVE THE DATE! Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference set for Dec. 7

Calling all middle school students! In our ever-changing world, Jesus is the answer to the longing of our hearts for meaning, fulfillment, security, and love. Join us at Beyond the Limits, Jr. High Conference on Saturday, December 7 to be illuminated in the light of Christ.

All students in grades 6 – 8 are invited to attend this retreat with their parish youth group. Learn more soon at steubenvillesouth.com, or follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates.

Michelle Lemoine named new principal of St. Mary's Assumption School, Cottonport

St. Mary's Assumption School has named their new principal for the upcoming 2024-25 school year.

Michelle Lemoine's 27 years of experience is rich and varied. Classroom teacher, Coordinator of Educational Programing, Administrator, Fundraiser, Youth Minister, and Director of Religious Education. She has performed many of these duties in both the private and public Sector.

"Experience is a valuable quality; however, I am most excited about her love of Jesus and His Church. In concert with our dedicated faculty, I know great things are in store for us at St. Mary's School," Lemoine said.

Michelle Lemoine

BRUMFIELD vs DODD POLICY.

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the following statement is published:

DIOCESE OF ALEXANDRIA NON-DISCRIMINATORY SCHOOL POLICY | July 2023

The Diocese of Alexandria School System re-affirms its non-discriminatory policy on the basis of race, sex, color, national and ethnic origin in its educational programs, activities and employment policies in accordance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments and Sections 4.03(a) and 4.03 (c) Revenue Procedure 75-50.

All students, faculty members and staff, without exception, are admitted to all rights, privileges and activities generally accorded or made available at the schools which do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its employment policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs.

- Sacred Heart School, Moreauville
- St. Anthony of Padua School, Bunkie
- St. Joseph Elementary and High School, Plaucheville
- St. Mary Assumption School, Cottonport
- St. Mary's Elementary and High School, Natchitoches
- Holy Savior Menard Central High School, Alexandria
- Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, Alexandria
- St. Frances Cabrini School, Alexandria

Most Rev. Robert W. Marshall, Jr.,
Bishop of Alexandria

How to help teens become fully alive in Christ

By Brian Kissinger
eucharisticrevival.org

Greetings from Steubenville, Ohio! My name is Brian Kissinger, and I work for Franciscan University of Steubenville, where I serve as executive director of conferences. I grew up in Steubenville, but before moving back to my hometown, I spent 11 years in parish youth ministry and, more recently, lived in Austria, where I worked for Franciscan's study abroad program.

As a parish youth minister, I was always trying to come up with better flyers, social media posts, icebreaker games, and event topics to pull in more teenagers to our events. Then I realized that, once they came, we also needed catchy titles for talks, thought-provoking small group questions, and unforgettable snacks to keep them coming back the following week.

The Key Ingredient to Youth Ministry

Although I still think some of my Instagram posts were cultural masterpieces—and I'll never forget how cool it was to make a life-sized Angry Birds game (circa 2010) using cardboard boxes and massive balloon launchers—in hindsight, there's no doubt the most effective and impactful part of our parish's youth ministry program was the simplest part. We kept things personal.

We knew we couldn't compete with the entertainment everyone had access to via their phones, but we could accompany young people on their journey of faith and offer personal encouragement and support. Most importantly, we could provide the opportunity for young people to personally encounter Jesus through the sacramental life of the Church.

The concept of encountering Jesus can sound intimidating or abstract, but it doesn't have to be. We recognized that, all too often, we Catholics can forget the significance of the rituals and sacraments that Christ has given the Church. Our aim was simply to offer a place and a time where young people could step back from the noise, distractions, and busyness and turn their focus on Jesus present in the Eucharist. Of course, when we speak of the Eucharist, we mean both the Mass—the source and summit of the Christian life—and the Blessed Sacrament. I am going to focus here on Eucharistic adoration. When it comes to setting the stage for this encounter with Jesus, it wasn't a complicated formula:

Before any times of Eucharistic adoration, we'd have a short talk reminding the congregants of both the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament as well as his desire to come close to us individually.

During the time of adoration, we'd invite everyone present to call to mind whatever was on their hearts and to silently and prayerfully offer it all to Jesus. Whether they were hopeful, anxious, excited, or fearful about those things, we reminded them that Jesus wants to hear from us.

We'd have times of both music and silence, recognizing that some people would love the silence while others would struggle with it.

The Longings of the Human Heart

The young people from our parish weren't magically made immune to the problems in their daily lives. They still had struggles, questions, and doubts even after they prayed in front of the Eucharist. But we knew that only Jesus could satisfy the longings, hopes, and needs of the human heart. Only in meeting the person of Jesus do we find the peace and fulfillment we're all looking for. Young people who had gone through years of faith formation remarked that something changed when they realized that the God of the universe, in the Person of his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, actually wanted to be close and known. We were privileged to accompany several teenagers as they sought Baptism and then full initiation within the Church. The response from young people was powerful; their hearts were moved as they came to know the Father's love made visible in our Eucharistic Lord.

In Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis invites the faithful to a "renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ." Although our age is unique in its ability to be more globally connected than ever before, we all still long for personal connection and real relationships.

Awaken: The Congress Youth Experience

For the last 49 years, Franciscan University has offered Steubenville Conferences in the summer to invite both young people and adults to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through the sacramental life of the Church. Both here on our campus in Steubenville and in collaboration with regional conference partners across the United States and in Canada, we've been privileged to provide this transformative retreat experience for over one million people.

While we've been blessed to work with incredibly talented speakers and musicians, we know the most important person involved in the Steubenville Conferences is Jesus Christ. Through reverent and inspiring liturgies, opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and times of Eucharistic adoration at every conference, we see faith renewed and hope restored. It's not a complicated formula; the music and talks prepare people to encounter Jesus, and then we get out of the way to let him do what only he can do.

As Catholic Christians, we believe that the same Lord who healed the sick and raised the dead 2,000 years ago is truly present in the Eucharist we receive at Mass and adore on the altar. More than simply help for the journey, the sacraments offer us a privileged opportunity to encounter Jesus. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, "Christianity is not an intellectual system, a collection of dogmas, or a moralism. Christianity is an encounter, a love story; it is an event."

We at Franciscan University of Steubenville are grateful that events like the National Eucharistic Congress help facilitate personal experiences of the revival, restoration, and renewal that Jesus Christ offers through his Church. We are honored to partner with the Congress to oversee the Youth Experience, Awaken, and trust that if we simply set the stage, Our Eucharistic Lord will do what only he can do: heal hearts and transform lives.

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Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: August 15

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Catholic Extension Initiative deadline to apply: Aug. 1

Are you a DRE or pastor that if finances were not a roadblock, you could implement something in your parish that would benefit families in catechesis? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable." According to research, many parents and caregivers desire to pass on the Catholic faith to their children, but struggle with the most effective way to do this. Last year three applications were submitted through the Diocese of Alexandria, for grants through Catholic Extension's Christion Parenting and Caregiving Initiative. As a result, this year Catholic Extension has funded three of our parishes at $15,000 each to help enable parents and caregivers pass on the Catholic faith. This initiative is multifaceted where key support from the pastor and a parent lead in the parish is required. If your parish is interested in applying for this grant initiative, please contact Dcn Jason Lavergne for more information at (318) 445-6424 ext. 207 or at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org. Informational material and complete applications are due August 1, 2024.

Manna House Ribbon cutting - Aug. 1

We're proud to announce the completion of the "Exterior Renovation" of Manna House. Join us as we celebrate this momentous occasion! The celebration will take place on Thursday, Aug. 1 from 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. at Manna House, 2655 Lee St., Alexandria.

Discalced Carmelite meeting - Aug. 10

The Order of the Discalced Carmelites holds its monthly meeting at 9:00 a.m. every second Saturday, at Maryhill Renewal Center. Anyone is invited to attend morning prayer followed by Mass and then the meeting. If you are interested in Carmelite spiritual studies, please contact Mary Jo McCoy at 318-346-6860 or 318-481-9638. **If you plan to attend.....Please call Mary Jo McCoy at the numbers listed above OR Deacon Bill Travis at 318 640-2827 or 318 664-7069 and someone will meet you at the Maryhill gate.

Women's 4th Annual Retreat Day - Aug. 17

We welcome you to join along with other women asking, seeking, and knocking for the Lord at Sts. Francis and Anne Catholic Church's 4th annual women's day retreat! Registration stars at 8:30 a.m. with coffee and refreshments then ends with 4:00 p.m. Mass.

Cost is $30, and includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, shirt, etc. We will not turn anyone away, so please let us know if you need financial assistance. You can bring cash or check payment the day of retreat, PayPal or Venmo (if you prefer this method, please ask Amelia for info), or mail a check written to Sts. Francis and Anne to:

Amelia Bordelon
241 Nadrchal Road
Deville, LA 71328

Scan the code to access the registration form. Registration form due by Aug. 10 to guarantee a shirt your size.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Catechetical Formation Enrichment Day - Sept. 28

Calling all Catechists entrusted with handing on the faith to the youth and adults in our Diocese: we invite you to join us for a Day of Enrichment! As you undertake this momentous task of handing on the faith to those in your parish, we aim to support you and provide you with tools to enrich your ministry further. Please join us on Saturday, September 28 at the LSU-Alexandria campus Brumfield Caffey Ballroom to dive into the vision for the ministry God has placed you in, the community around you, and the tools you'll need to get to work.

The day is free of charge and will consist of engaging talks, a panel Q&A, lunch, and more, all led by host Paul George and speaker, David Calavitta. Learn more at diocesealex.org, steubenvillesouth.com, or follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates on this Catechetical Enrichment Day. All are invited who hand on the faith: priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, as well as parish catechists and school religion teachers, parents and volunteers.

Registration opens on Tuesday, July 30, and closes on Friday, September 20. Space is limited. Join us as we discuss how to best accompany those around us in their encounters with Christ and His Church. Email hello@steubenvillesouth.com with any questions.

SAVE THE DATE! Pre-Cana Marriage Prep Workshop - Oct. 12

Are you engaged or planning for your upcoming nuptial ceremony? Or maybe you know someone in your family who is preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony. Beginning Oct. 12, Pre-Cana workshops are returning to the Diocese of Alexandria, and will be held quarterly. These one-day workshops will be held at the St. Joseph Catholic Center located at 4400 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria, LA. Beginning at 8:00 a.m., the day will include presentations on various topics that are vital to a couple's lifelong marriage. The workshop will end at approximately 3:00 p.m. and lunch will be included. Space will be limited, so please register for a workshop as soon as registration opens on the Diocese of Alexandria website. Future dates will also be listed when registration opens.

There is a fee of $60 per couple.

If you have any questions, please contact Deacon Jason Lavergne in the Office of Religious Education and Faith Formation at (318) 445-6424 ext. 207

ECHO Married Couples Retreat - October 25-27

ECHO Community is hosting a married couples retreat at Maryhill on October 25-27. Married couples will come together to dive into St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body, all the while growing in their own relationships and in authentic community with other couples. The retreat will offer dynamic talks, life giving discussions, quality time with your spouse, encounters with Christ through the sacraments, art, music, silent prayer, and so much more! For more information click the link below:

https://www.echoretreats.com/marriage.html

Genesis of Eve Women's Conference - Sept. 6-8

Join us downtown at the Alexandria at the Randolph Riverfront Center. Each day will include talks from nationally recognized Catholic Speakers including Beth Davis, Jackie Francois Angel, Kathryn Whitaker, and Fr. Justin Brady. Worship will be led by Kelley Pease Lombardi and include music by Laura Huval, with the closing Mass to be celebrated by our own Bishop Robert Marshall.

The conference is open to women of all faiths, ages 18 and older. All meals for the weekend are included with ticket purchase, and a special rate is available through the Hotel Bentley for those wishing to stay nearby.

For more information or to purchase tickets visit genesisofeve.com

Church Today News Deadlines

August 26
Deadline for news:
Thursday, August 15

September 23
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Sept. 12

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August 2024

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
JULY 22	23	24	25	26	27	28
PRAY FOR DCN. C. PELTO	PRAY FOR DCN. K. PRIMEAUX	PRAY FOR FR. R. RABALAIS	PRAY FOR FR. C. RAY	PRAY FOR FR. T. REYNOLDS	PRAY FOR DCN. T. ROBICHAUX	PRAY FOR FR. E. RODRIGUEZ-HERNANDEZ
29	30	31	AUGUST 1	2	3	4
			Manna House Ribbon cutting 9:30 a.m. Manna House, Alexandria			
PRAY FOR DCN. K. SAYES	PRAY FOR DCN. G. SCHUPBACH	PRAY FOR FR. C. SCOTT	PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL	FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. B. SEILER	FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. R. SHOURY	PRAY FOR FR. P. SIERRA-POSADA
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Raffle Drawing Catholic Charities Christmas in July (see page 13)	**First Day of Classes** for St. Mary's Assumption School, Cottonport FEAST of the TRANSFIGURATION of the LORD		**First Day of Classes:** St. Frances Cabrini School Sacred Heart School St. Joseph School Our Lady of Prompt Succor School St. Anthony School St. Mary's School	**First Day of Classes** for Holy Savior Menard Jr. High and High School	**Discalced Carmelite meeting** 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center	
PRAY FOR FR. L. SKLAR	PRAY FOR FR. I. ST. ROMAIN	PRAY FOR DCN. P. SUNDERHAUS	PRAY FOR DCN. C. THIBOBEAUX	PRAY FOR FR. J. THOMAS	PRAY FOR FR. A. TRAVIS	PRAY FOR DCN. W. TRAVIS
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
VIRTUS Training 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Church, Marksville			**Spiritual Direction Informational Meeting** 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria SOLEMNITY of the ASSUMPTION of the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (a holy day of obligation)		**4th Annual Women's Day Retreat** 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. St. Francis and Anne, Kolin	
PRAY FOR FR. A. VARGHESE	PRAY FOR FR. V. VEAD	PRAY FOR FR. G. VOLTZ	PRAY FOR DCN. L. WHITE	PRAY FOR DCN. J. WHITEHEAD	PRAY FOR FR. J. WILTSE	PRAY FOR FR. J. XAVIER
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
VIRTUS Training 6:00 p.m. St. Anthony of Padua Church, Bunkie		**VIRTUS Training** 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria				
PRAY FOR DCN. M. YOUNG	PRAY FOR FR. K. ZACHARIAH	PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA	PRAY FOR DCN. W. ALDRIDGE	PRAY FOR DCN. F. ANDRADE	PRAY FOR FR. J. ANTONY	PRAY FOR DCN. E.J. BARRE

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL -- ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, DEVILLE -- 6:00-8:30 P.M.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP) AWARENESS WEEK

VIRTUS FACILITATOR TRAINING -- 5:00-9:00 pm

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