

CHURCH TODAY

Volume LVI, No. 11

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Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

November 24, 2025

Advent

As Advent begins on November 30, the Church invites the faithful to slow down, prepare their hearts, and rediscover the hope, promise, and joyful expectation found throughout Scripture.

INSIDE

Diocese of Alexandria begins Chapter 11 reorganization

Bishop Robert W. Marshall announces the Diocese of Alexandria has filed for Chapter 11 reorganization to equitably address abuse claims while continuing essential ministry. Read the full message on page 2.

A season of hope and holy waiting

Advent begins November 30, inviting the faithful into a season of hope, preparation, and joyful expectation. From ancient prophecies to the call to “prepare the way,” Scripture offers a rich foundation for this sacred season. Read more on pages 12 and 13.

Praying our middle schoolers into encounter

Over 400 middle school students will attend the Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference on December 6. Families and parishioners are invited to pray for open hearts and ongoing growth as these young disciples return home. Read more on page 17.

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CHURCH
TODAY

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in
Christ, *Peace be with you!*

About one year ago, there
were some reports in the media
about the Diocese of Alexandria
considering entering a bankruptcy
proceeding. After consultation
with my priest consultors,
diocesan advisors, and after my
own prayerful consideration,
I write to tell you that I have
directed attorneys for the diocese
to file a petition for a Chapter 11
reorganization of its financial
affairs under the U.S. Bankruptcy
Code.

This is not an easy decision
and one of my many concerns
is the impact it will have on the
spiritual well-being of the Faithful
of the Diocese. However, after
reviewing the facts in front of us, I
determined it was the most prudent
course of action. Here's why.

This action is occurring
because some past priest-
perpetrators sexually abused
minors, actions that are evil,
sinful and go against everything
the Church and the priesthood
represents. As a result, there are
financial claims pending against
the diocese that exceed our means.

In taking this action, we have
two goals. First, we want to do as
much as we can, as fairly as we
can, to compensate those who have
been harmed. Second, we want to
carry on the essential ministries
of the diocese so we can continue
to meet the needs of our parishes,
parishioners and others who rely
upon the Church for assistance. A
Chapter 11 proceeding is the best
way to achieve these goals.

Alexandria is a mission
diocese, meaning we already rely
upon others to sustain the work of
the Church. As such, our resources
are scarce. Chapter 11 will allow

the diocese to use available
funds to compensate all abuse
survivors with unresolved claims
in a single process overseen by a
court, ensuring that all are treated
equitably. Second, by serving as
a final call for legal claims against
the diocese, the proceeding will
allow the Church to move forward
on stable financial ground, focused
on its Gospel mission.

The Diocese is also
committed to making sure that
nothing like this can ever happen
again. We will continue our
outreach to abuse survivors as an
ongoing ministry of the Church.
We will continue the policies and
practices we have implemented to
keep children safe.

Some of you may feel
disheartened or frustrated by this
development. Some may feel
anger or resentment that we have
come to this moment. I have
experienced the same emotions.
We are at this moment for one
reason: some priests sexually
abused minors. For that, I feel
deeply ashamed. As your bishop,
I apologize to abuse survivors
for the harm, pain and suffering
they experienced and continue to
experience in their lives.

I also want to apologize to
all the faithful priests, deacons,

Live, Jesus, in our Hearts Forever

By Bishop Robert W. Marshall, Jr.

Diocese of Alexandria files to reorganize under Chapter 11

religious and laity whose ministry
may have a shadow cast upon them
by this next step in the process.

This bankruptcy applies only
to the diocese itself. Our parishes
and other Catholic entities are
separately incorporated under
state law and are not affected by
this filing.

Our hope is that the diocese
can reach a global settlement with
those who have claims in the very
near future. We have already been
in negotiations for some months
with a group of lawyers whom
we understand represents the vast
majority of currently known abuse
survivors. If we can reach an
agreement toward the beginning
of the case, we would be able
to avoid the lengthy delays and
unnecessary professional fees that
would otherwise result.

I know there will be many
questions to answer as we move
through this legal process. Our
website — diocesealex.org —
will serve as a repository for
information. Some answers will
come only as the process unfolds.
I promise to share information
with you in an open, candid and
straightforward way.

Although this will be a
difficult journey, what inspires
me is the Faithful of the Diocese.

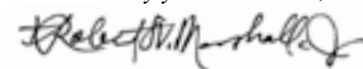
I have witnessed your faith I
action: in worship, in charity
and in service. So even as we
proceed with this Chapter 11, I
am confident this good work will
continue.

Our Pastoral Plan, Together
as One Church, will also continue.
We must remember that we are
pilgrims on a journey to our
eventual heavenly home. We
cannot allow our mission to
stagnate, even though the diocese
is in legal proceedings.

Lastly, I ask that you pray
for the Church, especially in the
Diocese of Alexandria, asking
God to give us wisdom and
grace in our decision making.
Together as One Church, we will
move forward, not forgetting our
past, but addressing it and taking
appropriate responsibility for those
who were harmed, and placing our
trust in God, who is our strength
and our hope, and who is with us
always.

With assurance of prayers
and with faith in Jesus Christ, who
makes all things new, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,



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Jubilee Year of Hope to close on Dec. 28



JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE TO CLOSE AT THE END OF DECEMBER. Bishop Robert Marshall presided over the Rite of the Opening of the Jubilee Year on Dec. 29, 2024 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. The celebration included a courtyard ceremony, a downtown procession with the Jubilee Cross, and veneration at the Cathedral. The closing Mass for the Jubilee Year will be held at the Cathedral, Sunday, Dec. 28, 2025. All are invited to attend.


The closing Mass for the Jubilee Year of Hope will be held on Sunday, Dec. 28 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria.

Over the past year, hundreds of people from across the diocese participated in the Jubilee Year of Hope pilgrimage. Every pilgrimage site in our diocese distributed hundreds of passports and thousands of stickers and we are overwhelmed with the number of completed passports being received weekly. Amazing!

Please note, if you are attempting to complete the

pilgrimage, the pilgrimage site churches may take up their passport stickers and other materials after the closing Mass on Dec. 28 so make sure you complete your pilgrimage before then.

We will accept your completed passports in the mail into the beginning of 2026 but to ensure you receive a completion certificate signed by Bishop and commemorative coin, please don't delay mailing them to us. When the coins run out, we will not be re-ordering.



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ON GIVING TUESDAY

Tuesday, Dec. 2

Join us this year for Giving Tuesday on December 2, as we embrace the opportunity to Give Thanks, Give Back, and Give Catholic! Advanced

Giving began Monday, Nov. 17. Please visit www.igivecatholic.org/community/alexandria and search for a church, school or ministry and donate!

Vatican document affirming scriptural understanding of Mary and her role prompts reflection

By Gina Christian
Our Sunday Visitor

(OSV News) — A new Vatican document on Mary affirms a Scripture-based understanding of her person and her pivotal role in salvation history, according to several experts — although some lament the document failed to confirm two key titles popularly associated with her over the centuries, while commending renewed attention to the role of Mary.

On Nov. 4, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith officially released “Mater Populi Fidelis” (“Mother of the Faithful People of God”), the text for which had been approved by Pope Leo XIV Oct. 7.

Now part of ‘ordinary magisterium’

The doctrinal note is now part of the Catholic Church’s “ordinary magisterium,” or official teaching and must be considered authoritative, said dicastery prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández during the Nov. 4 presentation of the document in Rome.

In his presentation text, Cardinal Fernández said the note was a response to “numerous requests and proposals” made to the Vatican over the decades regarding both Marian devotion and, in particular, two Marian titles: “co-redemptrix” or “co-mediatrix,” neither of which have been formally defined in Catholic teaching.

“Co-redemptrix” has generally referenced either Mary’s divine motherhood or her union with Christ at the Cross, said the doctrinal note. “Co-mediatrix” has typically sought to describe “Mary’s role in our life of grace,” the note said.

Citing Scripture and tradition

The titles were rejected by the dicastery in its doctrinal note, which — while commending the love and devotion underlying their use over time — cited Scripture, tradition and concerns raised by the late Pope Benedict XVI, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, on the risk they posed to an accurate

understanding of Mary’s role.

Citing Scripture and tradition, Cardinal Ratzinger had warned of potential doctrinal errors in the use of the terms, saying the “precise meaning” of the two terms is “not clear, and the doctrine contained in them is not mature.”

He stressed that “everything comes from Him — Christ — as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything that she is through Him.”

Importance of Marian devotion

Overall, the new Vatican document “affirms the importance of Marian devotion and how Marian devotion must never be separated from Christ, our Redeemer and Lord,” Robert Fastiggi, chair of dogmatic theology and Christology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, told OSV News.

Fastiggi said that he believed both the dicastery and its predecessor, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “have been studying the questions of Marian coredeemption and mediation of graces for some time.”

He described “Mater Populi Fidelis” as being “very cautious” about petitions to have the titles of “co-redemptrix” or “co-mediatrix” officially recognized in Catholic teaching.

“It’s clear that the DDF wishes to affirm Marian devotion without proclaiming any new Marian dogmas,” he said.

A call for greater examination

However, Mark Miravalle, president of the International Marian Association — whose members, including theologians and bishops, work to promote Marian devotion worldwide — said that several points in the document “call for greater examination and clarification within an authentic spirit of respect and dialogue.”

Writing in a Nov. 5 commentary, Miravalle — who also leads the lay nonprofit Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici,

dedicated to fostering Marian devotion and to seeking “papal definition of our Lady as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate” — stressed that he and his colleagues “emphatically agree” with the Vatican document’s “absolute imperative” to uphold “the infinite primacy of Jesus Christ as our only divine Mediator and Redeemer,” based on Scripture and tradition.

At the same time, he wrote, “we also seek to properly acknowledge the subordinate and unparalleled human participation and cooperation of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, in the historic work of Redemption.”

‘Numerous usages’ of ‘co-redemptrix’

In his commentary, Miravalle pointed to the “numerous usages” of “co-redemptrix” by “popes and their respective magisteriums.” He also cited “long tradition” of both the “redemptrix” and “co-redemptrix” titles “dating back to the 10th and 15th centuries” — which the doctrinal note also highlighted — as well as more modern invocations of the “co-redemptrix” title by a number of saints, and asked whether the document intended to classify these references as “inappropriate.”

He advanced similar arguments for the title of “co-mediatrix,” stating that “it has always been acknowledged that Mary’s role as Mediatrix of all graces does not include her own Immaculate Conception, but rather denotes her secondary distribution of redemptive graces at the service of Christ, the one divine Mediator, to fallen humanity.”

Neomi De Anda, professor and executive director of the International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, Ohio, told OSV News the doctrinal note indicated a return to Scripture in understanding Mary.

‘A scripturally-based Mary’

“What I am seeing as a move from many Marian scholars, and a very strong move from the Vatican, is a (move to a) Mary that is scripturally based, very scripturally based,” said De Anda. “And that is strong in this



NATIVE AMERICAN MASS. The annual Native American Mass honors the spiritual culture of our Native American brothers and sisters and was celebrated by Fr. Marc Noel alongside the Hispanic community of Forest Hill. Part of this annual celebration is the commemoration of St. Kateri Tekakwitha also known as “Lily of the Mohawks”, patron Saint of ecology, the environment, and Native Americans. The mass was followed by a traditional performance of Folkloric Dancing in honor of these traditions, along with a shared meal to cultivate this spiritual and communal gathering. This mass is a beautiful reminder of how, although we share different and unique cultural history, we are all connected in our spirituality and our faith for our One loving God.



THE BLUE MASS. Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated the Blue Mass on Friday, Nov. 7 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria. The Blue Mass honors our law enforcement, firefighters and other first responders. Names of the deceased who passed in the last year and who served in those capacities were read aloud during the Mass.

Prompt Succor group participates in pilgrimage



OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR JUBILEE PILGRIMS. Fr. Thomas Kennedy accompanied a group of people from OLPS in Alexandria as they visited pilgrimage sites in Natchitoches Parish.

*by Fr. Thomas Kennedy
Parochial Vicar, OLPS*

More than forty parishioners from Our Lady of Prompt Succor made a pilgrimage on Saturday, Nov. 15 to Natchitoches. We began at St. Augustine Church in Isle Brevelle, a historic Catholic community shaped by generations of Creole families whose faith has endured since the earliest days of Louisiana. After praying the rosary and receiving a tour, we continued to the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, the original cathedral of our diocese, founded under our first bishop, Auguste Martin, and forever linked to the heroic Shreveport Martyrs who served this region

during the yellow fever outbreaks. It is also the place where I celebrated my first Mass in 2021, and where we offered Mass again today as pilgrims. Following a fine lunch at Merci Beaucoup, we visited Fort St. Jean Baptiste and Los Adaes, the former capital of Spanish Texas and an early center of Catholic missionary life. Venerable Father Antonio Margil de Jesús, the great Franciscan who walked from Mexico City to evangelize the frontier, ministered in what is now our own diocese and region. These sacred and historic places remind us how deeply the Catholic faith is woven into the story of Louisiana.

Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

Psalm 72: 7
Responsorial Psalm for December 7
Second Sunday of Advent

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Our Lady of Guadalupe Church Fair set for Dec. 12-14

The Hispanic Community of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Forest Hill, with our Pastor Father Marc Noel, will be honoring and celebrating our Blessed Virgin Mary, commemorating her apparition to Saint Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City in 1531.

This celebration will take place on the future home grounds of the Parish Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe at 53 Butter Cemetery Rd. in Forest Hill.

Our community invites and welcomes you to join us in this traditional and cultural celebration honoring our Holy Mother. The Kermes (Church Fair) will commence Friday, Dec. 12 with a special Mass for her Feast Day. This will be a weekend long celebration from Dec. 12-14.

We hope you can join us on any or all these dates! The Kermes will be filled with traditional songs, performances, Aztec/



OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH FAIR. Participants' procession down the street on their way to the fair grounds from the current OLG Church in Forest Hill during last year's celebration. This year's fair will be held Dec. 12-14 and everyone is invited to attend.

Cultural dances, and of course our homemade selection of food and desserts. We cannot wait to see you here to celebrate with us on one of our biggest Fiestas of

the year! For more information or questions, please contact Jonathan Felix at 318-445-6424, ext. 230 or email jfelix@diocesealex.org



OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, FOREST HILL. Fr. Marc Noel, pastor, blesses riders and their horses at last year's Kermes (church fair).



The Light is ON for You

Campaign urges faithful to celebrate Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent

Catholics in the Diocese of Alexandria, especially those who have been away from the Church or the sacrament, are invited to experience God's mercy and forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This Advent, all Catholic churches in the Diocese of Alexandria have been asked to be open on Thursday, Dec. 11 from 6 p.m.-7 p.m. for confession and quiet prayer. Please check with your parish to confirm date and

time.

The Light is on for You, was created by the Archdiocese of Washington and has since been implemented by dioceses throughout the United States. By participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we experience God's individual and unwavering love for us and one of the true graces made available to us by our Catholic faith. God loves us just the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way.

MARY

Continued from pg. 3

document. I see many scholars and the Vatican moving toward a scripturally-based Mary that is more human."

The document also presented Mary as "very connected to the church," and as "a model of the church, the first disciple and mother of the church," De Anda said, adding, "I think it's really important to highlight that piece — Mary as disciple, and what that looks

like and means in following Jesus."

She also highlighted the doctrinal note's citations from the pastoral document of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean at Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007 (often known simply as the Aparecida Document), to which the late Pope Francis, as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, had contributed.

Aparecida Document

"I really loved that it began and ended with the Aparecida Document," said De Anda. "I found that so interesting in that they bookended this document with that document ... very much placing Marian devotion in the vein of the way the Latin American bishops have been thinking about popular devotion, as being on a journey for years, and of the people."

"I think Pope Francis and now Pope Leo (with his experience in Peru) wish to encourage popular Marian piety focused on Mary as our spiritual Mother and model disciple," said Fastiggi.

He added, "I think 'Mater Populi Fidelis' will stimulate a greater awareness of Mary's role in salvation history even though it discourages certain titles. I think theologians should study Mary's role in salvation history more deeply. ... I am happy that greater attention is now being given to these themes."

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe December 12

Solemn Candlelight Mass
Dec. 12, 5:30 p.m.
Our Lady of Prompt Succor,
Alexandria

Prayer Vigil
Dec. 12, 7:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Church,
St. Joseph, LA



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Scholarship Program announced for Diocese Catholic High Schools and Seminarians

The Catholic Foundation of North-Central Louisiana announced today the establishment of two scholarships to honor Herman and Genevieve Goudeau Kelley of Bunkie, LA and Eugene and Shirley Ackel Scott of Natchitoches, LA, for the primary and secondary Catholic education they provided their respective children, Kirk, Clay and Keith Kelley and Sadie, Whit and Craig Scott.

The scholarships will recognize the impact the Kelley and Scott parents had on the upbringing, education and subsequent careers of their children. In keeping with their parent's legacy and recognizing the value of a Catholic education, the scholarships will offer assistance to students who have financial need and possess the drive and determination to further their education. These scholarships will provide partial assistance to students as they pursue their dream of obtaining a college degree or priesthood spiritual development.

The Catholic Foundation of North-Central Louisiana, Inc. of Alexandria, LA will administer the scholarships on behalf of the



SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ESTABLISHED. Kirk Kelley, Becky Crooks of the Catholic Foundation of North-Central Louisiana and Fr. Craig Scott announce the establishment of two scholarships benefiting Catholic high schools and seminarian education.

Kelley and Scott families.

"On behalf of the Kelley and Scott families, we are honored to fund the establishment of these scholarships today to graduating Catholic high school seniors entering college or the seminary," said Kirk Kelley.

"We were all very fortunate to be afforded the opportunity of a catholic education, which made a significant impact on our lives and resulting careers. Despite popular belief and public skepticism, a commitment to higher education is the best investment we can make

in the lives of young people today. This commitment fully supports the Diocese of Alexandria, the stewardship of Bishop Marshall, the clergy, teachers and lay people."

Becky Crooks, Chairman of the Catholic Foundation, states, "We are honored that the Kelley and Scott families have chosen The Catholic Foundation to partner with in establishing this scholarship program. It is a privilege to support the family's vision of helping Catholic students and seminarians pursue their education and vocations. Their dedication to our faith and their desire to begin a lasting legacy are true reflections of their love for the church."

Mr. Kelley further stated that our commitment to this effort today totals \$36,000, whereby two, \$1,500 scholarship awards per year, or \$12,000 over the term of four years. The term of the Kelley and Scott College Scholarship program will initially be three years and may be renewed or extended based on the ultimate success of the program.

• One \$1,500 annual scholarship, or \$6,000 over

four years, will be awarded to a graduating high school senior from a Diocese of Alexandria Catholic high school that has applied or is enrolled fulltime in either Louisiana State University in Alexandria, Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, or Louisiana Tech in Ruston, LA.

• One \$15,000 annual spend, or \$6,000 over four years, to either a seminary candidate from the Diocese of Alexandria currently enrolled in either St. Joseph Seminary College in Saint Benedict, LA and Notre Dame Seminary College in New Orleans, LA or a retired priest from the Diocese of Alexandria.

The scholarship information and applications will be posted to the websites of the Diocese of Alexandria and the Diocese high schools (Holy Savior Menard Central High School, Alexandria; St. Mary's School, Natchitoches; and St. Joseph School, Plaquemine) beginning December 15, 2025. Awards will be announced by May 1, 2026. Please contact the Catholic Foundation if you have any questions.



DEACON RETREAT. Deacons and their wives from the Diocese of Alexandria and the Diocese of Shreveport came together again this year for a retreat at Maryhill Renewal Center. The weekend was led by Deacon Ron Pirau and his wife Linda. They are from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

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THE VOCATIONS PANEL WAS HELD AT ST. MARY’S ASSUMPTION CHURCH IN COTTONPORT on Saturday, Nov. 8, in recognition of National Vocations Awareness Week. Represented on the panel were: Fr. Charlie Ray, pastor of St Mary’s and host for event; Fr. Luke LaFleur, Director of Vocations for the Diocese of Alexandria; Four diocesan seminarians: Graham Descant, Blake Bernard, Will Brittain, and Matthew Bonner. Religious Communities represented include: Community of Jesus Christ Crucified; the Alliance of the Holy Family International; Mercedarian Sisters; Our Lady of Sorrows. This event was organized by the Vocations Ministry Team. The day consisted of testimonies, discernment advice, prayer life, adoration, and ended with the celebration of the Mass.

In Memoriam – Monsignor Antoine Piegay

Fr. Piegay was born on March 19th, 1862 in Saint Didier, Rhone, France to Antoine and Antoinette Piegay. He began his seminary studies at the Petite Seminary of Lyons in 1876 and completed his theological studies in 1887. He volunteered for missionary work in the Diocese of Natchitoches in Louisiana in 1887 and was ordained a priest in Natchitoches on May 8th, 1887 by Bishop Antoine Durier.

Fr. Piegay served as parochial vicar at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Natchitoches under Fr. Andrew Andries. At that time, the Cathedral clergy served several mission stations including Bayou Bourbeux, Bayou Dolle, Cotes de Afrique, Kecouen, Tiger Island. In 1901 Fr. Piegay requested a transfer of residence but the request was denied by Bishop Durier and he remained in Natchitoches.

In the spring of 1903, Bishop Durier suffered a stroke that paralyzed one side of his body. His condition grew steadily worse and he died in Natchitoches on February 28th, 1904. Not long after, on March 23rd, 1904, Fr. Andries died leaving the diocese without an administrator. Fr. Piegay took up the responsibility of the Cathedral parish during the interregnum until the installation of Bishop Cornelius Van de Ven on December 21st, 1904.

Recognizing his long



experience and abilities, Bishop Van de Ven appointed Fr. Piegay as Rector of the Cathedral and Vicar General of the diocese in November of 1905. He was appointed a Domestic Prelate with the title of Very Reverend Monsignor by Pope Benedict XV at the request of Bishop Van de Ven in 1921. Nearly all the priests of the diocese were in attendance for his investiture on February 15th 1922.

In the early 1930’s, at the request of Bishop Desmond

Msgr. Piegay began to look for land in Natchitoches to established a new church and school for the black Catholics of Natchitoches. Using his own funds, he purchased a plot of land at the corner of Pavie and 5th Sts. From Judge D. C. Scarborough. The first wood-frame church, erected by Ignatius Le Gras, was built at a cost of \$3,280. Bishop Desmond blessed the new church, dedicated to St. Anthony, on May 5th, 1935. The new parish was canonically erected in 1936 and entrusted

Seminarian Burses

October 2025 Donations

Knights of Columbus Council #9217	\$25.00
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Father Wade DeCoste Burse	
Mr. Vince Aymond	\$50.00
Father Daniel O’Connor Burse	
Mr. Vince Aymond	\$50.00
Father Rusty Rabalais Burse	
Mr. Dwight E. Beridon	\$150.00
Monsignor John M. Timmermans Burse	
Mr. Dwight E. Beridon	\$150.00
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Help them to become instruments
of your divine grace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives
and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

to the pastoral care of the Holy Ghost Fathers. In 1938 additional land was purchased to build a new two storied school building which was named ‘The Piegay Memorial School’ in honor of Msgr. Piegay.

On October 16, 1939, Msgr. Piegay died in Natchitoches having spent his entire priesthood, 52 years of service, in the same community. The Mayor and City Council ordered all municipal offices closed for the day of his funeral. The courts and public schools were also closed in his honor. His body was buried to the left of the front entrance of the Church of the Immaculate Conception under the shade of the crape myrtle trees where it still rests today.

Book of poems inspired by women of God

by **Liz Descant**

My husband, Marcus Descant, has written prayer poems for forty years. In July 2023, we published a book together, *Who Do You Say That I Am?* He wrote the prayer poems, and I developed a study guide to go with each poem. Publishing that book was truly a labor of love.

In May 2022, I attended a Genesis of Eve Women's Conference. I decided to take notes during the conference and see if anything might spark interest for Marcus to write additional prayer poems. When I returned home that weekend, I was so anxious to tell him about my ideas.

Well, that did not happen!! He was not interested in any of the ideas that I brought home. I was SO disappointed. I put that thought aside and went about my work in publishing our first book. For the next 8 months, the thought of that conference and my ideas kept coming to mind. The theme of the conference was "Come to The Well." That theme reminded me of the story about the Samaritan

woman at the well in the bible.

On a cold night the following January, I thought about the theme and the story of this woman. I decided to try my hand at writing. I've never written poetry before in my life! I sat down at the computer, did some research on the Samaritan woman and within 30 minutes of beginning, I had written my first poem; the story of the Samaritan woman told in poetry. I was ecstatic to think that I could write poetry!! Marcus was so surprised, and he absolutely loved it!! He then commented that I was "moving in on his territory." My response was, "Too bad, I gave you a chance and you turned it down!"

I then began to think how I could use this poem in a book. After much thought and prayer, I developed the title *Daring and Devoted Women of God*. It just seemed to feel right! Then I moved forward and began to think of all the daring and devoted women of God that lived not only in biblical times, but also throughout the centuries.



DARING & DEVOTED WOMEN OF GOD

by Liz Descant. The book is now available on Amazon.

Here we are now with 15 poems that tell the stories of 19 women of God. The stories begin with women in the Old Testament, moving through the New Testament on to the Middle Ages, and lastly to more recent centuries.

The book is reader-friendly with study guides to accompany each poem about these women. The activities are varied and cover all areas of the curriculum to include: reading, research, creative writing, math, science, geography, music and art. Something for everyone!!

I hope as you read this book you will see yourself in these Daring and Devoted Women of God!

Daring and Devoted Women of God is now available to on Amazon.

Liz Descant is a retired teacher and school administrator with a passion for spreading the word of God to others through poetry and bible study opportunities. She and her husband, Marcus, live in Leesville, LA.



CABRINIFEST. The St. Frances Cabrini School CabriniFest was held on Saturday, Nov. 1. It was a beautiful day for the annual festival that benefits St. Frances Cabrini School. During the festivities, Bishop Robert Marshall was able to visit with Sister Elizabeth Holmes, SSF, Sister Nina Vincent, OLS, and Father Chad Partain.



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CEMETERY CLEAN UP, BORDELONVILLE. On Oct. 27 St. Peter and St. Michael CCD students, teachers, Father Paul, and community members worked together in the annual cemetery cleanup in advance of All Souls Blessing of Graves.



OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR SCHOOL ROSARY WALK. Students joyfully processed from the school to the church, reflecting on the Luminous Mysteries of Christ's public life. We were blessed with beautiful weather for our walk and are grateful to continue our faith journey together as a community.



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, DEVILLE. The CCD children and teachers of St. John the Baptist, recited the Rosary by the Rosary Walk at the church.



ST. FRANCIS DESALES CHURCH, ECHO. The CCD classes gathered in the Rosary Garden to pray the Holy Rosary. Students were encouraged to bring a picture of a loved one who has passed away so they could be honored in prayer.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED:

If you have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected, and that the abuse is by a parent or caretaker, please first call the Louisiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437) and/or your local law enforcement agency. If suspected abuse is related to a diocesan/church/school program, or if abuse occurred by anyone acting in Church services, a report should then also be made to the diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, Dr. Lee Kneipp, Clinical Psychologist at 318-542-9805.

*Lord,
come and
save us.*

Psalm 146
Responsorial Psalm
for December 14
Third Sunday
of Advent

Lector Formation Workshop

Tuesday
January 13, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Workshop

Tuesday
January 20, 6:00-9 p.m.

Both workshops will be held at:
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SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE. SHS held its Parade of Saints on Friday, Oct. 31. Fifth grader, Baylor [redacted] from Marksville, pictured right, choose to portray new Saint Carlos Acutis, the youngest person to ever be canonized a saint.



All Saints Parades



ST. MARY'S SCHOOL FIRST GRADERS CELEBRATE ALL SAINTS DAY WITH PARADE. The first-grade students celebrated All Saints Day in a special and spirited way this week. After attending Mass, the students dressed as their favorite saints and marched proudly around the school gym in an All Saints Day parade. Front row, left to right: Abigail [redacted], Aria [redacted], Elaina [redacted], Anna [redacted], Eva [redacted], Remi [redacted]. Back row left to right: Robby [redacted], Barrett [redacted], Cahill [redacted], Father Irion St. Romain, Adalyn [redacted], Charlotte [redacted], Mary Beth [redacted], Amy [redacted].



(left) ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA CHURCH, NATCHITOCHES. On Wednesday, Oct. 29, the CCD class held an All Saints Halloween party.



ST. JOSEPH CHURCH IN ST. JOSEPH, LA. ON Sunday, Nov. 2, Fr. Taylor Reynolds welcomed the children's Parade of Saints at Mass.



OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR SCHOOL'S 4th grade celebrated all of their hard work on Monday, Nov. 3. After Mass they paraded through school so our smallest friends could see all of their Saints! They also read on announcements who they are and what they will be holding or wearing to help the others recognize them and educate others!

(right) LSUA CSO RECEIVES STAINED GLASS. Recently, the LSUA Catholic Student Center had stained glass installed, donated by Mrs. Missy and Mr. Robbie Laborde. Fr. Taylor Reynolds blessed the windows.





(left) **ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WINNSBORO.** Left to Right: Jude [redacted], Gabriel [redacted], Lucy [redacted], Joseph [redacted], Lillian [redacted] and Madelyn [redacted].



ALL SAINTS DAY, ST. FRANCIS de SALES, ECHO. On Nov. 2, the children from St. Francis DeSales Church took part in a beautiful and uplifting celebration of faith, commemorating the Communion of Saints. This cherished tradition acted as a vivid reminder of the significant examples established by the Saints.



ST. FRANCES CABRINI SCHOOL, ALEXANDRIA. On Friday, Oct. 31, Cabrini School held their Parade of Saints. Pictured are the Pre-K students.



St. Rita Hispanic Community celebrates Dia de Muertos

The Parish of St. Rita Hispanic Community celebrated and honored our deceased relatives in the traditionally beautiful and cultural commemoration of Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) November 2nd, 2025. The community started this day with the celebration of Sunday Mass with Father Peter Faulk. After mass, the community gathered in The Holy Family Center where traditional home-made food was contributed by the parishioners to bring together a personal experience of recipes that have been passed down through many years. One of the special traditions of Dia de Los Muertos is cooking the dish that the deceased relative most enjoyed. The community worked together to build the "ofrenda" (offering) for the deceased. Including an altar with food, water, & pictures of the deceased to honor them. According to the traditional belief and practice, the offering aids the souls of the deceased on their journey to cross over and visit during this time. Having a moment in the year where our past relatives feel closest to us and are celebrated and commemorated for their life they lived on earth, and the eternal life Our Savior Jesus Christ grants us. This celebration as a community was then followed by a rosary led by the community in honor of the deceased.

+++

La comunidad hispana de la parroquia de Santa Rita celebró y honró a nuestros familiares fallecidos en la tradicional y hermosa conmemoración cultural del Día de Muertos, el 2 de noviembre de 2025. La comunidad comenzó este día con la celebración de la misa dominical con el Padre Peter Faulk. Después de la misa, la comunidad se reunió en el Centro de la Sagrada Familia, donde los feligreses aportaron comida casera tradicional para compartir una experiencia personal de recetas que se han transmitido a lo largo de muchos años. Una de las tradiciones especiales del Día de los Muertos es cocinar el plato que más le gustaba al familiar fallecido. La comunidad trabajó en conjunto para construir la «ofrenda» para los difuntos. Se incluyó un altar con comida, agua y fotos de los fallecidos para honrarlos. Según la creencia y la práctica tradicional, la ofrenda ayuda a las almas de los difuntos en su viaje para cruzar y visitarnos durante este tiempo. Es un momento del año en el que nuestros familiares fallecidos se sienten más cerca de nosotros y son celebrados y conmemorados por la vida que vivieron en la tierra y por la vida eterna que nos concede nuestro Salvador Jesucristo. A esta celebración comunitaria le siguió un rosario dirigido por la comunidad en honor a los difuntos.

(left) **ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL STUDENTS CELEBRATE ALL SAINTS DAY WITH FAITH AND JOY.** Students at St. Joseph School, Plaquemine, celebrated All Saints Day with a special Mass honoring the holy men and women who serve as models of faith. In keeping with tradition, students from various grades dressed as their favorite Catholic saints, filling the church with colorful costumes and reverent excitement.

This Advent: God enters time just in time

by Katie Cassidy
Blessed is She

Time is a tricky concept. I am reminded of this truth frequently, as my three-year-old describes the book she read “yesterday,” the visit we had with so-and-so “this morning,” or the trip we’re taking “tomorrow.” It often feels like mental gymnastics to meet her in the moment she is describing with the limited cues I’m given.

We mature past this phase to a point where we can more or less judge increments of time well enough to keep our schedules on track and describe our days in detail. But how far do we truly advance in our concept of time and our relationship to it? For myself and many others, time is the final frontier we have not conquered, though we haven’t stopped trying. We spend time, save up time off, waste time, lose time, and take time. With all of our being, we try to quantify what is not quantifiable.

Time is a gift from God, who works outside of time.

As Advent approaches, this tension of not having enough time, coupled with entering a season of waiting, pushes our buttons—buttons that need to be pushed. Especially in a time of production, hurry, and hustle, not being in control of the very time we have been given might be a clue that we have metaphorically hit a spiritual two-by-four.

Advent: An Invitation to Slow our Pace

Honestly, I am not particularly good at waiting. Like so many, I have grown accustomed to accessing things nearly as soon as I think about them—quick answers on Google, groceries at the click of a button, an immediate response via text almost day or night. I would be lying if I said I did not have a deep appreciation for instant



gratification. Who doesn’t?

And yet, Advent is my favorite season.

We need it, don’t we? It offers a grounding rhythm of preparing for something, or Someone, important. Just as we prepare for significant events—we wouldn’t serve boxed mac and cheese to an out-of-town guest or for a holiday meal—we cannot casually or instantly create the heart posture necessary to welcome God Incarnate. For that, we need some time and space to do that well.

In Time: An Advent Guide

In *Blessed Is She’s* 2025 Advent devotional, *In Time: Living in the Now and Now Yet*, Claire Dwyer invites women into a reflective space where the Lord can speak to their hearts. Rather than focusing on traditional Advent themes such as hope, peace, joy, and love, Claire invites women into the practice of lectio divina, or praying with Scripture, while emphasizing four elements of time:

Sacred Waiting

When framed in the sacredness of the season, the beauty of waiting, or preparing, can be more clearly appreciated.

ways: the job you took on a whim, or out of desperation, that formed you for a role you’d need later; an encounter with the right friend; sufficient time in a relationship or profession only to realize it is not where you are called. “God writes straight with crooked lines,” as the saying, which is sometimes attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila, goes.

Our Story

The Lord is invested in our individual stories, in which God is actively revealed through every detail. I loved Claire’s reminder that God intimately and intentionally invites us to collaborate in the story of our lives, lived for the love of Christ. To Jesus, the details matter. Nothing is overlooked; nothing is wasted. Framing our own story within the story of Salvation History is a breathtaking view that we need to take in from time to time.

In Time

The phrase “God is never in a hurry but always on time” is such a comfort, especially when contemplating the Incarnation, as well as moments of grace in my own life that are evidence of God’s very intentional timing. We are never sufficiently “ready” to welcome the Word-made-flesh, yet, in God’s time (kairos), He comes to us anyway—humbly, faithfully, and generously. Our response to that kind of love can only be hospitality, opening the door of our hearts to Him.

How Do You Plan to Welcome the Christ Child this Season?

Advent does not require decorations and fanfare. In fact, Advent expects to find us on our way—almost ready—but not there yet. Truthfully, I think that we are uncomfortable with the thought of anyone—especially the God of the universe—catching us at a moment when we are not ready or do not have it together. But Advent encourages a posture of the heart that is watchful, attentive, and hopeful.

Like the virgins who kept their lamps filled with oil in hopes of the arrival of the bridegroom, Advent invites us into the same patient trust that what has been spoken will be fulfilled. The One Who said He is coming will come. So we wait with hopeful hearts.

Amidst the noise and clamor already vying for our attention through ads, music, and television, Jesus humbly enters into time without crashing cymbals and loud trumpets. Advent’s appeal is in its quiet invitation to slow down our pace, humble ourselves, and remember that the infinite God entered time to deliver something that had been long promised to us: a Savior.

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. // Isaiah 7:14

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Finding Advent in Scripture: Waiting, hoping, and preparing our hearts

Every year, as November gives way to December, the Church invites us into the quiet beauty of Advent—a season of watchfulness, longing, and joyful expectation. But many Catholics at some point wonder: Is Advent actually in the Bible?

The short answer: **not by name**, but **absolutely in substance**.

While Scripture never uses the word *Advent*, the themes that shape this season—hope, preparation, prophecy, repentance, and joyful waiting—run deeply throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The Church, guided by centuries of reflection, draws from these passages to help us prepare our hearts for Christ's coming—both the celebration of His birth and His promised return.

As we look toward Advent 2025, which begins on **Sunday, November 30**, the Word of God invites us once again to rediscover what it means to wait with hope. Below are some of the rich biblical foundations of Advent that can guide our prayer this season.

Prophecy and Promise: Advent Foretold in the Old Testament

Long before the shepherds heard angels singing over Bethlehem, the people of Israel carried prophecies that pointed toward a Messiah. Advent begins here—in the ache of expectation, the longing for a Savior, and the trust that God would keep His promises.

The prophet Isaiah, writing

more than 700 years before Christ, proclaimed signs of this coming salvation:

Isaiah 7:14 – “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanu-el.”

Isaiah 9:2 – “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...”

Isaiah 9:6 – “...his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Jeremiah, too, foretold a righteous king from the line of David:

Jeremiah 23:5 – “I will raise up for David a righteous Branch... and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

For Christians, these ancient promises speak directly into Advent. We reflect on how God prepared His people, generation after generation, to receive the Light of the World. Advent invites us to enter that same posture of anticipation—not only remembering Christ's birth, but renewing our hope in His return.

“Prepare the Way”: The Call to Spiritual Readiness

If the Old Testament gives us the foundation of Advent, the New Testament shows us how to respond. The season of Advent echoes one of the most urgent and essential messages of Scripture: **prepare your heart for the Lord**.

John the Baptist, the bridge between the Old and New

Covenants, becomes the great Advent prophet:

Matthew 3:3 – “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: *Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*”

Luke 3:2-3 – John “went... preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

Even the prophet Amos issues a stark, Advent-shaped invitation:

Amos 4:12 – “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”

These verses anchor one of Advent's most recognizable spiritual practices—repentance. The purple candles on the wreath, the simple beauty of the liturgy, and the call to confession all remind us that preparing for Jesus means making room for Him.

Advent is not meant to be passive waiting. It is active, intentional, joyful preparation.

Hope and Holy Waiting

Finally, Scripture offers us the theme at the very heart of Advent: **hopeful waiting**.

The infancy narratives of the Gospels are full of people who waited faithfully—Zechariah and Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary, and Simeon:

Luke 2:29-32 – Simeon, holding the Christ child, prays, “My eyes have seen your salvation... a light for revelation to the Gentiles.”

The New Testament continues to echo this theme for the whole Christian life:

Romans 8:25 – “If we hope for what we do not see, we wait

for it with patience.”

1 Peter 1:13 – “Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

These verses capture the spirit of Advent: the whole Church waiting, watching, and believing that God is faithful to His promises.

Advent 2025: Dates to Know

Advent is not just a season of Scripture—it is the beginning of the Church's liturgical year. Here are key dates for this year's observance:

When does Advent start in 2025?

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Advent always begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

When does Advent end?

Wednesday, December 24, 2025 (Christmas Eve)

How long is Advent?

Approximately four weeks, though the exact number of days shifts each year based on the calendar.

Why these dates?

The Advent season is anchored to Christmas. The Church begins a new liturgical year by preparing for the birth of Christ, and the four Sundays of Advent guide that preparation.

The Four Sundays of Advent

Each Sunday carries a theme symbolized by the candles of the Advent wreath:

First Sunday of Advent – November 30, 2025

Prophet's Candle / Candle of Hope

We remember the hope of Israel and the hope we hold today in Christ.

Second Sunday of Advent

– December 7, 2025

Bethlehem Candle / Candle of Peace

We reflect on the peace the Messiah brings into the world.

Third Sunday of Advent – December 14, 2025

Traditionally called *Gaudete Sunday*, this day emphasizes joy as we draw closer to Christmas.

Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 21, 2025

Angel's Candle / Candle of Love

We celebrate God's love made visible in the coming of Christ.

These themes help families and parishes mark the season not merely with dates, but with spiritual movement—progressively preparing our hearts for Jesus.

Why Advent Still Matters

In a world that rushes quickly to Christmas decorations, gift lists, and busyness, Advent stands as a gentle yet profound reminder: **slow down**.

Let the Word of God reveal to you the deeper reality of this season:

- God keeps His promises.
- Jesus has come—and will come again.
- We are called to prepare our hearts.
- *We wait with hope, not fear.*

Advent is a gift.

A reset.

A breath.

A sacred pause that reshapes our sense of time and teaches us to look toward heaven.

As the Church begins a new liturgical year this November, may we rediscover the beauty of waiting for Emmanuel—God-with-us—who enters our world and our hearts with saving love.

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Upcoming VIRTUS Sessions

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St. Joseph Catholic Center
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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.



2ND ANNUAL RETREAT: “COME TO THE WELL, SHINE IN THE WORLD” Our retreat at the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Natchitoches was truly a day of grace and renewal. Twenty-two participants gathered in faith and fellowship and were blessed by the presence of Fr. Irion St. Romain, whose guidance helped center our hearts in prayer. Deacons Jason Lavegne and Chad Thibodeaux led us deeply into the spiritual journey—inviting us first to come to the Well to find rest and refreshment in Christ, and then to shine His light in the world around us. Throughout the day, the Holy Spirit moved powerfully among us—through Scripture, personal reflection, shared stories, and moments of quiet encounter with God. Hearts were uplifted, burdens lightened, and a renewed sense of purpose and joy filled our community.



Young adults (ages 18–35) are invited to join us for fellowship, faith formation, and community!

We meet monthly at St. Mary’s Assumption Catholic Church in Cottonport to share a meal, watch a short video or reflection, and discuss topics that help us grow in faith and daily life. Each meeting is the second Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. in the CYO building following Mass. We hope to expand in the future and also do charity work and other events. Our next meeting is Monday, Dec. 8.

Anyone interested or have questions can contact: Callie Feierabend at 832-995-6782 or email cfeie2001@gmail.com

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Psalm 24: 7
Responsorial Psalm
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THE KNIGHTS AND DAMES OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER OF JERUSALEM from the Diocese of Alexandria joined Bishop Robert Marshall for Mass at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral Sunday, Oct. 26. The Order works to preserve the sacred sites in the Holy Land. We prayed together for a ceasefire that will hold and for a just and lasting peace. After Mass, the certificate and insignia of a Knight Commander was presented to Tony L. "Bo" Vets, Jr., Administrator of St. Mary's Residential Community and Services. Thank you to all of the members of the Order for your faith and commitment.

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FR. DWIGHT DEJESUS MARKS 40-YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD. St. Francis DeSales Church in Echo marked a momentous occasion on Thursday, Oct. 23, celebrating the 40th anniversary of Fr. Dwight's ordination. The milestone event drew a distinguished gathering, including Msgr. Scott Chemino, JD, JCL, pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Bunkie and Church of the Little Flower, Evergreen, and numerous other clergy who paid tribute to Fr. Dwight's long and faithful ministry.

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Upcoming Retreats:

January 15-18
Womens ACTS Retreat
hosted by St. Augustine Church
Isle Brevelle

January 15-18
Womens ACTS Retreat
hosted by Cenla ACTS (OLPS)
Alexandria

February 12-15
Womens ACTS Retreat
hosted by St. Alphonsus
Church, Hessmer

All retreats are held at Maryhill
Renewal Center.



ST. JOSEPH CROSS COUNTRY ATHLETES COMPETE AT LHSAA STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS. The St. Joseph School Cross Country team delivered an outstanding performance at the LHSAA State Championships held in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Competing against large, highly competitive fields, all four athletes represented St. Joseph with exceptional effort and determination. Pictured: athletes Camille [REDACTED], Shelby [REDACTED], Reid [REDACTED], John David [REDACTED]; coaches Christie Leonards and Alyson Lemoine.



ST. FRANCES CABRINI SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY. Top ten runners recieved a t-shirt and top 3 runners recieved a medal as well. Pictured: Landry [REDACTED] placed 3rd in the 3rd-4th Grade group. Not pictured: Luke [REDACTED], 6th place 3rd-4th Grade; Wyatt [REDACTED], 8th place 3rd-4th Grade; Kai [REDACTED], 7th place, 5th-6th Grade group.

ST. FRANCES CABRINI 8TH GRADERS. Cabrini School recently celebrated their 8th graders during 8th grade night. For cheer (Maddy) and for basketball (Anna).



HOLY SAVIOR MENARD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, ALEXANDRIA. On Wednesday, Nov. 5, Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated Mass at Holy Savior Menard High School.



PRINCIPAL FOR A DAY AT ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL, PLAUCHEVILLE. Recently, Mary [REDACTED] (4th grade) stepped into the role of Principal for a Day — and she took her duties seriously! From attending a leadership meeting and handling a few discipline issues to conducting classroom walk-throughs, attending Mass, paying school bills, and making important school decisions, Mary got the full experience of what it takes to lead St. Joseph School. She did an amazing job leading with confidence, faith, and a smile!



OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR SCHOOL. On Thursday, Oct. 30, students, faculty, and staff had the privilege of attending Mass with Bishop Marshall! He also visited several classrooms to answer students' questions. We are grateful for the opportunity to share our growth in academics and faith with Bishop Marshall. Looking forward to next time!

*Blessed are those who fear the Lord,
and walk in his ways.*

Psalm 128: 1 | Responsorial Psalm for December 28
Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Supporting our middle schoolers as they return from the Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference

by Cari Terracina

Every year, the Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference gathers hundreds of sixth–eighth graders from across our diocese for a day of worship, discipleship, friendship, and joyful encounter with Christ. For many of our young people, it's one of their first large-scale Catholic events—a moment when their faith becomes communal and alive.

This year's conference on December 6 arrives as we move deeper into Advent—a season of anticipation and preparation for the Lord. The conference invites our middle schoolers to encounter Jesus personally; Advent invites them to walk with Him daily. When students enter a space of enthusiastic worship, powerful teaching, and sincere prayer, hearts open and seeds are planted.

But the conference is just one day. How we—parents, grandparents, catechists, and the faithful in the pews—support our young people before and after the event makes all the difference.

1. The Week Before: Pray for Open Hearts

Even if you don't know a single junior high student by name, you can help prepare the



ground through prayer.

A Simple Daily Prayer (Nov. 29–Dec. 6)

“Lord Jesus, prepare the hearts of every student attending the Beyond the Limits Conference. Open them to Your presence and surround them with Your protection. Amen.”

Imagine the spiritual impact if hundreds across the diocese prayed this together.

Pray for Their Leaders

Lift up youth ministers, parish staff, and volunteers, asking God to give them stamina, joy, and openness to grace.

Offer a Small Fast or

Sacrifice

Skip a treat or offer a brief prayer break, uniting your intention to the hope that one young person who feels unseen will encounter Christ at the conference.

2. For Parents and Grandparents: Prepare Their Spirit, Not Just Their Backpack

Middle schoolers often feel uncertain before big events. Reassure them that God meets them right where they are. Keep the night before simple and peaceful so they arrive rested and ready.

If they're open to it, offer a brief prayer together the night before—nothing complicated,

just a reminder that Jesus goes with them.

3. After the Conference: Listen Before You Lecture

When they return, resist the urge to pepper them with questions or interpret every detail. Give them space to process.

Try gentle, open-ended questions such as:

- “What was something that stood out to you?”
- “What did you enjoy?”

Whether they're animated or quiet, honor their experience. God works loudly in some hearts and quietly in others.

4. Create Space for Grace to Grow

Encourage one small, doable spiritual habit—something they choose themselves. A single daily prayer or Scripture verse can keep their hearts connected to what they experienced.

You might also invite them to participate in small Advent practices at home, like lighting a candle or choosing a family prayer intention. Keep the tone invitational, not pressured.

5. For the Faithful in the Pews: Help Build a Parish Culture That Welcomes Young Disciples

After the conference, our middle schoolers return to their parishes with new impressions and questions. A supportive parish environment helps those seeds take root.

A warm smile at Mass or a simple “We're glad you're here” goes a long way. When you see young people serving, thank them. Even short encouragements anchor them more deeply in their parish family.

If you don't know any students personally, pray for “the middle schoolers of our parish.” Prayer crosses all boundaries.

6. Trust That God Is at Work

Not every student will come home overflowing with excitement. Some will shrug; some will be reflective; some may struggle to articulate what touched them. All of this is normal.

The seed of grace doesn't depend on dramatic expression. God works in silence as surely as in the spotlight. Our role is simply to love them, pray for them, and accompany them gently as they grow into young disciples.

As We Enter Advent...

Let us welcome this opportunity to support our middle schoolers with renewed intentionality. In this season of waiting, may we personally commit to praying for the young Church—our precious middle schoolers who are forming their first lasting impressions of God and faith.

May our prayers before the conference open their hearts.

May our presence after the conference strengthen their roots.

And may the Holy Spirit continue the good work begun in them—far beyond December 6.



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CLOSED TUESDAYS

Lunch: Mon.-Sat. 11 a.m. - 3:30 pm.

Dinner: Mon.-Thurs. 4 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. • Fri.-Sat. 4 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Sunday: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Campus Ministry:

LSU of Alexandria:

LSUA Catholic Student Organization, 318-447-2956. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram @lsuacatholics

Northwestern State University:

NSU Catholic Student Organization FOCUS Ministries. Contact Holy Cross Church: (318) 352-2615

Louisiana Christian University:

LCU Catholic Student Organization “Wildcat Catholics” 318-447-2956. Follow us on Instagram @wildcatcatholics

YOUR COMMUNITY STORES



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Journeys in Faith Bible Study with Liz Descant - starts Dec. 1

This innovative Bible Study with Liz Descant will be conducted via Facebook group starting Monday, Dec. 1. Questions will be posted weekly. Post your answers in the comments for all to read. We will learn from each other! No Zoom meetings, no set time to be anywhere, do it on your own time! Participating in the Bible Study is free of charge but you will need the book "Who Do You Say That I Am?" available on Amazon. To join the Facebook group, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/803790292314883> For more information email lizdescant@gmail.com.

#iGiveCatholic on Giving Tuesday - Dec. 2

Give back, give Catholic on Giving Tuesday. On Tuesday, Dec. 2 you can visit <https://www.igivecatholic.org/community/alexandria> and donate to a church or school in the diocese to help them raise funds for their church and school projects.

Priests' Jubilee Mass - December 3

Please join us for the annual Priests' Jubilee Mass at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria on Monday, Dec. 4 at 12:05 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference - Dec. 6

On December 6, over 400 middle school students will attend the Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference - a day of worship, fellowship, and encounter with Christ. As they prepare, we invite our parish families to pray for open hearts, safe travels, and a deep experience of God's love. After the conference, please continue supporting our young disciples with your prayers and encouragement. Thank you for uplifting the young Church!

Learn to Paint with Harleigh! Subject for this class: the Nativity - Dec. 9

Join us on Tuesday, Dec. 9 at 6:00 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral's Xavier Hall and learn how to paint the Nativity. Artist, Harleigh Leonards, will guide you through the steps start to finish. The class is designed for beginners to expert painters. A light meal will be provided by St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. Costs: 8" x 10" \$34; 11" x 14" \$42. All supplies are included in the price. You can register by contacting Dcn. Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org or (318) 445- 6424 ext. 207.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Cabrini Spirit Day at Wildwood Pizza - December 9

Let's make a difference together! On Tuesday, Dec. 9, join us at Wildwood Pizza for Spirit Day - Pizza With a Purpose, supporting St. Frances Cabrini School! A percentage of the day's proceeds will go directly to our school. Come enjoy delicious food from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and help us raise funds for our students! Will we see you there?

The Light is On for You: Advent Day of Reconciliation - Dec. 11

In addition to Advent penance services, the Diocese of Alexandria will offer an Advent day for confession on Dec. 11 when most churches within the Diocese will offer a time in the evening from 5:00-7:00 p.m. to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Please check with your church parish of their participation.

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Solemn Candlelight Mass - Dec. 12

Join us at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Alexandria for a special solemn candlelight Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Benediction at 5:00 p.m. followed by a brief period of confessions and Rosary before Mass starts at 5:30 p.m. A candlelight procession will be followed by veneration of the image and litany of Our Lady of Guadalupe (weather permitting). Please bring a flower(s) to offer to Our Lady.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Prayer Vigil - December 12

The Alliance of the Two Hearts will host a prayer vigil in St. Joseph Church in St. Joseph, LA in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A rosary will begin at 7:00 p.m. with confessions followed by Mass at 8:00 p.m. A small reception after mass and then the evening continues with Adoration and confession, prayers and Offices until midnight with a Eucharistic Procession and Mass in honor of the Immaculate Heart at 12:15 a.m. All are welcome and those who may need accommodations please contact Fr. Taylor at stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com

ECHO Adventure Retreat at Kisatchie National Forest - Dec. 12-14

Echo Community's Adventure retreats invite young adult men and women into an experience that brings them closer to truth through prayer and sacraments, recreation, and "unplugging" from technology, all in the context of God's gift of creation. The retreat is for young adults ages 19-35, and the cost is \$125. Retreat will be held at the Beaver Dam Campground near Minden, LA. Use the link below for registration: <https://rb.gy/dwh6nh>

Discalced Carmelites meeting - Dec. 13

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.

Closing Mass for the Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope - Dec. 28

The closing Mass for the Jubilee Year of Hope will be held on Sunday, Dec. 28 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria. Over the past year, hundreds of people from across the diocese participated in the Jubilee Year of Hope pilgrimage. Every pilgrimage site in our diocese distributed hundreds of passports and thousands of stickers.

We are overwhelmed with the number of completed passports being received weekly.

Please note, if you are attempting to complete the pilgrimage, the pilgrimage site churches may take up their passport stickers and other materials after the closing Mass on Sunday, Dec. 28 so make sure you complete your pilgrimage before then. We will accept your completed passports in the mail into the beginning of 2026 but to ensure you receive a completion certificate signed by Bishop and a limited edition commemorative coin, please don't delay.

Lector Formation Workshop - Jan. 13

The next Lector Formation workshop will be held Tuesday, Jan. 13, 6:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria. The workshop is for those individuals who are interested in serving or who currently may serve as a Lector in their parish. All training workshops will present the same material and will last no longer than two and a half hours. No need to register but for more information please contact Dcn. Jason Lavergne at (318) 445-6424 ext 207 or email dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org.

Church Today News Deadlines

December 29
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Dec. 11

January 26
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Jan. 15



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December 2025

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<div>NOVEMBER</div> <div>24</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. W. ENDRIS</div>	<div>25</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK</div>	<div>26</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. L. FELDKAMP</div>	<div>27</div> <div>THANKSGIVING PRAY FOR MSGR. J. FERGUSON</div>	<div>28</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. W. GEARHEARD</div>	<div>29</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. L. GLANKLER</div>	<div>30</div> <div>First Week of Advent PRAY FOR FR. J. GOOTEE</div>
<div>DECEMBER</div> <div>1</div> <div>PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL</div>	<div>2</div> <div>#iGiveCatholic PRAY FOR DCN. S. GRAMIGNA</div>	<div>3</div> <div>Priests' Jubilee Mass 12:05 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. R. GREMILLION</div>	<div>4</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. M. GUIDRY</div>	<div>5</div> <div>FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. D. HART</div>	<div>6</div> <div>Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Alexandria Convention Center PRAY FOR FR. R. HUMPHRIES</div>	<div>7</div> <div>Second Week of Advent PRAY FOR FR. R. JOHNSON</div>
<div>8</div> <div>Young Adult Ministry 6:00 p.m. St. Mary's Assumption Church, Cottonport SOLEMNITY of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION of the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (a Holy Day of obligation) PRAY FOR DCN. S. JONES</div>	<div>9</div> <div>Cabrini School Spirit Day at Wildwood Pizza Painting class: The Nativity 6:00 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. T. KENNEDY</div>	<div>10</div> <div>VIRTUS Training 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. P. KULIGOWSKI</div>	<div>11</div> <div>The Light is On for You: Advent Day of Reconciliation 5:00-7:00 p.m. Check with your church PRAY FOR FR. L. LAFLEUR</div>	<div>12</div> <div>OLG Prayer Vigil 7:00 p.m. St. Joseph Church St. Joseph, LA OLG Candlelight Mass 5:30 p.m. OLPS, Alexandria <div>Our Lady of Guadalupe Church Fair -- Forest Hill</div><div>ECHO Adventure Retreat: Kisatchie Forest</div> FEAST of OUR LADY of GUADALUPE PRAY FOR FR. M. LAIRD</div>	<div>13</div> <div>Disclaled Carmelites Monthly Meeting 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center PRAY FOR FR. P. LAPALME</div>	<div>14</div> <div>Third Week of Advent PRAY FOR DCN. J. LAVERGNE</div>
<div>15</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. G. LEBLANC</div>	<div>16</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. V. MANUEL</div>	<div>17</div> <div>PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL</div>	<div>18</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. R. MATHEWS</div>	<div>19</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. P. MCCUSKER</div>	<div>20</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. MEADE</div>	<div>21</div> <div>Fourth Week of Advent PRAY FOR FR. L. MELCHER</div>
<div>22</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. MICHALCHUK</div>	<div>23</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. K. MICHIELS</div>	<div>24</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. R. MITCHELL</div>	<div>25</div> <div>CHRISTMAS DAY PRAY FOR FR. C. MORGAN</div>	<div>26</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. D. MOREAU</div>	<div>27</div> <div>PRAY FOR DCN. L. MOREAU</div>	<div>28</div> <div>Closing Mass Jubilee Year of Hope 11:00 a.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria PRAY FOR DCN. T. MOULARD</div>

Our Catholic Schools in Action



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL FIELD TRIP FUN! The 2nd and 4th grade students visited the Louisiana Art & Science Museum in Baton Rouge on Wednesday, Oct. 29! Students explored hands-on exhibits, discovered the beauty of art and science, and enjoyed a day full of learning and excitement!



ST. FRANCES CABRINI SCHOOL FIELD TRIP TO THE TREEHOUSE! On Tuesday, Oct. 28, the students studied about rockets and space at The Treehouse in Alexandria.



RELIC DAY AT OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR SCHOOL. Recently, Father Thomas Kennedy shared his collection of over 100 1st and 2nd class relics. Students got to view and venerate these amazing items. Father Kennedy explained the differences between 1st and 2nd class relics and shared some fascinating stories about how he acquired them over the years. Thank you, Father Kennedy, for spending the day with us and helping us grow in our faith!



ST. FRANCES CABRINI SCHOOL FIELD TRIP TO CM FARMS. Recently, the PreK-4 class went on a field trip to CM Farms in Dry Creek, LA. There, the students rode on the train, read a story in a corn field and fed the animals!



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL CELEBRATES RED RIBBON WEEK WITH FAITH AND FUN. St. Joseph School students and staff celebrated Red Ribbon Week from October 27-31 to promote healthy, drug-free lifestyles rooted in faith and positive choices. Each day featured a special theme encouraging students to live with purpose and integrity. The week began with "Drugs Can't Find Me - Camo Day," as students dressed in camouflage to show they're hiding from bad choices.

More photos on photo galleries at www.diocesealex.org

Welcome to St. Frances Cabrini School!

St. Frances Cabrini School is a family of faith, consecrated to the Incarnate Word and committed to God's call of forming students in sound doctrine and purity of heart.

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