

CHURCH TODAY

Volume LVI, No. 12

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Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

December 29, 2025



Jubilee Year ends

An historic year for the Diocese of Alexandria with several main events that dominated the year. Bishop Robert Marshall gives a wrap up of this eventful year on page 2.

INSIDE

2025 in Review

Reflecting on a Jubilee Year of grace, challenge, and renewal in the Diocese of Alexandria. See page 2 for the full pastoral reflection from Bishop Marshall.

Together as One Church

Bishop Marshall reflects on the completion of the *Together as One Church* pastoral planning process, sharing gratitude, next steps, and hope for the future of our diocese. See pages 4-5 for the full story.

Where young hearts encounter Christ

Nearly 400 middle school students spent a full day in prayer, worship, and sacramental grace. See page 17 on how families and parishes can be involved in what's next.

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CHURCH
TODAY

Volume LVI, No. 12
December 29, 2025

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The CHURCH TODAY (USPS
393-240) is published by the
Catholic Diocese of Alexandria,
once a month, free of charge to
members of the parishes in the
Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana.
Out of diocese subscriptions are
\$20 a year.

The office is located at
4400 Coliseum Blvd.,
Alexandria, LA 71303.
Periodicals postage paid at
Alexandria, LA.

Postmaster:
Send address changes to
The CHURCH TODAY, P. O. Box
7417, Alexandria, LA 71306
Website: www.diocesealex.org
To receive a free subscription,
call 318-445-6424, ext 255 or
e-mail starver@diocesealex.org

2025 year in review: Year of Hope

by Bishop Robert Marshall

Throughout the year 2025, Catholics and others of good will were summoned to become "Pilgrims of Hope," witnesses to the saving power of Jesus Christ. Many traveled to Rome, to the four major basilicas, to pray at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and to grow in their appreciation of the Church as more than their local parish, more than their diocese or national church. Pilgrims are united in faith and in mission to the other travelers on the road, to all who share in their experience of prayer – regardless of differences in language, culture, race, nationality, or economic circumstances. Their eyes are opened to the eternal truth that each and every human person is made in the image and likeness of God.

In the Diocese of Alexandria, some of our brothers and sisters made a pilgrimage to Rome or to other sacred sites throughout the world. Many more undertook a local pilgrimage to eight different churches throughout the four deaneries of the Diocese of Alexandria. Pilgrims visited historic churches, small communities and those that are experiencing rapid growth. They learned – and shared in their comments – that our thirteen civil parishes encompass diverse communities. Many were moved by the reverent and life-giving liturgies in which they participated – even the experience of a Mass in another language held in a packed church. We are grateful to the more than 400 who completed this



2025 SAW ELECTION OF NEW POPE. Pope Leo XIV joined religious leaders at the International Meeting of Dialogue and Prayer for Peace near the Colosseum in Rome Oct. 28, 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

pilgrimage – and to the hundreds of others who visited one or more sites.

The pilgrimage of this Jubilee Year took twists and turns in other ways. Pope Francis proclaimed this Ordinary Jubilee, but did not live to see its completion. The faithful of the Church and many others throughout the world mourned his passing and prayed for the repose of his soul. In the centuries-old tradition, cardinals from throughout the world, came to the Vatican and met in conclave to choose a successor to Pope Francis, a successor to Saint Peter. None of us imagined that the conclave would result in the election of the first American Pope – a Chicago native, an

Augustinian who had been a bishop in Peru, Robert Cardinal Prevost, who chose the name Leo XIV. We are still getting to know Pope Leo, a task made simpler by his easy going nature, and his complete understanding of American culture. We look forward to his leadership for many more years.

As a diocese, we continued a process of Pastoral Planning – making decisions about how to move forward to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We have fewer priests than in the past. We are infinitely more mobile than we were decades ago. We have struggled to celebrate Masses that may have been necessary in years past when churches were often

full, but now draw dwindling numbers out of habit when every Catholic in the surrounding area could be accommodated in one or two Masses in one of our larger churches. The time has come to give priority to our mission of the proclamation of Jesus Christ over the burdensome task of maintaining numerous locations and buildings. In the coming year, we will emphasize how we can grow in our commitment to evangelization.

In the past two years, our diocese has been named in numerous lawsuits and claims regarding the sexual abuse of minors by priests. We recently filed for the financial reorganization of our diocese under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. As I noted at the time of our filing, we have two goals in this process. 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 that 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. We pray that in this difficult process we will address the sins of the past with an eye toward justice for all who were harmed.

The Jubilee Year has brought us graces and challenges. May our experiences of prayer, reflection, and dialogue bring us closer to our loving God and to one another as members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

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Nationwide Prayer Vigil for Life to Take Place January 22-23

WASHINGTON – Catholics across the country are encouraged to observe a nationwide prayer vigil from Thursday, January 22 to Friday, January 23, 2026, to pray for an end to abortion and a greater respect for all human life in post-Roe America. “Together, we must pray to change hearts and build a culture of life as we advocate for the most vulnerable. I look forward to opening our Vigil with Holy Mass together with many other bishops, hundreds of priests, consecrated religious, seminarians, and many thousands of pilgrims,” said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The National Prayer Vigil for Life is hosted each January by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Pro-Life Secretariat, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., and The Catholic University of America’s Office of Campus Ministry. This year, the opening of the National Prayer Vigil for Life will take place on January 22,



the anniversary date of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide in 1973.

In 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States issued its decision Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which overturned Roe v. Wade. Since the Dobbs decision, abortion policy is now determined at the state and federal levels. Some states have increased access to

abortion and others are working to ensure stronger policies to protect preborn children and their mothers.

The Opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life will take place at 5:00 p.m. in the Great Upper Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, January 22. Bishop Thomas will

be the principal celebrant and homilist for the Opening Mass. At 7:00 p.m., following the Opening Mass, a National Holy Hour for Life will take place in the Crypt Church (lower level) of the Basilica, which will include Recitation of the Rosary and Benediction. The nationwide vigil concludes on Friday, January 23 in the Great Upper Church with the 8:00 AM Closing Mass celebrated

by Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, OFM, Cap., archbishop emeritus of Boston.

Pre-registration is required for clergy and seminarians. For more information about on-site attendance at the Basilica for the National Prayer Vigil for Life, please visit the event page at <https://www.nationalshrine.org/event/2026-national-prayer-vigil-for-life/>.

The live television broadcasts on January 22 for the 5:00 pm Opening Mass and the January 23 Closing Mass at 8:00 a.m. will be provided by the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) and will be available via livestream on the Basilica’s website at www.nationalshrine.org/mass.

For those who cannot come to Washington, Catholics across the country are invited to unite in prayer during the nationwide vigil through local diocesan prayer efforts such as special Masses and holy hours taking place during January 22-23. Additionally, thousands of Catholics are signing up for the national pro-life novena, 9 Days for Life, which will take place from January 16-24, 2026.

2025 Jubilee Year Pilgrimage comes to a close

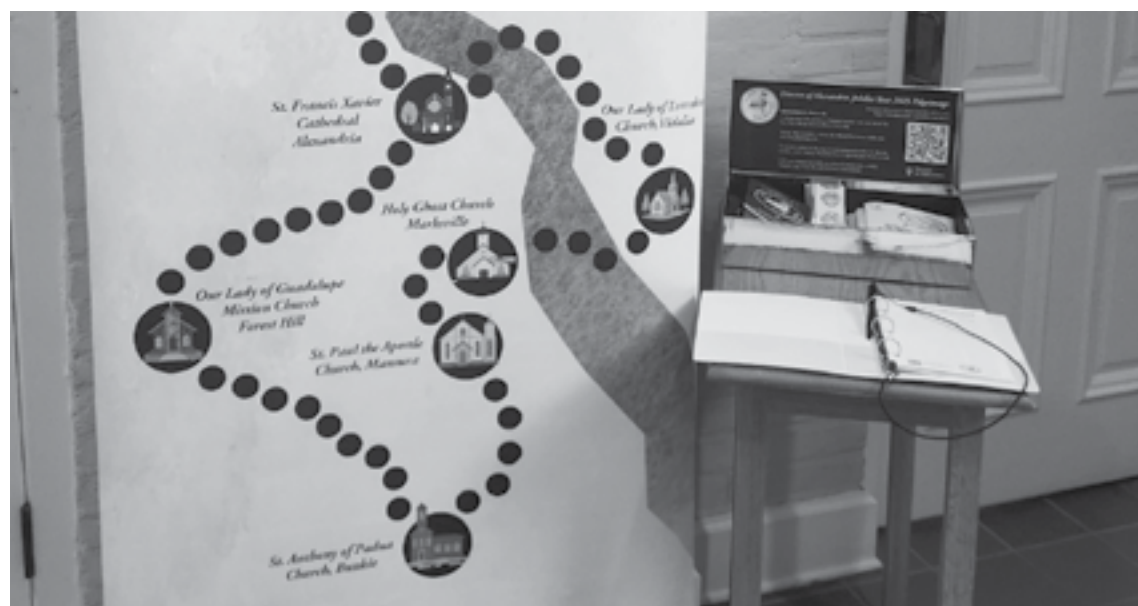
On behalf of Bishop Robert Marshall, we thank you for participating in the Diocese of Alexandria’s 2025 Jubilee Year Pilgrimage of Hope.

When we began planning this event in 2024, we weren’t sure how many would take the time to travel to all eight pilgrimage locations within the diocese specified by Bishop Marshall.

However, a pilgrimage is not meant to be an easy task and this one wasn’t something that could be completed in one day though a few of you tried! Some of you made notations in your passports of the dates of your visits and it took some of you months to complete. Thank you for your perseverance and commitment!

And it wasn’t just individuals who participated: church groups traveled together, families went together, friends accompanied each other.

Hundreds of pilgrims, not only from our diocese, but also from north and south Louisiana



and from as far away as Victoria, Texas; Westerville, Ohio; and Meridian, Idaho, came to visit each one of the pilgrimage sites in the Diocese of Alexandria.

Over 400 pilgrimage completion certificates were signed and sealed by Bishop Robert Marshall and mailed out

along with returned passports and commemorative Jubilee Year coins.

Stories were shared about how special the experience was such as one person telling us they received a personal tour and history lesson led by a parishioner at Our Lady of Lourdes in

Vidalia. Another told us about their emotional experience when visiting Our Lady of Guadalupe. They did not understand when the pastor spoke in Spanish but understood the liturgy of the Mass completely, no matter what language it is spoken in.

The Jubilee Year Cross,

which was specially made by a local artisan to commemorate this year, has been standing in St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. It will be moved to the Main Chapel at Maryhill by the end of this year.

As you know by now, the Diocese of Alexandria embarked on a major pastoral plan this year. We called it *Together as One* and the purpose was to find a path forward that was sustainable and promoted growth for the future Church in our diocese. Some difficult decisions had to be made in the end but nevertheless, throughout this pilgrimage year, it played out in real time how pilgrims were welcomed into churches that were “not their own” and in return, we welcomed with open arms those who “were not our parishioners,” to worship at our church, *together as one*.

Again, thank you for participating in the pilgrimage and thank you to the pastors and staff of the pilgrimage site churches for hosting.

Together as One Church
Embracing a Future of Hope

Diocese of Alexandria Pastoral Plan Initiative



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Bishop Marshall's letter regarding the Pastoral Plan



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December 3, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, I write with deep gratitude and renewed hope as we mark the completion of our *Together as One Church* pastoral planning process and formally release the decisions made on the realignment of parishes and missions. This moment is the fruit of nearly two years of prayer, listening, discernment, and collaboration across every corner of our diocese.

I first want to express my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Core Team. Their dedication, long hours, and careful reflection guided this process with wisdom and fidelity to the mission of the Church. I am also deeply grateful to our priests, who supported this effort with openness, honest dialogue, and a shared commitment to strengthening parish life.

Most especially, I thank you — the faithful people of our diocese. Your prayerful participation in parish sessions, regional gatherings, and online feedback made this truly a diocesan process. Your experiences, hopes, concerns, and insights shaped the final recommendations in a significant way. This plan could not—and should not—have been formed without you.

With this realignment of parishes and missions in mind, we will concentrate on the Four Pillars identified when this process was announced. We will seek ways to collaborate within deaneries and pastoral planning areas in coordinating Mass schedules and ministries. We will challenge parishes to expand their vision beyond those who regularly attend Mass by engaging in evangelization in their communities. We will renew our commitment to mission through effective discipleship. And we will encourage a vibrant parish experience through liturgies that are reverent and life-giving, and through parish and diocesan programs that help disciples become mission-driven. While some elements call us to change, every part of the plan is and will be ordered toward helping our communities flourish as living witnesses to the Gospel.

Official implementation of the structural changes and new pastoral assignments will begin on July 1, 2026. In the months ahead, we will continue to communicate with you and with parish leadership to ensure a smooth and prayerful transition.

I invite you to read the full scope of the pastoral realignment and learn more by visiting the Diocesan website. There you will find information about the recommendations, timelines, and next steps for each region of the diocese.

Though I am confident that the process we have undertaken is the right one for the future of the Church, I understand these results are very difficult when they directly affect you and your family. Change is hard. The changes may affect where you worship, how far you need to drive to attend Mass or participate in parish events, and what you consider to be your intimate faith community. I appreciate these decisions may cause you to be sad and lead to a time of grieving. With all my compassion, know that my prayers are with you on this new journey. I pray that you will be welcomed and embraced by a larger parish and diocesan family of mission-driven disciples.

Let us continue to entrust this work to the Holy Spirit. May the Lord strengthen us as we grow together—united in faith, hope, and love—as one Church.

With gratitude and every blessing,

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

Pastoral Planning final results

For more information and FAQ about the *Together as One* pastoral plan, please visit www.diocesealex.org/together-as-one-church-embracing-a-future-of-hope-2/

Avoyelles Deanery

- Christ the King Church, Simmesport:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Peter, Bordelonville
- Church of the Little Flower, Evergreen:**
Is to be suppressed and amalgamates with St. Anthony of Padua, Bunkie
- Holy Ghost Church, Marksville:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Joseph, Marksville and St. Genevieve, Brouillette
- Immaculate Conception Church, Dupont:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Mater Dolorosa, Plaucheville
- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaucheville:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Immaculate Conception, Dupont
- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Fifth Ward:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Francis de Sales, Echo
- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Mansura:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Paul the Apostle, Mansura
- Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Moreauville:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Sacred Heart, Moreauville
- Sacred Heart Church, Moreauville:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Our Lady of Sorrows, Moreauville
- St. Alphonsus Church, Hessmer:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Martin of Tours, Belledeau
- St. Anthony of Padua Church, Bunkie:**
Receives Church of the Little Flower in an amalgamation and remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. Charles Chapel, Goudeau, Evergreen:** Closes within one year
- St. Francis de Sales Church, Echo:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Our Lady of Lourdes, Fifth Ward
- St. Genevieve Church, Brouillette:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Joseph, Marksville and Holy Ghost, Marksville
- St. Joseph Church, Cheneyville:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Martin, Lecompte.
- St. Joseph Church, Marksville:**
Remains a Parish with a shared pastorate with Holy Ghost and St. Genevieve.
- St. Martin of Tours Church, Belledeau:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Alphonsus, Hessmer
- St. Mary's Assumption Church, Cottonport:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. Michael Church, Rexamere:**
Is to be suppressed and amalgamates with St. Peter, Bordelonville
- St. Paul the Apostle Church, Mansura:**
Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Mansura
- St. Peter Church, Bordelonville:**
Receives St. Michael, Rexamere in an amalgamation and remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with Christ the King, Simmesport
- St. Richard Chapel, Hickory Hill:** Closes within one year

Central Deanery

- Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tioga:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available
- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- Our Lady of Guadalupe (Espanol), Forest Hill:**
Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission becomes a canonical Parish with a resident pastor
- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available
- St. Cyril Chapel, Flatwoods:** Closes within one year
- St. Edward Church, Fishville (Pollock):**
Begins the process of becoming a canonical parish. In a shared pastorate with St. Mary, Jena
- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available
- St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. James Memorial Church, Alexandria:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available
- St. John the Baptist Church, Deville:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available and serves the Mission of St. John the Baptist, Moncla

Central Deanery continued

- St. John the Baptist Mission, Moncla:** Remains a Mission served by St. John the Baptist, Deville
- St. Joseph Church Central, Colfax:**
Remains a Parish and serves St. Patrick mission in Montgomery.
- St. Jude Mission, Sieper:** Closes within one year
- St. Juliana Church, Alexandria:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available
- St. Louis Church, Glenmora:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor and serves the Mission of St. Peter, Elmer
- St. Margaret Church, Boyce:** Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Rita, Alexandria
- St. Margaret Mary, Gorum:** Closes within one year
- St. Martin Church, Lecompte:** Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Joseph, Cheneyville
- St. Michael the Archangel Church, Leesville:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. Patrick Church, Montgomery:** Remains a Mission served by St. Joseph, Colfax
- St. Peter Mission, Elmer:** Remains a Mission served by St. Louis, Glenmora
- St. Rita Church, Alexandria:** Remains a Parish in a shared pastorate with St. Margaret, Boyce
- St. Winifred Chapel, Effie:** Closes within one year
- Sts. Francis and Anne Church, Kolin:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor as long as sufficient priests are available

Eastern Deanery

- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Vidalia:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. Edward the Confessor Church, Tallulah:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. Francis of Assisi Church, Waterproof:** Remains a Mission served by St. Joseph, St. Joseph
- St. Gerard Church, Jonesville:** Remains a Mission served by St. Patrick, Ferriday
- St. John Chapel, Columbia:** Remains a Mission served by St. Mary, Winnsboro
- St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor and serves the Mission of St. Francis of Assisi, Waterproof
- St. Mary Church, Jena:** Remains a Parish with a shared pastor when St. Edward, Fishville becomes a parish
- St. Mary Church, Winnsboro:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor and serves the Mission of St. John Chapel, Columbia
- St. Patrick Church, Ferriday:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor and serves the Mission of St. Gerard, Jonesville
- St. William Chapel, Olla:** Remains a Mission served by Our Lady of Lourdes, Winnfield

Natchitoches Deanery

- Holy Cross Church, Natchitoches:**
Holy Cross remains a non-territorial parish to serve the students of NSU and the LSMSA. As long as sufficient priests are available, it will be served by a resident pastor/campus minister.
- Holy Family Chapel, Monet Ferry (Cloutierville):** Closes within one year
- Holy Rosary Chapel, Emmanuel (Lena):** Closes within one year
- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Campti:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor and serves the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary, Black Lake
- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Winnfield:**
Remains a Parish with a resident pastor and serves the Mission of St. William, Olla
- Our Lady of Rosary Chapel, Black Lake:**
Remains a Mission served by Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Campti
- St. Anne Chapel, Old River:**
Remains available as a worship site with occasional liturgies determined by the pastor/pastoral team serving St. Augustine and St. John the Baptist
- St. Anne Church, Spanish Lake (Robeline):**
Remains a Mission served by St. Anthony of Padua, Natchitoches
- St. Anthony of Padua Church, Natchitoches:** Remains a Parish with a resident pastor
- St. Augustine Church, Isle Brevelle (Natchez, LA):**
Remains a parish in a shared pastorate with St. John the Baptist Church, Cloutierville
- St. Francis of Assisi Church, Powhatan:**
Is to be suppressed and amalgamated into St. Anthony of Padua, Natchitoches
- St. John the Baptist Church, Cloutierville:**
Remains a parish in a shared pastorate with St. Augustine, Isle Brevelle
- St. Joseph Chapel, Trichel:** Closes within one year

Lord, every nation on earth
will adore You.

Psalm 72: 11
Responsorial Psalm for January 4
The Epiphany of the Lord



CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF CENTRAL LOUISIANA CHRISTMAS CHEER PROJECTS. From Alexandria to Campti to Natchitoches Parish to Winnsboro, Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana recently made visits and dropped some Christmas Cheer along the way. Project #4: Thirty hams were donated to St Mary's Church, Winnsboro for their monthly food box distribution. Thank you Fr. Robert Johnson, pastor of St. Mary's, for your assistance! Also pictured: Jansen Kervin, Emily Paul and Heidi Wampler, all of Catholic Charities. The Christmas Cheer Projects were made possible by a grant from Healthy Blue!

Mandatory VIRTUS training will be AVAILABLE ONLINE beginning Jan. 1

by Kecia Coco
Director of Safe Environment

Exciting News...
MANDATORY VIRTUS training will be AVAILABLE ONLINE beginning January 1, 2026!

This means no more commuting or rearranging schedules for educators, employees, administration, and volunteers.

The updated online VIRTUS class is approximately 90 minutes long, with completion required within 48 hours once you begin the training. Participants can take the class from home, at a time that works best for them, ensuring that VIRTUS compliance is attainable for all. While the VIRTUS training material remains the same, the online format makes it a more comfortable and flexible experience without compromising the safety of our children. This new approach aims to simplify participation, making it easier for



VIRTUS TRAINING AVAILABLE ONLINE BEGINNING JANUARY 1. Above is a screen shot of the VIRTUS training module available to everyone in the Diocese of Alexandria. VIRTUS training is mandatory for anyone employed by a the diocese, or church or school within the diocese as well as those volunteering to work in any of those places.

everyone to fulfill their mandated responsibilities.

As always, following VIRTUS certification, training bulletins will be assigned monthly.

Please ensure these are completed to avoid suspension. Working or volunteering with our children requires you to be current with background checks, bulletins, and five-year recertification modules.

I am pleased to witness the progress we are making as a diocese. Daily dedication from each of us is essential to keeping our children safe. By working together, we can prevent harm and significantly reduce the circumstances surrounding child sexual abuse. Let us continue to stand united in our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable among us.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Kecia Coco, kcoco@diocesealex.org.

St. Joseph School to adopt the President/Principal model of administration Blaine Dautat, retired Superintendent of the Avoyelles Parish School Board, is to join the leadership team.

Reverend Martin Laird, Pastor of Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church and St. Joseph School, in Plaquemine, announces the hiring of Mr. Blaine Dautat as the President of St. Joseph School. Mr. Dautat will begin in January 2026.

For many decades, some Catholic schools have employed the President/Principal Model of Administration to further

advance and fulfill their missions. In this effective model, executive functions are aligned around two distinct leadership profiles:

- The Outward-Facing strategic planner, fundraiser, and external relations leader (President), and
- The Inward-Facing academician and champion of teaching, learning, discipline, and safety (Principal).



Blaine Dautat

St. Joseph School is also blessed to have an eighteen-year veteran of the school in the position of Principal. She has already begun collaborating with Mr. Blaine Dautat, who will formally join this new leadership team as President.

St. Joseph School is truly blessed to have such a proven and successful school leader as Mr. Dautat step into this new role.

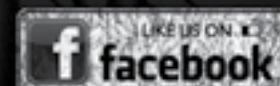
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PRIESTS JUBILEE MASS. On Wednesday, Dec. 3, the annual Priests Jubilee Mass was celebrated at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria. Priests who were celebrating a milestone anniversary of their priestly ordination this year: Fr. John Cunningham, 60 years; Fr. Ron Mathews, 50 years; Fr. Kurian Zachariah, 40 years; Msgr. James Ferguson, 40 years; Fr. Dwight de Jesus, 40 years; Fr. Daniel Cook, 35 years; Fr. Daniel O'Connor, 35 years; Fr. Edwin Rodriguez, 30 years; Bishop Robert Marshall, 25 years; Fr. Luke Melcher, 20 years; Fr. Ryan Humphries, 20 years; Fr. Irion St. Romain, 15 years; Fr. Brian Seiler, 10 years; Fr. Dale Meade, 10 years; Fr. Joseph Desimone, 10 years. Other priests present: Fr. Rickey Gremillion, Fr. Craig Scott, Fr. Anthony Dharmaraj, Fr. Phil Michiels, Fr. Albi Mulloth, Fr. Jacob Thomas, Fr. Bino Palliparambil, Fr. Luke LaFleur, Fr. Abraham Varghese, Fr. Abraham Pallakkattuchira, Fr. Christian Ogbonna, Fr. Jose Pallipurath, Fr. Joseph Xavier, Fr. Kenneth Obiekwe, Fr. Vincent Manuel, Fr. Martin Laird, Fr. Joy Antony, Fr. Wade deCoste, Fr. John Pardue, Fr. Chad Partain.



NOTRE DAME SEMINARY ALUMNI DAY. On Monday, Nov. 3, Notre Dame Seminary alumni gathered to attend alumni day. The evening began with an Alumni Association meeting, where the alumni heard from Rector, Fr. Josh Rodrigue. Following the meeting, over 75 alumni priests con-celebrated Mass. Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Chancellor and alumnus of NDS, was the main celebrant, and Bishop Robert Marshall ('00) was the guest homilist, as he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priestly ordination. Alumni, faculty, and fourth-year theologians enjoyed a reception and dinner following Mass. During the dinner, Fr. Jeff Merritt, president of the alumni association, welcomed the C4 seminarians into the alumni association and reminded them of the importance of the fraternity of their brother priests.

Seminarian Burses

November 2025 Donations


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Thank you for your generosity!
--- Very Reverend M. Craig Scott, Chairman


Gracious and loving God,
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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.



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OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE AT OLPS. A solemn candlelight Mass was celebrated on the evening of Dec. 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria. More than 200 faithful gathered for the liturgy, followed by a candlelight procession and the veneration of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. At the conclusion of the evening, Seminarian Blake Bernard offered a brief testimony, sharing how the witness of Saint Juan Diego and devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe played a significant role in his discernment of the call to seminary and priesthood.



CHRIST THE KING PROCESSION AT OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR, ALEXANDRIA. On Sunday, Nov. 23, OLPS had a solemn Mass for the feast of Christ the King, followed by a Eucharistic procession with approximately 200 people walking, giving public witness to our belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In the public Litany while making the journey, we prayed for the Lord's Blessing upon our church, school, neighborhood and city of Alexandria.

Fullness of Truth Conference set for February 20-21

Join us for the 5th Annual Fullness of Truth Catholic Family Conference to be held at St. Rita Church, 4401 Bayou Rapides Rd., Alexandria. This year's conference theme is "Why We're Catholic: Effectively Sharing the Hope Within You!" Speakers this year will be Fr. Michael Russo, pastor of St. Anne's Church, Youngsville, LA; Patty Schneier, Catholic evangelist, author and podcaster; and John Martignoni, Catholic apologist and author. Early bird general admission is \$35 if purchased before Jan. 31. Family pass, group pass and other options available online at www.fullnessoftruth.org or call 281-358-9195.



A Christmas Child

On one cold and dark winter night,
An angel of the Lord led
Joseph and Mary on a flight.

The night was cold and no place to stay,
They ended up in a barn that
was full of hay.

Mary was with child
whose name was Jesus,
He was born, and by His birth
He would save us.

In the barn there was a manger,
It was not fit even for a stranger.

Because of His humility shown
by His birth,
It opened the door to save
everyone on earth.

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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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NATIVITY PAINT PARTY AT THE CATHEDRAL.

Close to 60 people attended the Nativity Paint workshop on Tuesday, Dec. 9 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. The paint workshop, led by Harleigh Leonards, was a great success with both young and old having a great evening of painting. If you would like more information on Harleigh's classes or her collection of great online store items, visit <https://www.harleighleonards.com/>



ST. GENEVIEVE CHURCH CHRISTMAS HAYRIDE. On Dec. 6, the 2nd Sunday of Advent, St. Genevieve Church in Brouillette held its annual Christmas Hayride following the 4:00 p.m. Vigil Mass. This community event was well attended with many tractor pulled trailers going to different homes of parishioners who graciously opened their doors to everyone. Pictured above, one of the stops on the route. Pictured right, one of the many tractor-pulled flatbed trailers decked out with chairs and a lit up Christmas tree, ready to take on passengers for the ride.


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.

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SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION. On or near the First Sunday of Advent, parishes celebrate the Rite of Entrance into the Order of the Catechumenate with those adults and school age children who are preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. In the same rite or in a separate one, parishes celebrate the Rite of Welcome of Candidates for Confirmation, Eucharist, and/or acceptance into the full communion of the Catholic Church. These rites are a part of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). Bishop Marshall celebrated the combined rites on Sunday, Nov. 30, at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, with many of those who will receive one or more of the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.



SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE. St. Mary's Assumption Church Eucharistic Procession on November 23 which was 'Christ The King' Sunday.



ADVENT CLASS PROJECT. The 5th Grade class at Sacred Heart School, Moreauville, celebrated the Advent season by making posters with the theme "WHAT IS ADVENT?" as well as made Advent wreaths to be placed around the school.

See more photos on
photo galleries at
www.diocesealex.org



POLAR EXPRESS IN MOREAUVILLE. Mrs. Karen Guillot's kindergarten class had a great time celebrating the Polar Express dressed in their pajamas as they enjoyed the movie! Pictured with Karen Guillot (teacher), and Kim Bordelon (teacher's aide) are the students.



SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE. Fitzgerald [redacted] of Marksville, has been awarded Sacred Heart School's 5th Grade Student of the Year. Pictured with Fitzgerald is principal, Amy Coco.



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM. PreK-8th grade students participated in St. Joseph School's Christmas Program! A heartfelt thank you to Mrs. Akeysheia Juneau for heading up this special program, and to the many behind-the-scenes teachers and staff whose hard work, dedication, and love made this night possible. We celebrated our school, our students, and the true meaning of Christmas—the birth of Jesus Christ. What a joyful reminder of faith, community, and the light we are called to share.



SACRED HEART SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PLAY. SHS presented “An Old Fashion Christmas Radio Show” at the Earl Barbry Convention Center, Marksville on Thursday, Dec. 11. Written and directed by Karen Moreau. Music and choreography by Carmen Necaie.



CHRISTMAS CAROLING. St. Joseph School, Plaucheville, had their annual Christmas Caroling on Monday, Dec. 16.



(above and right) FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE. Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Friday, Dec. 12 in an outdoor Mass in Spanish at Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission in Forest Hill. There was great participation by the entire community. Reflection on the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Star of Evangelization was the focus. On behalf of Bishop Marshall, thank you to Father Marc Noel for the invitation and to the community for their kind welcome.



ST. RITA CHURCH CELEBRATES OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE. St. Rita's Spanish community celebrated its first ever Kermes following Mass to celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe across the diocese

As the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe took place Dec. 12, communities throughout the Diocese prepared and celebrated this day honoring our Blessed Mother Mary. Our Lady of Guadalupe mission church, St. Rita, and Our Lady of Lourdes (Winnfield) held their Holy Mass, followed by the “Kermes” (Church Fair) with food, activities, and cultural dances for the community. The youth groups also worked and practiced for the reenactment of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe that day in the year 1531. It was a weekend full of love and devotion to Our Blessed Mother. Parishioners of our Dioceses from other Parishes attended and celebrated this Feast Day together. It was truly a time where the communities were able to share amongst each other and grow our unity and relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you to our Bishop Robert Marhsall, his clergy, and the Knights of Columbus for their support and attendance in honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Como la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se celebró el 12 de diciembre, las comunidades de toda la diócesis prepararon y celebraron este día en honor a nuestra Santísima Madre María. La iglesia misionera de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Santa Rita y Nuestra Señora de Lourdes (Winnfield) celebraron su Santa Misa, y su «Kermes» con comida, actividades y bailes culturales para la comunidad. Los grupos de jóvenes también trabajaron y ensayaron para la recreación de las apariciones de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe ese día en el año 1531. Fue un fin de semana lleno de amor y devoción a Nuestra Santísima Madre. Los feligreses de otras parroquias de nuestra diócesis asistieron y celebraron juntos esta fiesta. Fue realmente un momento en el que las comunidades pudieron compartir entre sí y hacer crecer nuestra unidad y relación como hermanos y hermanas en Cristo. Gracias a nuestro obispo Robert Marhsall, a su clero, y a los Caballeros de Colón por su apoyo y asistencia en honor a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.



Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana Grief Ministry

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana offers an eight-week program, *Breathing through Grief*, designed to bring comfort and hope to anyone facing loss—whether through death, illness, broken relationships, or other life-altering changes. Rooted in faith and guided by grace, this program provides a safe haven for sharing, embrace healing, and discover that even in the emptiness, God is near and new beginnings are possible.

Participants will find strength to renew their spirit, experience inner peace, and take intentional steps toward a meaningful new chapter in life. Each session blends practical tools with spiritual encouragement in a caring group setting, fostering resilience and hope throughout the journey.

Breathing through Grief will be two separate groups, one in Alexandria and one in Cottonport.

In Alexandria, the program begins Monday, February 2, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.



in the Diocese of Alexandria Conference Room at 4400 Coliseum Boulevard.

In Cottonport, an informational meeting will be held Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. to determine dates and time. Meeting will

be at St. Mary's Assumption Catholic Church, 820 Front Street in The Regina Caeli Room.

For more details or to register, call Catholic Charities at 318-445-6424, Ext. 506.

Make 2026 Your Year to Quit Tobacco! Free Six-Week Tobacco Cessation Group

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana invites adults who are ready to quit smoking, vaping, or using tobacco to join a supportive, no-cost cessation group.

Group Details:

- **Start Date:** Monday, January 26, 2026
- **Time:** 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
- **Location:** Diocese of Alexandria
4400 Coliseum Blvd,
Alexandria, LA
- **Group Size:** Limited to 10 participants

Led by nationally credentialed tobacco treatment specialists (NCTTP) certified through the University of Mississippi Medical Center's ACT Center, this group offers expert guidance and peer support to help you succeed.

Individual sessions are also available.

Register today: <https://cccenla.org/mental-health-services>

For more information, call: 318.445.6424 ext. 506.



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- **Christian Life Coaching**
- **Christian Support Groups:**
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Peace in the Mds of Crisis Divorce Support
- **Vaping/Tobacco Cessation (Youth and Adult)**
- **Disaster Preparedness Resources**
- **Financial Literacy Budget Class**
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- **Assist.Educate.Elevate.**
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- **SNAP Enrollment Assistance**
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My spiritual father, my priest

By Elza Soaedry
Blessed is She

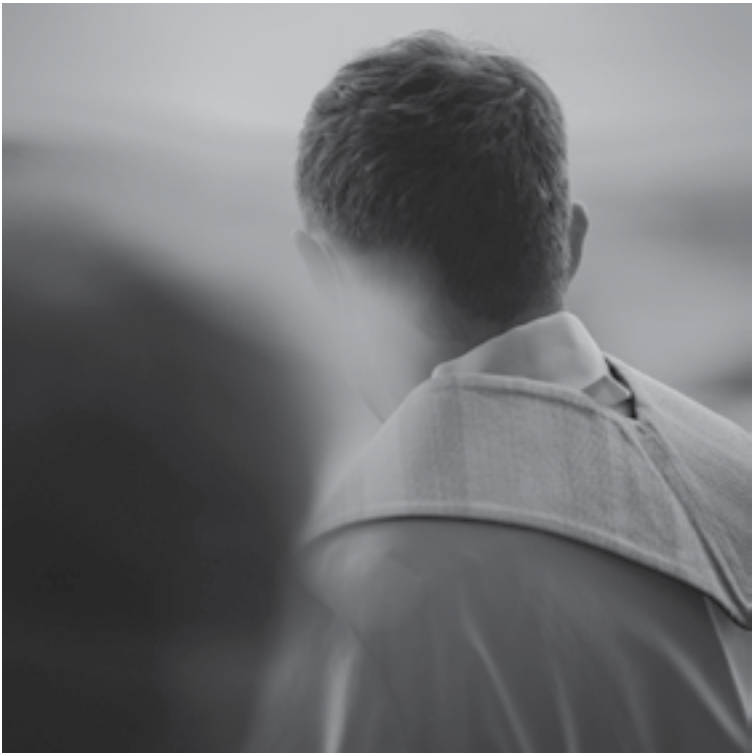
My own earthly father (whom I love very much) was, out of his own brokenness, ill-equipped to be a spiritual father. Growing up, my dad claimed he didn't believe in organized religion. Sadly, I have no recollection of him ever going to church or praying with us. That was my mom's job.

Years ago, as I was growing in my faith and in my relationship with God the Father, I realized how that had left me with a large father-wound that needed healing.

Our experiences with our earthly fathers have a major impact in the way we see our heavenly Father. For some people, having a father-wound tends to make them shy away from getting close to our heavenly Father. Fortunately for me, it made me realize just how much I needed to find my identity in the One Who created me and loves me more than I can fathom.

Discovering My Identity

I have been blessed to have experienced sweet intimacy with Our Lord in my own heart through my friendship with Him. By having a real relationship with Him, I have come to discover one of the most important things I could ever learn: my identity lies in being His precious daughter. I am a beloved daughter of a Father



Who willed me into existence, loves me through and through, and even knows how many strands of hair are on my head. My identity lies in a God Who knew me before He knitted me together in my mother's womb.

That is one amazing Father!

The Ministerial Priesthood

By the nature of their ordination, every Catholic priest becomes a father. In His goodness, Our Lord instituted the Eucharist as His true Body and Blood and the Sacrament of Holy Orders all at the same time: during His Last Supper with His

disciples.

During the Last Supper, Jesus offered himself as the Passover sacrifice, the sacrificial Lamb, and taught that every ordained priest is to follow the same sacrifice in the exact same way.

Priests are God's Gift to Us

Many are called, few are chosen. What a grace and blessing must be to be called to be one of His priests.

Without our priests, we would not be able to participate in the celebration of the Holy Mass and receive Our Lord in the Eucharist. We would not have a way to receive another beautiful

gift of our faith: the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we walk into the confessional, we are walking to talk to Jesus about our sins. This is where we come when we know we have fallen short and fallen into the temptation of sin. Through the priest, we ask Our Lord to have mercy on us and to forgive us. I love what Saint Isidore of Seville had to say about Confession:

Confession heals, confession justifies, confession grants pardon of sin. All hope consists in confession. In confession there is a chance for mercy. Believe it firmly, do not doubt, do not hesitate, never despair of the mercy of God.

Of course, in our human weakness, we sometimes keep committing the same sins over and over again. God knew this about us, and that is precisely why He instituted the Sacrament of Confession. In His endless mercy and through the Sacrament of Confession, the good Lord brings forgiveness to our broken hearts, hearts that have been broken by sinning against Him, ourselves, and others.

Holy Friendships

We moved from Florida to my husband's hometown of Bismarck, ND in 2008. There, for the first time in my life, I began having the privilege of experiencing amazing and holy friendships with our priests.

My husband has a good childhood friend who became a priest, and we had the gift of having him and many other priests in and out of our home. Breaking

bread with them, laughing, and witnessing the beauty of a faithfully-lived vocation (while also learning that they as human) was truly a blessing.

Once, we had our friend and pastor, Father Guthrie, over for dinner. We enjoyed a nice meal together with great conversation and, as I walked away from the table to clear the dishes, I began to hear the two of them go on and on about their favorite movie quotes. It became clear that both had watched The Godfather many times. They were unabashedly trying to outdo one another as to who could recite more quotes from this iconic movie. I remember thinking how cool it was to watch my husband and our priest being just like two regular guys.

Serving Our Priests

As I started volunteering in different capacities at our parish, I had the opportunity to join a handful of women in our diocese who started a ministry which concentrated on caring for our priests' daily needs, including cooking for them twice a week. We would take turns cooking for different priests. Watching the pure joy and appreciation in their faces as they got together with other brother priests to enjoy a nice homemade meal was truly beautiful.

I began to realize that these holy men were indispensable and a big reason why I love my Catholic Faith. They show us and model to us what it is to live a life of sacrificial love. They give up everything to serve Our Lord in the most unselfish and profound way.

See PRIEST, page 15

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The Lord
will
bless his
people
with
peace.

Psalm 29: 11
Responsorial Psalm
for January 11
The Baptism of the Lord

The ongoing birth of Jesus

By Dr. Richard Clements
Word on Fire

The Blessed Virgin Mary isn't the only person who was called to give birth to Jesus. We are all called to give birth to Jesus. Not physically, of course. Mary is unique in that respect, as in so many others. But we are all called to give birth to Jesus *spiritually* in our hearts, in our minds, and in our lives. The physical birth of Jesus into the world was a one-time occurrence; the spiritual birth of Jesus into the world is an ongoing event—one that is intended to continue until he comes again, and one to which each of us is invited to contribute. By "giving birth" to Jesus, we help to bring his loving presence to every time and place throughout the world until he returns in glory.

This concept of "giving birth to Jesus" goes all the way back to the earliest centuries of the Church. St. Irenaeus spoke of the Word of God allowing

himself to be "carried" by man, and of man "making room" for the Word within himself. St. Hippolytus described the Logos as constantly giving birth to the saints and allowing the saints, in turn, to give birth to him. Hippolytus emphasized the central role that the Church plays in this process: The Church as a whole strives to give birth to the Word of God in the world, and the Church enables her individual members to do the same. Similarly, St. Methodius portrayed the Church as being "with child" and as giving birth to the mystical Body of Christ.

St. Augustine discusses the theme of giving birth to Jesus in a sermon (Sermon 25, 7–8) that focused on Matt. 12:46–50, a passage which serves as one of the main scriptural foundations for this concept. In that passage, Jesus is speaking to a crowd, and someone informs him that "his mother and his brethren" are outside, asking to speak to him. Jesus replies by asking,

"Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" He then points to his disciples and says, "Here are my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Augustine points out that all of us who have been baptized became brothers and sisters of Christ by virtue of that baptism, and he asserts that we become Jesus' "mother" in at least two ways: by doing the will of God the Father, as Jesus emphasizes in this passage, and by expanding the Body of Christ by drawing other people to seek out baptism and membership in the Church:

Now you in your turn must draw to the font of baptism as many as you possibly can. You became sons when you were born there yourselves, and now by bringing others to birth in the same way, you have it in your power to become the mothers of Christ.

More than four centuries ago, St. Teresa of Avila wrote the poem "Christ Has No Body," which eloquently describes our call to give birth to Jesus and incarnate him in our world:

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

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*Here am I, Lord;
I come
to do
Your will.*

Psalm 40: 8
Responsorial Psalm
for January 18
Second Sunday
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Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

God entrusts each of us with the undeserved privilege—and the rather daunting responsibility—of incarnating Jesus Christ in our contemporary world by doing the Father's will (which is always love) and by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us more and more into the image of the Son (Rom. 8:29).

Incarnating Christ requires that we die to self so that Christ might live in us as fully as possible.

The poet Charles Péguy

expressed the magnitude of this responsibility and the depth of the trust that God has placed in us in this regard in stark terms in his 1911 work *The Portico of the Mystery of the Second Virtue*:

Fortune, mystery, danger, wretchedness, divine grace, a unique call,

A terrible responsibility, the misery and nobility of our life,

Ephemeral creatures that we are . . .

Fragile, it depends on us whether the eternal Voice will resound or lapse into silence.

St. Paul gives us some concrete guidance regarding ways in which we can incarnate Jesus in our lives—ways in which we can help ensure that the “eternal Voice” continues to resound in our world today and in the future. Prayer is always a good place to start. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul emphasizes the transformative power of

time spent contemplating the life of Christ and the “glory of the Lord”: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being *changed into his likeness* from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18, emphasis added).

In several of his letters, Paul exhorts us to allow the Lord to transform our minds and grant us “new knowledge,” knowledge that will help us to put on the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16; see Phil. 2:5). He reminds the Colossians (and us as well), “You have put off the old man with his practices and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator” (Col. 3:9–10). And he gives the following encouragement to the Romans of his time and to us: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2). This transformation of our minds (and hearts) will enable us to “speak the truth in love,” which further helps us to grow into the image of Christ

(Eph. 4:15).

But at the most fundamental level, incarnating Christ requires that we die to self so that Christ might live in us as fully as possible: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:19–20).

If we strive to do such things as these, we will have done our part in giving birth to Jesus in today's troubled world, as Hans Urs von Balthasar reassures us:

We too will be capable of a suprahuman generation and birth that can make us, as Jesus says, his “mothers”. We can plant God's life in this world and make it grow; we can make God's kingdom come and cause his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven; we can cause his Name to be glorified in this godless and blasphemous world, despite all aggressive atheism. . . . Our bearing of God need not worry us at all: if we live by faith we shall surely bring forth our fruit.

PRIEST

Continued from pg. 13

The Beauty of Sacrificial Love

In a world that is becoming more and more selfish and unwilling to understand the true meaning of sacrificial love, I can see why a vocation to the priesthood will always be inviting to so many faithful Catholic young men who are growing tired of this world's empty promises.

Since moving to the Charlotte, NC area, my family and I now have the blessing of having Fr. John Putnam as our pastor. As a leader of a large parish that now has over 5,000 families, he has proven to be an amazing spiritual leader.

Fr. Putnam was the one chosen by God to be used as His instrument to completely heal me from the terrible trauma of the sexual abuse I suffered as a little girl. He walked me through an amazing healing process that has completely changed my life. Thank God for our holy priests, who in their wisdom know how to minister to us when we need it most.

Fr. Putnam has played the part of the supportive father, but most importantly, he understands that his first and most important job is to teach and guide his children towards God. I feel the Lord has used him to help prune me and best prepare me for a life of discipleship. I'm blessed beyond belief that God would be so kind as to give me such an amazing spiritual father.

Dear Lord, bless and protect all priests. Provide them with all the graces necessary to remain faithful and steadfast in their vocation with fidelity, love and zeal. Amen.



Upcoming Retreats:

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

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

February 26 - March 1
Men's ACTS Retreat
hosted by St. Rita Church,
Alexandria

All retreats are held at Maryhill
Renewal Center.

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POPE LEO LIVE WATCH PARTY. The community of Holy Savior Menard Central High School attended the Pope Leo Live Watch Party held in the Holy Family Center at St. Rita Church, Alexandria. After the event, the football team and others boarded a bus to New Orleans for their playoff game on Friday, Nov. 28. Providentially, the bus (right) featured the name Prevost - the Holy Father's last name!




ST. JOSEPH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PLAUCHEVILLE. Our first graders were so excited for their art lessons this year! In November, students learned about warm and cool colors, how colors can affect our emotions, and the fascinating pointillism technique. After viewing Georges Seurat's A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, they created beautiful fall tree paintings using only warm colors and tiny painted dots.



SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE, BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE. The sixth graders acted out "The Road to the American Revolution" in Mrs. Katie Freeman's history class. Top row: Scarlet [redacted] (tax collector), Jadyn [redacted] (King George III), Jayce [redacted] (Paul Revere), Joey [redacted] (narrator), Eli [redacted] (Samuel Adams). Second row: Harper [redacted] (British soldier), Aubrey [redacted] (British soldier), La'Kaveon [redacted] (Mohawk Patriot). Bottom row: Luby [redacted] (colonist), Jolie [redacted] (tea merchant), Lane [redacted] (colonist), Carter [redacted] (colonist).




LSUA CAMPUS MINISTRY. Sr. Protrectrice of the Servants of the Lord visited LSUA and had ice cream and talked on her mission to Africa.



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A day of joy, reverence, and hope: Beyond the Limits recap

By Cari Terracina
Steubenville South Coordinator

There is something unmistakably holy about a room full of middle schoolers who are open, joyful, and unafraid to encounter God. This year's Junior High Conference was exactly that: a long, beautiful day marked by laughter, reverence, curiosity, and grace.

Nearly 400 junior high students gathered for 12 full hours—no small feat for anyone, especially for adolescents bursting with energy and questions. And yet, what unfolded throughout the day was nothing short of remarkable. The students brought their full selves: their enthusiasm, their honesty, their silliness, and their sincere desire to know God more deeply. Their innocence and joy were palpable, reminding everyone present that the Lord is already powerfully at work in the hearts of our young people.

From the moment students arrived, the atmosphere was alive with excitement. They listened attentively to speakers who spoke truth with clarity and compassion, participated eagerly in prayer and worship, and leaned into moments of silence with unexpected maturity. Group leaders consistently remarked on how engaged their teens were—asking thoughtful questions, sharing vulnerably,



and supporting one another throughout the day.

One of the most profound moments came at the end of the conference during Eucharistic Adoration. After a long, full day, the room grew still. Hundreds of students knelt or sat quietly before the Blessed Sacrament, many encountering this form of prayer for the first time. In that sacred stillness, the energy of the day gave way to peace.

The sacrament of Reconciliation was also a central and moving part of the day. Approximately 150 students received the grace of Confession, many courageously approaching the sacrament with open hearts. We are deeply grateful to the priests who generously gave their time and presence, creating a welcoming and prayerful space for these encounters with God's

mercy. Their willingness to walk with our youth—listening, encouraging, and absolving—was an invaluable gift.

We extend heartfelt thanks to all of our priests, speakers, musicians, volunteers, and team members who made the day possible. Their commitment, preparation, and prayer were evident in every detail of the day.

Group Leaders shared how deeply they love this work, and the privilege of walking alongside young people during such formative year. Their dedication is a testament to the strength and vitality of our diocesan community.

At the same time, they voiced a hopeful invitation for the future: increased parental involvement. As we look ahead to 2026, we gently and intentionally invite parents to take an even more

active role in their children's faith formation. Conferences like this are powerful moments of encounter, but they are meant to be part of a larger journey. Conversations at home, shared prayer, regular participation in parish life, and intentional discipleship within families all help nurture the seeds planted on days like this one.

Parents are not just supporters of youth ministry—they are its primary witnesses. Your presence, encouragement, and example matter deeply. As we move forward, we hope to continue building stronger partnerships between parents, parishes, and diocesan events so that our young people are surrounded by a consistent, loving witness to the faith.

While we pause to celebrate the fruits of this Junior High Conference, we are also keenly aware that this is not the end of the story. In many ways, it is just the beginning.

Already, preparations are underway for the Steubenville South 2026 Conference, themed "*Worthy*," inspired by 1 Samuel 17:47: "For the battle belongs to the Lord." This theme invites teens to reflect on their God-given

dignity, their identity as beloved sons and daughters, and the truth that their worth is rooted not in achievement or strength, but in the Lord who fights for them.

There are many ways to be involved in the upcoming conference. Whether you feel called to serve behind the scenes or to accompany young people directly, your "yes" can make a lasting impact.

More information about Steubenville South 2026 will be available after the new year at steubenvillesouth.com and on Instagram. We encourage families, parish leaders, and community members to stay connected, pray for our youth, and consider how they might be part of what God is doing through these ministries.

As we reflect on this Junior High Conference, our hearts are full of gratitude and hope. Gratitude for the grace that filled the day, for the young people who showed up ready to receive, and for the many hands and hearts that made it possible. Hope for what lies ahead, trusting that the Lord—who has already begun this good work—will continue to lead, guide, and call our youth deeper into His love.

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

Heart of Saint Kateri Circle

Do you have a devotion to Saint Kateri Tekakwitha?

Do you have a desire to learn and become more involved with this vital ministry to and with our indigenous brothers and sisters?

Are you looking for new opportunities to pray, serve and grow alongside believers right in your own community?

You are invited to **COME & SEE** what we're all about!

- Tribal affiliation, though welcome, is not a requirement •

The "**Heart of Saint Kateri**" Circle meets:

2nd Thursday of each month 6:00 p.m.

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*The Lord is my light
and my salvation.*

Psalm 27: 1 | Responsorial Psalm for January 25
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Transitional Deacon Ordination - Jan. 10

You are invited to join us for the Transitional Deacon Ordination of Matthew Bonner at 10:00 a.m. at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria.

Disclaled Carmelites meeting - Jan. 10

The Order of the Disclaled 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.

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.

Catholic Charities Thrift Shop Volunteer Recruitment Breakfast - Jan. 15

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana will be opening its own thrift shop in February! Volunteers are needed to help sort and price merchandise, pickup donations, and man the sales floor during hours of operation. If you are interested in volunteering, a volunteer recruitment breakfast will be held from 9:00-10:00 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 15 at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria. For more information or to RSVP please contact jgilchrist@cccla.org

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Workshop - Jan. 20

The next workshop for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will be held at 6:00 p.m. on January 20 at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria. The average time for the workshop is about three hours so please plan accordingly. For more information, contact Dcn Jason Lavergne at (318) 445-6424 ext 207 or by email at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org. There is no need to register and no charge to attend. We will be happy to have you!

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children - Jan. 22

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373, designates January 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children": "In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion."

Confirmation Retreat - Jan. 24 or Feb. 28

The annual Confirmation Retreat will have two date options (the same retreat each weekend, students are only required to attend one): **Jan 24 OR Feb 28.**

Location: Maryhill Renewal Center, Pineville. Speaker change: presenter for the day will be Dustin Bertrand. Dustin is a dynamic speaker, youth minister, and evangelist from south Louisiana. He has a degree in psychology and criminal justice and a Masters degree in Theology and Christian Ministry from Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio and has been evangelizing for the past 12 years through his ministry called God Made Self Driven.

National Catholic Schools Week - Jan. 25-31

A week to celebrate the value of a Catholic education, its impact on students' minds, bodies, and spirits, and its contributions to the Church and society. We welcome you to come see for yourself, what our Catholic Schools are all about.

Smoking Cessation Weekly Support Group - begins Jan. 26

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana invites adults who are ready to quit smoking, vaping, or using tobacco to join a supportive, no-cost cessation group. Sessions will be held from 4:00-5:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, 4400 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria. Led

by nationally credentialed tobacco treatment specialists (NCTTP) certified through the University of Mississippi Medical Center's ACT Center, this group offers expert guidance and peer support to help you succeed. Individual sessions are also available.

Register today: <https://cccenla.org/mental-health-services>. For more information, call: 318-445-6424 ext. 506.

St. Frances Cabrini School Open House - Jan. 27

Come see what St. Frances Cabrini School in Alexandria is all about. We're having our Open House during Catholic Schools Week on Tuesday, Jan. 27 at 5:30 p.m.

What makes us stand out? This and more:

- Safe Environment
- Data driven instruction
- Project based learning
- Christian values
- Diverse student body

For more information contact the school office: 318-448-3333

Cenla Life March - Jan. 31

Join us marching for unborn babies and their mothers on Saturday, Jan. 31 at the annual Cenla Life March. We will gather at 10:00 a.m. at Louisiana Christian University in Pineville.

"Breathing through Grief" Weekly Support Group - begins Feb. 2

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana offers an eight-week program, Breathing through Grief, designed to bring comfort and hope to anyone facing loss—whether through death, illness, broken relationships, or other life-altering changes. Rooted in faith and guided by grace, this program provides a safe haven for sharing, embrace healing, and discover that even in the emptiness, God is near and new beginnings are possible.

Participants will find strength to renew their spirit, experience inner peace, and take intentional steps toward a meaningful new chapter in life. Each session blends practical tools with spiritual encouragement in a caring group setting, fostering resilience and hope throughout the journey. The program begins Monday, Feb. 2, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the St. Joseph Catholic Center Conference Room at 4400 Coliseum Boulevard in Alexandria. For more details or to register, call Catholic Charities at 318-445-6424, Ext. 506.

Church Today News Deadlines

January 26
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Jan. 15

February 23
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Feb. 12



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January 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
DECEMBER 29	30	31	JANUARY 1	2	3	4
			SOLEMNITY of MARY the HOLY MOTHER of GOD (a Holy Day of obligation) NEW YEARS DAY	FIRST FRIDAY	FIRST SATURDAY	SOLEMNITY of the EPIPHANY of the LORD
PRAY FOR FR. A. MULLOTH	PRAY FOR DCN. S. NEWBURY	PRAY FOR FR. M. NOEL	PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL	PRAY FOR FR. K. OBIKWE	PRAY FOR FR. J. O'BRIEN	PRAY FOR FR. D. O'CONNOR
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
					Disclaled Carmelites Monthly Meeting 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center Transitional Deacon Ordination 10:00 a.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria	Special collection for the Church Today: Please consider supporting our official Diocesan Newspaper
PRAY FOR FR. C. OBGONNA	PRAY FOR FR. A. PALAKKATTUCHIRA	PRAY FOR FR. B. PALLIPARAMBIL	PRAY FOR FR. J. PALLIPURATH	PRAY FOR FR. J. PARDUE	PRAY FOR FR. C. PARTAIN	PRAY FOR FR. T. PAUL
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Lector Workshop 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria Steubenville South Registration opens 9:00 a.m. steubenvillesouth.com					
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
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	EMHC Workshop 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria		National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children		Confirmation Retreat Maryhill Renewal Center	
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY PRAY FOR DCN. K. SAYES	PRAY FOR DCN. G. SCHUPBACH	PRAY FOR FR. C. SCOTT	PRAY FOR FR. B. SEILER	PRAY FOR FR. P. SIERRA-POSADA	PRAY FOR FR. L. SKLAR	PRAY FOR FR. I. ST. ROMAIN
26	27	28	29	30	31	FEBRUARY 1
Smoking Cessation Support Group 4:00-5:00 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria	OPEN HOUSE 5:30 p.m. St. Frances Cabrini School				CENLA Life March 10:00 a.m. Louisiana Christian University Grief Support Informational Meeting 10:00 a.m. St. Mary's Assumption, Cottonport	
NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK						
PRAY FOR DCN. P. SUNDERHAUS	PRAY FOR DCN. C. THIBODEAUX	PRAY FOR FR. J. THOMAS	PRAY FOR FR. A. TRAVIS	PRAY FOR DCN. W. TRAVIS	PRAY FOR FR. A. VARGHESE	PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana to Open “Second Blessings” Thrift Store in February 2026

Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana is pleased to announce the opening of Second Blessings Thrift Store, a new outreach that will expand services to those in need while providing opportunities for the community to serve through volunteerism and stewardship.

Catholic Charities officially signed a lease on Dec. 1 for a building located on Coliseum Boulevard in Alexandria, marking an important milestone in the development of this new ministry. While the thrift store will be the centerpiece of the space, the building will also house a Budget Classroom as well as a meeting space for case managers to work with Basic Needs clients, and a dedicated area to store disaster response supplies. This multi-purpose location will allow Catholic Charities to serve individuals and families in a more holistic and efficient way.

The project has been made possible through the incredible generosity of several generous donors. An anonymous donor contributed \$40,000 to help launch the thrift store. Since then, additional donations of \$2,500, \$5,000 and \$15,000 have been received, further supporting the effort to get the store open and prepare it for service to the community.

The thrift store project is being managed by Heidi Wampler, Manager of Finance and Development for Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana.



SECOND BLESSINGS THRIFT STORE. The main showroom at the new Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana thrift store is beginning to fill up with donated goods. Sorting, organizing and building fixtures are the current priority before the doors open for business in February.

Currently, the organization is in the process of acquiring fixtures and setting up the store, preparing for its anticipated opening in February 2026. Once open, Second Blessings Thrift Store will operate Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In preparation for opening, donations are now being accepted, and Catholic Charities is also seeking volunteers to help bring this ministry to life. A Volunteer Recruitment Breakfast will be held on Jan. 15, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the St. Joseph Catholic Center, 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria. Individuals interested in volunteering are invited to attend and learn more about

opportunities to serve in areas such as ticketing, sorting, setting up displays, working the sales floor, and cashiering. Catholic Charities welcomes volunteers who are able to serve one day a week or even just a few hours, recognizing that every contribution of time makes a difference.

All proceeds from Second Blessings Thrift Store will directly support Catholic Charities programs and operating expenses, helping to sustain services for those facing financial hardship, disaster, and other challenges throughout Central Louisiana.

As part of the planning process, Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana visited

Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas in Beaumont to learn more about opening and operating a successful thrift store. That visit provided valuable guidance, and Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas generously donated several display cases and other items, as well as 16 chairs for the Budget Class, demonstrating the strength of collaboration within the Catholic Charities network.

In addition, Ms. Wampler applied for and received the One by One Grant, which includes

\$500. These funds were used to purchase bib aprons for volunteers, helping ensure that those serving in the store are easily identifiable and well equipped.

Through Second Blessings Thrift Store, Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana hopes to create a space where generosity is multiplied, where donated items become blessings for shoppers, the many individuals and families served through Catholic Charities' mission. The organization invites the Central Louisiana Catholic community to support this new ministry through donations, volunteering, and prayer as preparations continue toward the February 2026 opening.

Quick info:

To donate items:

Call 318-445-6424, ext. 501

To volunteer:

Attend recruitment breakfast
on Jan. 15, 9-10 a.m. at
St. Joseph Catholic Center
4400 Coliseum Blvd.
Alexandria
(see below)

To donate funds:

Visit cccenla.org



HOME GOODS ON A BUDGET. Thrift store manager, Heidi Wampler, shares the backstory of a donated object with Deacon Richard Mitchell.

**SECOND BLESSINGS
THRIFT STORE**

**VOLUNTEER
RECRUITMENT
BREAKFAST**

RSVP by Friday, January 9th
to jgilchrist@cccenla.org

**Thursday, January 15th
9am - 10am**

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