

CHURCH TODAY

Volume LVII, No. 1

www.diocesealex.org

Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

January 26, 2026



Transitional Deacon

On Saturday, Jan. 10, Matthew Bonner was ordained a Transitional Deacon at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria. In June of this year, he will be ordained a priest of the Diocese. Please pray for him and all of our seminarians in formation.

INSIDE

Embracing the Future of Hope

As the Diocese of Alexandria continues its mission as Pilgrims of Hope, we rejoice in growth, face challenges with faith, and persevere together in prayer and trust in Christ. Read more from Bishop Marshall on page 2.

It's Game Day

With humor and heart, Deacon Richard Mitchell calls Catholics to join "Team Jesus," reminding us that stewardship works best when we give together. See page 4 for more information.

Protecting children, simplified

The Diocese of Alexandria introduces online VIRTUS training - offering greater flexibility while upholding the highest standards of child protection for all who serve. See page 9 for more information.

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CHURCH
TODAY

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† 2026 ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

Embracing the Future of Hope

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Last year, as we observed the great Jubilee Year 2025, we were challenged to become “Pilgrims of Hope,” drawing comfort from Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans: “Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, and persevere in prayer” (Romans 12:12). Those same words continue to characterize our journey to embrace and advance the mission of Jesus Christ here in the Diocese of Alexandria. We draw hope from the great number of pilgrims who visited one or more of the eight Jubilee pilgrimage churches, and especially from the more than 500 who completed the task. We draw hope from the increasing number of adults who are seeking the Sacrament of Baptism or of fellow Christians who are seeking full communion with the Catholic Church. And we draw hope from the many parishioners who participated in our pastoral planning project as we strive to envision a church equipped to meet the needs of the twenty-first century with mission-driven parishes.

At the same time, we continue to face challenges. From an economic standpoint, our insurance and other costs remain much higher than they were even a few years ago. Additionally, the diocese is now actively involved in a Chapter 11 reorganization of our financial affairs – a reorganization made necessary by the sinful acts of a finite number of priests in years past. We are committed to seeking fair and equitable justice for those who have been harmed – though that commitment will come at a significant financial cost to the diocese. We embrace the call both to endure in affliction and to persevere in prayer. Through it all, we must continue to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our troubled world needs his message of hope and salvation more than ever. We need his message more than ever.

The Annual Diocesan Appeal is our primary way of funding the necessary work of faith formation and evangelization. Contributions to the Appeal go toward five specific areas of our ministry:

- Seminar Education and Religious Vocations Awareness;
- Lifelong Faith Formation and Religious Education;
- Support of the health care and retirement benefits for our priests;
- Spiritual Renewal through the work of Maryhill Renewal Center; and
- Youth, Young Adult, Campus and Hispanic Ministries.

These ministries are carried out by the diocese in cooperation with and for the benefit of our parishes because they are broader than the boundaries of any one parish. Your restricted gift to the Annual Diocesan Appeal will be used for the above-listed ministries and for no other purpose.



Thank you to all of those who have contributed to the ADA in the past. We ask for your continued support. Whether or not you have been a contributor to the ADA before, we ask you to look at the five ministry areas listed above and prayerfully consider whether you can join us in supporting these ministries as fellow disciples of the Lord. May we indeed give glory to the kingdom by rejoicing in hope, enduring in affliction, and persevering in prayer.

Live Jesus in our hearts,

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



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Remain steadfast in Christian unity efforts amid division, says ecumenical expert

by Gina Christian
Our Sunday Visitor

PHILADELPHIA (OSV News) — Amid division and geopolitical turmoil, an ecumenical expert is encouraging the faithful to remain steadfast as they observe the international Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Jan. 18-25.

This year's commemoration "is even more relevant" since "there's so much division in our world," said Msgr. Gregory Fairbanks, an ecumenical expert and dean of the diaconal formation school at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Ambler, which is part of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. "I think it's even more important to recognize that we can come together, at least as Christians, for a common purpose: to pray."

Formally instituted in 1968

The annual observance, formally instituted in 1968 by the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, traces its roots to the 18th century, with Pentecostal, Anglican and Catholic clergy all promoting prayers over the intervening decades to restore the bonds among believers.

Among Catholics, Pope Leo XIII, Franciscan Friar of the Atonement Father Paul Wattson, Dominican theologian Father Yves Congar and St. John XXIII were prominent advocates of ecumenism, derived from the Greek word "oikoumene," meaning "the whole inhabited world."

In its decree "Unitatis Redintegratio," the Second Vatican Council declared "the restoration of unity among all Christians" was "one of (its) principal concerns."

Oneness of the body of Christ



CHRISTIAN UNITY AND EFFORTS AMID DIVISION. Pope Leo XIV and Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople greet people from a balcony following a Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George in Istanbul Nov. 30, 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

The theme for this year's observance is taken from Ephesians 4:1-13, in which St. Paul focuses on the oneness of the body of Christ.

Prayer materials and resources for the 2026 week of prayer — which are available on the website of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity — were drafted by the Armenian Apostolic Church's interchurch relations department.

The work of Christian unity can seem daunting, especially since the number of Christian denominations has reflected a "geometric progression of division" over the past century, said Msgr. Fairbanks.

According to the

International Bulletin of Mission Research, the world's 2.6 billion Christians spanned some 50,000 denominations in 2025, with that number projected to rise to 64,000 by 2050.

Criteria for defining a denomination

Msgr. Fairbanks clarified to OSV News that there has been some discussion among academics as to the report's criteria for defining a denomination, a debate that could impact the total number of reported denominations. But the division is nonetheless extensive, and it usually centers on decision-making in a given faith tradition, he said.

The recent celebration of

the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed have imparted renewed impetus to the work of Christian unity, said Msgr. Fairbanks.

"I think the biggest accomplishment was the fact that it (the Nicaea commemoration) happened, that they were able to pull off having a good portion of Christianity be represented to show our unity in faith, the unity under the creed, unity under the belief that was articulated 1,700 years ago," he said.

'Essential aspects of our faith'

Specifically, the commemoration highlighted "the essential aspects of our faith," he said. "And that's a good reminder

for us to base our unity, or at least this step in the prayer for unity, in the creed, and in our common Christian faith and beliefs.

And, said Msgr. Fairbanks, "Even when we don't have unity yet, that doesn't mean we stop working for it or stop praying for it."

Referencing Jesus' prayer in John 17:1-26, Msgr. Fairbanks said, "If Christ calls us to unity, which he did in John's Gospel, then we have an obligation as Christians to do our best — trusting, of course, that unity is going to come in God's time, but with our cooperation, and that we need to work together to put aside what really isn't that important."

'Renewal of one's own faith'

He added that "Unitatis Redintegratio" reminds the faithful that "every movement of renewal and Christian unity starts with a renewal of one's own faith."

"We have to first examine our own consciousness to figure out, 'OK, what's holding me back as an individual, as well as a community, from even seeking full visible unity?'" he said. "We break down barriers by engaging with people, by praying with people, by trusting them."

Although "we're not going to solve the issues overnight," and "it may take centuries," he said, "we have to at least engage with other Christians, and see the Christ in them, even if we're not ready to have full visible unity yet."

Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News. Follow her on X @GinaJesseReina.

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Stewardship is a “Team Sport”

by Deacon Richard Mitchell
Director of Stewardship
and Development

I grew up playing team sports from the time I could walk and hold a baseball bat. Since my family has a long history of producing baseball players, my first experience was, of course, Tee-ball. The problem was that I cried every time it was gameday, so it did not take long for my mother to realize I was not destined for the major leagues! I think I cried because I was afraid that I would be the one to make an error that would lose us the game. Thankfully, as I continued to play, the tears dried up and I became a decent pitcher and second baseman.

I enjoyed my time in sports and learned many valuable lessons that have helped me in life. One lesson that has stuck with me is realizing that a good team consists of individuals that have varying strengths and abilities, but when we work collectively, we can accomplish much more together than we ever could accomplish individually. Another lesson is one that eventually helped me stop crying on the way to the game. That is, seldom does the success or failure of the team depend on one person. Sometimes I batted in the winning run, other times I struck out to lose the game. Anyone involved in a team for any length of time would attest to the same. The important lesson was we did



our best and at the end of the day, we either won together or we lost together.

So, what does any of this have to do with stewardship?

Well, although you nor I were ever drafted to play in the major leagues, we have been drafted for a much more important team... Team Jesus!

And just like with a sports team, we all have different levels of ability, but when we pool our resources together, we can (and will!) do great things. The important part is to be involved and be part of this team of supporters. Over that past several years for the Annual Diocesan Appeal Campaign, the average percentage of donors throughout the diocese is only about 22%. Even with that low percentage, we usually come very close to

meeting our annual goal which is very important.

This year, I would like to focus on the percentage of donors and not just the financial goal. If we meet our goal with 22% of Catholics giving, imagine the impact we could have on our church communities if 40%, 50%, or even 75% of our people joined the team and donated. ANY amount is appreciated, and I truly mean that.

To our faithful donors, you are our “All Stars” and I say THANK YOU, please continue to help because we need you to ensure we reach our goal of \$850,000. If you have not donated to the Annual Diocesan Appeal in the past, please consider joining the team and help us reach our (my) goal of significantly increasing the percentage of donors.

Over the next few months, I will write an article which highlights a few of the ministries your restricted donations to the Annual Diocesan Appeal will help fund.

The first ministries to highlight are certainly some of the most important (and most expensive) for the Church:

Vocations to the Priesthood, Diaconate, and Married Life Priests:

One of the most beautiful gifts a man can give is his life for the service of the Church. Our priests are dedicated men who administer the sacraments while rejoicing with us in our celebrations and praying for us during our times of need. When a man is ordained a priest, it is easy to overlook the time (up to 8 years), effort, sacrifices, prayer....

that it took for him to be ready for ordination. Since the diocese is responsible for funding his formation, which is about \$40,000 per year, a significant portion of the funds collected each year through Annual Diocesan Appeal is used to pay for the ten men in formation at two seminaries: St. Joseph Abbey in Saint Benedict, Louisiana and Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans.

Permanent Deacons:

The Diocese of Alexandria is blessed to have 30 deacons in active ministry throughout the diocese. As a permanent deacon myself, this ministry is especially meaningful to me. I know the importance of the diaconate in parish ministry and how they support the pastor of the parish as well as Bishop Marshall in providing for the needs of the parish community. A portion of the funds from the Annual Diocesan Appeal is used to pay for their formation, which is about \$3,500 per person per year. We contract with Notre Dame Seminary who provide instructors for these men's academic formation.

Married Life:

The Office of Religious Education and Faith Formation hosts “Pre-Cana” retreats for couples who are engaged to be married. Our world is in desperate need of good, strong, healthy families. It is so important for couples to be rooted in their faith and include Jesus in their marriage and the foundation of their family. By supporting the appeal, you are helping us with that mission.

If you are a registered parishioner in your parish, a letter from Bishop Marshall along with a pledge card should be arriving to you soon. However, if you are inspired and want to join “Team Jesus” right now, you can go the diocesan website and click “Donate” to set up your account. If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss a pledge, please send me an email: dcnrmitchell@diocesealex.org. I would love to speak with you and share the great work and ministries we provide in the Diocese of Alexandria.

It is game day and we need you to step up to the plate. Don't be nervous, for those on “Team Jesus” never strike out and we win together!



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Works of mercy during this Lenten season, some more challenging than others

by Fr. Taylor Reynolds

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me, in prison and you visited me."

We will hear these words at the end of this liturgical year, on Christ the King Sunday, as part of Jesus' final judgement. As the gospel relates, our final judgement will be according to how we have treated the least of our brethren and performed works of mercy, as Mother Teresa called "the Gospel on 5 fingers." *"You-did-it-to-me."*

Some of the works are easier to do than others: feeding the hungry, we can give supplies to the Manna House or Catholic Charities; clothing the naked, we can donate old clothing to St. Vincent de Paul or Goodwill.

The others? Not so easy. Caring for the sick... welcoming the stranger... visiting the imprisoned.

Some of the difficulty lies in the basic logistics of even encountering these people much less performing these works of mercy. But for some of us, the obstacle that heightens the difficulty is a moral one, a



certain viewpoint or opinion we may have, especially in the political atmosphere we live in. Welcoming the stranger and visiting the imprisoned can be tied to very strong secular opinions and discretionary impressions.

As Catholics, we might struggle with what is the right thing to do and how to face these issues.

A few principles can be helpful to at least allow us greater freedom in discernment and a more centered view. First, we

must remember that every human being on the face of the planet, regardless of race, nationality, or even criminal culpability, is a child of God and deserves to be treated with respect and love. Loving and respecting the person is not always the same as loving and accepting behavior or situations, but as Catholics it is important for everyone to never equate a person's deeds with their dignity. We can and should separate and deal with them distinctly.

Next, the virtue of prudence is a forgotten virtue we should all study. Prudence is about using the right means to the right and best end. These means can be things such as laws, policies, institutions and such. We must also remember that without prudence these things can be misused.

Also, it is a delicate situation to note that lacking proper legalization or citizenship is not to be treated on the same level as an attack or offense against a human life or person. Both

situations should be rectified, but maybe in different ways.

Next, in dealing with people incarcerated, we need to balance the common good of society to look after, while also caring for the betterment and conversion of each soul. Jesus said, *"there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents and the 99 just"* (Luke 15:9).

Where sin abounds, grace abounds, and much grace is at work within prisons. For example, historically, there have been innocent people unjustly sent to prison such as St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein), and many others. There have also been many convicted guilty people who have had massive conversions such as Alessandro Serinelli and St. Dismas, the good thief on the cross.

Finally, we should all remember our own status as strangers in this world and guilt of some sin before God and how he treats us with mercy. Prayer for these people should always be the first response. May God help in our discernment.

Lenten Season of Service set for February 18 - April 2

The Season of Service (S.O.S.) program will be in its 5th year. As we enter the upcoming Lenten season, we are reminded that Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, sacrifice and almsgiving.

We live in a world where there are many needs around us so it should be somewhat easy to define a project from those who find themselves without shelter, those who may go without food, those who are alone or isolated. From the physical to the spiritual, there are needs around us where we can gather a group together, and in service, make a huge difference in the lives of people and our parish communities.

Projects for Season of Service are only limited by the imagination. Some of last year's projects included leading rosary walks around the church, deep cleaning chairs and tables in the church hall, filling holy water bottles for Easter, organizing

a community meal ministry, cemetery clean up and more!

To register your team, please visit the Diocese of Alexandria's website at diocesealex.org, click on the S.O.S. logo to register.

You will need the following information to register your team: Team Name, Team Captains name and contact information, a description of your service project and your team members names. If you participate in this year's S.O.S., you have the option of the S.O.S. t-shirt like last year or a keychain. *Please keep in mind that T-shirts ordered can take up to two weeks to arrive. Key chains are in limited quantity as well, so get your teams registered as soon as possible.

We look forward to seeing and hearing about your service project!

If you need any additional information please contact Dcn Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org

diocesealex.org

Please send any photos taken of your teams serving in their project to Dcn. Jason or to Joan Ferguson at joanferguson@diocesealex.org. Photos may be used on the diocese website or in future issues of the Church Today.

2025 Season of Service: Immaculate Conception, Dupont. Pastor, Fr. Abraham Varghese, celebrated Mass at Avoyelles Manor Nursing Home. For one of their Season of Service projects, parishioners of Immaculate Conception distributed bibs to residents of the nursing home.



*Blessed are the poor in spirit;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs!*

Matthew 5:3
Responsorial Psalm
for February 1
Fourth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Completed Burses at \$15,000.00 Each:

- Bishop Charles P. Greco
- Monsignor Henry Fr. Beckers
- Monsignor Milburn Broussard
- Monsignor Thomas F. Early (3 Completed)
- Monsignor Bruce Miller (2 Completed)
- Monsignor B. A. Scallan
- Father H. Gerald Bordelon
- Father Daniel Corkery (3 Completed)
- Father Michael P. Kammer
- Father Christian Ogbonna
- Father William B. Provosty (2 Completed)
- Deacon Rodrick “Benny” Broussard
- Bobby D. Basco
- Angelo R. And Ena F. D’Angelo
- John Dominick Driscoll
- Miss Mary F. Early
- Daryl “Pat” Mauterer
- Irvin and Elma Moreau, Harrison P. Moreau, Michael N. Moreau, Deborah S. Moreau Bouche, Emily A. Moreau, Tom and Mary Candiotto, and Ruby Moreau
- David Stafford “Brother” O’Shee
- Mr. and Mrs. Howard E. Shores
- John Gregory Simms
- John T. Simms, Jr.
- Sadie Stroud

The following is a list of established bursees and amounts in each:

St. Damien De Veuster	175.00
Bishop William Friend	100.00
Bishop Lawrence P. Graves	5,805.00
Bishop Charles P. Greco	1,750.00
Bishop Ronald P. Herzog	450.00
Bishop Sam G. Jacobs	1,200.00
Bishop Robert W. Marshall, Jr.	1,200.00
Bishop David P. Talley	525.00
Monsignor Marcel J. Anderson	100.00
Monsignor Leon R. Aycock	1,535.00
Monsignor Norman C. Buvens	100.00
Monsignor Paul E. Conway	825.00
Monsignor S. Scott Chemino	750.00
Monsignor Allen M. Chenevert	1,000.00
Monsignor Isidore Deceulaer	160.00
Monsignor S. J. Dekeuwer	650.00
Monsignor Gerald J. Ducote	560.00
Monsignor James Ferguson	1,900.00
Monsignor Robert C. Friend	50.00
Monsignor Ronald C. Hoppe	1,100.00
Monsignor James E. Howard	50.00
Monsignor Charles M. Jekeler	325.00
Monsignor Joseph F. Kidd	1,500.00
Monsignor William Kwaitaal	850.00
Monsignor Warren T. Larroque	800.00
Monsignor Terrence J. Lennon	125.00
Monsignor George W. Martinez	500.00
Monsignor Bruce Miller	300.00
Monsignor Patrick Murphy	2,304.00
Monsignor William C. O’Hanlon	5,000.00
Monsignor Aloysius O. Olinger	965.00
Monsignor Mozart Pelletier	100.00
Monsignor John V. Plauche	400.00
Monsignor F. Joseph Rateau	570.00
Monsignor Russell J. Richie	616.14
Monsignor B. A. Scallan	10,085.90
Monsignor Matthew J. Scanlon	310.00
Monsignor Joseph M. Susi	10,006.00
Monsignor Steve J. Testa	10,975.00
Monsignor Henry A. Thompson	960.00
Monsignor John M. Timmermans	11,070.00
Monsignor Martin J. Tyrrell	4,250.00
Monsignor Henry Van der Putten	1,291.89
Monsignor John C. Vandegaer	1,350.00
Monsignor Nicholas F. Vandegaer	1,350.00
Monsignor John J. Wakeman	100.00
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Father George Krosfield	175.00
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Father Luke LaFleur	50.00
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Father Samuel J. Polizzi	1,000.00
Father George Pookkattu	50.00
Father William B. Provosty	105.00
Father Rusty Rabalais	875.00
Father Charles Ray	1,600.00
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Deacon Ken J. Primeaux	25.00
Deacon Kenny Sayes	20.00
Deacon William E. Shaidnagle	100.00

Deacon Gary A. Schupbach	1,225.00
Deacon William “Bill” Travis	200.00
Deacon Luther “Luke” White	25.00
Deacon John L. Whitehead	100.00
Deacon Michael L. Young	200.00
Sister Margaret McCaffrey	300.00
Sister Marie Therese McGee, OP	100.00
Sister Virginia Lee Vanderlick, CDP	100.00
Seminarian Will Brittain	50.00
Ismael and Libby Agosto	250.00
Shirley Alexander	1,125.00
Charles P. and Florence C. Anastasio	880.00
Germaine Armand	550.00
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Delores Basco	150.00
Harold and Lillie Beridon	9,250.00
John M. Bauer	150.00
Dr. Lamar and Jean Boese	50.00
Will Bollich	100.00
J. V. Bonnette	50.00
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Chris and Barbara Cancienne	50.00
Nathan Cannella	225.00
Frank V. Cariere	175.00
Dylan Michael Cashio	400.00
T. W. Clark	50.00
Joseph and Lucy Costantino	600.00
James Curley	50.00
Charles D’Amico	50.00
Leo P. Dobard	7,100.00
Randolph J. Engelen	200.00
Gerald Flynn	50.00
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Flynn	100.00
Anne Berry Gallagher	2,025.00
Anthony and Mary Glorioso	350.00
Robert L. Greiner, Sr.	400.00
Toby Guedry	1,000.00
Gail T. Gutierrez	100.00
William J. Hamlin	500.00
Madeline Jeansonne	100.00
Leonard E. and Marjorie V. Johnson	2,950.00
Richard Kelly	100.00
Maria S. Keran	3,000.00
Floyd J. LaCour, Jr.	9,100.00
Eugene and Rita LaPalme	300.00
Garry and Connie Leglue	100.00
Huey and Neen Lemoine	150.00
Louis Lowrey	652.00
Judge Alfred and Mary Jo Mansour	2,050.00
Cecilia Vanderlick Mathews	100.00
Huey and Ethel Mathews	1,000.00
Louis Henry “Dump” Mathews, Sr.	100.00
Cecilia M. McDowell	1,000.00
Ethel Miller	100.00
Odis James Miller	190.00
Yvonne More	150.00
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Helen Morgan	12,000.00
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N. J. and Hannah Nolan	10,000.00
Harvey Miller “Buddy” Normand	100.00
Louis Jeansonne Normand	1,200.00
Shirley O’Connor	100.00
W. D. O’Neal	8,159.00
Danny O’Quinn	100.00
Stella and Regina Pelczar	500.00
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Kathleen Poole	375.00
Edna Rabalais	8,532.50
Rita Juneau Rabalais	4,000.00
William F. Reynolds	3,000.00
Mary Lee and Gerald Robichaux, Sr.	6,850.00
Dr. Sidney Rud	50.00
Luis R. Robles-Cortez	125.00
Dr. Brenda V. Seiler	1,200.00
Josephine G. Serio	275.00
John Gregory Simms	4,275.00
Robert Upton	100.00
Dr. Charles Vanderlick	200.00
Henry Vanderlick	400.00
Jerome and Audrey Vandersypen	2,465.00
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Patsy Dekeyzer Vincek	200.00
Gus Voltz, Jr.	6,135.00
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Mary Virginia Young	100.00
Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence	100.00
Deceased Members of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas	
Court Regina Pacis #1372, Natchitoches	775.00
In Honor of Providence Central High School Class of 1959	1,450.00
Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches	100.00
Our Lady of Prompt Succor Parish, Alexandria	3,260.00
St. Edward the Confessor Parish, Tallulah	100.00
St. Mary’s Assumption Parish, Cottonport	700.00
General Fund	2,000.00
Total	795,179.17




TRANSITIONAL DEACON ORDINATION. Reverend Mr. Matthew Bonner was ordained at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria on Saturday, Jan. 10, as a transitional deacon for the Diocese of Alexandria. Pictured, front row left to right: Seminarian Blaine Phillips, Rev. Mr. Matthew Bonner, Bishop Robert Marshall, seminarians Ty Schexnayder, David Rubio, Cullen Phillips. Second row: Seminarian Gabe Dowden, Director of Vocations, Fr. Luke LaFleur, Fr. Joshua Rodrigue, Rector and President of Notre Dame Seminary Graduate School of Theology, seminarians Jacob Cass and David Rudio. Back row: Seminarians Matthew Kramer and Blake Bernard.

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Deacon and Mrs. L.G. Deloach, Jr.	\$500.00
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Deacon and Mrs. L.G. Deloach, Jr.	\$500.00
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Deacon and Mrs. L.G. Deloach, Jr.	\$500.00
Father Craig Scott Burse	
Dr. Joseph W. Landreneau	\$2,000.00
Edna Rabalais Burse	

Total **\$3,800.00**

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

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

Gracious and loving God,
we thank you for the gift of our priests.
Through them, we experience your presence
in the sacraments.

Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.
Set their souls on fire with love for your people.
Grant them the wisdom, understanding,
and strength they need to follow
in the footsteps of Jesus.

Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom.
Give them the words they need to
spread the Gospel.
Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.
Help them to become instruments
of your divine grace.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives
and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

Second Blessings Thrift Store opening set for Feb. 10

“Second Blessings” Thrift Store will open its doors for business at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 10, and the community is warmly invited to come shop, browse, and support this new ministry serving Central Louisiana. More than just a place to find great deals, the store is designed to be a welcoming space where donated items are given new life in support of charitable outreach.

The store will offer a wide variety of gently used items, including clothing and accessories for men, women, and kids; furniture; home décor (including wall décor); housewares; bedding; toys; jewelry; luggage, and more—there’s truly something for everyone. Proceeds from sales will directly support the mission and services of Catholic Charities



SECOND BLESSINGS THRIFT STORE. Located at 4409 Coliseum Blvd. Donations taken on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. until 12 noon. All proceeds will benefit Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana.

the building. “Second Blessings” is located at 4409 Coliseum Blvd, Suite A, between and behind the Chevron and the credit union, in the same building as Eagle Hydraulics. Volunteers are an important part of this ministry’s success. If you’d like to share your time and talents, please contact Heidi Wampler at hwampler@cccenla.org or call 318-445-6424, ext. 510.

Second Blessings Thrift Store Quick info:

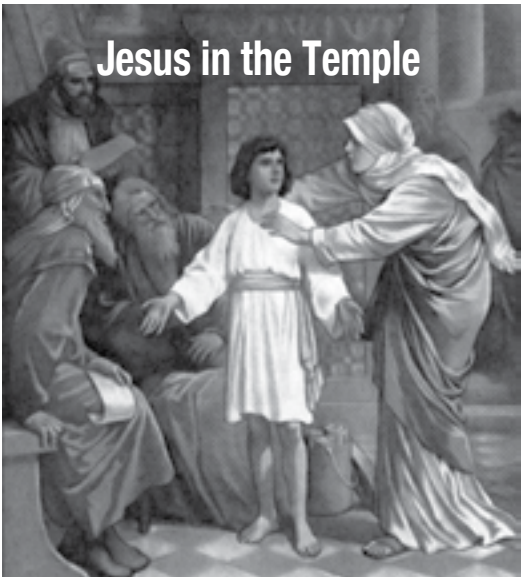
Location:
4409 Coliseum Blvd.
Alexandria

Store hours:
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Tuesday-Friday

To donate items:
10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Tues. and Thurs. only
After hours:
drop donations in the
plastic deck bins

To volunteer:
Call 318-445-6424, ext. 501

**To donate funds for
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The love of the Father and the Son,
Comes together as three in one.

He spoke in parables and they understood,
To love each other as best they could.

He remembered His Father and
where He had been,
Sharing love with His people
to protect them from sin.

He died for us and rose from the dead,
So turn your eyes from this world,
and follow Him instead.

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of Central Louisiana. Regular operating hours after opening day will be 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. Donations will be accepted on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m.-12 noon. For added convenience, donations may also be placed in the plastic-covered deck boxes located to the right of

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“We cannot love God
unless we love each
other, and to love we
must know each other.”

dorothy day

Every donation,
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volunteer hour at
Second Blessings is an
opportunity
to encounter Christ
in one another.

VIRTUS training is now online

by **Kecia Coco**
Director of Safe Environment

In case you haven't heard, mandatory VIRTUS training sessions are now online! This means no more commuting or rearranging schedules for educators, employees, administration, and volunteers in our diocese.

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 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 of your certification. 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.

To get started, visit www.virtus.org.

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

"The protection of children and young people is a primary responsibility of the Church."

pope benedict xvi

President of North Central Louisiana Catholic Foundation passes away

Curtis P. Meaux passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, surrounded by his loving family at his residence.

Mr. Meaux was serving as President of the North Central Louisiana Catholic Foundation at the time of his passing. He also worked at Roy O. Martin Lumber Company, where he served for more than 23 years. He retired in 2016 as Accounting Manager and Treasurer. Even after retiring from full-time employment, Curtis continued to share his expertise, working with Payne, Moore & Harrington, Certified Public Accountants.

A devoted member of St. Rita Catholic Church, Curtis faithfully served in numerous lay ministry roles and on advisory committees. Prior to his illness, he was proud to bring communion to the infirmed and served on the Bereavement Committee. He was also an honorary life member of the Knights of Columbus, Bishop Greco Council 1134.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Ivy Thomas Meaux and Mary Etheleen Broussard



Curtis P. Meaux

Meaux; and his brother, Wayne Meaux.

A Mass of Christian Burial for Mr. Meaux was celebrated on Monday, January 12 at St. Rita Catholic Church with Rev. Anthony Dharmaraj officiating. In lieu of flowers, charitable donations may be made to the North Central Louisiana Catholic Foundation on behalf of the Curtis Meaux Memorial Fund for various needs in the Diocese, or to Manna House.

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.

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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A NIGHT OF WONDER CHRISTMAS PLAY ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC CHURCH, ECHO. The sanctuary of St. Francis DeSales Church was transformed into a living Bethlehem as the parish children presented their annual Echo Christmas Play. Filled with youthful joy and solemn reverence, the performance brought the timeless story of the Nativity to life for the local community. The production featured a full cast of young parishioners, from shining angels in white to shepherds and Magi adorned in vibrant robes. The children gathered at the altar, surrounding the manger in a powerful “echo” of the first Christmas night.

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

OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR KINDERGARTEN CHRISTMAS PAGEANT. OLPS kindergarteners amazed us with their performance in the Christmas Pageant! The Marys and Josephs, Inn Keeper, Star, Shepherds, Angels, and Wise Men were all fantastic. A huge thank you to our kindergarten team for putting this amazing show together every year, and a special thanks to all the other teachers who contributed their time and talent.



SACRED HEART CHURCH, MOREAUVILLE, CHRISTMAS EVE NATIVITY PLAY. 1st row: Grace [redacted], Josiah [redacted], Isaiah [redacted], Lillian [redacted], Hudson [redacted], Orion [redacted], Anthony [redacted], 2nd row: Margaret [redacted], Riley [redacted], Gabriel [redacted], Mary [redacted], Kinleigh [redacted], Cora [redacted], Avielle [redacted], Lilianna [redacted], Mason [redacted], Cristian [redacted] 4th row: Fr. Brian Seiler, Pastor, Freya [redacted], Anniston [redacted], and Fr. Joshua Burch, Associate Pastor.

“Christmas is not a date. It is a state of mind”
pope st. john paul ii

Jubilee Year of Hope Closing Mass




The 2026 Jubilee Year of Hope came to a close on Sunday, Dec. 28 with Mass celebrated by Bishop Robert Marshall at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria.

On behalf of Bishop Robert Marshall, we want to thank everyone who participated in the pilgrimage, even if you were not able to complete it. And thank you to those who did finish and sent

in your passports. The final count of Pilgrims of Hope passports received for a certificate was 617. Please note that the last certificates will be sent out at the end of January. Regretfully,

we’ve run out of coins. We also wish to thank the pastors of the pilgrimage sites and their staff for their help and participation in maintaining the pilgrimage materials and of

course to all the parishioners who welcomed pilgrims into their churches throughout the year.



Celebrate our 30th Steubenville South Conference with us, June 26-28, 2026, back at the Laborde-Earles Coliseum!

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Bishop Burbidge outlines Christian approach to mental health amid ‘staggering crisis’

by *Gina Christian*
Our Sunday Visitor

A U.S. bishop is highlighting the nation’s growing mental health crisis, while pointing to the “divine medicine” offered by Christ through the work of the Church.

On Jan. 19, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, released “The Divine Physician and a Christian Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing,” a pastoral letter surveying the state of mental health in the U.S. and offering both “encouragement and guidance” in addressing mental health challenges “in light of the teachings of Christ and the Gospel.”

Bishop Burbidge said the letter was prompted by his “increasing pastoral concern” over “the emergence of a broad crisis concerning mental health that is negatively impacting Americans, and especially young people, in terms of their spiritual, mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.”

He described “the scale and scope of this crisis” as “staggering,” citing data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness indicating that one in five American adults experience mental health challenges each year.

The pastoral letter, available on the Diocese of



BISHOP BURBRIDGE SPEAKS AT NATIONAL PRAYER VIGIL FOR LIFE. Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, VA., delivers the homily during the opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life Jan. 18, 2024, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. (OSV News photo / Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard)

Arlington’s website, also announced the creation of a diocesan mental health council to provide resources for “those experiencing significant mental health challenges as well as their loved ones.”

Bishop Burbidge said the council also is “committed to providing training opportunities for mental health counselors” so that they can better ground their services “in a Catholic anthropology that emphasizes the sacredness of all human life and the dignity of every person.”

Central to the bishop’s pastoral letter was an understanding of the human person as a divinely created being redeemed by Christ.

God’s plan for humanity

Bishop Burbidge situated the issue of mental health within the broader context of God’s eternal plan for humanity, and the “negative effects of our separation” from God, which “so obviously frustrate our natural desires for health, wellbeing, and lasting happiness.”

“Even before the advent of Christ, and before our definitive knowledge of God’s goodness and the possibility of heavenly peace, humanity knew that all was not well,” he said. “We knew that we needed a Savior.”

The numerous healings Christ performed in his earthly ministry, “revealing his authority over ailments affecting mind,

“In the cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering itself has been redeemed.”

*st. john paul ii,
salvifici doloris*

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Cabrini: 318-448-3333
Sacred Heart: 318-985-2772

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- **SNAP Enrollment Assistance**
 - To support our work, thank you for your donation of time, talent, or treasure!
- **Volunteer** - cccenla.org/volunteer
- **Donate** - cccenla.org/hero-of-hope

Questions? Email info@cccenla.org

body, and soul,” point to his intention to ultimately redeem humanity fully from the effects of sin and death, said Bishop Burbidge.

The bishop stressed that “the Church follows our Lord in emphasizing the primacy of spiritual healing, the importance of faith in God, and fidelity to his commands as the key for everlasting salvation.”

He said that “faith and trust in God are shown to be the keys to everlasting health and wellbeing for humanity,” while emphasizing that “we must be careful in recognizing that not all who ask for healing are healed, either in the way they want or in the timeframe for which they may hope.”

Mental health and redemptive suffering

In his letter, Bishop Burbidge explored the issue of mental health with respect to several considerations: the ongoing stigma many feel in seeking help; the mystery of human suffering, which can be redemptive when united with that of Christ; and the social realities that have led to increased loneliness and disconnection.

He particularly mourned “the breakdown of the family,” a decline in which “many of the challenges we experience today have their roots.” Bishop Burbidge said that the erosion of the family structure — in which children “first discover

their inherent dignity” — has been “accelerated over the past century by the progressive disintegration of sacramental marriage as a cultural and social norm.”

we must be more intentional than ever about our daily priorities, especially including our prioritization of relationships with friends and family.

The Church has been entrusted with a mission to bring Christ’s healing to all of these wounds, said Bishop Burbidge.

Christians “have a particular responsibility to address the stigmas that prevent people from seeking help and to remove barriers that keep so many stuck in patterns of isolation and misery,” he said.

Less than half of Americans experiencing mental health issues seek treatment, with those who do often waiting years to enter into counseling, he noted.

‘Freedom for’ mentality

At the same time, Bishop Burbidge cautioned against

equating the world’s view of human identity, health and happiness with that of the divine.

“The difference between Catholic and secular views of happiness and mental health is the difference between a ‘freedom for’ versus a ‘freedom from’ mentality,” he explained.

The secular “freedom from” mentality seeks to eliminate anxiety and distress, he said, while the Christian understanding “goes deeper,” and “encourages us to recognize freedom as a gift meant for our holistic flourishing.”

“The Christian approach guides us to consider what God asks of us in our lives,” said Bishop Burbidge.

He also distinguished between suffering and despair.

“As Catholics, we understand that suffering, whether physical or mental, is an invitation to draw near to Christ at the foot of the cross,” said Bishop Burbidge. “We can find purpose and meaning in suffering if we first recognize that everyone suffers to different degrees and that peace is possible when suffering is offered to God with confidence and earnest prayer.”

In contrast, despair “lacks that other-focused quality,” and leads to isolation and self-focus while obscuring “any larger meaning and purpose,” he said.

“God may allow suffering in our lives, but he forbids despair,” said Bishop Burbidge. “Any

person experiencing recurrent or unrelenting despair should seek assistance and support.”

Made for community

He urged the faithful to be “willing to connect with others,” since “we are made for community and find purpose when given the chance to cultivate authentic relationships with others and practice virtues like compassion.”

In addition, he said, “due to the structure of our society, we must be more intentional than ever about our daily priorities, especially including our prioritization of relationship with friends and family.”

The bishop observed that “all things that are devotional and holy” also benefit the human psyche, “including the sacrament of reconciliation on a regular basis.”

He called for Christian counseling that is “rightly anchored in a Christian theological anthropology,” and that “restores and equips us for our daily pilgrimage.”

“Counseling involves sharing our mind and heart with another in the hope of being restored to health and wellbeing in body, mind, and soul,” said Bishop Burbidge, adding that “a counselor with a Christian theological anthropology — that is, the understanding of our origin and ultimate destiny in God — is better equipped to help us overcome the obstacles

that prevent us from being fully able to follow God’s call in our lives.”

Confidence from relationship with God

Counseling is intended “neither to eliminate all hardships nor to establish a perpetual dependency on therapy,” he said, but “should help us accept and embrace challenges in our lives with the confidence that comes from a preeminent relationship with God and the healing offered through relationship with his Son, the Divine Physician.”

Quoting Isaiah 43:1, Bishop Burbidge invited the faithful to “reflect without ceasing on God’s promise that ‘You are mine.’”

“May we pray with humility and trust, seeking whenever necessary the assistance of professional experts who are Christ’s instruments for our healing. May we actively engage with the sacramental life of the Church and support one another in our parish communities,” he said. “And may we find consolation and peace in the frequent reception of the Eucharist and the adoration of the one who promises to save us, forever and always.”

Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News. Follow her on X @GinaJesseReina.

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(318)717-1995

The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.

Psalm 112: 4
Responsorial Psalm
for February 8
Fifth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Septuagesima: A short season that prepares us for Lent

by Sarah Damn
Blessed is She

Lent is a radical season, set apart from the rest of the year. It urges us to live our days meditating on and imitating the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

Lent is meant to change our lives.

The transformative nature of Lent asks us to do hard things in the form of sacrifice. Our sacrifices—whether big or small—take on a deeper purpose, because the intention behind them is love for Jesus. This allows us to enter into Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection in an intimate way, truly encountering His deep love for us, as we unite our sacrifices with His perfect sacrifice on the Cross.

But a good Lent doesn't just happen. We must be intentional.

Just like a runner cannot run a marathon without training, so a Christian cannot "run in the race" of Lent without a little preparation too.

"Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus, I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight



as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9: 24-27)

This reading comes from the Epistle for Septuagesima Sunday, according to the *Roman Catholic Daily Missal of 1962*. It struck me that the Church gave us the perfect reading to contemplate as we prepare for the upcoming season of Lent.

We "run in the race" of

Lent, not aimlessly, but to win an imperishable crown.

Before we continue exploring the importance of preparing for Lent, you may be wondering, What is Septuagesima Sunday?

Introducing Septuagesima

Pope Saint Gregory the Great thought established Septuagesima Sunday in the seventh century as a pre-Lenten season of sorts. At the time, he recognized that Christians were not having a deep experience of

Lent, and they needed set-aside time to prepare to enter into the penitential season.

And doesn't that sound familiar? How many times have I reached Ash Wednesday without a plan for Lent? How often have I not had a deep experience of Lent, because I wasn't prepared?

With Septuagesima, it doesn't have to be that way. Because it readies us for the

drastic changes that the Lord, through the Lenten season, invites us to embrace.

Septuagesima 101

While Septuagesima was removed from the liturgical calendar in 1969, it continues to be observed by some Catholics. It is the shortest liturgical season (fewer than three weeks). Each of the three Sundays before Lent are included in this season, with names corresponding to roughly the number of days before Easter: Septuagesima (seventy), Sexagesima (sixty), and Quinquagesima (fifty), which then brings us to the forty days of Lent.

This year, Septuagesima lasts from Sunday, February 1, to Tuesday, February 17.

Within the Septuagesima season, the Gloria and Alleluia are already removed from the liturgy, and the priests begin wearing violet vestments. It prompts us to recall our fallen nature and the redemption Jesus offers through His sacrifice of love. It invites us to consider how bodily fasting can "curb our vices, lift our minds, and bestow strength" (Preface for Lent).

Yes, Septuagesima invites us to consider how we will specifically and concretely enter

*Blessed
are they
who follow
the law of
the Lord!*

Psalm 119: 1
Responsorial Psalm
for February 15
Sixth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

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

into the season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving:

What do I need to fast from in order to curb a vice?

What should I read that will lift my mind more to Jesus?

What prayer practices can I incorporate in order to strengthen my relationship with the Lord?

Now is the Acceptable Time ... to Prepare for Lent

“Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

2 corinthians 6:2

Are you ready to embrace the season of Lent, or are you feeling a bit uncertain about what this year's forty days will bring?

We can utilize the practical nature of Septuagesima, so we

will be ready to begin Lent with an openness to what God would like to teach us and show us throughout those forty days.

Below are a few ideas to make the most of the season of Septuagesima, in preparation for Lent:

Learn more about Septuagesima through this video by Dan Burke of the Avila Institute: *The Mystery of Septuagesima: Countdown to Lent*.

Prayerfully consider what you will do in the areas of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent.

Decide what spiritual book or devotional you will read this Lent.

If you feel called to more intense fasting, *Fiat 40* offers a complete program of prayer and fasting, meant to be done in community with other women.

Do you practice Septuagesima? How are you preparing for Lent this year?

Lenten Regulations

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. This means that we do not eat meat and we have only one full meal.

The other Fridays of the season of Lent are days of abstinence from meat. The obligation to abstain from meat binds Catholics 14 years of age and older. The obligation to fast, limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals in the course of the day, binds Catholics from the age of 18 to 59. Those who are younger or older may freely embrace these disciplines. But Lenten disciplines should never endanger your health.

It is obvious that abstaining from meat is meaningless for vegetarians, who must choose some other form of abstinence. It is equally obvious that replacing meat with a gourmet seafood meal is not in keeping with the spirit of Lent.

ash wednesday: february 18

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Looking for a retreat this Lent? An ACTS retreat is a three day and three night Catholic lay retreat presented by fellow parishioners. The retreat begins on Thursday evening and ends the following Sunday at a Mass celebrated with the parish community. The focus of the retreat is Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service, from which the ACTS acronym is derived.

Upcoming Retreats:

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

March 12-15

Women's ACTS Retreat
hosted by St. Joseph Church,
Marksville

All retreats are held at Maryhill
Renewal Center.



OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR SCHOOL 5TH GRADE DARE GRADUATION. On December 11, 2025, OLPS 5th graders graduated from D.A.R.E.! We are so proud of their hard work learning to be safe and responsible. Huge congratulations [redacted] for their incredible essays about their D.A.R.E. journey. We couldn't be prouder of our students!



EIGHTH GRADERS TOUR HOLY SAVIOR MENARD HIGH SCHOOL. St. Frances Cabrini School 8th graders were invited for a tour of Holy Savior Menard recently. A future at HSM could be possible!



HOLY SAVIOR MENARD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL MARKED 100TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2025. Pictured is the original Menard Memorial High School, dedicated Jan. 4, 1925. On November 4, 1923, St. Francis Xavier Commercial College was partially damaged in a fire. The building and grounds had already been considered far from being adequate to accommodate the current enrollment at the time. Rev. C.C. Neudling, the pastor then, decided it was a good opportunity to build a larger facility and plans commenced to build the Brothers' School on Elliott between 19th and 20th Streets in Alexandria. The new boys' school was called Menard Memorial High School in honor of R. Rev. Monsignor L. Menard, who, during his pastorate between 1883 and 1912, had erected and established all the Catholic Schools within Rapides parish. Mr. E. Leo Ball of Alexandria was the architect who prepared the plans. The contractor and builder were J.P. McCann & Son of Baton Rouge. The cost of the building on Elliott Street was \$63,443.00. Breaking ground was held on July 21, 1924 and the new school was dedicated on Sunday, Jan. 4, 1925. Classes started on January 6, 1925.

a prayer for our students

Loving God, You call us to be strong and courageous, not because we are fearless, but because You are always with us.
As our students learn, grow, and face new challenges, remind them that they never walk alone.
Give them courage when school feels hard, strength when they are unsure, and faith to trust Your guiding hand.
Help them to choose what is right, to be kind to one another, and to carry Your light wherever they go.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Steubenville South opens registration for 30th anniversary conference

Registration is now open for Steubenville South 2026, a milestone year as the conference celebrates 30 years of ministry to high school youth across Central Louisiana and beyond.

The Steubenville South High School Youth Conference will be held June 26-28, 2026, and will return to the Laborde-Earles Coliseum, where the conference was hosted through 2012. In the years that followed, the conference weekend moved to the Randolph Riverfront Center. After the challenges of COVID-19, Steubenville South has been intentionally rebuilding this ministry weekend, and after experiencing two consecutive years of waitlists, the decision was made to return to the Coliseum in order to welcome more teens while continuing to provide a prayerful, Spirit-filled experience.

Open to students in grades 9-12 - from those entering their freshman year of high school in fall 2026 through those graduating high school in spring 2026 - Steubenville South continues to draw participants from across the region. Groups regularly attend from Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, and registration has already begun for 2026, including a group traveling all the way from Minnesota.



STEUBENVILLE SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH CONFERENCE REGISTRATION IS OPEN. Pictured are teens in the opening session at the Steubenville South Youth Conference held last year from June 20-22, 2025.

As far as organizers are aware, Steubenville South remains the only Catholic youth event of its kind of the state of Louisiana and is also the lowest-priced Steubenville conference in the country. This commitment reflects a longstanding mission to ensure that every young person has access to an authentic encounter with Christ - and that this ministry remains available in our own backyard for generations

to come.

The theme for this anniversary year is "Worthy," taken from 1 Samuel 17:47: "For the battle belongs to the Lord."

The theme invites teens to recognize their God-given worth and to trust in the Lord's power at work in their lives.

The 2026 conference will be led by a gifted and experienced team, including host Paul George, team priest Father Dave Pivonka,

TOR, worship leader Josh Blakesley, and speakers Noelle Garcia, Tim Jara, and Tanner Kalina.

Steubenville South's roots trace back to 1976, when Franciscan University of Steubenville hosted its first youth conference with more than 1,000 youth and young adults in

attendance. As the conferences grew, Franciscan University partnered with the Diocese of Alexandria to host its first off-campus conference, Steubenville South, in 1995. Over the past three decades, the conference has continued to evolve while remaining firmly grounded in Catholic teaching, Sacred Scripture, and the Sacraments. Today, Steubenville conferences are held across the United States, but Steubenville South remains a cornerstone of youth ministry in Central Louisiana.

Throughout its history, Steubenville South has borne abundant fruit - leading many former participants to lives of service as priests, religious, youth ministers, volunteers, and parish leaders. As the conference enters its 30th year, it intentionally builds on the legacy of faith handed on by those who came before.

Registration opened on January 13, and will remain open as long as space is available. The final payment and forms deadline is May 22.

For more information, visit www.steubenvillesouth.com/resources for a list of frequently asked questions, or email hello@steubenvillesouth.com.

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



STEUBENVILLE SOUTH | June 26-28, 2026

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*Be merciful, O Lord,
for we have sinned.*

Psalm 51: 3 | Responsorial Psalm for February 22
First Sunday of Lent

Journeys in Faith Facebook Bible Study with Liz Descant

This innovative Bible Study with Liz Descant is ongoing and being conducted via Facebook group. 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 participate, follow the link, hit the join button to be added to the Facebook group: visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/803790292314883>

For more information email lizdescant@gmail.com.

"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.

Pre-Cana Marriage Prep Workshop - Feb. 7

These one-day workshops will be at the St. Joseph Catholic Center located at 4400 Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria, LA. Beginning at 8:00 a.m., the day will include presentations on various topics that are vital to a couple's lifelong marriage. The workshop will end at approximately 3:00 p.m. and lunch will be included. Space will be limited, so please register for a workshop as soon as possible.

Registration for the February 7, 2026 workshop is now open. There is a fee of \$60 per couple. You may pay online after submitting the registration form.

You can also pay the day of the workshop via check, money order or cash. Or you can prepay by mailing your check or money order (payable to Diocese of Alexandria) and mail to: Office of Religious Education and Faith

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Formation, P.O. Box 7417, Alexandria, LA 71306-0417.

Other future workshop dates:

• May 30, 2026

• Sept. 12, 2026

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

Discalced Carmelites meeting - Feb. 14

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.

Fullness of Truth Conference - Feb. 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.

Confirmation Retreat - Feb. 28

The Confirmation Retreat that was scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 24, was cancelled due to the winter weather forecasted for that weekend.

The Confirmation Retreat scheduled for February 28 is still valid except **THE LOCATION HAS BEEN CHANGED** due to many who registered for the January retreat will now attend the February retreat.

The new location is now going to be St. Rita Church Holy Family Center in Alexandria.

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.

To register, contact Dcn. Jason Lavergne at 318-445-6424, ext. 207 or email dcnlavergne@diocesealex.org.

SAVE THE DATE! Shamrockin' Fest - March 14

Grown ups! Join us at 6:00 p.m., March 14 at the Randolph Riverfront Center in Alexandria for the annual Shamrockin' Fest! Proceeds from Shamrockin' Fest will benefit upgrades at Holy Savior Menard School. Please consider contributing to our Shamrockin' Fest by purchasing a table, an individual ticket, contributing to a mixology team and/or making a monetary donation. Registration information forthcoming soon! This event is for adults only.

SAVE THE DATE!

Women's Silent Retreat - April 23-26

Save the date for the next Women's Silent retreat presented by Becky Eldredge. Theme: Hope in Our Real Lives. Location: Maryhill Renewal Center. Registration information to come.

SAVE THE DATE! Steubenville South Youth Conference - June 26-28

Steubenville South is a dynamic Catholic youth conference for teens entering grades 9-12, offering a powerful weekend of faith, fellowship, and encounter with Christ. Through engaging speakers, uplifting music, daily Mass, confession, and prayer, teens are invited to deepen their relationship with God and discover the joy of living out their Catholic faith. This life-changing conference draws parishes from across the South and is designed to support teens in a pivotal season of their spiritual lives - helping them grow in confidence, courage, and faith-filled friendships. Registration is now open! Visit steubenvillesouth.com for more information. Contact your youth minister or church office to register or learn more.

SAVE THE DATE!

Men's Silent Retreat - August 7-9

Save the date for our first Men's Silent retreat presented by Deacon Micheal Parker from the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Location: Maryhill Renewal Center. Registration information to come.

Church Today News Deadlines

February 23
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Feb. 12

March 23
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Mar12. 15



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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
JANUARY 26	27	28	29	30	31	FEBRUARY 1
NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK						
PRAY FOR FR. VIC VEAD	PRAY FOR FR. G. VOLTZ	PRAY FOR DCN. L. WHITE	PRAY FOR DCN. J. WHITEHEAD	PRAY FOR FR. J. XAVIER	PRAY FOR DCN. M. YOUNG	PRAY FOR FR. K. ZACHARIAH
2 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria	3	4	5	6 FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR DCN. EJ BARRE	7 Marriage Prep Workshop (Pre-Cana) 8:00 a.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria	8
PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA	PRAY FOR DCN. W. ALDRIDGE	PRAY FOR DCN. F. ANDRADE	PRAY FOR FR. J. ANTONY	PRAY FOR DCN. EJ BARRE	FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. S. BRANDOW	PRAY FOR FR. D. BRAQUET
9 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria	10 Grand Opening Second Blessings Thrift Store 9:00 a.m. 4409 Coliseum Blvd., alexandriA	11	12	13	14 Discalced Carmelites Monthly Meeting 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center	15
Women’s ACTS Retreat hosted by St. Alphonsus Church, Hessmer -- Maryhill Renewal Center						
PRAY FOR FR. J. BROCATO	PRAY FOR FR. J. BURCH	PRAY FOR MSGR. S. CHEMINO	PRAY FOR DCN. R. CHRISTOPHER	PRAY FOR FR. J. CUNNINGHAM	VALENTINES DAY PRAY FOR FR. W. DECOSTE	PRAY FOR FR. D. DEJESUS
16 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria	17	18	19	20 Fullness of Truth Conference -- St. Rita Church	21	22 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT Rite of Election 2:30 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria
PRESIDENTS DAY PRAY FOR DCN. LG DELOACH	MARDI GRAS PRAY FOR FR. B. DESHAUTELLE	ASH WEDNESDAY PRAY FOR FR. J. DESIMONE	PRAY FOR FR. A. DHARMARAJ	PRAY FOR DCN. D. DUBROC	PRAY FOR DCN. R. DUCOTE	PRAY FOR DCN. W. ENDRIS
23 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria	24	25	26	27	28 Confirmation Retreat 9:00 a.m. St. Rita Church Holy Family Center, Alexandria	MARCH 1 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
Men’s ACTS Retreat hosted by St. Rita Church, Alexandria -- Maryhill Renewal Center						
PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK	PRAY FOR DCN. L. FELDKAMP	PRAY FOR MSGR. J. FERGUSON	PRAY FOR FR. W. GEARHEARD	PRAY FOR DCN. L. GLANKLER	PRAY FOR FR. J. GOOTEE	PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL

Students of the Year



HSM STUDENTS OF THE YEAR. Congratulations to Students of the Year at Holy Savior Menard. We are proud to recognize Maddy [redacted] as the 12th grade student of the year and Eve [redacted] as the 8th grade student of the year.



CABRINI SCHOOL STUDENTS OF THE YEAR. Congratulations to our 8th AND 5th Grade Students of the Year, Anna and Belle!



DIOCESE OF ALEXANDRIA 2026 STUDENTS OF THE YEAR. The annual Diocesan Student of the Year interviews took place on Thursday, Jan. 22 at the St. Joseph Catholic Center in Alexandria. Students selected by their school competed to be named Student of the Year at three grade levels - 5th, 8th, and 12th. These "Excellent Eleven" students represented their schools well and are fine examples of the quality education offered by the Catholic schools in our diocese. Pictured are 5th Grade winner, Ivy [redacted] of Our Lady of Prompt Succor School; 8th Grade winner, Eve [redacted] of Holy Savior Menard Junior High School; and 12th Grade winner Madeline [redacted] of Holy Savior Menard High School. Also pictured are Bishop Robert Marshall and Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Sylvia Y. Davis. Congratulations to all!



CABRINI ARCHERY TEAM TO COMPETE AT STATE LEVEL. Eleven members of the St. Frances Cabrini School Archery Team have qualified to shoot at the Louisiana State Archery Tournament in March! Congratulations to these students who not only worked hard to qualify but also had to maintain the grades to be eligible to compete. Good luck ladies and gentlemen! The Archery Team is open to 5th-8th graders by open invitation and new team formation will begin at the end of April for the 2026-2027 team. Incoming 4th graders interested need to contact Mr. Brooks or Mrs. Ashley as these will be approved on a case by case basis.


Save The Date


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