

CHURCH TODAY

Volume LVII, No. 2

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Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

February 23, 2026



*Laissez
les bon temps rouler*

Our Lady of Prompt Succor School held their Pre-K Mardi Gras Parade on Wednesday, February 11. Pre-K students had a blast cruising through the playground with their 6th grade Bulldog Buddies throwing out beads and trinkets along the way.

INSIDE

New Archbishop for New Orleans

Pope Leo XIV confirms Archbishop James F. Checchio as leader of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, succeeding Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond. See page 2 for more details on his background and first Mass.

Faith isn't meant to be silent

Deacon Richard Mitchell reflects on sharing our faith in today's culture and invites support for the Annual Diocesan Appeal, which funds formation, vocations, and ministries across our diocese. See page 5 for more details.

From Hosanna to the empty tomb

As Palm Sunday approaches, rediscover the meaning of your blessed palm. See page 9 for simple ways to keep it visible in your home and prayer life.

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Pope accepts resignation of Archbishop Aymond, 76, and confirms coadjutor as successor

by Courtney Mares
Our Sunday Visitor

ROME (OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV has confirmed Archbishop James F. Checchio as the new leader of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, effective immediately, following the retirement of Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond on Feb. 11.

Archbishop Checchio, 59, was appointed coadjutor archbishop of New Orleans by the pope in September. According to the Church's canon law, a coadjutor bishop is appointed to assist the diocesan bishop until his retirement, when the coadjutor automatically becomes head of the diocese.

Archbishop Aymond is 76

The Vatican announced on Feb. 11 that Pope Leo had accepted Archbishop Aymond's resignation. He is 76, one year past the age canon law requires bishops to submit their resignation to the pope.

Archbishop Checchio, a native of New Jersey, was formally welcomed to the archdiocese of New Orleans with a Mass on Nov. 18. As coadjutor, he came into an on archdiocese faced with having to resolve hundreds of sexual abuse claims. A long-running Chapter 11 filing, which dates to 2020, has racked up more than \$41 million in legal fees, with a tentative multimillion-dollar settlement proposed by the archdiocese in September.

Former bishop of Metuchen

Prior to his appointment, he served nine years as the bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey, where he made visiting the parishes of the diocese "a top priority" and had to deal with the fallout from the reports of child sexual abuse by the late Theodore McCarrick, a former bishop of Metuchen.

Archbishop Checchio, who served as rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome from 2006 to 2016, brings extensive administrative experience to New Orleans.



POPE CONFIRMS CHECCHIO AS ARCHBISHOP SUCCESSOR. Then-Bishop James F. Checchio of Metuchen, NJ, is seen in this 2016 photo. Named coadjutor archbishop of New Orleans Sept. 24, 2025, he automatically succeeds New Orleans Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, 76, whose resignation was accepted by Pope Leo XIV on Feb. 11, 2026. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Born in Camden, New Jersey, in 1966, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Camden in 1992 and holds a doctorate in canon law from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome and a master's degree in business economics from LaSalle University in Philadelphia. His career has included parish ministry, diocesan communications and leadership roles such as moderator of the curia and episcopal vicar in Camden before he was appointed bishop of Metuchen in 2016.

Getting to know The Big Easy and the Archdiocese of New Orleans

The Archdiocese of New Orleans holds a distinctive place in American Catholic history as one of the oldest and most culturally significant diocese in the United States. Established in 1793 as

The Diocese of Alexandria looks forward to collaborating with Archbishop Checchio, the new Metropolitan-Archbishop of the Province of New Orleans, which includes the Diocese of Alexandria and the entire state of Louisiana.

We extend our affection, best wishes, and deep gratitude to Archbishop-emeritus Aymond for his many years of service to the Archdiocese as a priest, seminary rector, auxiliary bishop, and more than 15 years as archbishop.

We are especially grateful for his service as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Alexandria from April 2019 to August 2020.

See ARCHBISHOP, page 3



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Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen beatification advances after 6-year pause

By OSV News

(OSV News) — Venerable Fulton J. Sheen will soon be beatified, now that the Vatican has given the green light, the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, announced Feb. 9. No date or location for the beatification was given. The announcement comes six years after the Holy See had postponed the beatification, initially scheduled for December 2019, only weeks before the event was to take place. “The Holy See has informed me that the Cause for the Venerable Servant of God Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen can proceed to Beatification,” Bishop Louis

Tylka of Peoria said in a Feb. 9 statement. “The next step in the process is the celebration of the Beatification, in which Fulton Sheen would be declared Blessed.” He added, “We are working with the Dicastery of the Causes of Saints at the Vatican to determine the details for the upcoming Beatification.” The bishop said the date and event details will be released soon through celebratesheen.com. “Archbishop Fulton Sheen was one of the greatest voices of evangelization in the Church and the world in the 20th century,” Bishop Tylka said. “I have long admired his lifelong commitment to serve the Church as a priest,

rooted in his deep devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Eucharist.”

Cause controversies

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen’s cause for canonization, opened in 2002, has been stalled by two controversies — a public battle to relocate his remains from St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York to its current location, the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria; and concerns that as bishop of Rochester from 1966-1969, the prelate might have overlooked sexual abuse by at least one former diocesan priest there. The latter concern was magnified after the state of

New York adopted lookback laws that allowed hundreds of abuse claims to be considered, with the Diocese of Rochester ultimately filing for bankruptcy. The bankruptcy was finalized in September 2025, after the establishment of a \$256.35 million settlement fund for abuse survivors. In July 2019, then-Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria announced Pope Francis had approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Sheen. The announcement was made on Nov. 18, 2019, that Pope Francis had called for the beatification to be held Dec. 21, 2019, in Peoria.

A Dec. 3, 2019, news release

from the Diocese of Peoria said the Holy See had decided to postpone the ceremony “at the request of a few members” of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops over the possibility that abuse-related concerns might surface. The Dec. 3 statement from the Diocese of Peoria said there had never been any allegation against (Archbishop) Sheen involving the abuse of a minor. However, a Dec. 5 statement from the Diocese of Rochester, New York, said it had “expressed concern about advancing the cause for the beatification of Archbishop

See SHEEN, page 4



ARCHBISHOP AYMOND RETIRES AT 76. New Orleans Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond is pictured in a 2017 file photo distributing Communion during the closing Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. On Feb. 11, 2026, Pope Leo XIV accepted the resignation of Archbishop Aymond, 76, and confirmed his coadjutor, Archbishop James F. Checchio, as the new leader of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, effective immediately. (CNS photo/Bob Roller).

ARCHBISHOP

Continued from pg. 2

the Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas, it has deep roots in the region’s French and Spanish colonial heritage, giving it a unique Catholic identity shaped by Creole culture, jazz funerals and vibrant traditions like the blessing of the St. Joseph altars.

The archdiocese has a total population of more than 1.26 million people of whom more than half a million are Catholic and contains 104 parishes, four missions and two campus ministries.

Since his arrival in New Orleans in the fall, Archbishop Checchio has visited local parishes and schools, and even participated in a float for a Super Bowl parade, to get to know the people in the archdiocese.

‘Beautiful part of His vineyard’

“These three months since my arrival in New Orleans have gone by very quickly as I learn

more about our local Church and seek to understand how God is calling me to best serve this beautiful part of His vineyard,” he said in a statement published after the announcement.

“It is fascinating that the faith has been so active here in Southeastern Louisiana for so long! The contributions of the many priests, religious men and women and the lay faithful over the years are a testament to the interconnectedness of faith in public life in our Archdiocese of New Orleans — something within which we should take great pride.”

Archbishop Checchio offered his first public Mass as archbishop of New Orleans on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18, at noon in the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis in Jackson Square, one of the oldest cathedrals in continuous use in the United States.

Courtney Mares is Vatican editor for OSV News. Follow her on X @catholiccourtney.

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SHEEN

Continued from pg. 3

Sheen at this time without a further review of his role in priests' assignments."

A growing devotion

The one-time New York lookback window, part of the state's Child Victims Act, was open from August 2019 until August 2021. In December 2024, Msgr. Jason Gray, executive director of the Archbishop Fulton John Sheen Foundation, told OSV News that "Sheen is clean. ... Not one accusation has been raised that impugned Sheen." Msgr. Gray said the foundation has examined "all of the pleadings" relevant to claims against the Rochester Diocese, and "there hasn't been anything that was brought up there" implicating Archbishop Sheen. Msgr. Gray also told OSV News that "the desire to see Sheen beatified is increasing, and there is a growing devotion to him," as evidenced by a surge in visits to his tomb, requests for relics and for his more than 50 books, and reports of favors and graces received through Archbishop Sheen's intercession.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, 'God's microphone'

Archbishop Sheen is remembered as one of the most influential evangelists in American history. Once dubbed "God's microphone," Archbishop Sheen announced God's truth to untold millions through radio, print and television. Born in El Paso, Illinois, on May 8, 1895, Archbishop Sheen resolved to serve the Church as a priest from an early age. He was ordained to the priesthood on Sept. 20, 1919, for the Diocese of Peoria. After studies in Europe, Archbishop Sheen landed a professorship at The Catholic University of America in Washington, where for a quarter century he was known for his engaging lectures and published more than half of his over 60 books. During the 1930s and 1940s, then-Msgr. Sheen became a household name as host of "The Catholic Hour," broadcast nationally from NBC radio in New York.

Having to give up his professorship after appointment as director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1950, Msgr. Sheen moved to New York City. The next year, he was appointed an auxiliary bishop of

New York, ordained in Rome on June 11, 1951. He donated all media earnings to the missions.

Evangelization via television

Beginning in 1952, Bishop Sheen proposed eternal truths each Tuesday evening to tens of millions via his "Life Is Worth Living" TV program. After his first year on the air, Bishop Sheen won an Emmy award for best television personality. Upon acceptance, he famously thanked his writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Throughout his 60-year priesthood, Bishop Sheen sought to conform himself more closely

to Christ by observing a daily Eucharistic Holy Hour, what he called "the hour that makes my day."

Trials endured

Bishop Sheen battled various temptations and difficulties throughout his life, including a decade of hostility from Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. He understood his sufferings in light of God's providence: "Christianity begins not with sunshine, but with defeat." Despite his best efforts as bishop in Rochester, New York (1966-69), Bishop Sheen's tenure was met with resistance. After retirement, Bishop Sheen

was appointed titular archbishop of Newport, Wales, by Pope St. Paul VI. Archbishop Sheen maintained a voice in the public square through regular media appearances.

After nearly two years in and out of the hospital following open-heart surgery, Archbishop Sheen died Dec. 9, 1979, in New York City, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He was declared venerable in 2012.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen 'a special blessing'

Bishop Tylka said that Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, particularly in his work for the missions, "helped us recognize

that the Church is meant for all people." "Archbishop Sheen will be a special blessing for the Church in the United States," he said. Bishop Tylka expressed thanks for "the collaboration, assistance, generosity, and prayers from the Holy See, my brother Bishops, clergy and lay people from around the world in moving this cause forward."

Contributing to this story were Gina Christian, Michael R. Heinlein and Catholic News Service.

Public Notice – Action Required**Sexual Abuse Claims in the Diocese of Alexandria Bankruptcy**

Regardless of how old you are today or when the sexual abuse occurred, you need to file your claim so that it is received by June 8, 2026.

The Diocese of Alexandria ("Diocese" or "Debtor") has filed bankruptcy to restructure its nonprofit organization and pay Putative Abuse Survivors. Please read this notice carefully as it may impact your rights against the Diocese and provides information about the case, *In re: Diocese of Alexandria*, Case No. 25-31257 (Bankr. W.D. La.). This notice is a short summary. For more detail, go to <https://cases.stretto.com/diocesefalexandria> or call (855) 655-5795.

Who Should File a Putative Abuse Survivor Claim?

Anyone who alleges they were abused and believes the Diocese, or persons affiliated with the Diocese, may be responsible for the abuse must file a claim. This includes abuse in connection with any entity or activity associated with the Diocese, including schools, orphanages, parishes, or Catholic Charities. A list of such entities associated with the Diocese is available on the website or by calling the toll-free number listed below. If you have an abuse claim against any entity on that list, you may have a claim against the Diocese. Only the Diocese is in bankruptcy. If you have a claim against any entity on that list, you must take additional legal action to preserve and pursue your rights.

When and How Should I File a Putative Abuse Survivor Claim?

You should file a claim using the Putative Abuse Survivor Proof of Claim so that it is received by **June 8, 2026**. **If you do not file a timely Putative Abuse Survivor Claim, you may lose rights against the Diocese, including any right to compensation.**

Your information will be kept private. You can download and file a claim at the website or call the toll-free number listed below for help on how to file a claim by mail.

Your information will be kept private

<https://cases.stretto.com/diocesefalexandria> and (855) 655-5795

Mind Your Manners – 3 Topics to Avoid

by **Deacon Richard Mitchell**
*Director of Stewardship
 and Development*



I am a native Louisianian, so I was raised to be a “Southern gentleman.” Being polite, courteous, and well-mannered was expected—even when my mother was not around. Part of the etiquette instilled in me was to avoid three topics when in public or at family gatherings. You know them: 1) politics, 2) finances, and 3) religion.

We avoid these topics because they can easily cause division, discomfort, and conflict. They can disrupt family dinners, strain friendships, and send an otherwise polite conversation in a completely different direction.

This is especially true in today’s political climate and so-called “cancel culture.” If someone expresses a belief on a controversial topic, it is often met with bitterness or hostility. If you do not believe me, post on your Facebook page that you are a “Proud (insert political party)” and then sit back and watch the sparks fly. It often seems as though we can no longer respectfully disagree and build on common ground. Instead, the loudest and most combative voice wins. What do they win? I am still not sure—but they win nonetheless. With such hostility, it is easy to see why many people choose to remain silent on important issues.

Unfortunately, for Christians,

silence regarding religion comes at a steep cost.

Not talking about God may feel courteous, especially when we know there are people around us who are not Christian or who hold very different views about Christianity. But silence is not what the Lord intended when He gave the Great Commission at the end of Matthew’s Gospel:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (28:19–20)

How can we teach about God

without talking about religion?

“Go, therefore,
 and make disciples of
 all nations, baptizing
 them in the name of the
 Father, and of the Son,
 and of the Holy Spirit...”

matthew 28:19

The Church has never taught that faith should be kept hidden or discussed only behind

closed doors. From the earliest days, Christians spoke openly—sometimes at great personal risk—about what they had seen and heard. The apostles did not debate whether it was polite to speak about their faith. In fact, most were martyred because they would not stop talking about Jesus!

Perhaps it is time for us to “unlearn” the tendency to avoid discussing religion in our circles under the guise of “keeping the peace.” If we continue to remain silent, faith in Jesus Christ will continue to dwindle, and church attendance will continue to decline.

I realize many of us are unsure what evangelization looks like or how to even begin talking about it. We might even feel self-conscious or insecure in our own knowledge about our own faith. Let not your hearts be troubled: a portion of your contributions to the Annual Diocesan Appeal helps fund faith formation and religious education programs. These programs are designed to equip us to speak about our faith, share our experiences respectfully, and remain charitable toward others.

Please support the Diocese in these efforts by donating to the Annual Diocesan Appeal. In addition to lifelong faith formation and religious education programs, your restricted/designated gifts also help fund the following areas:

- Seminarian education and religious vocations awareness
- Health care and retirement benefits for our priests
- Spiritual renewal through the work of Maryhill Renewal Center
- Youth, young adult, campus, and Hispanic ministries

To donate, visit the diocesan website at <https://www.diocesealex.org/> and click the “Donate” button. If you prefer to mail a check, please make payable to the Diocese of Alexandria and include on the subject line ADA Donation and mail to:

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 us,
 as we place
 our trust in
 you.*

Psalm 33: 22
 Responsorial Psalm
 for March 1
 Second Sunday
 of Lent

Farmers' Mass and Blessing of the Seed rooted in longstanding Catholic tradition

As planting season approaches across Central Louisiana, a beautiful and time-honored Catholic tradition will once again take place in Tensas Parish in the Eastern Deanery of the diocese.

St. Joseph Church in St. Joseph, Louisiana, will host a **Farmers' Mass and Blessing of the Seed at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 1.** All farmers and members of the agricultural community are warmly invited to gather in prayer for a fruitful and safe planting season.

The blessing site is located just off Highway 65, to the left at the Highway 128 intersection as you turn into the town of St. Joseph.

A Tradition as Old as the Church's Rural Roots

The Blessing of Seeds and Fields is deeply rooted in Catholic life, particularly in rural communities where families depend upon the land. For centuries, the Church has asked God's protection over crops, livestock, and all who labor in agriculture.

Historically, these blessings were closely associated with the Rogation Days, observed in the spring before the Solemnity of the Ascension. On those days, the faithful would process through fields while praying the Litany of the Saints, asking God to protect crops from storms, drought, pests, and disease. These processions were both practical and profoundly spiritual, acknowledging human dependence on God's providence.

The Church's official liturgical books, including the *Book of Blessings*, contain prayers specifically for seeds, fields, and those who work the land. These blessings recognize that:

- God is the Creator of the earth and all it produces.
- Human labor cooperates with God's creative work.
- The fruits of the earth ultimately serve the good of all.

In agricultural regions like ours, this tradition remains especially meaningful.

Faith and Farming in Central Louisiana

For generations, farming families in our region have understood what Scripture proclaims: "The earth is the



BLESSING THE FIELDS. In this file photo dated February 26, 2024, Fr. Taylor Reynolds blesses the various farms in Tensas parish preparing to start planting at the beginning of March.

Lord's and all it holds" (Psalm 24:1). While modern technology and science play an important role in agriculture, farmers still know that rain, sun, soil, and seasons are gifts beyond human control.

The Blessing of the Seed is not superstition, nor is it a guarantee of material success. Rather, it is an act of humble trust, placing the coming season into God's hands and asking for:

- Favorable weather
- Protection from natural disaster
- Safety for farm workers and families
- An abundant harvest for the good of the community

It is also a reminder that agriculture is a vocation, a participation in God's ongoing care for His people through the fruits of the earth.

A Communal Prayer for Provision

A Farmers' Mass gathers not only those who work the land but also the broader community who depends on their labor. When farmers thrive, local communities thrive.

In celebrating the Eucharist before the planting season begins, farmers place their work at the altar — uniting their daily labor with Christ's sacrifice. Just as bread and wine, "fruit of the earth and work of human hands," become the Body and Blood of Christ, so too the work of planting and harvesting becomes part of

God's providential plan.

In rural Louisiana, where agriculture remains a vital part of both economy and identity, this Mass is a powerful sign of faith woven into everyday life.

All Are Welcome

St. Joseph Church invites all farmers and members of the agricultural community to attend the Farmers' Mass and Blessing of the Seed on Sunday, March 1, at 5:00 p.m.

The church is located right off Highway 65, to the left at the Highway 128 intersection turning into the town of St. Joseph, Louisiana.

For more information, please email stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com.

As another planting season begins, may our prayers rise like the seeds placed in the soil — small acts of trust in the God who alone gives the growth (cf. 1

Farmers' Mass and Blessing of the Seed - March 1
St. Joseph Church in St. Joseph, LA will host a Farmers' Mass and Blessing of the Seed at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 1. The Mass will be celebrated right off of Hwy 65 to the left at the Hwy 128 intersection turning into the town of St. Joseph, LA. All farmers are invited to come and pray for a successful planting season. For more information please contact stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com

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Supporting seminarians: Walking with men who are discerning a call

The road to the priesthood is a beautiful one—but it is also long and demanding. For most men, seminary formation includes six to eight (or more) years of study, prayer, spiritual direction, and pastoral training. During the academic year, seminarians attend classes and grow in human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral formation. In the summers, many serve in parishes or participate in ministry assignments that continue to shape their hearts for service.

While they prepare to one day shepherd our parishes and celebrate the sacraments, many of these men live simply—often on a budget similar to that of a college

student. Behind every vocation is a community that prays, encourages, and supports.

If you've ever been grateful for a priest who walked with your family through baptism, confession, marriage, illness, or loss, consider how you might help form the next generation of spiritual fathers.

Here are a few practical ways to support our seminarians:

- Reach out to a local seminary to ask about current needs and specific ways to help.
- Offer a monetary gift to treat the seminarians to a shared meal or celebration for a special occasion.
- Send a small gift or note of

encouragement on a liturgical feast day or holiday to a seminarian you know personally—perhaps someone from your parish or a young man you've watched grow in faith.

• Even a simple card assuring them of your prayers can be a powerful reminder that they are not walking this journey alone.

Come and See

For young men who may be wondering if the Lord is stirring something more in their hearts, an upcoming opportunity is just around the corner.

St. Joseph Abbey Seminary College will host its Spring Come and See Weekend March 27–29. This weekend is open to young men ages 16 and older who would like to visit the campus, meet seminarians, and experience firsthand what seminary life is like.

To learn more or register, please contact the Director of Vocations, Fr. Luke LaFleur, at frllafleur@diocesealex.org.

The Church's future priests are being formed today. Let's continue to pray for them, encourage them, and support them as they listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd—and learn to echo it with their lives.

March 27-29
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*Come and See
Weekend*

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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.

You are the palms and the ashes

by *Laura Kelly Fanucci*
Blessed is She

Imagine you are the palms.

Waved aloft in triumph and praise last year, the symbol of Palm Sunday. Now dried and brittle, gathered to be broken and burned in holy fire.

It takes mere seconds to sear the palms. To transform them as unrecognizable from what they were. Smoldered to soot, their dirty grey now a far cry from the strong, slender green they were at their prime.

What sears us like that? What turns us from palms to ashes?

Life brings a thousand ways we are burned. But we do not disappear. The ashes of what we were can become a powerful sign—as outward and obvious as

the smear of soot we will wear on our foreheads today.

The truth at the heart of our faith is that suffering is not meaningless. It is terrible, but can still be transformative. We bear this proof on our skin today. We will live it out over the next forty days. We will become what we receive.

Imagine you are the palms.

Imagine whatever was smooth or straight about your life becoming bent and broken. Imagine whatever was young and green—strong and beautiful, jubilant and triumphant—now burning in hottest flames.

But now imagine that what looks like death is not the end.

Imagine being cooled with care, gathered with reverence, blessed with love, sprinkled with holiness. Imagine being spread

and shared—with hundreds more than the single hand that once held you.

Imagine being pressed on young skin, old skin, soft skin, wrinkled skin, dirty skin, over and over with words of prophetic power. Imagine being turned into the cross, dark and startling for all to see. Imagine being carried out into the world as a sign of the Savior.

We are the palms. We are the ashes.

Today we are transformed.

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

mark 11:9



THE BEGINNING

Adam and Eve were put on this earth,
Many centuries ago before Jesus' birth.

The Garden of Eden was a place to behold,
A place of beauty as it has been told.

Many gifts were given
to them because of God's love,
They had knowledge and wisdom
brought by the dove.

Satan came along
and caused them to stray,
From that moment on
their lives were in disarray.

Their gifts were taken away
because of their sins,
Because of God's love
they could start over again.

If we trust in God He will save us all,
even though Satan caused us to fall.

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*If today
you hear
his voice,
harden
not your
hearts.*

Psalm 95: 8
Responsorial Psalm
for March 8
Third Sunday
of Lent

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Keeping Hosanna close to home

If you've ever carefully folded your Palm Sunday palm into a cross after Mass... only to discover it months later in a desk drawer or the glove compartment, you are not alone.

Palm branches are sacramentals—sacred signs instituted by the Church that prepare us to receive grace and help us sanctify the ordinary moments of life (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1667). They are meant to be visible reminders of Christ's saving work, not forgotten keepsakes tucked away out of sight.

As we look ahead to Palm Sunday on March 29, 2026, perhaps this is the year to do something different: to let that simple palm branch become a steady invitation to prayer throughout the year.

Remembering What We Proclaim

On Palm Sunday we echo the crowds who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem:

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9).

Within days, those cries of praise would give way to shouts of "Crucify him." The liturgy places us right there in the story—not as spectators, but as participants. The palm reminds us that Christ truly entered into our suffering, took on our sin, and conquered death. It calls us to humility, repentance, and hope.

When we keep that palm

visible in our homes, it quietly proclaims:

Jesus is King. Jesus suffered for us. Jesus is victorious.

Meaningful Ways to Display Your Palm

Here are several simple, respectful ways to keep your Palm Sunday palm where it can gently draw your heart back to the Lord.

1. Place it behind a crucifix or sacred image.

Tuck the palm behind a crucifix, icon, or framed Scripture verse. The added greenery naturally draws the eye and highlights the central mystery of our faith: Christ crucified and risen.

2. Add it to your Easter table.

During the Easter season, incorporate your palm into a centerpiece with flowers or candles. It becomes a visual bridge between the triumphal entry and the Resurrection we celebrate so joyfully.

3. Use it as a Bible marker.

A folded palm makes a beautiful bookmark. Consider placing it in the Passion narratives (John 18–19), the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), or another passage you want to return to throughout the year.

4. Include it in a family prayer space.

Whether you have a full prayer corner or simply a small shelf with a candle and holy water, the palm can serve as a



visible reminder to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

5. Create a small Holy Week frame.

Place your folded palm in

a simple frame with the date—Palm Sunday 2026—and a short Scripture verse. It becomes a yearly marker of God's faithfulness in your family's life.

For Families with Small Children

If you have little ones at home, Palm Sunday is a beautiful opportunity to make the faith tangible and memorable.

Here are a few ideas:

- Let children help fold the palm into a cross. Even if it's imperfect, the act of folding becomes a teaching moment about Jesus' sacrifice.

- Start a "Hosanna spot." Invite children to place the palm near a child-friendly prayer book or Bible and say one short prayer there each night during Holy Week.

- Act out the Gospel. Read the Palm Sunday Gospel together and let children wave palms while singing a simple "Hosanna" song.

- Mark growth year by year. Save one palm cross (properly stored) in a keepsake box with the year labeled, and talk about how your child has grown—not just physically, but in faith.

- Connect it to service. Explain that just as the crowds welcomed Jesus, we welcome Him by loving others. Choose one small family act of kindness during Holy Week.

What to Do With Old Palms

Because palms are

See HOSANNA, page 16

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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.



SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE. Miss Candyce Coco's 2B class celebrated National Catholic Schools Week by coloring this year's theme logo. Back Row: Rhenlee [redacted], Noah [redacted], Tucker [redacted], Rose [redacted], Karolin [redacted], Eli [redacted], Layton [redacted], Ross [redacted]. Middle Row: Trey [redacted], Abby [redacted], Landon [redacted], Kollin [redacted], Harlee [redacted], Remi [redacted]. Front Row: (sitting) McCoy [redacted], Mary [redacted], Lola [redacted], Easton [redacted].

SACRED HEART SCHOOL. During National Catholic Schools Week, Dylan [redacted] in PK4B was one of the students that helped paint "stained glass" windows of the PK Building as a class project. It was supervised by PK4B teacher Mrs. Ashley Foret.



Louisiana Right to Life hosts Central Louisiana March for Life

By Giada Difulco

On Saturday, Jan. 31, Louisiana Right to Life hosted the Central Louisiana March for Life in Pineville to support the abolition of abortion by marching approximately 1.4 miles through town with posters and banners.

Many young children came with their parents to march for the lives of the unborn. There were also many young adults taking part in the March. Also participating were students from Louisiana Christian University, Louisiana State University of Alexandria, and many other students from local high schools around Cenla. The Knights of Columbus were also walking for life.

Marchers were chanting, "We are the Pro-Life Generation, Love them both." People in

cars had to stop for the peaceful protestors walking the streets of Pineville.

The Rev. Chad Partain from St Frances Cabrini Church in Alexandria, led the opening prayer for the march and other pastors, such as Pastor James White, and Rev. Luke LaFleur added their prayers as the marchers bowed their heads. Two speakers gave their pro-life stories of how abortion affected their families and how they turned to the pro-life cause. Foster parents shared their stories of life-giving support for loving them after the choice to choose life.

Benjamin Clapper, the director of the Louisiana Right to Life, spoke of how he witnessed the demolition site of an abortion clinic and was able to keep a brick from that building.

ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL PARTICIPATES IN MARCH FOR LIFE. On January 28, students of St. Joe in Plaquemine participated along with hundreds of others.





OLPS PRE-K MARDI GRAS PARADE, WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11. The Annual OLPS Pre-K Mardi Gras Parade on the school campus was held in brilliantly beautiful weather. Family, friends and school students, staff and faculty let the good times roll!



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES ANNUAL TRADITION FOR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL. Volunteers from St. Francis DeSales Church in Echo, hosted the “Together Tuesday” welcome for students at Poland Junior High School. This year’s “Mardi Gras” theme was a hit, continuing a festive tradition that students eagerly anticipate every year.



(left and right) ST. GENEVIEVE CHURCH, BROUILLETTE. On the evening of Jan. 31, the community of Brouillette gathered at St. Genevieve Church for the Vigil Mass and afterward, joined together in the parish hall for the annual “Taste From The Country” event. A sold out crowd braved the chill of the night for delicious soul-warming food. From Mr. Brent Scallan’s stuffed pork tenderloin, Mr. Roy’s stuffed crawfish pistolette, to finally getting some of Seth and Sarah’s blackberry cobbler, the evening of food and fellowship did not disappoint. It was a great night of “la vey” with everyone who attended in support of their church and community. The Cajun French refers to an evening visit with friends or family, often involving talking, laughing, and socializing after dark.



OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR PERFORMS WILLY WONKA. The OLPS annual school play, *Willy Wonka Jr.*, was performed at Lagniappe Theater the weekend of Jan. 23-25. Over 65 students in kindergarten through 6th grade managed to perform twice despite bad weather shutting everything down Saturday evening.

To see more photos from across the Diocese please visit the photo galleries at www.diocesealex.org

Second Blessings Thrift Store opens for business Feb. 10



THE CATHOLIC CHARITIES SECOND BLESSINGS THRIFT STORE GRAND OPENING RIBBON CUTTING TUESDAY, FEB. 10. assisted by the Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce, volunteer workers, and supporters of Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana.

Second Blessings Thrift Store Quick Info:

Location:

4409 Coliseum Blvd.
Alexandria

Store hours:

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Fri.

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 operating expenses:

Visit cccenla.org



SECOND BLESSINGS. Bishop Marshall blesses the store during its Feb. 5 dedication to St. Teresa of Calcutta. In attendance were Fr. John Brocato, Executive Director of Catholic Charities; Jennifer Gilchrist, Director of Operations, Cynthia Upton, Manager of Coaching Programs, interns Gabrielle Colson, Emily Paul and Jansen Kervin. The celebration continued Feb. 10 with a grand opening and ribbon cutting, marking the launch of this new outreach made possible through the generous support of donors, volunteers, and partners - including Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas, whose mentorship guided the project from vision to reality. Pictured below, the volunteers who attended the Grand Opening of Second Blessings with Heidi Wampler, Manager of Finance and Development for Catholic Charities of Central Louisiana.



BISHOP'S BLESSING. Bishop Robert Marshall sprinkles holy water throughout the Second Blessings Thrift Store. Catholic Charities staff, staff of the Diocese of Alexandria and supporters attended the ceremony on Feb. 5.



Services Offered by Catholic Charities of Central LA

Visit cccenla.org to access a variety of services. Appointments are required and can be made online.

- **Mental Health Counseling**
- **Christian Life Coaching**
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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**
- in partnership with Red River Bank and OFMS
- **Assist.Educate.Elevate.**
Emergency Basic Needs Assistance
(For those at risk of utility disconnect and eviction, victims of house fires, and information and referral)
- **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

The things that make for peace

By Dr. Richard Clements
Word on Fire

“Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!”

Jesus uttered these words in lamentation over Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago (Luke 19:42), but his words still apply to many of us “even today.” Sadly, many of us still don’t know the things that make for peace.

Thomas Merton, over the course of his life, came to know a great deal about those things, and he shared many of those insights with us in the books he wrote about the spiritual life. One of his key insights was that “we are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God.” He was right on target. True and lasting peace has both a horizontal dimension (peace with our fellow human beings) and a vertical dimension (peace with God).

Regarding the horizontal dimension of peace, Merton spoke of a “contagion of conflict” that can arise when we are not at peace with ourselves:

A man who is not at peace with himself necessarily projects his interior fighting into the society of those he lives with, and spreads a contagion of conflict all

“A man who is not at peace with himself necessarily projects his interior fighting into the society of those he lives with, and spreads a contagion of conflict all around him.”

Thomas Merton

around him.

Our inner turmoil tends to spill out into our relationships to the detriment of those relationships. And where does much of that inner turmoil come from? From not being at peace with God. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be at peace with other people over the long term if we lack peace within ourselves, and we cannot be (and remain) truly at peace within ourselves if we aren’t at peace with God. At the most fundamental level, all of the “things that make for peace” flow from being at peace with God.

And how can we be at peace with God? St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans, “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). Baptism into the body of Christ brings us

into the peace of God (Eph 2:13–18; Gal 3:26–28; 1 Pet 3:21), and the other sacraments help to sustain us in that peace or restore us to that peace, including the sacrament of reconciliation, in which God grants the penitent sinner “pardon and peace” through the ministry of the priest (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1449).

We dwell in the divine peace only by giving it away, by sharing the divine love and peace with others.

Along with the sacraments of the Catholic Church, prayer is also an essential component of keeping ourselves centered in the divine peace. Prayer, especially contemplative prayer, was one of the major themes of Thomas Merton’s writings. Merton described contemplation as finding the place deep within yourself where you are, here and now, being created by God and sustained in existence by God. Finding that place and returning to that place on a regular basis via contemplative prayer helps keep you connected to God, resting in his peace. It also connects you to all other human beings and, indeed, everything else in the cosmos, all of whom and all of which are also being sustained in existence by God from moment to moment.

Scripture refers to this state of resting in the peace of God at

this center deep within ourselves as “abiding” with God (Ps 91:1–10; John 15:4), which literally means to dwell with God, to make our home with God. We’re all searching for home in this life, and resting in God in contemplative prayer can give us a foretaste of our ultimate home, the home for which each of us was created: our eternal home within the divine life of God.

But Scripture also tells us that “abiding” with God requires that we take action. We need to follow God’s commandments; we need to strive to love as God loves (John 15:4–17; 1 John 2:3–6, 2:28–29, 3:24, and 4:11–18). God’s commandments are not capricious; they are designed to guide us toward our intended destiny, toward our ultimate home in him. They are designed to teach us to love as he loves, so that we might share as fully as possible in God’s life, love, and peace.

That’s why the Bible, in multiple places, connects our keeping of God’s commandments with our experience of the divine peace. The psalmist promises us, “Great peace have those who love [God’s] law; nothing can make them stumble” (Ps 119:165). God, through the prophet Isaiah, admonishes his people: “O that you had listened to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river” (Isa

48:18). And St. Paul reminds us that there will be “glory and honor and peace for every one who does good” (Rom 2:10).

The sacraments of the Church and an active prayer life can help us stay rooted in the peace of God, providing us with a firm foundation of peace in our lives, a peace from within which we can then step out into a world that is often far from peaceful. Once we’ve found the peace of God, we can’t remain in that peace by clinging to it; we dwell in the divine peace only by giving it away, by sharing the divine love and peace with others.

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*With
the Lord,
there is
mercy and
fullness of
redemption.*

Psalm 130: 7
Responsorial Psalm
for March 22
Fifth Sunday of Lent

Strengthen your sacrament: Domestic Church evangelization retreat for married couples

Marriage is more than a partnership—it is a sacrament, a living sign of Christ’s love for His Church. And like every vocation, it flourishes when it is intentionally nurtured.

From **March 13–15**, married couples are invited to step away from the busyness of daily life and enter into a deeper encounter with Christ together at the **Domestic Church Evangelization Retreat**, held at the peaceful **Maryhill Renewal Center**.

This retreat is designed specifically for **sacramentally married couples** who desire to begin—or deepen—their spiritual journey as husband and wife. It serves as the introductory experience for those interested in joining a Domestic Church Circle, but it is also a beautiful standalone opportunity to refocus your marriage on prayer, grace, and shared mission.

Grounded in Catholic teaching on the sacrament of matrimony, Domestic Church is a worldwide marriage and family formation movement inspired by the Church’s rich spiritual

tradition. The Evangelization Retreat offers couples:

- Daily Mass and opportunities for prayer
- Spiritually rich talks rooted in Church teaching
- Guided reflection and meaningful couple dialogue
- Time for quiet, rest, and reconnection

This is not a counseling program. Rather, it is a sacred pause, a chance to invite Christ more intentionally into your marriage and allow Him to renew what He began on your wedding day.

“Let the family be a sanctuary of life and love.”

*saint pope
john paul ii*

Many couples who attend speak of rediscovering peace, clarity, and a renewed spiritual unity that carries into everyday family life.

A Growing Mission for Marriage

Domestic Church continues to grow across the United States, and there is exciting news to share.

Did you know that in 2024, the English-speaking U.S. Domestic Church community unveiled a newly re-branded logo? The updated design beautifully reflects the heart of the mission: Christ at the center, radiating grace outward into marriage, family life, and the wider world. The thoughtful symbolism emphasizes unity, covenant love, and the call for families to become true “domestic churches” — living witnesses of faith in their homes and communities.

Along with the refreshed logo, the Domestic Church website was completely redesigned last year, making it easier than ever

for couples to explore retreats, formation opportunities, and the vision behind the movement. If you haven’t visited recently, now is a wonderful time to take a look.

In addition, we give thanks to God for the appointment of Fr. David Miller as DC-USA

National Chaplain.

Fr. Miller is a priest of the Diocese of Charlotte and has been involved with Domestic Church since its early days there eight years ago, serving faithfully as a circle priest. Ordained in 2010, he brings a rich background



PRE-CANA MARRIAGE PREP WORKSHOP. Thirteen engaged couples attended the Feb. 7 session of the Pre-Cana Workshop held at the St. Joseph Catholic Center in Alexandria. During these workshops, speakers talk on various topics that are vital to a couple’s lifelong marriage. The next workshop is May 30 and the cost is \$60 per couple. Register at www.diocesealex.org/pre-cana-marriage-prep-workshop/

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:

March 12-15

Women’s ACTS Retreat

hosted by St. Joseph Church, Marksville

March 19-22

Men’s ACTS Retreat

hosted by St. Michael the Archangel Church, Leesville

March 26-29

Men’s ACTS Retreat

hosted by Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville

All retreats are held at Maryhill Renewal Center.

*The Lord
is my
shepherd;
there is
nothing I
shall want.*

Psalm 23: 1
Responsorial Psalm
for March 15
Fourth Sunday
of Lent

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

in theology, psychology, and spiritual direction to this role. Currently writing two books on marriage, Fr. Miller is also one of twelve children and has a deep love for marriage and family life. His pastoral heart and theological depth are a tremendous gift to the Domestic Church mission nationwide.

Your Invitation

Sacramental marriage is a lifelong call to holiness. The Domestic Church Evangelization Retreat offers couples a space to rediscover that call — together.

For more information or to register for the March 13–15 retreat at Maryhill Renewal Center, visit <https://domesticchurchfamilies.com/retreats/>.

For local questions, contact Catherine and Mark Turner at alexandria@domesticchurchfamilies.com

Give your marriage this gift. Step away. Pray together. Let Christ strengthen the covenant that binds you — and send you back into the world renewed.



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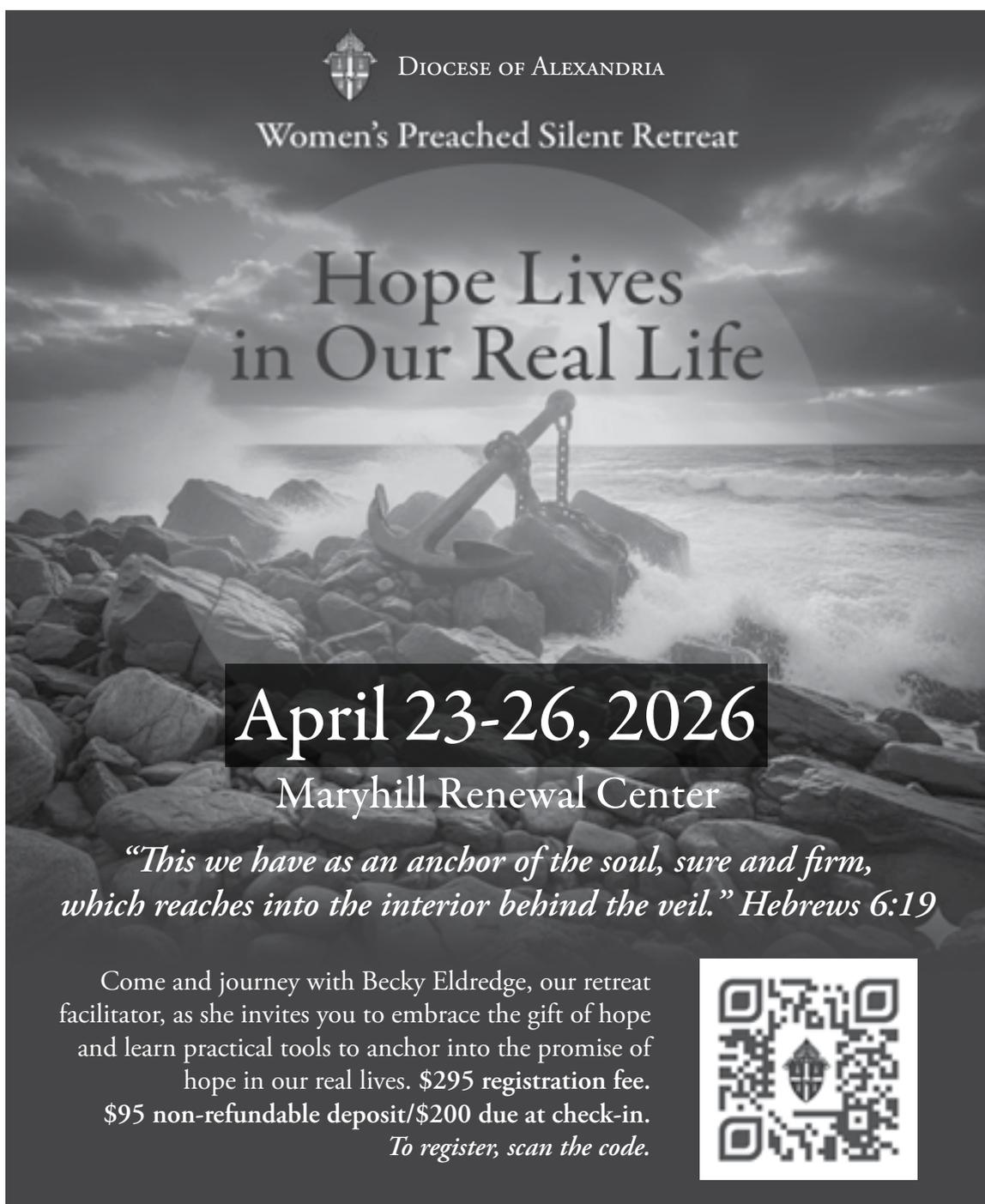
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Women's Preached Silent Retreat

Hope Lives in Our Real Life

April 23-26, 2026
 Maryhill Renewal Center

"This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil." Hebrews 6:19

Come and journey with Becky Eldredge, our retreat facilitator, as she invites you to embrace the gift of hope and learn practical tools to anchor into the promise of hope in our real lives. \$295 registration fee. \$95 non-refundable deposit/\$200 due at check-in.
To register, scan the code.



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.



SACRED HEART SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES FAIR WINNER. Joey [redacted] won First Place and Overall in the 2026 Catholic Schools Week Social Studies Fair. His project was on the "History of Christmas."

A TEACHING MOMENT. While visiting during Catholic Schools week, a Pre-K student at St. Frances Cabrini School became curious about Bishop Marshall's Pectoral Cross. Bishop let her see it and examine it up close.



100th DAY AT SACRED HEART SCHOOL. Students in Mrs. Karen Guillot's kindergarten class dressed for the 100th Day of school as 100 year olds. Pictured left to right: Vayda [redacted], Nolan [redacted], Lane [redacted], Kohen [redacted], Knox [redacted], Kason [redacted], Wade [redacted], Jackson [redacted], Collins [redacted], Mia [redacted], Blake [redacted], Saylor [redacted], Addilyn [redacted], Evelyn [redacted].



MENARD APOSTLES FOR CHRIST. The Holy Savior Menard MAC team hosted a retreat at Maryhill on Monday, Feb. 9 for the 6th-8th graders of St. Frances Cabrini School and the 6th graders from Our Lady of Prompt Succor School.

HOSANNA

Continued from pg. 9

sacramentals, they should be treated with respect. Before the next Ash Wednesday, you may return old palms to your parish—many churches burn them to create the ashes used on Ash Wednesday. If that is not possible, they may be burned privately and the ashes buried, or simply buried in the ground in a dignified way.

Palm Sunday invites us into the great drama of salvation. The palm branch in our hands is more than a symbol of a past event—it is a reminder that Christ still comes to us, still calls us, and still reigns.

This year, may we keep our palms close—not hidden away—but visible in our homes and in our hearts, as we journey with Him from "Hosanna" to the empty tomb.

Save the Date

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Why retreats still matter for our teens

In the steady rhythm of parish life, most ministry happens in ordinary ways: weekly youth nights, Sunday Mass, service projects, faith formation classes, and conversations in hallways or parking lots. It is in these consistent, faithful moments that seeds are planted.

But every so often, something different is needed.

Retreats — whether a parish day retreat, a Confirmation retreat, a summer conference, or camp — create intentional space for young people to step away from their routines and listen more closely for God’s voice. They do not replace everyday ministry. Rather, they deepen it. A retreat becomes a kind of “mountaintop” moment, helping teens recognize how God has already been at work in their lives.

For many teenagers, these experiences become turning points. In the quiet of Eucharistic Adoration, during honest small-group conversations, or through the witness of other young Catholics, they begin to see themselves differently — not just as students or athletes or friends, but as beloved sons and daughters of God with a unique calling.

Confirmation Retreat — February 28

One upcoming opportunity for our diocese is the Confirmation Retreat scheduled for February 28



at the St. Rita Church Holy Family Center in Alexandria.

The day will be led by Dustin Bertrand, a dynamic Catholic speaker, youth minister, and evangelist from south Louisiana. Dustin holds degrees in psychology and criminal justice, along with a Master’s degree in Theology and Christian Ministry from Franciscan University of Steubenville, and has spent more than a decade serving teens through his ministry, God Made Self Driven. His passion is helping young people understand who they are in Christ and respond generously to God’s call.

As teens prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, a retreat day like this offers space for prayer, reflection, and renewed openness to the Holy Spirit.

To register your group, contact Deacon Jason Lavergne at 318-445-6424, ext. 207, or email

denjlavergne@diocesealex.org
Steubenville South Youth Conference – June 26–28

Looking ahead to summer, teens entering grades 9–12 are invited to attend the Steubenville South Youth Conference, June 26–28.

Steubenville South is a dynamic Catholic youth conference that gathers parishes from across the South for a powerful weekend of faith, fellowship, and encounter with Christ. Through engaging speakers, uplifting worship, daily Mass, opportunities for Confession, and Eucharistic Adoration, teens are invited to deepen their relationship with God and discover the joy of living out their Catholic faith.

This year’s theme, “Worthy,” is based on 1 Samuel 17:47: “The battle is the Lord’s.” In a culture that often questions their value or identity, teens will be reminded

that their worth comes from the Lord — and that He fights for them.

Speakers include Paul George, Fr. Dave Pivonka, Tanner Kalina, Noelle Garcia, and Tim Jara, each bringing a unique voice of encouragement and truth to this pivotal season in a young person’s spiritual life.

Registration is now open. Visit steubenvillesouth.com for more information, and contact your parish youth minister or

church office to learn how to register.

In a busy world that rarely slows down, retreat experiences remind us of something essential: God is always speaking. Sometimes we simply need to create space to hear Him.

Families are encouraged to prayerfully consider how these opportunities might bless the teens in their lives. Even one intentional “yes” — one day, one weekend, one step closer to Christ — can make a lasting difference.

*My God,
my God,
why have you
abandoned
me?*

Psalm 22: 2 | Responsorial
Psalm for March 29
Palm Sunday of the Lord’s
Passion

Campus Ministry:

LSU of Alexandria:
LSUA Catholic Student Organization, 318-447-2956.
Follow us on Facebook or Instagram @lsucatholics

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.
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**For the battle
belongs to the Lord.**

1 SAMUEL 17:47

STEBENVILLE SOUTH | June 26-28, 2026



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The Light is On For You - March 12

The Diocese of Alexandria will offer a Lenten day for confession on Thursday, Mar. 12 when most churches within the Diocese will offer a time in the evening from 5:00-7:00 p.m. to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Contact your church to confirm they are participating.

Domestic Church Evangelization retreat for married couples - March 13-15

The Domestic Church Evangelization Retreat provides sacramentally married couples with an opportunity to begin their spiritual journey together (or deepen it if it already exists). The retreat serves as the introduction to Domestic Church for those interested in beginning formation in a Domestic Church circle. Held at Maryhill Renewal Center. For more information, visit domesticchurchfamilies.com/retreats/ or contact Catherine and Mark Turner by email at alexandria@domesticchurchfamilies.com with any questions.

Disalced Carmelites meeting - March 14

The Order of the Disalced 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.

Shamrockin' Fest - March 14

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.

Ecumenical St. Joseph Altar - March 19

On Thursday, March 19, St. Joseph Church in St. Joseph, LA will host its 2nd annual Ecumenical St. Joseph Altar. The altar will begin at 5:30 p.m. that evening at the downtown St. Joseph Ampitheater in St. Joseph, LA. There will be scripture reading, songs, food, and blessed bread. All faiths are welcome. Please if you are interested in coming, email Fr. Taylor at stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

6th Annual Adam Jeansonne Memorial Golf Tournament - March 20

Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church Youth Group is having their 6th Annual Adam Jeansonne Memorial Golf Tournament at Links on the Bayou on Friday, March 20. Proceeds help fund summer camps for the youth group. Tournament format is four-person scramble. Lunch and beverages included, great prizes, team entry fee is \$400 or \$125 a person. For more information email or call Felicia Schneider at : jrhigh@olpschurch.org or call (318) 445-9748, ext. 228.

Taste of Echo- March 21

A Celebration of Local Flavors! Join us at St. Francis DeSales Church, Echo on Saturday, Mar. 21, from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. \$15 donation is appreciated. For tickets contact Millie at 318-359-3660.

Seminary Come and See Weekend - March 27-29

St. Joseph Abbey Seminary College is scheduled to have its Spring Come and See weekend from March 27-29. This is a great opportunity for any male 16 years old or older to come and see the seminary campus and what seminary life is like. For more information, please contact the Director of Vocations, Fr. Luke LaFleur at frillafleur@diocesealex.org.

Beginning Experience - March 27-29

Widowed, separated, or divorced? Don't know where to turn? Struggling with grief or loss? Beginning Experience of Alexandria is registering now for a weekend away that provides an individual with the opportunity to encounter self and to grow with a purpose to achieve inner peace. The experience is to help close the door gently on the past and move on with renewed hope and purpose. The weekend will be held at Maryhill Renewal Center. The cost is \$185.00 which includes two nights lodging and meals. If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to ask. For more information, the website is: www.beginningexperience.org or to register contact: Anna at (318) 448-1990 or (318) 452-2678 asweat7@aol.com

Chrism Mass - March 31

Join us for the annual Chrism Mass at 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, March 31 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in

Alexandria. During the Chrism Mass, Bishop Marshall blesses and consecrates the oils which the priests will use in Sacraments throughout the year. At the conclusion of the Chrism Mass, each parish in the Diocese of Alexandria will receive the oils to bring back to their parish for use for the next year.

Women's Silent Retreat - April 23-26

"This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil." – Hebrews 6:19

Come and journey with Becky Eldredge, our retreat facilitator, as she invites you to embrace the gift of hope and learn practical tools to anchor into the promise of hope in our real lives. Location: Maryhill Renewal Center. Cost of the retreat is \$295. A non-refundable deposit of \$95 is due now at registration and \$200 is due when you check-in for the retreat. To register please visit: <https://freedonationkiosk.com:9011/doa/events/3/168660>

Pre-Cana Marriage Prep - May 30

The day will include presentations on various topics that are vital to a couple's lifelong marriage. Lunch will be included. Space will be limited, so please register for a workshop as soon as possible.

Registration for the May 30, 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 Formation, P.O. Box 7417, Alexandria, LA 71306-0417.

Other future workshop dates: 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

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.

Church Today News Deadlines

March 23
Deadline for news:
Thursday, Mar 12

April 27
Deadline for news:
Thursday, April 16



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March 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
FEBRUARY 23 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK	24 PRAY FOR DCN. L. FELDKAMP	25 PRAY FOR MSGR. J. FERGUSON	26 PRAY FOR FR. W. GEARHEARD	27 PRAY FOR DCN. L. GLANKLER	28 PRAY FOR FR. J. GOOTEE	MARCH 1 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT Farmers' Mass and Blessing of the Seed 5:00 p.m. Hwy 65 and Hwy 128, St. Joseph, LA PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL
2 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR DCN. S. GRAMIGNA	3 PRAY FOR FR. R. GREMILLION	4 PRAY FOR DCN. M. GUIDRY	5 PRAY FOR FR. D. HART	6 FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. R. HUMPHRIES	7 FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. R. JOHNSON	8 THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT PRAY FOR DCN. S. JONES
9 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. T. KENNEDY	10 PRAY FOR FR. P. KULIGOWSKI	11 PRAY FOR FR. P. KUNNUMPURAM	12 The Light is On For You Lenten Day of Confession 5:00-7:00 p.m. PRAY FOR FR. L. LAFLEUR	13 PRAY FOR FR. M. LAIRD	14 Discaled Carmelites Monthly Meeting 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center Shamrockin' Fest 6:00 p.m. Randolph Riverfront Center, Alexandria Domestic Church Evangelization Retreat -- Maryhill Renewal Center Women's ACTS Retreat hosted by St. Joseph Church, Marksville -- Maryhill Renewal Center	15 FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT PRAY FOR DCN. J. LAVERGNE
16 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR DCN. G. LEBLANC	17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY PRAY FOR FR. V. MANUEL	18 PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL	19 Ecumenical St. Joseph's Altar 5:30 p.m. Hosted by St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph, LA SOLEMNITY of ST. JOSEPH, SPOUSE of the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PRAY FOR FR. R. MATHEWS	20 6th Annual Adam Jeansonne Golf Tournament Links on the Bayou, Alexandria PRAY FOR DCN. P. MCCUSKER	21 Taste of Echo 5:00-7:00 p.m. St. Francis de Sales Church, Echo PRAY FOR FR. D. MEADE	22 FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT PRAY FOR FR. L. MELCHER
23 Breathing Through Grief Support Group 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph Catholic Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. J. MICHALCHUK	24 PRAY FOR FR. K. MICHIELS	25 SOLEMNITY of the ANNUNCIATION of the LORD PRAY FOR DCN. R. MITCHELL	26 PRAY FOR FR. C. MORGAN	27 PRAY FOR DCN. D. MOREAU	28 PRAY FOR DCN. L. MOREAU	29 SIXTH SUNDAY OF LENT Beginning Experience Retreat -- Maryhill Renewal Center Come and See Weekend -- St. Joseph Seminary, Covington Men's ACTS Retreat hosted by Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville -- Maryhill PALM SUNDAY PRAY FOR DCN. T. MOULARD

2026 Catholic Schools Week



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: UNITED IN FAITH AND COMMUNITY.

The Diocese of Alexandria Catholic Schools provide a sound academic education that addresses the individual needs of the students as completely as possible. All the teachers and principals of our schools meet the teaching/administrative requirements of the State of Louisiana.

This year in our diocese, National Catholic Schools Week was interrupted by an ice storm and schools were closed for a few days, but once the ice melted and students were back in class, we carried on celebrating this week set aside to highlight the best of a Catholic education. Pictured top to bottom, left to right: St. Mary's Assumption School, Cottonport; Holy Savior Menard High School, Alexandria; St. Anthony School, Bunkie; St. Mary's Catholic School, Natchitoches (attending March for Life in Natchitoches); St. Frances Cabrini School, Alexandria; Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, Alexandria; St. Joseph Elementary School, Plaquemine; and Sacred Heart School, Moreauville.

