



The Rev. Anthony Fontenot, reads the Gospel at the 75th anniversary Mass for St. Raphael Parish in Iowa. At right is Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Diocesan Administrator, who was the celebrant and homilist.

## St. Raphael begins year-long celebration of 75th anniversary

IOWA - St. Raphael Catholic Church began a year-long celebration of its 75th anniversary of establishment on Sunday, Feb. 5. The parish was established by Bishop Jules B Jeanmard, Bishop of Lafayette, on Feb. 7, 1931.

According to the Rev. Anthony Fontenot, pastor of St. Raphael, during each of the next 12 months an activity will be celebrated to commemorate the anniversary. Some of those events include the St. Joseph's Table (March) at St. Joseph Mission in LeBleu Settlement, Senior Citizens Retreat (April), Armed Forces Day (May);

Vacation Bible School (July); Ministry Fair (August); St. Raphael Patronal Feast (September); Church Bazaar (October) and Living Nativity at St. Joseph Chapel in December.

Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Diocesan Administrator, was the celebrant of the Mass with Fr. Fontenot, Rev. Aubrey Guilbeau, a former pastor, and Rev. T.L. Herlong, a former associate pastor as concelebrants. Msgr. Irving A. DeBlanc was also in attendance.

The Mass saw the premiere performance of the "Mass of St. Raphael," which was composed by the

church's choir director Gary Mouton.

The Rev. Wilfred Belanger was the founding pastor of the parish which took in the surrounding communities of Bell City, Hayes, Lacassine and LeBleu Settlement. St. John Vianney Parish in Bell City was erected in 1939. A chapel was completed in LeBleu Settlement, St. Joseph Chapel, in 1941.

The current St. Raphael Church was built in 1959 and can seat 600. The rectory was completed in the late 1960s and a new parish hall was built in 1973 with classrooms added to the hall in 1980.

## Jennings' Immaculate Conception celebrates 50th anniversary

JENNINGS - Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Diocesan Administrator, was the celebrant of a special 50th anniversary Mass on Sunday, Feb. 12 at Immaculate Conception Church. Concelebrating were Rev. Jude Brunnert, M.S., Rev. T. L. Herlong, Rev. Hyacinth Okafor, and Rev. Wayne LeBleu. Deacons Ed McNally and Bennett McNeal served at the altar.

Immaculate Conception was established on Feb. 10, 1956 by the Most Reverend Maurice Schexnayder with the Rev. John J. Windt, a Dutch priest, as the founding pastor. Subsequent pastors were the Rev. Henry Van Tiel, Fr. Herlong, Rev. Oris Broussard, Fr. LeBleu, and now Fr. Brunnert.

A number of religious sis-

ters who served the parish over the years were also present for the Mass. Those included Sr. Mary Jo Ortego, Sr. Hilda Mallet, Sr. Pius Blanchard and Sr. Michelle Geerken, all sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament, and Sr. Monica Myers, an Eucharistic Missionaries sister.

The parish was established from territory previously part of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish. The new Immaculate Conception Church was dedicated in 1964.

In his homily Msgr. Greig lauded the members of the church, saying, "You have shown that you are imitators of Christ in the 50 years, in your community, in your town, and in the world. We must continue to be examples to the young people of

the Church as imitators of Christ. Thank God for the foundation of this community."

Acknowledged after the Mass at a celebratory luncheon held in John Windt Hall were several firsts - first Baptisms, Michael LeGros and Mary Alice Doucet, on March 4, 1956; first marriage J.K. Hopkins and Anna Pearl Buras, March 3, 1956, and the first death Lufrey Lopez, May 21, 1956.

Also recognized were members of the Church who were members from the beginning. On behalf of the parish and in honor of its anniversary, Fr. Brunnert presented Msgr. Greig with a financial contribution to aid victims of Hurricane Rita.



## DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

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LENT 2006

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Ash Wednesday readings introduce us to an ongoing Lenten theme through the words PRAYER, FASTING, AND ALMSGIVING.

PRAYER places us in a disposition of openness to God speaking to us. Participating in the Eucharist, reflecting on the daily Scripture readings, seeking conversion from our sinful ways, taking time for spiritual reading, and spending time in family prayer are helpful ways to deepen our prayer life and to spiritually grow during this season.

FASTING allows us to experience physical hunger which in turn reminds us of our spiritual hunger for God in our lives. Through fasting, we focus on our total dependence on God and we identify with the needs of the hungry and the poor. Fasting and abstinence can be a discipline we choose to practice throughout the Lenten season even though it is only required on certain days.

ALMSGIVING helps us focus on the blessings we have in a spirit of gratitude. Our most precious possessions of love, good health, and friendships are pure gifts of God. Gratitude for who we are and how we have been blessed prompts us to reach out to others out of compassion. Compassion and generosity compel us to share with others.

For each of us, the Lenten season can be a time of spiritual growth. How? By taking the time to develop "a plan of action" for myself. We all acknowledge that there are many demands on our time - if I do not decide to create time for spiritual renewal in my life, each day will simply flow into the next. I encourage you over the next few days approaching Ash Wednesday to decide on a Lenten plan for yourself. You might choose to commit yourself to a discipline under each "category" of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Be realistic with what is possible for you to do, rely upon God's grace to accomplish your "plan of action," and, if you fall short of fulfilling your commitment, realize that each day of Lent is an opportunity to begin anew.

The Lord's gift to each of us is the present, namely, this Lent. My prayer for you is that you may be faithful to your commitment to God and to His direction in your life as you embrace fully your journey with Him through this Holy Season.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig  
Diocesan Administrator



Bernice Istre, left, joins Rev. Jude Brunnert, M.S. center, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Jennings and Lovey Reed, right, as they peruse the proclamation from the State of Louisiana congratulating Immaculate Conception on its 50th anniversary. The proclamation was presented by State Senator Jerry Theunissen and Representative Dan Morrish.

# Visitors come to help SW Louisiana's Rita survivors

LAKE CHARLES - Many people, over the more than four months since the land-fall of Hurricane Rita, have come to Southwest Louisiana from outside the area. They have come to see the devastation with their own eyes and to do whatever they can to help. The scope of the devastation has been a shock to most of them but their willingness to provide the sweat of their own brow and, with some, their expertise in coordinating disaster relief.

Catholic Charities USA has provided the Diocese of Lake Charles with a grant of more than \$2 million in order to get direct financial assistance to the people affected by Hurricane Rita.

Since January, members of disaster relief teams affiliated with Catholic Charities in other dioceses have been here to provide their expertise. Rose Graham, the Director of Development of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie in Pennsylvania has made two trips. During her most recent visit she was accompanied by Edie Joseph and Paulette Patora. All three came to assist with Relief Effort of Catholic Social Services (RECSS) of the Diocese. They accompanied Deacon Edward Lavine, Director of Catholic Social Services on numerous trips to Cameron Parish to help and to see the destruction first hand. The trio had been to the New Orleans area before coming to Lake Charles and had some definite impressions of the damages to each

location.

"I think the first indication of the damage was when I came through the airport (Lake Charles Regional Airport) and baggage claim is now outside and the airport building is damaged," Graham said. "I can tell you that when I went through New Orleans their airport is fully operational. So right away you realize there is a problem here. Damage-wise if you rate it (the scope of damage) on population and amount I would say its equal because you are a smaller community."

"The difference in New Orleans is that a lot of the structure is still there. When you go into the civil parish of Cameron, the communities of Holly Beach, Johnson Bayou, those places are gone. There is not even any structure left. The folks in New Orleans will have to tear down their houses. Most of them are not going to be livable but at least when you go there you see a structure. Here, all you see is empty space, where there used to be homes."

Graham saw the gritty attitude of the people of Southwest Louisiana. "The people I met in Cameron Parish told me they all plan on rebuilding. They want to get back to life as it was before. Of course, there will be folks in both regions that won't come back.

"The spirit of the people here is just amazing," she continued. "After you go across the big bridge on the

way to Cameron we saw a house in the road and someone had written "God bless" on it. Someone still has the spirit of "God Bless" in them after this horrible situation."

Even as the grants from Catholic Charities are being used to aid those most in need, Graham noted that more is needed, "Of course, there is never enough money to go around," she said. "The money you got will help but it is a dent and a band aid on a much larger problem. Hopefully it will leverage other folks to also help so that all together we can make a difference. The grant

will also provide assistance for some support service connections that might be needed for folks. Some people might not know how to apply for welfare benefits or unemployment; they may have never had to do that before. They may have new medical needs due to the hurricane; new stress related problems due to the hurricane that they need to talk with someone about. Hopefully we will be able to meet some of those needs."

Joseph, a licensed social worker, was seeing the destruction for the first time and noted the attitude of the

people "I was very, very surprised at the destruction of the whole community," she said. "It was a shell of a community but it was an alive community. Even though there were only shells of houses, businesses and schools left, the people were there and they were cleaning up and I got a sense of hope from them that they were going to rebuild their lives. You wonder how it's going to turn out because it was so total."

Though she had seen some of the television coverage about the storm's aftermath the reality was a sobering experience. "It is different when you are actually here, because it's just an image on TV," she continued. "You can look at it and say it's awful but it is a physical experience. You really start to feel physical about the emptiness and the devastation. I think it means more (to be here) because I was actually able to see it, and smell it and touch it as opposed to seeing it on a television set. News coverage doesn't do it justice. The reality of seeing the destruction live, it really hit home."

Patora, a computer data professional, helped set up the database to keep track of those receiving aid. Seeing the devastation first hand also was a heart-rending experience.

"My first impression when we went to New Orleans was

the devastation and the depression of the people who had lost so much," she said. "It kind of consumed me. I kept thinking that people really must come down and see for themselves to do it justice and that the press doesn't do it justice. It focuses on it for that time when it is popular and then they forget about you."

"You can't forget about these people," she continued. "Coming to Lake Charles, what really got me the most was going to Holly Beach and Cameron Parish and just counting my own blessings at home. When I see how much these people need, not just material goods but prayers. They are so devastated mind, body, and soul. They need everything and you just want to get out and do everything that you can for them. I think that we as a people, the whole people of the United States, aren't doing enough."

"A lack of real knowledge of the general public away from here about what happened here is vast. People really need an education. They need to come down here and spend time, hands on time to really experience what the people have gone through. It's not going to be a short-term fix; it's going to be long term. You have to teach the people and enable them, give them a hand up, not a handout."



Relief Effort of Catholic Social Services (RECSS) has placed a storage pod at St. Patrick Chapel in Sweetlake to provide Hurricane Rita victims with many needed items. RECSS has been assisted by a Disaster Relief Team from the Diocese of Erie, Penn. From left are, Rose Graham, Rev. Joseph McGrath, Paulette Parotta, and Edie Joseph at St. Patrick