

Blessing of graves of unidentified from Audrey held July 1

LAKE CHARLES - Remembering in prayer the dead of Hurricane Audrey, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, blessed the gravesites of more than 150 unidentified victims of the June 1957 storm on Sunday, July 1. Bishop Provost began the afternoon's blessings at Combre Memorial Park and then traveled to Highland Memorial Gardens to complete the rite.

The ceremonies began at each site with a reading from Scripture by the Rev. V. Wayne LeBleu, pastor of Christ the King Church in Lake Charles and a native of Cameron Parish. Following the prayer, Bishop Provost gave a short homily and then led the people in the Litany of the Saints. He then walked the length and breadth of the gravesites blessing those interred and then blessing those in attendance.

In his homily, the Bishop said, "We come together in a very special way to recall the tragic events of 50 years ago. It was on July 1st and July 2nd, 50 years ago, that the burials at these sites began to take place and we thought it appropriate for us to recall this moment in the history of this community and the deceased, these tragic victims of this hurricane.

"We have to recall the very real way that God's will, and his plan for us, is always mysterious and that God can use whatever he wishes to reveal that mysterious plan to us, even suffering and tragedy." Bishop Provost continued. "We know because God assures us in the Sacred Scriptures and also in his revelation of Jesus Christ himself, that very often through death comes promise and hope."

The Bishop referred to the Gospel of John, in which Jesus speaks about the grain of wheat.

"Did not our Lord himself say, 'unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and die, it remains just a grain of wheat.' Didn't He say in the Gospel, that unless we take our Cross daily and follow in his steps we are not worthy of Him.

"I recall reading many years ago, a very wise person's comment on suffering, that suffering was God screaming at us," the Bishop said. "God captures our attention with suffering. So often we lead daily lives, in and out, somewhat humdrum lives, with schedules that are very predictable. This causes us to forget, very often, the presence of God in our midst. Look how unfortunate that is.

"So often suffering is an opportunity for us to recall that God's plan for us is a plan of love," he continued. "Somehow,



At left, Bishop Glen John Provost addresses those gathered at Highland Memorial Gardens Cemetery for the blessing of the gravesite of unidentified victims of Hurricane Audrey there, while, at right, the Reverend V. Wayne LeBleu, pastor of Christ the King Church in Lake Charles, reads the Gospel at the first prayer service for unidentified victims of Audrey buried at Combre Memorial Park prior to Bishop Provost's blessing of the gravesite. July 1 and July 2 were the 50th anniversaries of the burials of more than 150 unidentified victims of the storm at the two mass gravesites.



someway God's will is hidden mysteriously in every event and it is for us to understand that. This is why St. Paul in that beautiful reading that we heard at the beginning of our prayer this afternoon, says that we must never yield to sorrow, we must never yield to grief because we have a promise. That promise is hidden in God's mysterious will and yet revealing itself in many, many ways.

In closing his remarks, the Bishop said, "So, this afternoon we restore our faith, we reaffirm our faith and our hope in eternal life for these victims buried here. It moves me a great deal just to think that we are standing on a site where there

are victims buried, who were unidentified and who were brought to this resting place, somewhat like lost souls.

"Some of their families don't know that they are buried here. There is something very tragic about that. But at the same time, we are here and we are praying for them and we are united with them in a very special way. They live in our memory, we do not forget them and we should not. There is no more powerful a memory than the memory of God. They live with God and in his memory, He who never forgets. Let us then pray for them and pray for all of us who are left behind, may our hope and our faith be restored."



The Reverend E. Joseph McGrath, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Creole, prepares to rededicate the Hurricane Memorial in front of Our Lady Star of the Sea Church in Cameron on June 27, the 50th anniversary of the landfall of Hurricane Audrey. Father McGrath celebrated the first Mass in the nearly completed Cameron church that day. The wreath on the monument was later laid on the water at the Cameron Jetties to commemorate the loss of life from the storm.

Abortion: The First Human Rights Abuse

Torture, political imprisonment, sexual slavery, genocide - these are a few of the examples one would think of when it comes to human rights abuses. These are heinous abuses that not only Catholics, but all people of good will should fight. But in this list of atrocities, many people can forget that abortion is the earliest and most fundamental attack on human rights.

Until recently, Amnesty International documented and decried China's policy of coercive abortion as a human rights abuse. But earlier this year, Amnesty International changed its generally neutral stance on abortion in favor of a policy supporting abortion rights for any woman who "becomes pregnant as the result of rape, sexual assault, or incest, or where a pregnancy poses a risk to a woman's life or a grave risk to her health." "Health" can and has been interpreted very broadly, and so this new policy opens the door to abortion on demand. By pitting

women's "rights" over the right to life of the unborn, this policy will increase the injustice unborn babies suffer worldwide everyday.

A mother's womb should be the place where the smallest of God's children are nurtured and protected, but abortion advocacy makes the womb a place of violence and bloodshed. Human rights groups like Amnesty International should fight to protect the beginning of life as much as they fight to stop the abuses affecting those already born, since the right to life is the foundation for every other human right.

Amnesty International's new policy fails to recognize not only the dignity of the child, but also the reality that many women suffer mentally, emotionally and physically after abortion. The regret from taking part in the death of their child can leave lifelong sorrow. People often don't consider that men can suffer too. Men who encouraged or who didn't have the power to stop the abortion can also be

greatly impacted by the loss of their child.

Amnesty International should reconsider their new policy. If they attack the fundamental right to life, the foundation for all other human rights, then they have no credible grounds to stand upon to promote other human rights. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

As a people of faith, we have to work to prevent human rights abuses from occurring, most importantly, in the womb. We must strive to increase respect for human life from conception to natural death, to prevent abortions and the suffering of men and women. We must all work together to protect those unable to speak for themselves, born or soon to be born.

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The photo above shows the image of the mural at St. Eugene Church in Grand Chenier as it was following Hurricane Rita, which damaged it and the church severely. Recently, St. Eugene was blessed and re-dedicated including the new and enhanced image, left, painted by internationally known local artist Elton Louviere along with his wife Pat. The original mural was commissioned by the parish a number of years ago having been a project under consideration by the Rev. Vincent Vadakkedath since 1994 when he was named pastor.