

Catholic Charities seeks to support parish ministries

LAKE CHARLES - Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Lake Charles recently hosted a Social Ministry Resource Planning Meeting with representatives from church parishes of the Diocese. The representatives were those who currently serve in social or outreach ministry in their churches.

Sharing information about the different services available at each of the churches and determining how Catholic Charities can support or enhance those activities was one of the purposes of the meeting, according to Carolyn Fernandez, Director of Catholic Charities.

"Our parishes are the hub of local Church life and are often the first place people turn when they are in need," Fernandez said. "Catholic Charities wants to support and supplement those front-line efforts, and determine what additional resources may be needed to help the churches enhance their services."

A second goal of the meeting was to conduct the first discussion group on the policy paper *Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good* that was released last month by Catholic Charities USA. Father Henry Mancuso, Secretary of Pastoral Services of the Diocese, gave an in depth presentation on the data and statistics from the paper and explained why this is important information for anyone working in social ministry.

"It is key to understand the context in which we labor," said Father Mancuso. "We must recognize that a large number of the

people who are seeking help are constrained by a system that has presented them many economic and educational barriers, making it extremely difficult to escape the cycle of poverty.

"As we are providing help, if we are open and receptive, the person we are helping also gives something back to us," he continued.

The next step for the Catholic Charities awareness and advocacy effort on poverty and racism is to hold discussion groups in each deanery. There are many misconceptions regarding poverty in our country. Many people believe poverty is due to the failures of individuals and they are unaware that revisions to current economic and social policies could dramatically improve this crisis.

With these discussion groups, Catholic Charities will be working to dispel the misconceptions and to empower people with the real facts. "We need large numbers of people advocating on behalf of the poor, talking to their Senators, talking to their Congressmen, expressing how important it is to invest in social programs and to support policies that will provide economic security and opportunity for low-income individuals and families," Fernandez said. "We should all get involved when we know there are problems, problems with social security, cost of prescription medication, the current minimum wage. In addition to doing the work of charity, we have to do the work of justice and advocate for change."



Reverend Henry Mancuso speaks to parish representatives attending a recent Social Ministry Resource Planning Meeting. Carolyn Fernandez, at left, Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Lake Charles, spoke to the group about ways the organization can support and enhance the different services parishes make available to those in need.

Marriage preparation course provides "living example"

LAKE CHARLES - A sunny and dry Saturday morning. Ordinarily 28 engaged couples might be shopping for dinnerware or towels or perhaps working on guest lists for the weddings.

On a recent such day that same 28 couples, all anticipating a Catholic wedding later in the year, were taking part in a one-day marriage preparation program offered by the Office of Family Life of the Diocese of Lake Charles - Together for a Lifetime.

Kathy Owen, Director of Family Life, and her husband Chris serve as the example of a living, breathing Catholic Christian marriage and try to teach the skills that will be necessary for each of those couples to succeed in making their own marriage work.

"We introduce them to the concepts, teaching them about the sacramental nature of marriage through our own witness," Kathy said.

Together for a Lifetime is a compulsory program for couples entering the Sacra-

ment of Marriage, according to Owen. "All dioceses across the country have guidelines for the sacrament not just here in Lake Charles.

"We try to get the couples to understand what it takes to make a marriage work," Owen said. "We remind them of what the vows say - for better or worse and we try to show them the real side of marriage with its ups and downs."

Owen offers the program eight times per year as well as providing couples with the option of attending an Engaged Encounter weekend at Saint Charles Center.

"Marriage is a true gift from God," she continued. "We try to show them the reality of the Sacrament - lifelong, unconditional, mutual."

Many couples seem to be delaying marriage from their early 20s into their mid 20s, Owen noted. "Which is good," she said. Unlike some younger people, "those older couples aren't trying to escape something," Owen continued. "They will usually

have put more discernment in their decision the older they are."

Statistics have shown that just attending a marriage preparation course reduces the chances of divorce by 50 percent

Owen also pointed to the great work being done by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and its programs dealing with marriage.

"A wonderful resource for couples, both engaged and already married, is the web site, *for your marriage.org*," she said. "The site, sponsored by the Bishops, provides information, skills, inspiration and resources."

A new program to be offered this Fall is "God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage," a one-day program that will be offered to couples as an option to Together for a Lifetime.

For more information about Marriage Preparation Programs call Kathy Owen at 337-439-7400, Ext. 313.



Passing out material for the recent Together for a Lifetime program, sponsored by the Office of Family Life, are Chris and Kathy Owen. Kathy is the director of Family Life. The couple serve as an example of a living, breathing Catholic Christian marriage, teaching the skills necessary for couples to succeed in making their own marriage work.

Bishop Provost will lead Easter liturgies

LAKE CHARLES - The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, will celebrate the Sacred Triduum - Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday - on March 20-23, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Bishop Provost will bless the palms before the 9:30 a.m. Mass Sunday, March 17. The blessing will begin in the courtyard between the Cathedral and the Day Chapel, weather permitting. The Bishop and parishioners will then process into the Cathedral for the Palm Sunday Mass.

On Wednesday, March 19 at 10 a.m., the Bishop will celebrate the Chrism Mass, at which the Holy Oils used during the year are pre-

pared and blessed, in the Cathedral. The priests of the Diocese will concelebrate.

The Mass of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated on Holy Thursday, March 20, at 7 p.m. The Bishop will wash the feet of 12 members of the laity in commemoration of Christ washing the feet of the Apostles.

The celebration of the Lord's Passion will take place on Good Friday at 3 p.m. in the Cathedral. The service begins with the Liturgy of the Word, followed by Veneration of the Cross, with the faithful recognizing the Cross of Christ as our only hope of salvation. The celebration concludes with Holy Communion.

At the Easter Vigil on Saturday, which will begin at 8 p.m., candidates for recep-

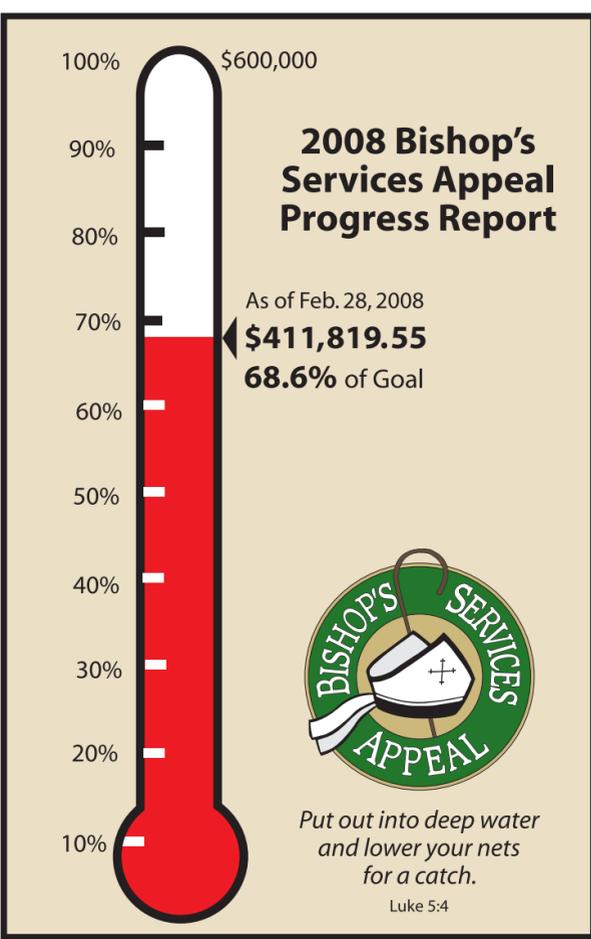
tion to the Church are baptized and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation while Catechumens are received into full communion with the Church.

Mass times for Easter Sunday, April 23, in the Cathedral are 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. Bishop Provost will celebrate the 9:30 a.m. Liturgy.

Penance Services will be held during the week of March 10-14 at 7 p.m. each night. Sites are the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception; Monday, St. Philip Neri Church, Kinder, Tuesday; Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Sulphur, Wednesday; St. Patrick Mission Chapel, Sweetlake, Thursday; and Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Jennings, Friday.



In celebration of the beginning of the 100th anniversary year of Sacred Heart Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic School, Bishop Glen John Provost blessed the school reconstruction project necessitated by Hurricane Rita. Pictured with the Bishop are Father Rommel Tollentino, Deacon Edward Lavine, and Father Henry Mancuso.



Did you know...

The only two priests of the Diocese of Lake Charles, since its establishment, named Protonotary Apostolic, the highest grade of signior found outside Rome, were the late Rev. Msgr. Irving A. DeBlanc and the late Rev. Msgr. Amos J. Vincent. The honor was bestowed on Monsignor DeBlanc on June 6, 1982 by Pope John Paul II while Msgr. Vincent was named on June 29, 1998, also by Pope John Paul II. The two priests had previously been honored by various Pontiffs. Pope John XXIII named Msgr. Vincent a Chaplain of Honor to His Holiness in 1961 and Pope Paul VI named him a Prelate of Honor to His Holiness in 1966. Msgr. DeBlanc had been named a Prelate of Honor to His Holiness by Pope Pius XII in 1953.

There are currently 28 men who are Permanent Deacons of the Diocese of Lake Charles. In August 1980, Bishop Jude Speyrer ordained the first eight men as Permanent Deacons since the establishment of the Diocese earlier that year. Do you know who they were? Find out in the March 21 Catholic Calendar.

The Offices of the Diocese of Lake Charles will be closed Holy Thursday, March 20; Good Friday, March 21; and Easter Monday, March 24. Offices will reopen at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 25.