

Apostolic Succession: We are not alone

By Bishop Glen John Provost
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"Do not let your hearts be troubled." John 14:1

Last week for his first time as Roman Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States. Thousands greeted him in Masses both in Washington and New York. As the 265th successor of St. Peter, Pope Benedict XVI embraced his office, in his own words, as "a humble worker in the vineyard."

How appropriate that the scripture readings of last Sunday speak of the continuity of service and office passed down by the apostles themselves. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that the number of disciples grew. In so doing there was need for greater service and ministers. So the community selected deacons to serve. In turn, "They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them" (Acts 6:6). This same gesture is used to this very day in the ordination of deacons, priests, and bishops in the Catholic Church. In just two short weeks, I will ordain two priests and a deacon for service in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. I will do what the apostles did, laying my hands on the

heads of these three new servants of the Gospel. Through those hands pass the sacred mission of ordination that links us, and particularly the Bishop of Rome, with the apostles.

Why is the apostolic succession so important to us as Catholics? St. Peter himself answers that question. "Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). St. Peter sees this unity in structure as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame" (Isaiah 28:16). The Church for St. Peter and the Christian Catholic is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

So today in Rome over the tomb of St. Peter, the "Rock," teaches, sanctifies, and leads, another living stone to build up the Church of God. On the very site where St. Peter was martyred, his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, takes up the office that he so faithfully fulfills by witnessing to Christ.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled"

(John 14:1), Jesus says in the Gospel because we belong in God's house. There are many dwelling places. Each of us makes his or her contribution. Each of us has been given a gift. How marvelous it is! Each gift is different, and what an adventure of the Christian life it is to discover it and to use it.

Jesus says something truly remarkable in the Gospel. "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these" (John 14:12). Could this be true? It is one thing to do great deeds. It is quite another thing to do the works that Jesus does. However, Jesus doesn't stop there. Isn't it unbelievable to do even greater works than Jesus did? This is what Jesus says. How can this be possible? It is only possible because we are united with Him in the "spiritual house" of the Church.

Jesus wants to be visible. He reveals the Father, and He cannot do that unless He is visible. For all this visibility to take place, Jesus wants the Church. For this reason, the Church repeats Jesus' work and does even greater works than He did. Through these works the life of God is communicated through the Body of His Son.

Let Benedict XVI speak. "Christ is God being here with us. In him God has time for

us; he is God's time for us and thus at the same time the opening of time into eternity. God is no longer the distant indeterminate God to whom no bridge will reach; he is the God at hand: the Body of the Son is the bridge for our souls. Through him, each single person's relationship with God has been blended together in his one relationship with God.... God is no longer merely a God up there, but God surrounds us from above, from below, and from within: he is all in all, therefore all in all belongs to us: 'All that is mine is yours.' God's being 'all in all' began with Christ's renunciation on the Cross of what was properly his. It will be complete when the Son finally hands over to the Father the Kingdom, that is, in gathered humanity and the creation that is carried with them. That is why the purely private existence of the isolated self no longer exists.... Each accepted pain, no matter how obscure, every silent suffering of evil, each act of inwardly overcoming oneself, every outreach of love, each renunciation, and every turning in silence to God—all of that now becomes effective as a whole: Nothing that is good goes for nothing" (Ratzinger, "God Is Near Us", pp. 144-145).



Bishop Glen John Provost, left, celebrated the closing Liturgy at the annual Diocesan Youth Conference, which drew nearly 300 youth, young adults, adult chaperones, and staff. Concelebrating with Bishop Provost were the Very Rev. Daniel Torres, Vicar General and Rev. Whitney Miller, Secretary for Christian Formation. The Master of Ceremonies was Rev. Derek Covert while Deacon Dale Deshotel attended the Bishop and read the Gospel.

Youth Conference brings teens together for weekend

LAKE CHARLES - Each year's Diocesan Youth Conference brings together upwards of 300 attendees, including youth, young adults, adult chaperones, and staff in a three-day event held the weekend before Lent begins.

This year's conference attempted to answer three questions, according to Milissa Thibodeaux, Director of the Office of Youth Ministry. "We wanted to answer the questions, how are we blessed in this life, where do we find those blessings and how do we bless other people," Thibodeaux said. "The conference is about touching one heart, one mind at a time."

"I tell the kids you don't have to do this extraordinary, miraculous act of service to make a difference," she continued. "By simply being the person that God created, simply being who you are called to be through your ordinary lives, doing ordinary things you bring about extraordinary change. The young people are starting to say that, feeding back what the adults in their lives have said to them."

Thibodeaux sees that in the many young adults who continue to return to assist the Office in various ways, particularly with the youth conference.

"Many are returning what they have learned through the years to others," Thi-

bodeaux said. "In our diocese it is a sense of family, a sense of community, a sense of history that people want to be a part of."

The conference is a larger undertaking that actually begins six to eight months from the opening day.

According to Thibodeaux, she meets with key adults, the youth core staff, parish youth directors, and former adults who have attended the conference. They discuss what is happening on a national level, the themes of the biennial National Youth Conference, and what came from the previous year's diocesan conference.

"The national conference happens in odd years, last year's was in Ohio," Thibodeaux said. "We also look at the Gospel readings for the conference weekend."

After rough outlines are drawn up, the ideas go to the diocesan core team and a few others drawn from various parishes for a brainstorming session. The first meetings are normally held in mid-October following the adult session in late August or September.

"It ends with a three-day weekend in December," Thibodeaux said. "That's where the theme is finalized, the tee-shirt designs are made, where the topics for all the breakout sessions happen, prayer services are written ... the whole conference is

put on paper during that weekend."

Then it goes back to the adults, who flesh out the theme, talk about the topics, get ideas from kids and figure out who will be doing what - workshops, keynotes, etc.

There were four keynotes at this year's conference and the event ended with a keynote/homily by Bishop Glen John Provost on Sunday morning.

"That was a treat that he was there," Thibodeaux said. "Originally he was going to be unable to attend."

A number of priests were also able to come and stay the entire weekend with the youth. "We have always had priests, coming in and going out, but having them here the entire weekend was a wonderful treat for the youth, Thibodeaux said."

Of the 14 workshops held, three were designed for the adults present.

"In the past, the adult chaperones would just go to the workshops," she continued. "One of our core team members suggested that we actually have workshops designed for the adults. We found that for the adults who come to the conference as chaperones, it is just as important for them. They get just as much out of it, sometimes more than the kids do."

Home Missions Appeal to be held April 26-27

Since 1998, the Catholic Home Missions Appeal collection has been a powerful expression of stewardship and our Catholic communion. Catholics from more prosperous parishes across America give generously to offer desperately needed help to the Mission Church here at home. Here in the Diocese of Lake Charles the 2008 Appeal is this weekend, April 26-27.

This Appeal offers Catholics a wonderful opportunity to help fellow Catholics practice their faith

in such rugged areas as Alaska, Appalachia, the Deep South, the Rocky Mountain states, the dusty Southwest, Puerto Rico, and island dioceses in the Pacific and Caribbean, and even right here in Southwest Louisiana. It is one practical way for parishes to be good stewards of God's gifts and to make a difference.

Here in the Diocese of Lake Charles the Appeal currently supports eight parishes and mission chapels in financial need along with programs of

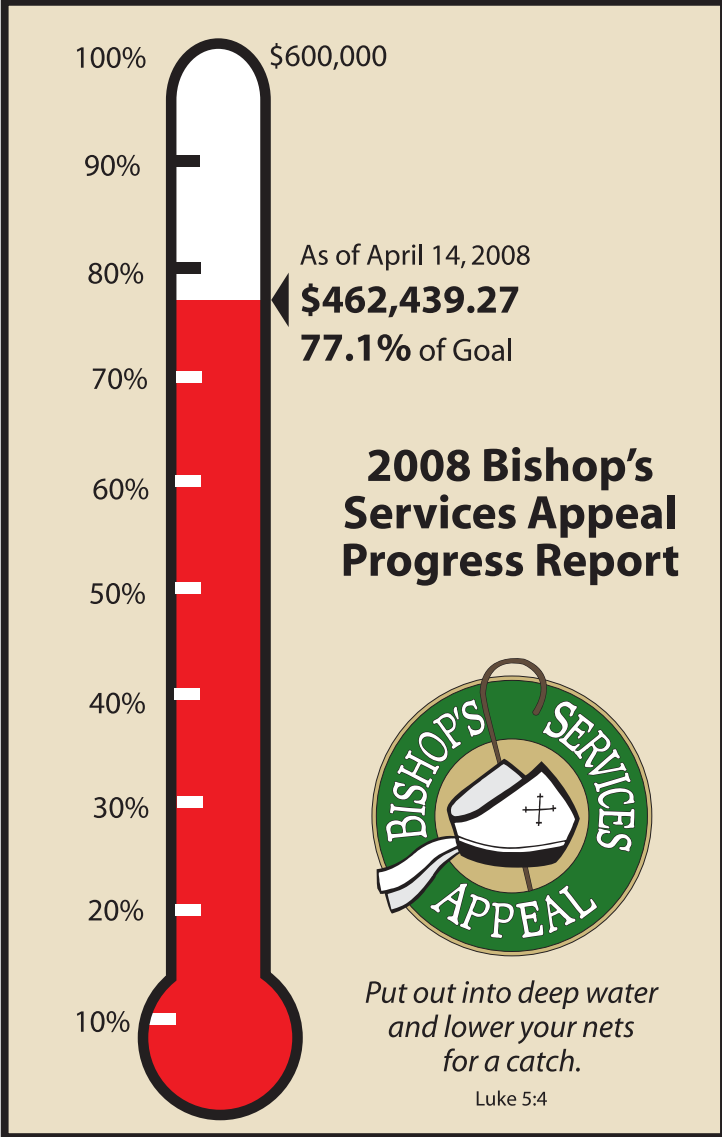
Evangelization, Lay Ministry Formation, Youth Ministry, Vocation Retreats and Communications Outreach.

If you have ever visited eastern Kentucky or Tennessee, driven through rural Georgia, Alabama, or Mississippi, spent time on the Mexican border, or passed through scattered small towns in Wyoming, Montana, or Oregon, you have been in mission territory. The little brick or clapboard churches you see along the way, housing pockets of Catholic faithful, are the home missions. This Appeal also benefits Catholic communities in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and island chains in the Pacific that have ties to America.

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal allows more prosperous Catholic communities to support ones in need here in America. "Home missions" are as simple as that and some of those needs are right here at home in Southwest Louisiana.

The Church is quite fragile in many parts of the United States where Catholics are a small minority. In the Diocese of Lake Charles, Catholics make up about 27 percent of the general population.

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal, dedicated to strengthening the Church at home, is administered by the Committee on the Home Missions, a division of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.



More than 75 men regularly attend the monthly Men's Prayer Breakfast with Bishop Glen John Provost held in the Ave Maria Hall of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Shown at a recent event are, from left, Cornie Moon, Daniel Ieyoub, Jack Brooks, Remy Miller and Brian Thompson. The next Prayer Breakfast is Thursday, May 1, beginning at 7 a.m. Catholic men are asked to call 439-7400 to register.

Did you know...

After the establishment of the Church of St. Francis de Sales (now Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception) on December 8, 1869 it was 21 years before another parish was formed. That new church, established on May 20, 1890, was Sacred Heart of Jesus in Creole with Fa-

ther John Engberink as the founding pastor. The second parish to be established came on December 7, 1891 when Father Cornelius Van de Ven became the founding pastor of Our Lady Help of Christians in Jennings.

There are 38 parishes in today's

Diocese of Lake Charles. The most recent to be named were St. Martin de Porres and Christ the King in November 2002. Do you know the first parish to be established following the 1980 formation of the Diocese? Find out in the next issue of the Catholic Calendar.