



Bishop Provost's Pastoral Letter for Lent 2010

First Sunday of Lent
February 21, 2010

My dear People of God,

We read in the Gospel of the First Sunday of Lent that Jesus "was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2). As we strive to imitate Our Lord Jesus Christ by entering ourselves into a forty days of desert fasting and praying, I wish to continue my reflection on the important Sacrament of Penance by which we experience the saving grace of reconciliation, God's forgiveness. In my previous two Lenten pastoral letters, I stressed the reality of this Sacrament, which is rooted in the intent of Jesus Christ to continue the ministry of the forgiveness of sin. Simply expressed, we encounter in the Sacrament of Penance the overflowing bounty of God's forgiveness made manifest in Jesus Christ. It is Saint Paul who reminds us: "Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Timothy 1:14-15). Thus, as Saint Paul will also note, just as he has been reconciled through Christ, now God has "given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18-19).

In this letter I wish to reflect first on the encounter of Jesus with the devil in the desert. Then I will follow with a few reflections on how Jesus meets sinners in the Gospels. And, finally, I will draw some conclusions that hopefully will assist in an appreciation for the bountiful mercy God extends to us sinners.

The devil presents Jesus Christ with three temptations. The first temptation, to change stones into bread, plays upon the hunger of Jesus who "ate nothing during those days" (Luke 4:2). The second, to receive the power and glory "of all the kingdoms of the world" (Luke 4:5) if only Jesus will worship the devil, offers Jesus the opportunity of having a world audience to hear His message. The third, to leap from the parapet of the temple only to be gathered up by angels, is enticing because it would be a spectacular sign that would attract the immediate attention of the people to Jesus. In short, each temptation is a denial of the cross. Jesus ultimately came to do the Father's will and that meant suffering and death. There is no resurrection without them. For Jesus to have succumbed to any of these temptations would have meant a negation of His mission to suffer, die and rise.

The modern world finds the message of the cross hard to accept. It wants the glory without the sacrifices. When on a number of occasions Jesus predicted His suffering, death and resurrection, even His disciples were scandalized. Saint Peter himself would say, "No such thing shall ever happen to you" (Matthew 16:22), to which Jesus responds with a sharp retort. "Get behind me Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do" (Matthew 16:23). If the mission of every disciple is to lose his life (Matthew 10:39), if being a true disciple requires that I carry my own cross daily (Luke 14:27), if to follow Jesus one must imitate the grain of wheat that must die to bear fruit (John 12:24), then the cross must be part of our lives just as surely as the resurrection. I think this is the insight to which Saint Paul testifies so eloquently in the conclusion of his Letter to the Galatians: "May I never

boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

To turn stones into bread when hungry or to have nations worship at any price or to attract the crowds with a public display of glory would have been easy. They would also have ended the public ministry of Christ where we meet the mercy of God offered to the sinner. In His life and work, Jesus meets numerous sinners in the Gospels, but I would call your attention to two individuals.

At a well in Samaria, Jesus meets a woman on her way to draw water. In the midst of this daily routine, Jesus slowly attracts her to what He has to say. He does so by speaking of "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Jesus moves the woman from the known to the unknown and finally moves her to a profession of faith when He reveals her present immoral life. "For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband" (John 4:18), Jesus says to her, and she responds, "I can see that you are a prophet" (John 19). Indeed, by her own admission, the identifying mark of the Messiah will be that "he will tell us everything" (John 4:25). When the woman goes to the town and testifies to what she has experienced, as proof, she says, "He told me everything I have done" (John 4:39). This testimony leads the townspeople to go to Jesus themselves and believe. "We know that this is truly the savior of the world" (John 4:43).

Honesty and truth lead to conversion. Jesus draws the truth out of the woman, so that she can encounter a lasting truth in Him. It is this truth that we as Catholics encounter in the Sacrament of Penance. We call it the integrity of the sacrament. We hide nothing. We bring to the Lord ourselves. We admit our guilt, honestly and truthfully. As it were, we hold up a mirror to our lives, or, better yet, God holds that mirror to our face, and we say with the Samaritan woman, "He told me everything I have done." God's grace has called us to conversion, just as simply as if we had gone to get a drink of water. Yet there is something dynamic here, and it happens every time we encounter Jesus Christ at the well of mercy in the Sacrament of Penance.

My thoughts turn now to a second individual in the Gospel of St. John (John 8). The scribes and Pharisees bring to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. There is no doubt that she has committed adultery. The penalty is death by stoning. They want to test Jesus and ask Him what He would do. Their intent in doing this is disingenuous. They know of the compassion and mercy of Jesus, and they want to trap Jesus contradicting the law. Instead, Jesus shifts attention away from the woman and onto the crowd. Jewish law prescribed that the first to throw stones must be those who witnessed the crime (Deuteronomy 17:7). Jesus says to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). The first to throw the stone must not only be a witness but also sinless. Jesus has reminded them that judgment ultimately belongs to God, a truth taught by a higher law throughout the Scriptures. As the crowd begins to disperse, beginning with the older and more experienced sinners first, the woman is left alone. She has escaped the penalty but not the call to repentance. "Go," Jesus says to her, "and from now on do not sin any more" (John 8:11).

In every encounter with the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Penance, there is an admonition to sin no more. We state the desire to do exactly that when we pray the Act of Contrition. "I firmly intend with the help of your grace to sin

no more and to avoid the occasions of sin." Sin exists. Jesus never tells the woman she is "okay," letting her off the hook, as we would say. It is folly to think that sin does not exist and that it does not have serious consequences. What we meet in this Gospel is God's patience calling us to a change of heart, a new life. In the Sacrament of Penance we meet a merciful Father who is willing to forgive not seven times but seventy times seven times, a Father who is as prodigal with His mercy as the son he forgives is prodigal squandering his inheritance. This mercy in turn is to become ours, so that we forgive as we have been forgiven. The ongoing encounter with this mercy calls us to an ongoing repentance. Lord, as I have been forgiven, help me to forgive. I cannot help but think that in extending mercy to the woman caught in adultery, our Lord also has in mind the repentance of the man with whom she shared this offense. Sin is deceptive and enslaving. Mercy is expansive and liberating.

This observation brings me to the devil in the desert. As human beings, we would think that the devil would have more advantage at the beginning of the desert experience rather than at the end. Instead the devil comes when the forty days "were over" (Luke 4:2). I am reminded of the observation of that great Doctor of the Church, Saint Teresa of Avila: "When the devil sees that the soul's character and habits are such that it is ready to make further progress: all the powers of hell will combine to drive it back again." The devil cannot tolerate progress. We must also be aware that as the "Father of Lies," the devil twists the truth, as with the temptations in the desert, and that the devil's greatest temptation is to despair. The devil would like nothing better than to have us think that we are not worthy of forgiveness.

Here, I must repeat the consoling words of Saint Paul: "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57). And every time I hear my confessor say to me in the Sacrament of Penance, as our Lord said to numerous sinners in the Gospel, "Your sins are forgiven," I know that victory.

As the Scriptures remind us, God humbled himself by becoming man for our salvation. In doing so, Jesus left us an example to be followed. In the Sacrament of Penance, we follow His lead by humbly admitting our sins and asking forgiveness.

My final words are those of Pope Benedict XVI in his *Lenten Message for the Year 2010*.

Humility is required to accept that I need Another to free me from 'what is mine,' to give me gratuitously 'what is His.' This happens especially in the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Thanks to Christ's action, we may enter into the 'greatest' justice, which is that of love (cf. Romans 13,8-10), the justice that recognizes itself in every case more a debtor than a creditor, because it has received more than could ever have been expected.

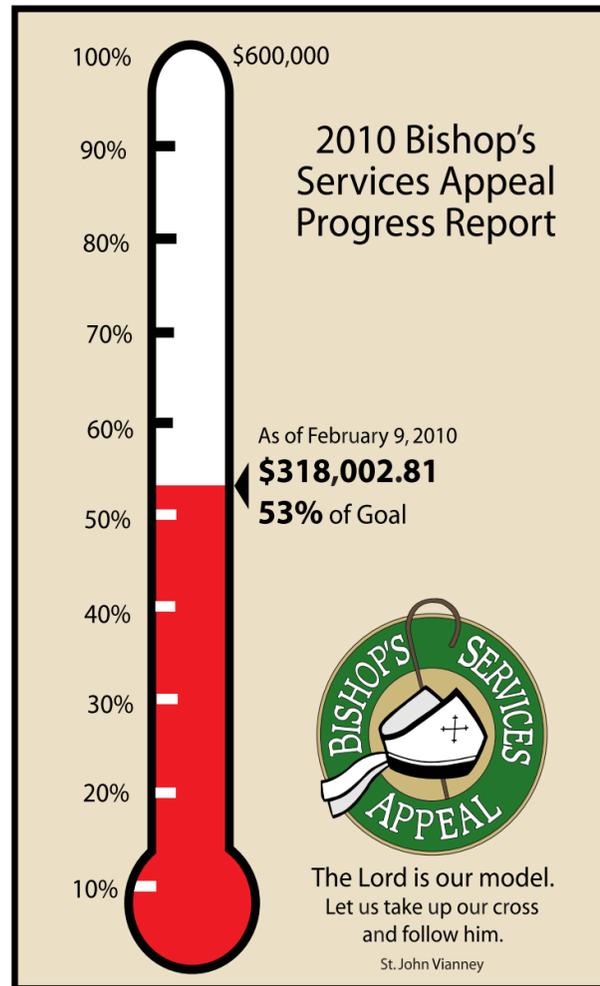
I extend to you my blessings and prayers for a blessed Lent that will lead to an even more glorious Easter, as I remain

Devotedly yours in our Lord,

+Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles



Bishop Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, is joined by members of the clergy at the celebration of the Catholic School Week Mass held in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception with eighth grade students from the Catholic schools of the Diocese along with the 12th grade students from St. Louis Catholic High School. Priests concelebrating were, from left in back row, Rev. Ruben Buller, Very Rev. Marcus Johnson, Rev. Whitney Miller, Rev. Msgr. James Gaddy and Rev. Msgr. Charles Dubois. Deacons assisting Bishop Provost were, left, Deacon Patrick Lapoint and, right, Deacon George Carr.



This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles through the generous sponsorships of the following:

For sponsorship information
Call Laurie Cormier at 337-436-5037
or lcormier62@yahoo.com

Your Knights of Columbus Council Here

Your Knights of Peter Claver Council Here

In Memory Of Your Loved One Here

"Connected Catholics" Diocesan Singles Ministry 337-439-7400

Catholic Charities Diocese of Lake Charles 337-439-7436

Watch "Glad Tidings" Sunday at 6 a.m. on KPLC-TV



On a recent visit to Rome for meetings at the Pontifical North American College, Bishop Glen John Provost along with Rev. Derek Covert and seminarian Jeffrey Starkovich were received in special audience by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, along with students, faculty and alumni of the Pontifical North American College on the occasion of the institution's 150th anniversary. Pictured are, top photo, Bishop Provost along with Cardinals and Bishops attending. The bottom left photo shows Father Covert kissing the Holy Father's ring while Jeff Starkovich greets the Pope, right.



Diocesan Briefs

Sacrament of Penance Nights set in March

LAKE CHARLES -- Diocesan Sacrament of Penance Nights will begin in late March, according to Bishop Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles.

The Sacrament of Penance will be celebrated in every parish in the Western Deanery on Tuesday, March 23; in the Central Deanery on Wednesday, March 24; and in the Eastern Deanery on Thursday, March 25, from 5 to 7 p.m. each night.

This change of format will allow for those who work and others with scheduling difficulties and busy lives to celebrate this splendid sacrament of reconciliation. Priests will be available in every church in the given deanery for the sacrament.

2010-2011 Catholic School Calendar Announced

LAKE CHARLES -- The Office of Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Lake Charles has announced the school calendar for 2010-2011.

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School in Jennings will open on Tuesday, August 11 while the remainder of schools in the Diocese open for a half-day on Monday, August 17. The first full day of class for those schools is Tuesday, August 18. The school year ends on May 27, 2011. Catholic Schools Week will be celebrated Sunday, Jan. 30 to Saturday, Feb. 4, highlighted by Mass on Tuesday, Feb. 1 in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

The calendar can be viewed at live.lcdiocese.org/news/477-catholic-schools-calendar-for-2010-2011.html.

St. Louis seeking principal

LAKE CHARLES - St. Louis Catholic High School is seeking a principal for the 2010-2011 school year. The St. Louis administrative team consists of the principal and two Deans of Students who report to and work collaboratively with the President to advance the school's mission.

A list of qualifications and application forms may be accessed on the St. Louis Catholic High School website - slchs.org. Resumes and applications should be sent to: Deborah Frank, President, St. Louis Catholic High School, 1620 Bank Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601 or fax (337) 436-6792.

Tavern on the Green set March 13

LAKE CHARLES -- The annual Irish-themed celebration of the anniversary of CHRISTUS St. Patrick Hospital, Tavern on the Green, will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday, March 13 in the Gray Plantation Clubhouse.

Tickets are \$75 each and can be purchased at the CHRISTUS St. Patrick Foundation office, 524 Dr. Michael DeBakey Drive or online at www.stpatrickfoundation.org. Proceeds will benefit the Foundation. Call 430-5353 for more information.

St. Martin DePorres Lenten Mission Feb. 28-March 2

LAKE CHARLES -- Deacon Alex Jones, a former Pentecostal minister who converted to Catholicism and brought members of his churches and own family with him, will lead a Lenten Mission at St. Martin DePorres Church, 5326 Elliott Road, Feb. 28-March 2, at 6 p.m. each evening.

Deacon Jones' topics for the three days are My Testimony, No Price Too High, New Wine for Old Wine Skins, and Run Tell That.

Central Deanery Vocaré meeting dates

LAKE CHARLES -- The next Central Deanery Vocaré meeting will be held Sunday, March 14, at the Our Lady Queen of Heaven offices, 617 West Claude Street, according to Rev. Nathan Long, vocation recruiter for the deanery.

The meeting begins with a meal and discussion in the offices followed by time for Adoration. Young men 16 years or older, who feel they have a vocation calling should contact Father Long at nathan.long@lcdiocese.org, or call Our Lady Queen of Heaven at 477-1236 for more information.

A "Come and See" weekend at St. Joseph Abbey and Seminary College, St. Benedict, LA for men 16 years and older is set for March 26-28. Contact Father Long for more information.

Forty Hours Devotion sites and dates set

LAKE CHARLES -- Days set aside for Forty Hours Devotion before the Blessed Sacrament praying for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life will be held in the Western Deanery during February and during March in the Eastern Deanery.

The final site of the Devotion for February will be Immaculate Conception in Maplewood from Monday, Feb. 22 through Friday, Feb. 26.

Eastern Deanery dates and locations for Devotion in March are Monday, March 1 through Saturday, March 6 at St. Joan of Arc in Oberlin, Monday, March 8 through Saturday, March 13, in St. Philip Neri in Kinder, Monday, March 15 through Saturday, March 20, in Our Lady Help of Christians in Jennings and Monday, March 22 through Saturday, March 27 at Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Jennings.

Rite of Election Sunday, Feb. 21

LAKE CHARLES -- The Rite of Election, the recognition of God's choice to call catechumens for immediate initiation into the Church, will be held at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21, the First Sunday of Lent, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

The Most Reverend Glen John Provost will preside.

The rite closes the period of the catechumenate, and begins the preparation for baptism at Easter. Catechumens who undergo this rite are called the "Elect" during the period of purification and enlightenment.

Key to the Rite of Election are two elements: the inscription of the names of the Elect, and the testimony of godparents and catechists. Testimony occurs in the form of affirmation by the godparents and the assembly. After the catechumens are presented, the Bishop asks the godparents if they consider the candidates worthy for initiation. This

question and answer presumes that some deliberation has taken place prior to this moment. The Rite of Election brings to a ritual moment the decision that these catechumens are ready for baptism.

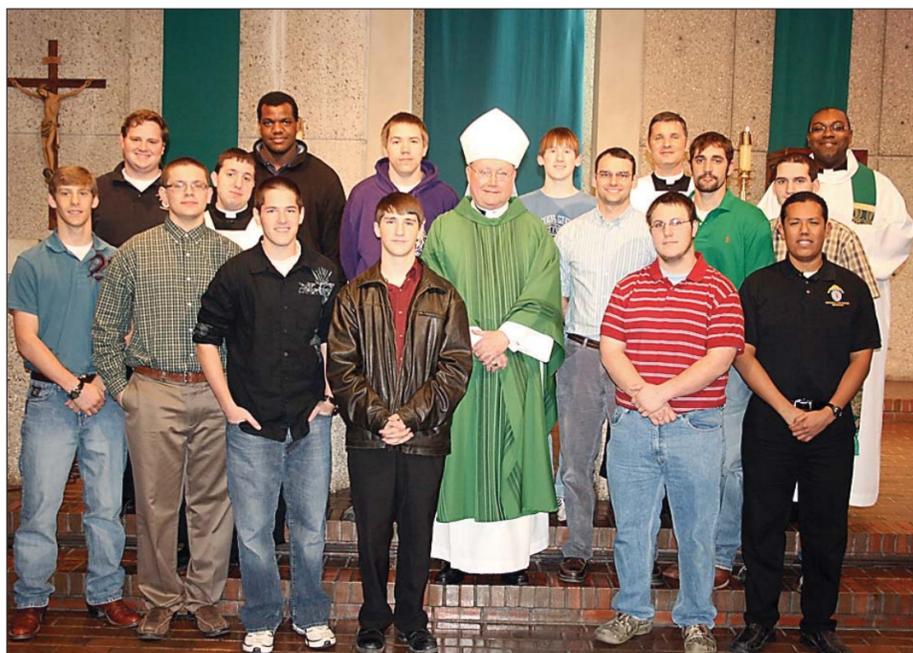
The inscription is made in the Book of the Elect. The names recorded there are the names by which the Elect will be baptized. After the enrollment, the Bishop announces that the catechumens are members of the Elect. All offer prayers on their behalf, and if there is no Eucharist at this celebration, all are dismissed.

Baptized candidates, who are preparing for full communion with the Church, are asked to participate in the rite of calling the candidates to continuing conversion. The candidates along with their sponsors are presented to the Bishop for recognition.

Did you know...

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Lake Charles holds the distinction of having two of its native sons not only ordained to the priesthood but also raised to the Episcopacy. Ordained to the priesthood in 1944, as a priest of the Society of the Divine Word, and named Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans in 1965, Bishop Harold Perry was the first African American Bishop of the 20th century. Bishop Perry died in 1991. The second native son of Sacred Heart to reach those lofty heights was Bishop Leonard Olivier, also a priest of the Society of the Divine Word. He was ordained a priest in 1951 and appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, DC in 1988. Bishop Olivier retired in 2004.

Four churches in the Diocese celebrate anniversaries ending in "zero" this year. Do you know which churches and the age of each? Find out in our next Catholic Calendar.



Bishop Glen John Provost, center, is pictured with 10 young men discerning a priestly vocation along with seminarians from the Diocese of Lake Charles and clergy at the "Come Follow Me" Vocations Retreat held recently at the Bishop Tracy Center in Baton Rouge. Individuals from the Diocese of Lake Charles were Larry Findley III, Brock Dupre, Logan Planchard, all of St. Joseph Church in Vinton; Isaac Omlor, Christopher Chance Dubard, all of St. Raphael Church in Iowa; Matthew Rigmaiden, Jakob Ihli, Aaron Wayne Cole, John Souder, all of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Church in Lake Charles and Joshua Oliver of St. Lawrence Church in Raymond. The Dioceses of Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette jointly sponsor the annual retreat. Also pictured are current seminarians for the Diocese, Corey LaVergne, Matthew Cormier, Brandon Jones, John Huckaby, and Cristian Gonzalez as well as Very Rev. Marcus Johnson, St. Louis Catholic High School rector and a vocation recruiter. A total of 20 men discerning a vocation attended from the three dioceses.

This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles through the generous sponsorships of the following:

Your Knights of Columbus Council Here

Your Knights of Peter Claver Council Here

Crossroads Your Store of Faith 474-7100

Saint Charles Center/Tabor Retreat House 337-855-1232

Catholic Charities Diocese of Lake Charles 337-439-7436

For sponsorship information Call Laurie Cormier at 337-436-5037 or lcormier62@yahoo.com

Icon painting workshop at Saint Charles Center

MOSS BLUFF -- A basic and intermediate retreat/workshop in icon painting will be held July 12-18 at Tabor Retreat House of Saint Charles Center. Father Mefodii of the Skete of Maximus the Confessor Monastery of Palmyra, Virginia, will be the instructor.

Father Mefodii is a faculty member of the Prosopeon School of Iconography and will introduce participants to the Christian practice and theory of the ancient art of Icon-Writing in the Byzantine-Russian tradition.

During the six-day retreat/workshop, the participants are introduced to the practical and the theoretical aspects of the iconographic tradition. In addition to the technical instruction, the participants will learn the iconographic symbolism and the theological base of each

step of the icon-writing process.

In an atmosphere of prayerful silence, each participant will complete an icon in egg tempera, using the same natural materials and ancient techniques that have been used by iconographers throughout the centuries. Previous painting experience is helpful but is not necessary!

The final day to register for this program, which is limited to 18 participants, is May 15. The suggested donation for this program is \$915 per person for a single room and \$855 per person for double occupancy. This donation includes all art supplies and other expenses. A deposit \$105 is due upon registration.

To register, call the Center at 337-855-1232