



CATHOLIC CALENDAR



The Diocese of Lake Charles
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The Most Reverend Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

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PLANTING THE SEED

Divine Mercy: Jesus shows us his heart is open

As we begin the Divine Mercy Novena today, Good Friday, and will soon enter the glorious Easter Season, let us reflect a little on Divine Mercy, celebrated in the Catholic Church this year on Sunday, April 12. This is also the date of Orthodox Easter for 2015.

How appropriate that Christ in His Divine Mercy be pictured with His hands shaped the way they are! Doubtless you have seen this image displayed in your parish church. One hand is raised in blessing. From the earliest centuries of Christian art, Christ has been pictured this way, with fingers raised. Ancient Roman sources (e.g. Quintilian Inst. Orat. XI and Cicero Orator XXV) tell us that this gesture symbolized that the speaker was speaking definitively. A judge raised his hand in this way to give a verdict, an orator to proclaim his thesis, a witness to take an oath. The other hand is pointed towards the heart. Jesus seems to be saying, my heart is definitively opened to you. Consider what the hands of Jesus tells us in the Gospel.

When the other apostles tell Thomas of Jesus' first appearance to them, Thomas responds, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Thomas sounds like the typical skeptic of today. His demand to see so that he can believe is the demand of the person for whom the only real knowledge is scientific. But let us not be too hard on Thomas. Thomas wants to touch the hands that were nailed to the cross. He wants to feel the hands that cured the lepers, healed the paralytics, and gave sight to the blind. Thomas wants his faith restored.

I recall once someone describing how he remembered his mother's hands. They were the hands that held him as a child, dressed his injuries, prepared his meals, stroked his head, and took his own hands into hers when she taught him how to pray. Hands tell us a great deal about people too, the coarse hands roughened by work, the smooth hands of an art-

ist, the steady hands of a surgeon, or the nimble hands of a seamstress. Thomas knows the meaning of hands.

The opportunity comes a week following the Resurrection. Jesus appears again and challenges Thomas saying, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side" (John 20:27). There are Jesus's hands. They are the hands of invitation, inviting Thomas to touch in order to believe.

Jesus in His Divine Mercy offers an invitation, and He does so with His hands. Just as the hands tell us a great deal about anyone, about Jesus they tell us everything about His mercy. The hands are open, accepting and unconditional. The world today needs to see the hands of Jesus.

It is no small matter that in His first Resurrection appearance to His apostles as a group, Jesus says, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:23). Jesus is not only giving to His Church the legacy of the Sacrament of Penance. He is also reassuring us that His Divine Mercy flows forth from the mystery of His being.

Thus, the hands of doubt in Thomas are invited to touch the hands of faith in Christ. In the hands of Christ, which could not be touched without love, Thomas finds the faith that eluded his grasp.

How often have we seen the hardened sinner or the most stubborn skeptic melt before the power of love? For when all the rational arguments in the world could not convince him of the truth of what Jesus said, it was the opened hands of God's love that awakened a hidden love that the sinner never



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knew before. Praised be Jesus Christ that allows His Church to be the instrument of that converting love. Love became the only proof needed. When one loves, then little proof is necessary.

The hands of Divine Mercy tell us everything about love. It is a love that transforms doubt into faith, a love that invites a hand to touch so that hearts can be transformed. This is the Mercy that moves mountains and inspires saints, that brings repentance and forgives sins, that gives its body over to be burned and sells all that it owns for a most precious gift. It is a Mercy so compelling that a commandment becomes a work of love, a joy rather than a burden. It is about this quality of Mercy that every spiritual writer has spoken and to which every saint has responded. It is expressed most exquisitely to me in an ancient English poem:

"My God, I love thee—though there were/ No heaven for me to win./ No hell to punish those who dare/ Against they love to sin.... And shall the fear of hell below/ Or hope of heaven above/ Be all the reason heart can know/ This loving Lord to love?/ The love that asks not anything/ Love like thy own love free./ Jesus, I give."



Jesus, I trust in You!

Good Friday Collection helps Christians in Mid-East

LAKE CHARLES – The Pontifical Good Friday Collection is taken up today, Good Friday, in every parish of the Diocese of Lake Charles as well as across the U.S. in support of ministries and works, largely under the direction of the Franciscans, in the Holy Land.

This collection offers all Catholics an opportunity to express their solidarity with Christians in the Holy Land. A gift to the Holy Father's annual appeal is a direct way to make a difference in the lives of those caught up in war, violence and instability in this region. The collection offers a direct link for individual parishioners to be witnesses of peace. This financial support is a sign of Christian unity, which helps protect the Holy Places, uniting all Christians with the Holy Land.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, recently provided to Bishop Glen John Provost a report on the good works done in the Holy Land that were made possible by contributions to the 2014 Good Friday Collection.

In Jerusalem, the restoration, maintenance, and waterproofing of the Basilica of Gethsemane as well as restoration of the mosaics of the cupolas and floor of the basilica was completed. Maintenance of the Holy Sepulchre was continued and a new garden with spaces for the celebrations and welcoming of pilgrims was achieved at the Friary of the Holy Cenacle.

The installation of cameras for live or recorded transmissions of celebrations in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth was achieved along with a new lighting system as well as waterproofing of the grotto.

The collection made possible continued works of conservation in the city of Magdala as well as at the archaeological site at Capernaum, especially restoration of the mosaics of the Byzantine church on the house of Peter.

Work was begun at the Shrine of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor as well as maintenance and reconstruction of an exterior perimeter wall at the Shrine of Sephoris.

At the site of Christ's first miracle, Cana, the first phase of a parochial center and school to meet the needs of parishioners was begun. Work on the expansion of a parish cemetery in Bethlehem and a parish center in Nazareth were aided by the Good Friday Collection.

A new roof was finished at the Shrine and Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo as well as an exhibition itinerary for the mosaics discovered during excavations. Additionally there, a new Sacristy with new electrical, mechanical and air-conditioning work was completed.

Scholarships for 295 students were distributed to various universities – Bethlehem, Hebrew in Jerusalem and Haifa, Bir Zeit, Amman and others. Ten small artisan craft firms were assisted along with laboratories for works in olive wood and mother of pearl to include professional formation for young Palestinians in order to keep alive the tradition of local manufacturing.

In Bethlehem, the Collection supported the Parochial Family Consultative Board, the Franciscan House for young boys, gave medical assistance, and restored the homes of the most needy. Apartments for the poor in Jerusalem and housing projects in Bethlehem were built and support for the faculty of the Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem and the Franciscan Media Center were achieved by contributions to the annual collection.

In addition to the work realized and projected in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, attention was also given to Christians in Lebanon and Syria, who live in situations of extreme need.

GOOD FRIDAY COLLECTION HOW THE COLLECTION IS USED

LAST YEAR

Through the generous support of Catholics across the United States, the Good Friday Collection supported these various projects for the benefit of the Holy Land and the Christians who live there.

AID TO THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA & IRAQ

\$2.5 MILLION Dollars

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE HOLY LAND

\$2.6 MILLION Dollars

DISTRIBUTION OF THE GOOD FRIDAY COLLECTION

FRANCISCAN CUSTODY SPECIAL PROJECTS

PROJECTS AT RISK PROJECTS IN OTHER SURROUNDING AREAS

HOW THE COLLECTION IS USED

- 16 schools for 10,000 students
- 295 scholarships for students
- 398 homes for Christian families
- 74 sanctuaries & shrines preserved
- 29 parishes supported
- 100 vocation candidates supported
- 1,500 jobs for Christians

HOLY WEEK OFFICE HOURS

The offices of the Diocese of Lake Charles are closed today – Good Friday – April 3 and Monday, April 6. They will reopen on Tuesday, April 7, at 8:30 a.m.

In Holy Year, Pope wants to share his own experience of mercy



Pope Francis

(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

(Read more at live.lcdioocese.org)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis' decision to convoke a special Holy Year of Mercy has its roots in the event that led a teen-age Jorge Mario Bergoglio to the priesthood.

Pope Francis has recounted the story several times in the past two years. On one occasion early in his pontificate, he told members of Catholic lay movements about his faith journey, particularly the importance of growing up Catholic and the influence of his grandmother. Then he said:

"One day in particular, though, was very important to me: Sept. 21, 1953. I was almost 17. It was 'Students' Day,' for us the first day of spring -- for you the first day of autumn. Before going to the celebration I passed through the parish I normally attended, I found a priest that I did not know and I felt the need to go to confession. For me this was an experience of encounter: I found that someone was waiting for me. Yet I do not know what happened, I can't remember, I do not know why that particular priest was there whom I did not know, or why I felt this desire to confess, but the truth is that someone was waiting for me. He had been waiting for me for some time. After making my confession I felt something had changed. I was not the same. I had heard something like a voice, or a call. I was convinced that I should become a priest."

Over and over again, Pope Francis tells people: God is always there first, waiting for you; the sacrament of confession is an encounter with the merciful God who is always ready to forgive those who seek pardon; and recognizing how merci-

ful God has been with you should make you merciful toward others.

The pope frequently talks about Caravaggio's painting of the "Calling of St. Matthew" -- a tax collector. And he chose his motto from the Venerable Bede's homily on the Gospel story where Jesus sees Matthew, says "follow me," and Matthew does.

The pope's motto is "miserando atque eligendo," which St. Bede used to describe Matthew, calling him "wretched, but chosen."

Talking about the call of Matthew, Pope Francis told young people in the Philippines in January, "That morning, when Matthew was going off to work and said goodbye to his wife, he never thought that he was going to return in a hurry, without money, to tell his wife to prepare a banquet. The banquet for the one who loved him first, who surprised him with something important, more important than all the money he had."

Irish Jesuit Father James Corkery, a professor at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University, said the pope's Jesuit training, specifically through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, built on his experience of mercy as a young man.

The first week of the exercises is about "meditating on my sins, being aware that I am a sinner and also being aware that I am beloved by God," he said. The meditation on personal sins ends with an invitation to have a "colloquy" or prayer conversation with God the father about mercy.

Good Friday and Easter schedule

LAKE CHARLES - The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, will preside at the celebration of the Lord's Pasch today, April 3, at 3 p.m. in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

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 and

the congregation leaves the Cathedral in silence. The Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4, begins at 8 p.m. in the Cathedral. On Easter Sunday, Bishop Provost will celebrate the 9 a.m. Mass at Our Lady Queen of Heaven

Catholic Church.

Mass times for Easter Sunday, April 5, in the Cathedral are 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. The celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Liturgy will take place at 5 p.m. in the Cathedral on Easter Sunday.