



PRIVATE AUDIENCE WITH THE HOLY FATHER

Lake Charles seminarian meets Pope Leo XIV

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

Michael DesOrmeaux, a seminarian for the Diocese of Lake Charles, was blessed with the opportunity to meet Pope Leo XIV with other students in Rome on Sunday, August 24, 2025.

Pope Leo received seminarians during a private audience in Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace before leading the Angelus in St. Peter's Square.

DesOrmeaux is continuing his studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome as he enters his first year of Configuration Stage. He is a parishioner of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and the son of David and Courtney DesOrmeaux.

Remarking how "real" the visit seemed, Michael said, "The room had no AC and the temperature was comparable to Louisiana in August, so I never once thought to myself, 'I must be dreaming'."

When sharing the news of the papal visit with his family, he said, "I told them about the joy of hearing my spiritual father speaking in clear English. His message was truly impactful."

The Holy Father's message concerned the importance of praying for the virtue of perseverance, Michael said.

"Pope Leo touched on other priestly virtues, but this one was the one that the Holy Father most wanted to hammer in for the

American seminarians," he noted.

"The pope shared a story about how when he was young he worked with another priest who was in his eighties who prayed daily for perseverance," Michael shared. "He thought to himself, 'If that guy is praying for perseverance, then I had better get started!'"

Michael commented that the Holy Father joked that he has fond memories of interacting with people from the Pontifical North American College.

"Last year when he was Cardinal Prevost, he celebrated Thanksgiving Day Mass for the school and deeply enjoyed the pumpkin pie," remarked Michael who said it was good to hear the Holy Father gently cracking jokes.

Michael said he was struck how Pope Leo carried himself with appropriate dignity, but clearly was also human — a balance he thought the pontiff struck well.

"The purpose of the North American College's founding was so that American seminarians could grow in their love of the Holy Father, and this experience definitely did that for me," he shared. "If Christ became human, why should His Representative on Earth not be human?"

As Pope Leo started to leave, the group of seminarians began to sing, "Ad Multos Annos," ("to many more").



Michael DesOrmeaux, a seminarian studying in Rome for the Diocese of Lake Charles, greets His Holiness Pope Leo XIV in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace on Sunday, August 24. Along with other seminarians from the Pontifical North American College, DesOrmeaux was received by Pope Leo in a private audience. After brief introductions, the Holy Father delivered a message on the importance of praying for the virtue of perseverance and other priestly virtues. (Photo courtesy of the Vatican)

Before the private audience, the seminarians were given a tour of some areas of the Apostolic Palace.

"One of the highlights of Raphael's beautiful wall frescoes was when I found what appeared to be a crawfish among the other food items," Michael recalled. "After

the audience, we prayed in the Pauline Chapel, where Pope Leo prayed after he was elected."

Before the tour ended, the seminarians sang the "Salve Regina" before the image of Our Lady and the souls who are being pulled to heaven by hanging on to the rosary, to which Michael said,

"The Sistene Chapel's acoustics were perfect."

While he is not certain about what is entailed on the academic side of things, Michael said that he will be focusing on adapting to life in Rome and learning to receive all that the Pontifical North American College has to offer.

Ten Seminarians studying for Diocese of Lake Charles

The 2025-2026 school year is under way for 10 seminarians studying for the Diocese of Lake Charles. Two are in the beginning stages of their seminarian formation while eight are continuing at different stages of their journeys to the priesthood.

Returning seminarians to Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans are **Philip Seilhan**, **Cameron Fontenot**, **Nicholas Poncho**, and **Luka Hagen**.

Continuing their studies in the Configuration Stage are Seilhan, third year; and C. Fontenot, first year. Continuing their studies in the Discipleship Stage are Poncho, fourth year; and Hagen, second year.

Home parishes are Our Lady Help of Christians in Jennings for Seilhan, St. Martin de Porres in Lake Charles for C. Fontenot, Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Sulphur for Poncho, and Our Lady of LaSalette in DeQuincy for Hagen.

Returning seminarians to St. Joseph Seminary College in Saint Benedict near Covington are **Justin Fontenot** and **Logan Guillot**. J. Fontenot is in his fourth year of Discipleship Stage while Guillot is in his third year of Discipleship Stage. Home parishes are St. Pius X in Ragley for J. Fontenot and Our Lady of LaSalette in DeQuincy for Guillot.

Michael DesOrmeaux is continuing his studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome as he enters his first year of Configuration Stage. He is a parishioner of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Liam Leonard entered his third year of the Basselin Scholarship Program at Theological College in Washington, D.C.

2025

2025 DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES SEMINARIANS

2026

 Philip Seilhan	 Michael DesOrmeaux	 Cameron Fontenot	 Liam Leonard	 Justin Fontenot
 Luka Hagen	 Nicholas Poncho	 Ezekial Richmond	 Logan Guillot	 Owen Bailey

His home parish is Our Lady of Prompt Succor in Sulphur.

Two first-year seminarians began their studies at St. Joseph Seminary College and Notre Dame Seminary. **Owen Bailey** is in his first year of Propaedeutic Stage at St. Joseph Seminary, and **Ezekial Richmond** entered his first year of Discipleship Stage at Notre Dame. Both seminarians are parishioners of St. Pius X in Ragley.

Please pray for these 10 men in seminarian formation for the Diocese of Lake Charles as they discern their call to the priesthood.

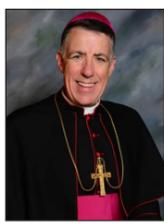
For more information on the Office of Vocations, visit www.lcvocations.com or call Rev. Michael Caraway, Director of Vocations and Seminarians, at 337-439-7400, ext. 226, or email michael.caraway@lcdiocese.org.

Pope Leo XIV Appoints Coadjutor Archbishop of N.O.

WASHINGTON — Pope Leo XIV has appointed Most Reverend James F. Checchio, Bishop of Metuchen, as Coadjutor Archbishop of New Orleans. The appointment was publicized in Washington, D.C. on September 24, 2025, by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States.

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond is the current archbishop of New Orleans, and the appointment as coadjutor archbishop confers on Bishop Checchio the right of succession for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

The Most Rev. Checchio was named the Bishop of the Diocese of Metuchen by Pope Francis on March 8, 2016. He was ordained and installed as the Fifth Bishop of Metuchen on May 3, 2016.



Most Reverend Checchio

after serving as vice rector for two and a half years. During his years as rector, the College enjoyed its highest enrollment of seminarians from the United States since the 1960's.

The Archdiocese of New Orleans is comprised of 4,208 square miles in the Louisiana and has a total population of 1,263,422, of which 505,369, are Catholic.

Before being named Bishop of the Diocese of Metuchen, he served as rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome from January 2006 to January 2016,

respect life month novena

October 22-30, 2025

The annual Respect Life Month Novena prays for the protection of human life, from conception to natural death. Each day of the novena features a different pro-life prayer intention which is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life.

Join thousands of Catholics in praying for life!

Sign Up!

Get the daily prayers by email or text message! Scan the QR code or visit respectlife.org/respect-life-month-novena.



respectlife.org

Weekly Adoration at Saint Charles Center

MOSS BLUFF — Make a visit to Saint Charles Center on Tuesday nights for Eucharistic Adoration.

Spend an hour with Jesus as Deacon Brian Soileau leads the Divine Mercy Chaplet during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The weekly gathering takes place in the Chapel of the Assumption beginning at 7:00 p.m. All are invited to attend.

Please check the Saint Charles Center website calendar at www.stcharlescenter.com, the Center's Facebook page, or call the office at 337-855-1232 to check for location changes due to retreats.

Saint Charles Center is located at 2151 Sam Houston Jones Parkway in Moss Bluff.



635 YEARS OF COMBINED SERVICE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Clergy and Religious honored for milestone anniversaries

His Excellency, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, was the celebrant and homilist for the 18th annual Clergy and Religious Recognition Celebration on Tuesday, September 9, at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur. For a combined 635 years of service to the Catholic Church, this year's honorees included a total of 17 priests, 2 deacons, and 3 religious sisters.

The following were recognized for significant anniversaries:

- 60 years — Monsignor James Gaddy and Rev. Joe Gosselin, MS
- 50 years — The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles; and Rev. Ron Foshage, MS
- 45 years — Rev. Whitney Miller, Deacon George Stearns, and Deacon Milton White
- 35 years — Rev. Jose Vattakunnel
- 30 years — Rev. Wayne LeB-

leu, Rev. Shaji Jose, HGN; Sister Maria Howell, RSM; and Sister Shirley Gobert, SEC

- 25 years — Canon Olivier Meney from the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest
- 20 years — Rev. Rommel Tolentino and Rev. Louis Tigga, HGN
- 15 years — Rev. Vijaya Prakash Peddoju, HGN
- 10 years — Very Rev. Ruben Villarreal, Rev. Jay Alexius, and Sister Marie Josepha Kluczny, RSM
- 5 years — Very Rev. Joseph Caraway, Rev. Andrew DeRouen, and Rev. Levi Thompson

The annual recognition celebration is coordinated by the Serra Club of Lake Charles. To date, a total of 386 priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters have been honored over the past 17 years with contributing organizations donating a total of \$100,675 to the honorees.



Honored for milestone priesthood anniversaries are, from left: Rev. Ron Foshage, MS, 50 years; Monsignor James Gaddy, 60 years; Bishop Glen John Provost, 50 years; and Rev. Joe Gosselin, MS, 60 years. This year's honorees at the 18th annual Clergy and Religious Recognition Celebration included 17 priests, 2 deacons, and 3 religious sisters. (Photo credit: Morris LeBleu)

Aquilina shares wisdom of early Church Fathers at annual Veritas Conference

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — Internationally acclaimed speaker on the Fathers of the Church, Mike Aquilina, traveled from Pittsburgh to the Diocese of Lake Charles to help the faithful appreciate the growth of the Catholic Church we know today.

Aquilina, the author of more than 70 books on Catholic history, doctrine, and devotion, was the keynote speaker at the 14th annual Veritas Conference on Saturday, September 13, at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Family Life Center. The event was hosted by the Office of Religious Education.

Traveling back in time 20 centuries, Aquilina offered a look at signs of the early Christians, martyrdom, and what we can learn on how to live out our faith in today's world.

"There were several unmistakable signs of Christianity ... a precious snapshot for us," said Aquilina. "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and the communion, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers."

Aquilina noted that the early Christians devoted themselves to the Mass, to the Eucharist, remarking, "That is the most important way they showed themselves to be Christians. By 150 A.D., the Mass was everywhere."

Another dominant reality in the ancient Church was martyrdom and persecution, said Aquilina, raising the question: What was so offensive about the early Christians?

"They dared to have their own opinions without forcing them on others. They themselves were a judgment in the mind of the others because they lived upright lives, and they experienced a happiness that was unknown elsewhere," he pointed out.

Comparing martyrdom to the Mass, Aquilina emphasized how Jesus gives himself



Mike Aquilina, an internationally acclaimed speaker on the Fathers of the Church, provided the keynote for the 14th annual Veritas Conference in the Diocese of Lake Charles on Saturday, September 13. The event, hosted by the Office of Religious Education, took place in the Our Lady Queen of Heaven Family Life Center. The conference also featured several breakout session talks by priests and laity from the Diocese of Lake Charles. (Photo credit: Morris LeBleu)

to us in the Mass without holding anything back.

"He gives us his body, blood, soul, and divinity. He gives himself to us as food, and that is love, the total gift of self. It is the very love the martyrs wanted to imitate," said Aquilina. "At every Eucharist, Jesus gives himself entirely to us, and we give ourselves in return by saying, 'Amen.' We are accepting our own martyrdom, our own crosses. Everyday life should be a martyrdom, a self-denial."

What does the Eucharistic life look like on a daily basis? Aquilina suggested a few ways:

"It looks like a mother staying up all night with a sick child, or grandparents staying up all night so that their daughter can get some sleep.

"It looks like a husband working long hours at a task he doesn't particularly enjoy so that his family can know a better life.

"It looks like a family keeping vigil by a deathbed. It looks like the dying man

who musters a smile for the sake of his loved ones, even though he doesn't feel like smiling."

As St. Jerome once said, "Let us not think that there is martyrdom only in the shedding of the blood." There is always martyrdom, noted Aquilina.

The second part of the keynote in the afternoon focused on how true friendships will be the true evangelization. Aquilina pointed out, "God knows and God showed us that friendship is the first step toward saving souls. For his sake, we need to get to know the people around us."

Conference Reaction

Mary Wilkinson was at the conference sharing information on behalf of Southwest Louisiana Pro-life Billboards. She enjoyed hearing Aquilina talk about martyrdom in today's world.

"His comments on ways we can all be martyrs in our everyday living strengthened me a lot," said Wilkinson. "It is not only about physical martyrdom, but also about the daily sacrifices we can make."

This was Charlotte Trahan's first time attending Veritas. She is Director of the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) at St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Catholic Church in Carlyss. Already familiar with the keynote speaker, Trahan was excited to hear him in person.

"It caught my attention when Mike talked about the private liturgy in the early Church was the Mass, but the public liturgy was martyrdom," Trahan noted. "That was an eye opener for me not having thought of it in that way before."

For a selection of books by Mike Aquilina, who is co-founder with Scott Hahn, of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology based in Steubenville, Ohio, visit fathersofthechurch.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

All Saints Day concert at Consolata

Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church Music Ministry & Friends will present "From Darkness to Light," a Choral Pilgrimage with the Saints of Hope on All Saints Day.

The concert will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 1, in the Consolata Cemetery Mausoleum Chapel, 2300 Country Club Road, in Lake Charles. Admission is free.

All Halo's Eve at Camp Karol

The fifth annual All Halo's Eve will take place from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, October 25, at Camp Karol, 1087 Bozo Road, in Moss Bluff. Entry and participation is

free of charge.

The event will shine the spotlight on a variety of saints so children (and adults, too) in the Diocese of Lake Charles and surrounding communities can learn more about the stories of these heroic and virtuous role models of the Catholic Church.

Come dressed as your favorite saint and join the fun of games, candy, activities, food and more! For more information on All Halo's Eve, contact Saint Charles Center at 337-855-1232.

Inaugural bazaar at Our Lady of Seven Dolors

Our Lady of Seven Dolors Catholic Church in Welsh will host its first bazaar the weekend of Saturday-Sunday, No-

Mass for the Dead

Monday, November 3, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
at Consolata Cemetery, 2300 Country Club Road



Blessing of the Graves will follow Mass

ember 15-16. The bazaar begins at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and 10:00 a.m. on Sunday.

Highlights include a rice cookoff, petting zoo, silent auction, live entertainment, bingo, sweets shop, and more. The church is located at 209 N. Adams Street.

St. Henry Church raffle is Nov. 16

St. Henry Catholic Church will host a raffle with a grand prize of \$2,000 on Sunday, November 16. Tickets are \$5. Proceeds will help with repairs. For tickets, call the office at 337-436-7223.

DIocese of LAKE CHARLES
Office of Vocations

NATIONAL VOCATIONS AWARENESS WEEK

NOVEMBER 2-8, 2025

The faithful are encouraged to join us in praying a rosary for an Increase in Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

If you would like for your rosary to be added to the official rosary tally that will be announced on the Lake Charles Vocations Facebook Page, scan the QR code or visit the link to indicate the number of rosaries you will pray!

Link: <https://levocations.com/nvaw>