



Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass honors 48 couples

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

There is something extra special about Christmas Eve for Rene and Lucy (Leleux) Hanks of Starks. It is the day they were married in 1955, and to hear them tell the story, it was meant to be from the start.

Parishioners of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Vinton, Rene and Lucy were among 96 spouses honored during the 11:15 a.m. Mass on Sunday, May 18, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. For a combined total of 2,380 years of marriage, 48 couples registered for the Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass and reception hosted by the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost blessed those marking jubilee anniversaries of 25, 50, 55, 60, 65, or 70 years in 2025.

Young Love Endures

The spark of love that was ignited more than 70 years ago in Morse, La., between Rene and Lucy still glows when they reminisce about how they met.

“My family moved from Morse to Port Arthur (Texas) when I was 7 years old,” recalled Lucy. “When I was 14, I was visiting cousins in Morse for a couple of weeks. The mother of one of my cousins owned a restaurant where we liked to hang around. Rene walked in with two of his friends. I had my eyes on him,” she said with a big grin.

The fact that Lucy loved to dance as much as Rene did sealed the deal. “We went to Martinez Dance Hall. It was family friendly and open to everybody,” Rene said. “We started Cajun dancing and that was it.”

Lucy was determined to keep the romance alive despite the distance between Morse and Port Arthur.

“When I turned 15, my dad knew that I was in love, so he bought me a little Ford car so I could drive to Morse and see Rene,” she said. “When I told my dad I wanted to get married, he said, ‘I can’t afford your car and your marriage, so sell the car.’”

There is some debate over who popped the question.

“I forget who proposed. I think she proposed,” said Rene, with Lucy chiming in to say, “No, he proposed. He hitchhiked from Morse to Port Arthur (110 miles) to talk to my dad.”

Rene remembers it like this: “It was late at night when I arrived and they were asleep, so I slept in her daddy’s car. I woke up the next morning and he was getting ready to go to work. I guess I gave him a heart attack when he saw me. I don’t think he liked us getting married so young, but he knew we were in love.”

In January of 1955, Rene entered the Air Force. While on a 10-day furlough, which he had to beg to get, he and Lucy were married on December 25, 1955, by Rev. Mathias Cramers in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morse. With both their birthdays in December, Rene had just turned 21 and Lucy was a mere 16.

Even though their love has never wavered, Rene admits that those early years were rough.

“I was not making much money, and we depended on her parents quite a bit,” he said. “You have to stick it out and work at it. When you are dating, just make sure it is in here,” Rene said pointing to his heart. “When I first met Lucy, she didn’t think I was paying attention, but I was. I knew she was the one for me.”

While they are not on the dance floor as much as they once were, Rene (90) and Lucy (85) now dance to the beat of life with their 3 daughters, 9 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson.

Expression of Gratitude

In congratulating all the couples, Bishop Provost thanked them for taking seriously the command of the Lord, “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” (John 31:34) “This is a love that only a Christian can know,” the bishop said.

He continued telling them, “Our Lord invited you to that profound love. He knew that it was the only love that would unite, a transforming love because it sought not the self but the other. May God confirm you in His love and bring you many blessings and rewards.”

Those celebrating milestone anniversaries in 2025 are:

70 YEARS

- Rene and Lucy Hanks, St. Joseph, Vinton

65 YEARS

- Merlin and Burline Fontenot, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Lake Charles

60 YEARS

- Jim and Aline Babineaux, St. Lawrence, Raymond
- Curtis and Claudia Dyle, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles
- Joseph and Anne Newby, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles
- Lincoln and Laura Richardson, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Lake Charles
- Bob and Kathy Soileau, St. Margaret of Scotland, Lake Charles

55 YEARS

- Willie and Kathleen Ashford, St. Raphael, Iowa
- Jack and Susan Blevins, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles
- Jerry and Janie Doucet, St. Raphael, Iowa
- Albert and Sue Duplantis, Christ the King, Lake Charles
- Joseph and Angela Fairfield, St. Joseph, LeBleu Settlement
- Tim and Gerry Fontenot, St. Theodore, Moss Bluff
- Russell and Paula Hanks, St. Theodore, Moss Bluff
- Everett and Delora Lovejoy, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Oakdale
- Michael and Annette Maneille, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles

50 YEARS

- Jason and Dinah Billings, St. Raphael, Iowa
- Doug and Debbie Boudreaux, St. Margaret of Scotland, Lake Charles



Rene and Lucy Hanks will celebrate 70 years of marriage on December 24, 2025. They were married on Christmas Eve in 1955 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morse, La. The Hanks were among 48 couples honored during the annual Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass on Sunday, May 18, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception with Bishop Glen John Provost. (Morris LeBleu / Diocese of Lake Charles)

- Dan and Linda Breaux, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles
- Murphy and Kathryn Breaux, St. Pius X, Ragley
- Roy and Willa Bushnell, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Lake Charles
- Roger and Lois Clausen, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles
- Kevin and Debi Comboy, Immaculate Conception, Sulphur
- James and Jacqueline Davis, St. Theodore, Moss Bluff
- Glenn and Jeanne Delahoussaye, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles
- Wayne and Susan Fontenot, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles
- James and Joann Francis, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Lake Charles
- Deacon Paul and Melissa Gregory, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Lake Charles
- Charles and Karen Guidry, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles
- John and Connie Guillory, St. Henry, Lake Charles
- David and Andrea Habetz, St. Pius X, Ragley
- Danny and Selene Landry, St. Pius X, Ragley
- Edward and Barbara LeJeune, Our Lady of Seven Dolours, Welsh
- James and Debbie McCarty, St. Joseph, DeRidder

- Deacon Jesse and Myrna Menard, St. Joseph, Vinton
- Dan and Kathleen Morrish, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles
- Abraham and Marva Nash, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Lake Charles
- Carl and Judy Reeves, St. Margaret of Scotland, Lake Charles
- Greg and Deborah Richard, St. Theodore, Moss Bluff
- Glenn and Susan Terrebonne, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Oakdale
- Henry and Gayle Vaccaro, St. Margaret of Scotland, Lake Charles
- Robert and Ruthie Whelan, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles

25 YEARS

- Jessy and Crystal Broussard, St. Margaret of Scotland, Lake Charles
- Joseph and Katrina Bushnell, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Lake Charles
- Mark and Shila Cowart, St. Theodore, Moss Bluff
- Richard and Christy Jones, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles
- Byron and Viveca Woods Sr., Sacred Heart of Jesus, Lake Charles
- Fray and Linda Zamora, Christ the King Lake Charles

Faithful turn to Our Lady for protection from storms

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

CAMERON PARISH — It has been nearly 70 years since Hurricane Audrey roared ashore in the early morning hours of June 27, 1957, along the coastline of Southwest Louisiana. There are many still alive who will never forget the destruction and loss of life, nor that of catastrophic storms in recent memory.

The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, celebrated a “Mass to Avert Storms” in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Life Center in Creole on Friday, May 30, to pray for protection from storms during the 2025 Hurricane Season (June 1 – November 30). A vehicle procession followed to the Historic Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea for the “Blessing of the Coast.”

“Every year we gather for this pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea to ask for Mary’s intercession for protection during the upcoming hurricane season,” the bishop remarked to dozens who traveled from various areas of the diocese for the Mass and Blessing.

“When I came to the Diocese in 2007, I was immediately requested to visit the burial sites of those who had died in

Hurricane Audrey in 1957,” he recalled. “You know better than anyone else what that catastrophe meant. More than 520 people were killed along the coast and some inland as well. It was a horrific event.”

The communities of Oak Grove, Holly Beach, Grand Chenier and Little Chenier bore the brunt of Audrey’s fury and were almost completely wiped off the map, according to a newspaper report. More than 400 were killed in Cameron Parish alone.

In the years following Hurricane Audrey, The Most Rev. Maurice Schexnayder, second Bishop of the Lafayette Diocese, commissioned a shrine to be built honoring the deadly storm’s victims. It was consecrated on October 6, 1963.

At the request of Bishop Provost in 2013, the Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea enjoys, with papal approval, the same spiritual privileges as would a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome, one of the four major basilicas in the Eternal City. The diocesan shrine is also one of six local pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee Year of Hope that will conclude on December 28, 2025.

Russell and Paula Hanks, parishioners of St. Theodore

Catholic Church in Moss Bluff, made the hour-long drive to Creole for the Mass and were excited to be a part of the Jubilee Year pilgrimage.

“This was our first time to attend the Mass to Avert Storms. Especially because of the Jubilee Year of Hope, we wanted to make the pilgrimage to the Shrine,” said Paula, who was a child when Hurricane Audrey hit.

“When Bishop Provost spoke of how the Shrine came to be, it brought back memories for me,” she continued. “I was eight years old living in Welsh at the time. Even though we have lived through several powerful hurricanes since then, a lot of my memories of hurricanes date back to Audrey. I recall my dad going down to Cameron to help with the bodies.”

Russell said his father also assisted with burying countless bodies after Audrey. “My family was living in Lafayette, and my daddy was a truck driver for Herrin Transportation on Highway 90,” he recalled. “My dad helped haul a lot of the bodies.”

In offering the Mass for the hundreds who were killed in Hurricane Audrey and also many others who have survived subsequent storms and rebuilt, Bishop Provost

acknowledged those who have shared in the Calvary of Our Lord by suffering and death.

“As we recall the dreaded storms that destroyed life and property on this very coast over the centuries, we come as Mary’s adopted children to implore her intercession,” he said. “Many on this very spot have pleaded with Mary, Mother of the Church and Star of the Sea, to protect them as her children. This is what we do today.”



Bishop Glen John Provost prays in front of the Historic Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea in Cameron to ask for protection during the 2025 hurricane season. He was joined by several priests and seminarians as well as many faithful from the Diocese of Lake Charles.

Morris LeBleu retires as longtime communications director

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

MOSS BLUFF — It was a rare occurrence, but on Thursday, May 29, 2025, Morris LeBleu, longtime Director of Communications for the Diocese of Lake Charles, was seen at an event *without* his camera. This time, the focus was on him while being honored during his retirement luncheon following 38 dedicated years.

His first day on the job was November 1, 1986, and since that time has served under three bishops — the late Bishop Jude Speyrer, founding bishop; Bishop Edward Braxton; and currently, Bishop Glen John Provost.

“When Bishop Speyrer offered me the role I initially played here in the diocese, he asked one request of me — to stay at least three years. I think I am over the limit,” Morris told a room full of clergy and staff in the Lodge at Camp Karol.

While he is often seen behind the lens of a camera, his work has encompassed much more than photography.

Morris was hired as Director of Planned Gift Development to seek contributions through estate planning tools. Early in his tenure, he was also appointed to the Communications Advisory Board. For at least 12 years, he wore two hats simultaneously as Director of Development and Director of Communications.

It was only fitting that Deacon George Stearns, former Chancellor and Archivist who retired in 2024 after 44 years, offered comments about Morris’ longtime career since the two share a lot of institutional knowledge about the 45-year-old Diocese.

“I was asked as an ‘old hat’ to say a few words about another ‘old hat,’” Deacon Stearns remarked jokingly.

“Morris has always been forever present in giving his best in his role as communications director for the diocese. The words that come to my mind are commitment, dedication,

loyalty, caring, and strength,” said Stearns. “Morris has unquestionably made a mark through his work as editor of the *Catholic Calendar* (monthly diocesan publication) by leaving us a treasure chest of stories and photographs that will be more and more appreciated in years to come. From one old hat to another, thank you, Morris, for all you have done.”

Bishop Provost described Morris as omnipresent.

“In my 18 years as bishop, it didn’t matter what day it was, even a holiday, when I would go to the Chancery, Morris was always the first person there,” he pointed out.

“I want to express my gratitude to you for all that you have done for me personally as bishop and for my predecessors,” His Excellency said. “You were always very helpful to them. Both Bishop Speyrer and Bishop Braxton spoke highly of your abilities, your presence, and your gifts. We are most grateful for your diligent and dedicated service. Know of our gratitude and our continued prayers for you and Sallye. You may leave, but you are still the omnipresent Morris.”

Memorable Moments

One doesn’t keep a diocese informed and connected for nearly 40 years without some memorable moments. Several that come to mind for Morris include:

1. Site blessing for Saint Charles Center in Moss Bluff and official opening of the facility
2. Publication of the diocesan newspaper — *The Southwest Catholic* — from 1987 to August 2005
3. Diocesan presence on the internet
4. Three-year pilgrimage around the diocese leading up to the year 2000 and the midnight Mass in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
5. Hurricanes of 2005, 2008, and 2020 and their aftermaths
6. Appointment of the second bishop of Lake Charles — Bishop Braxton — and the



Morris LeBleu, longtime Director of Communications for the Diocese of Lake Charles, is joined by his wife, Sallye, and The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, for a photograph to mark the momentous occasion of his retirement after more than 38 years. (Donna Price / Special to the Diocese of Lake Charles)

press conference in the Chancery Assembly Room on Iris Street

7. Naming of Bishop Provost, current bishop, in 2017 after a nearly 18-month interregnum

Morris commented that he had the opportunity to work with some “extraordinary priests” over the years.

“As I look at some of our priests who I saw as seminarians and watched them grow in their ministry, in their vocation, I perceived early on that to do my job properly, I had to see it differently than a regular job,” he remarked. “I am appreciative of all that you do in your various ministries and in your vocations as clergy.”

Morris also acknowledged someone significant in helping him fulfill his role as Director of Communications.

“There is one other person I would like to

thank, and that is my wife, Sallye, of nearly 43 years. She has made me the person that I am and allowed me to do these things,” he said. “There were times when she wasn’t sure whether I was married to her or to the Church because of that omnipresence the bishop mentioned.”

Many across the four deaneries of the Diocese of Lake Charles can look forward to seeing Morris “behind the lens” as he will continue to assist with photography at various events, something he enjoys doing.

“The everyday interplay with the people with whom I worked and those in the public that I interacted with at many events and liturgical services has been my favorite part these past 38 years,” Morris said. “You have not seen the last of me. I hope to be around for a long time and assist where I can.”

Announcement of Pastoral Assignments

The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, hereby announces the pastoral assignments for the year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five for the Diocese of Lake Charles, Louisiana.

Effective July 1, 2025:

The Rev. Prabhakar Kowtiki, MOC — Pastor, Our Lady of Seven Dolors and St. Joseph, Welsh, and the mission of St. Peter Claver, Iowa

The Rev. Rojo Koonathan — Pastor, Saint John Bosco, Westlake

The Rev. Ronald Foshage, MS — Pastor, Our Lady of LaSalette, Sulphur

The Rev. Jerish George, MOC — Pastor, Saint Mary of the Lake, Big Lake; and remaining Pastor, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Creole

The Rev. Mathew Panackal, MOC — Continuing as Judicial Vicar and assisting with pastoral duties at St. Margaret of Scotland while in residence at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Effective upon the beginning of academic year in August 2025:

The Rev. Andrew DeRouen — Canon Law Studies, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Signed by our hand and that of our Chancellor, on day 30 of May in the Year of our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty-Five.



✱ Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles



The Very Reverend
Joseph Caraway
Chancellor



Fr. Kowtiki



Fr. Koonathan



Fr. Foshage



Fr. George



Fr. Panackal



Fr. DeRouen

Seal named Director for Office of Communications

LAKE CHARLES — The Diocese of Lake Charles is pleased to announce Mrs. Pamela Seal has been named Director of Communications. She succeeds longtime director Morris LeBleu who retired on May 30, 2025, after dedicating more than 38 years of service under three bishops.

Seal is no stranger to the diocese as she has been contributing to the Office of Communications in her role as Associate Director since October 2019. She has a strong background in journalism having worked at the American Press newspaper for 34 years as lifestyle editor, page designer, and copy editor before bringing her blend of writing

and communication skills to the diocese.

“With 40 years of experience in journalism and print media, I look forward to continuing in the mission to shine the spotlight on the good news of the Diocese of Lake Charles and the Church as a whole,” Seal expressed. “I enjoy interacting with people socially and professionally. In my role as Director of Communications I hope to add value with my ability to work cohesively with others on the diocesan and parish levels for effective messaging.”

Seal holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Mass Communication from McNeese State University in Lake Charles. She is married to Allen Seal of Westlake, and



Pamela Seal

they are parishioners of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles.

MASS OF THANKSGIVING

HONORING THE MOST REVEREND GLEN JOHN PROVOST
ON THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF HIS PRIESTHOOD ORDINATION



Ordained on June 29, 1975
by Pope St. Paul VI

50
YEARS

CATHEDRAL OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

935 Bilbo Street, Lake Charles, LA

11:15 a.m. Sunday, June 29, 2025

Reception will follow at the Chancery
1201 Ryan Street, Lake Charles



Veritas Conference set for Sept. 13

LAKE CHARLES — Registration is open for the Annual Diocesan Veritas Conference on Saturday, September 13, from 9:30am-3:30pm at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Family Life Center, 3939 Kingston Street. Keynote speaker will be Mike Aquilina, an internationally acclaimed speaker on the Church Fathers who co-founded the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology with Dr. Scott Hahn, has hosted 11 TV series on EWTN, and is general editor of

the Reclaiming Catholic History series.

Early bird discount of \$30 ends August 31. Regular registration of \$40 is available online from September 1 until September 12 at noon. On-site registration is available at the door on the day of event. Parish groups of 6 or more receive an additional \$5 off per person.

Follow the event at facebook.com/lcdiocese/events. Paper registration forms available from your parish office.