



## BESTOWAL OF DIOCESAN HONORS

# Bishop Provost recognizes 60 for dedicated service to church parishes and Diocese

**By Pamela Seal**  
**Diocese of Lake Charles**  
LAKE CHARLES — Diocesan honors were presented to 60 individuals in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, September 7. Representing 13 church parishes, the recipients were chosen for their profound dedication and devotion to the Catholic Church and community.

His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, officiated the Solemn Vespers liturgy for the Bestowal of Diocesan Honors at 5:00 p.m. on the Solemnity of St. Peter Claver, patron of the Diocese of Lake Charles, whose feast day is September 9. The bishop was assisted by Deacon Brian Soileau and Very Rev. Joseph Caraway, who served as Master of Ceremonies.

“In this the year of my Golden Jubilee of ordination to the Holy Priesthood, I am delighted to award diocesan honors to distinguished laity who have given of themselves selflessly in the work of the Church,” Bishop Provost said in his comments to those gathered.

“These good Catholic men and women have assisted their pastors, as well as the Diocese, in meeting numerous pastoral needs. Recommended for these honors by their pastors, they have faithfully witnessed to the lesson taught by our Lord in the Gospel — ‘What you did for the least of my brothers and sisters you did for me.’ The Diocese rejoices in their accomplishments, and I extend my blessings to them and their families for peace and well-being,” the bishop remarked.

Awards included the *Order of Saint Charles* in the Officer Class and Member Class, and the *Diocesan Devoted Service Medal*.

The Most Reverend Jude Speyrer, founding Bishop of Lake Charles, established the *Diocesan Devoted Service Medal* to be presented to men and women who have exemplified exceptional service at the church parish level. The honor is granted at the recommendation of the pastor.

Bishop Speyrer also established a personal award of recognition, which may be presented to members of the clergy and laity of the Diocese, and others, for services to the Church and the Bishop. This award — the *Order of Saint Charles* — is a decoration named in honor of the patron saint of the City of Lake Charles. It was established in three classes — Companion, Officer, and Member.

The *Order of Saint Charles* was created to afford the Bishop an opportunity to express his personal appreciation to those who have contributed in a special way to the welfare and development of the Church and the Diocese. Membership Class is granted to those whose service has had reaches throughout the Diocese, while the Officer Class is granted to those whose service has been ongoing throughout the Diocese. Companions of Saint Charles are for those who have given service that is unique and lasting throughout the Diocese.

Recipients, by medal and parish are:

### Order of St. Charles Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

**Officer Class:** Mary Alice Lauw, Michael Nodier, Consuelo “Connie” Nodier, Barbara Dubose, and Kenneth Trahan

**Member Class:** Stephen Broussard, Monica Broussard, Michael Fills, Karen Fills, James Bushnell, Mary Bushnell, Julie Engert, Jeanne Delahoussaye, Charles Marcantel, Vincent Lupo, Robbie LaVern, and Lavonne “Cookie” Dennison



### ORDER OF SAINT CHARLES MEDAL

Recipients of the *Order of Saint Charles Medal* are joined by His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, who bestowed the diocesan honor to each of them in appreciation for their dedication to the Diocese of Lake Charles and to the Bishop. This personal award of recognition is named in honor of the patron saint of the City of Lake Charles and was established in three classes — Companion, Officer, and Member. Those pictured from the Solemn Vespers liturgy on Sunday, September 7, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception include honorees from the Officer Class and the Member Class. See story on this page for a list of all honorees. *(Photography credit: Morris LeBleu)*



### DIOCESAN DEVOTED SERVICE MEDAL

Recipients of the *Diocesan Devoted Service Medal* are joined by His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, who bestowed the diocesan honor to each of them for outstanding service at the church parish level. The honor is granted at the recommendation of their pastor. The bestowal of diocesan honors took place on Sunday, September 7, during a Solemn Vespers liturgy in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. See story on this page for a list of all honorees. *(Photography credit: Morris LeBleu)*

#### Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church

**Officer Class:** Linda Portie and Linda Ann Guilbeau

**Member Class:** John Leer Ardoin

#### St. Henry Catholic Church

**Member Class:** Gussie Pitre, Sr.; Carla Ann Duhon Goodly, Miguel Angel del Rosal Martinez, and Esthela Huerta del Rosal

#### St. Joseph Catholic Church (DeRidder)

**Member Class:** Sandra Sue Kyle

#### St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church

**Member Class:** Donna Grace Powers Vancherie †

#### St. Philip Neri Catholic Church

**Officer Class:** Karen Leann Savant and Wendy Rachelle LaFleur

#### St. Raphael Catholic Church

**Member Class:** Barbara Jane LeBlanc

#### Diocesan Devoted Service Medal

• **Christ the King Catholic Church** — Leroy Crochet, Lisa Kay Bordelon Henry, and Susan Jane Heard Reeds

• **Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church** — August Sterling

• **Immaculate Conception Catholic Church** (Jennings) — Eddie Eskew, Eileen Eskew, Dwayne Lewis, Kathy Lewis, Whitney Duplantis, and Pamela Duplantis

• **Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church** — Paul Gerald Touchet, Linda Faye Touchet, and Don Patrick Portie

• **Our Lady of Seven Dolors Catholic Church** — Sammy Marshall Watkins

• **Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church** — Jimmy Richard, Ramona Richard, Debra Ann Hylton, Helen Louviere, and Ronald Oustalet

• **St. Henry Catholic Church** — John Carl Broussard and Julie Theresa Dartez Broussard

• **St. Philip Neri Catholic Church** — Rhonda Kay Marcantel and Barbara Jean Istre

• **St. Raphael Catholic Church** — George Earl Bertrand Jr., Allice Marie Bertrand, and Judith Ann Joubert

• **St. Theodore Catholic Church** — Jackie Breaux, Cherrylye Fruge, Sherry Livingston, Robin Mathis, and Linda Mathis

Following the joyful ceremony of honors, a reception for family and friends was held in the Ave Maria Hall.





## Rev. Hunter LaRocca ordained to Priesthood

### Assigned as Parochial Vicar at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church

By Pamela Seal  
Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — The Diocese of Lake Charles gained a new priest on Saturday, September 6, when Deacon Hunter Thomas LaRocca was ordained to the Sacred Order of Priesthood by His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles. With standing room only, the Rite of Ordination took place in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

“I was reminded by a good bishop friend of mine that it is a joyful moment in the life of a diocese when we can bring a new priest to the Altar of God,” Bishop Provost remarked. “I extend my congratulations to Father LaRocca’s family and assure them of our prayers and thank them for supporting him in his formation.”

A parishioner of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Lake Charles, Father LaRocca is the 29-year-old son of Kurt and Kara Smith of Oberlin, and the late Barry LaRocca.

In his homily before the Rite of Ordination, Bishop Provost told then-Deacon LaRocca that, “if your purpose is to procure the glory of God the Father in Christ, then you have a weighty task ahead of you. Everything you do — prayer, adoration, preaching, offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice, administering the Sacraments, and any work of ministry — all of this must be for the glory of God and, by extension, the increase of divine life in those whom you will serve.”

Bishop Provost also reminded LaRocca that the Eucharist is the heart and center of this offering of glory to God.

“The Eucharist is the font of your life,” he continued. “The Mass, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, must be offered with all the prayerful reverence, dignity, and purpose that you, as a mere human being, can muster.”

Father LaRocca said that he is grateful that God has called him in a special way to participate in His ministry as one of His priests.

“What I look forward to the most about being a priest is offering the Holy Sacrifice of Mass



(Photography credit: Matthew Johnson)

**Toward the conclusion of the Sacrament of Holy Orders on Saturday, September 6, Reverend Hunter LaRocca uses his consecrated hands to bless His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost, who, a short while before, ordained Father LaRocca to the Priesthood with the laying on of hands and prayer of consecration in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.**

and offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation,” he remarked.

As LaRocca was being ordained, his mother Kara said that she felt an “overwhelming joy” that her son has joined this brotherhood.

“When the priests, one by one, laid their hands on his head calling down the Holy Spirit upon Hunter, that is when I started crying. It hit me that the priesthood is a brotherhood like no other. There is nothing in comparison,” said Kara.

When asked what characteristics will serve her son well as a priest, she said, “Hunter

is a people person and has a great capacity to be empathetic toward others and consider people’s emotions and their feelings.”

Father LaRocca said that he owes a huge debt of gratitude for many people helping him along his journey to the priesthood.

“I want to thank my parents and family for their immense support of my choosing this vocation. I am also grateful to His Excellency, Bishop Provost, for his prayers and support throughout these years of formation. What an honor it has been to be ordained a deacon and now a priest by him and to be a partner in carrying out

his ministry in the Diocese,” said Father LaRocca.

Bishop Provost extended a greeting of peace to the newly ordained priest as a sign that they are coworkers in the ministry of the Church. Priests in attendance came forward to extend the “fraternal kiss of peace” to the newly ordained as well.

Father LaRocca also expressed appreciation to Father Jeffrey Starkovich and Father Michael Caraway, his former and current vocation directors, as well as his brother priests.

“One of the biggest inspirations for me has been

through the example of so many priests serving in our diocese who live out their vocation with joy and fidelity,” he shared.

Monsignor Daniel Torres, Vicar General and Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church, assisted LaRocca with vesting, which is a customary way to honor a mentor priest.

In his homily, Bishop Provost told Hunter, “Your seminary formation and the example of good and holy priests have, to this point, given you much assistance. The completion of the task is now your own work, with God’s help.”

Emphasizing his love for the Diocese of Lake Charles and the culture that helped shape him into the person he is today, Father LaRocca is grateful to many parishioners for their continued support, prayers, and encouragement. “What greater gift than to give back to the people and to be Christ’s minister to them,” he said.

Before the final blessing, Very Rev. Joseph Caraway, diocesan chancellor and master of ceremonies, announced Father LaRocca’s first priestly assignment as Parochial Vicar at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur, effective September 8, 2025.

Father LaRocca officiated his first Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday, September 7, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Lake Charles. Toward the conclusion of the Mass, Father LaRocca presented his mother, Kara Smith, with the maniturgium — a white linen cloth that Hunter used to wipe the chrism oil from his hands after the ordination rite.

The newly ordained priest fought back tears as he explained the pious tradition of giving the maniturgium to his mother who will keep it until her death, at which point it will be placed in her hands when she is buried.

Tradition holds that at her final judgment, she will present the cloth to Christ, who will ask, “I have given you life, what have you given me?” and she will reply, “I have given you my son as a priest.”

## Bishop’s Services Appeal begins 2025-2026 campaign

In his Bishop’s Services Appeal message for 2025-2026, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost reminds us that while the Diocese of Lake Charles continues its long and arduous task of recovery from Hurricanes Laura and Delta in 2020, it has made significant progress because of God’s help and support from the faithful.

The 45<sup>th</sup> annual Bishop’s Services Appeal, a fundraising campaign to aid in the operation of various ministries and programs, kicked off the weekend of September 13-14 in church parishes throughout the Diocese.

As the Diocese launches its annual appeal, Bishop Provost invites you to prayerfully consider making a gift. Every contribution, no matter the size, directly supports Catholic Schools, Religious Education, Saint Charles Center, Youth Ministry & Camp Karol, Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana, Priests’ Welfare & Retirement, and Seminarian Education.

“The services of the Diocese of Lake Charles, which you support so generously, are what makes recovery possible,” said Bishop Provost. “Whether with Catholic Charities or Vocation ministry, teaching the Gospel in religious education or fostering the work of our retreat center and youth camp, or assisting our elderly and retired priests — you, the faithful of the Diocese of Lake Charles, are there to support materially and spiritually the work and ministry of the Church in Southwest Louisiana.”

This year’s Bishop’s Services Appeal, which continues until the end of the fiscal year — June 30, 2026, with a goal of \$860,000 — has as its theme: “I make all things new!” (Revelation 21:5)

Reminding us that Christians are people of hope, Bishop Provost asks us to rededicate ourselves to the work, inspired by the hope we have in God’s promise to bring about a “new Jerusalem.”

“The old dissolves so that something new can take place. This is only possible with God’s Grace and our cooperation, our union with that Grace to achieve an end which is in accord with God’s Will,” the Bishop remarked in his message.

Every gift will be gratefully accepted. Donors can choose from the following options to make their contributions:

- By check or cash in your parish’s designated BSA collection envelope
- By designating a donation at any time in your parish’s collection
- By credit card or electronic check (ACH) through the Diocese of Lake Charles website at <http://www.lcdioocese.org/resources/support-the-diocese>. Select Bishop’s Services Appeal 2025-2026.

The first weekend of collections in church parishes will be at all Masses September 20-21.

*I make all things new!*

REVELATION 21:5



DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES  
BISHOP’S SERVICES APPEAL  
2025 - 2026