



Pope Leo XIV bestows Papal Honor upon Very Rev. Aubrey Guilbeau

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

It was early on in the priesthood of Very Reverend Aubrey Guilbeau that he learned from the people what it means to be a priest.

“A priest needs not to be the one with all the answers, but rather one who will listen with compassion and allow the Holy Spirit to provide the answers,” he said, recalling the wise words of his first pastor, the late Monsignor Charles Dubois: *“Always be present and available, and the Lord will take care of the rest.”*

In recognition of his faithful presence and dedication as a priest for 43 years in the Diocese of Lake Charles, Pope Leo XIV has conferred a Papal Honor on Father Guilbeau.

He received the Papal Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (Cross for the Church and Pontiff) from His Excellency, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, in the presence of Very Reverend Ruben J. Buller, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia; Reverend Monsignor Daniel A. Torres, Vicar General; and Very Reverend Joseph Caraway, Chancellor, on Friday, October 31, in the Chancery.

Pope Leo conferred the Honor at the request of Bishop Provost, who remarked, “I consider the service and priestly commitment of Father Guilbeau a significant blessing to the Church in Southwest Louisiana and to me personally as a Bishop.”

Father Guilbeau said that he was truly humbled by this recognition. “When I was presented the Papal Honor by Bishop Provost, I was completely surprised and speechless. It was something I never even entertained receiving as I believe there are many others equally or more deserving,” he said.

“I am grateful every day that the Lord has graced me with the priesthood,” Father Guilbeau continued. “From the vantage point of a priest, I have shared in the sorrows and joys of so many people. I am humbled by the trust people place in their priest in inviting us into the sacred parts of their lives.”

Father Guilbeau was ordained to the priesthood on May 29, 1982, by the Most Reverend Jude Speyrer, founding bishop. He has been a priest for most of the 45-year history of the Diocese of Lake Charles. In that time, his pastoral assignments have included church



On October 31, 2025, Bishop Glen John Provost presented Very Reverend Aubrey Guilbeau with the Papal Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (Cross for the Church and Pontiff) award in the Chancery of the Diocese of Lake Charles. Pope Leo XIV conferred the honor at the request of Bishop Provost for Father Guilbeau’s dedicated ministry to the priesthood. At right is a closeup of the Papal Medal, also known as the Cross of Honor. It consists of a cross-shaped medal depicting the Apostles Peter and Paul, suspended from a ribbon of gold and white, the colors of the Holy See. The Papal Honor was established by Pope Leo XIII in July of 1888.



parishes of St. Raphael in Iowa, St. Margaret of Scotland in Lake Charles, Immaculate Conception in Sulphur, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, and presently St. Theodore in Moss Bluff.

He has also served as Chaplain of the Deaf Apostolate since his ordination. In this role over the past 43 years, Father Guilbeau has celebrated the Holy Mass in voice and Sign Language every Saturday evening since his appointment to the Deaf Apostolate.

“Father Guilbeau is a ‘priest’s priest,’ as we say,” the bishop remarked. “Not only has he served as an exemplary pastor throughout his priesthood but also held the position of Vicar General under Bishop Edward Braxton, as well as Vocation Director, Pastor of the Cathedral, and Dean, and the Office of Vicar for Clergy, to which I appointed him several years ago.”

Bishop Provost continued, “The clergy highly respect him as

a trusted friend and advisor. The faithful of the parishes to which he has been assigned also hold him in high regard.”

Father Guilbeau credits three “outstanding” people in his home parish of Our Lady Help of Christians in Jennings who modeled for him the joy of ministry.

“At the age of 27 and after exploring several different jobs and career choices, I still felt an emptiness in my life,” he shared. “The late Monsignor Ronald Groth, Father Marshall Boulet, and Sister Camille Martinez all brought new life to our church, and this was something I wanted in my life.”

He continued, “The invitation of some peers who had become active in the parish assisting with youth ministry and with their own weekly Bible Study and faith sharing, I experienced for the first time something I desired to do for the rest of my life. My discernment led to my entering the seminary.”

While each priest has his own

personality and gifts, Bishop Provost said that younger priests can learn a great deal from Father Guilbeau.

“He is a hard worker, cherishes his priestly life, and is highly self-motivated, always with a view to accomplishing what Christ and His Church seeks for the Kingdom of God,” His Excellency remarked. “He does not wait to be told what to do. He thoughtfully considers the situation and acts with maturity and sound judgment.”

Another trait that Father Guilbeau brings to his priestly ministry is his calming presence, something he attributes to his mother.

“As a servant of the Lord, I always pray that I will be used to bring a sense of peace and calmness to all those whom I minister. My mother modeled that for me in our home. With prayer, she always trusted in the Lord, and I try to follow that same example,” he said. “The Lord tells us to ‘fear not,’ and so I try to live out these words.”

Throughout his ministry these past 43 years, Father Guilbeau said that he has learned more from others than they have learned from him and for that he is grateful. “The Lord never stops amazing me of His care and love.”

About the Papal Cross

The Papal Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* honor was established by Pope Leo XIII in July of 1888. The medal is awarded to Catholics aged 45 and above for distinguished service to the Catholic Church and to the Papal office. Also known as the Cross of Honor, it comes directly from the Holy See. It consists of a cross-shaped medal depicting the apostles Peter and Paul, suspended from a ribbon of gold and white, the colors of the Holy See. In the Diocese of Lake Charles, the Cross is presented to clergy and laity for services and contributions to the Catholic Church at the Diocesan level over a period of 10 years or more.



‘Diocesan Novena for Our Next Bishop’ begins Nov. 30

His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost, invites the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Lake Charles to join him in praying a Nine-Day Novena to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. The purpose of the novena is to pray for the selection of our next bishop.

While the Holy Father has accepted the resignation of Bishop Provost, he has been instructed to remain the Bishop of the Diocese of Lake Charles until such a time a new bishop will be appointed.

The “Diocesan Novena for Our Next Bishop” will begin on Sunday, November 30, 2025, the First Sunday of Advent, and conclude on Monday, December 8, 2025, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

The novena is addressed to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception not only because she is the patroness of the Diocese of Lake Charles, but also because her image has the singular privilege of being a Crowned Image by proclamation of Pope Benedict XVI.

Prayer cards have been distributed throughout the Diocese. All are encouraged to pray the novena requesting “that a faithful and zealous shepherd be chosen as our next Bishop of Lake Charles.”

DIOCESAN NOVENA

FOR OUR NEXT BISHOP

O most Holy Virgin, whom the Lord was pleased to make His Mother, immaculate in body and soul, unwavering in faith and ardent in love, look kindly upon us as we implore your powerful intercession.

O most Holy Mother, who by the first moment of your Immaculate Conception did crush the head of our ancient foe, we humbly beseech you as suppliants to receive our prayers as we implore you to present at the throne of God the favor we now request: **that a faithful and zealous shepherd be chosen as the next Bishop of Lake Charles.**

O Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Holy Mother of God, you did have influence with your Divine Son while upon this Earth. And, since your most powerful persuasion has in every way come to fullness now in Heaven, pray for us and obtain from Him, Whom you rightly call your own Son, the granting of our petition according to the Divine Will, through the same Christ our Lord. *Amen*

To be prayed November 30 – December 8, 2025
First Sunday of Advent through the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Image: From the Apse at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles



CONTRIBUTIONS OF TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES IN FENTON

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church dedicated after extensive renovations

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles
FENTON — After 11 months of extensive renovations, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, dedicated St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church on Tuesday, November 4, the Feast day of the church's patron saint.

As the congregation sang “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” during the entrance procession of the 5:30 p.m. Mass, they had much to be grateful for in this Jubilee Year of Hope as they gathered in their church for the first time in nearly a year. “With deep gratitude and joy, I stand before you all on this gracious and blessed day — the dedication of our beloved church,” Rev. Jom Joseph, HGN, Pastor of St. Charles Borromeo said. Father Jom expressed his heartfelt thanks to Bishop Provost for granting approval for the project, for his guidance, encouragement, and presence from the very beginning — from blessing the site to presiding at the Order of Dedication.

In remarking on the project's completion, Bishop Provost said, “We come together to dedicate this church after much effort to restore it, and it is quite beautiful. We give thanks this evening for the beauty God allows us to witness in the newly renovated St. Charles Borromeo Church.” The one-million dollar renovation effort includes a bridal room/quiet room, sacristy, and foyer, that can also serve as catechism classrooms; additional seating, new flooring, enhanced handicapped accessibility, and new restrooms. A wooden ceiling replaces the older one which was in disrepair. Special thanks were extended to Father Jerish George, MOC, for allowing the use of the hanging lights from Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church in Cameron that was destroyed by Hurricane Laura in 2020. “The lights brighten not only our church, but our hearts as well,” said Father Jom. Visiting clergy included many from the Diocese of Lake Charles as well as those traveling far distances to show support for their brother priest, Father Jom. It was a homecoming of sorts for Very Rev. Ruben Buller, Vicar General, who grew up attending St. Charles Borromeo.



ABOVE: The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, celebrates the Eucharist on November 4, 2025, during the dedication Mass for parish renovations at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Fenton. Concelebrating with him are Reverend Jom Joseph, HGN, Pastor, along with local and visiting priests. **BELOW:** A plaque commemorating the extensive renovations at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church was unveiled by Bishop Provost and Reverend Jom Joseph following the Order of Dedication. *(Karlee Johnson / Rae of Rose Photography)*

The Mass began with a sprinkling rite reminding us of our baptism. Following the Liturgy of the Word, the Prayer of Dedication and the Anointings began with everyone praying the Litany of the Saints. Bishop Provost then poured sacred Chrism in the middle of the altar and on each corner, spreading it with his hand as he completely covered the surface. After anointing the altar and walls of the church, he lit a fire on the altar and walked around the altar using incense to serve as reminder that the sacred space is now consecrated and ready for worship. The altar was vested and candles surrounding it were solemnly lit. The dedication continued with the celebration of the Eucharist, uniting the St. Charles Borromeo community as they returned “home” for the first time since January 2025. Immediately after Mass, Bishop Provost unveiled a commemorative plaque in gratitude for all who contributed spiritually, physically, and financially to the lasting presence of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church.

“Together we have built not just a beautiful church, but a living testimony of faith, unity, and love,” remarked Father Jom. “May God who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion, and may St. Charles Borromeo continue to watch over and intercede for us always.” Father Jom also extended a heartfelt thank you to (Jeff) Kudla Architecture for “blending the old with the new so beautifully” and (Khoury) Kraus Construction, Inc. for their “magnificent” transformation of the church. While renovations were underway, the parish celebrated Mass in the adjacent church hall. It was in that same church hall where parishioners gathered after the dedication Mass for a meal to celebrate their joint contributions of time, talents, and treasures.



SEMINARIAN NEWS

Ministry of Lector

On Wednesday, October 8, 2025, the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, presided at the Mass for the Institution of Lectors at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. Among those given the Ministry of Lector from the Diocese of Lake Charles was Cameron Fontenot. The Rite of Institution of Lectors is one of the ministries a seminarian must receive before ordination to the Diaconate and Priesthood. Those given the Ministry of Lector are entrusted with reading the Sacred Scriptures during Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. Cameron was instructed by Bishop Provost to, “Take this book of Holy Scripture and be faithful in handing on the word of God, so that it may grow strong in the hearts of his people.” Please pray for Cameron and all our seminarians as they continue their priestly formation at Notre Dame Seminary, Saint Joseph Seminary College, Theological College, and Pontifical North American College. From left: Very Rev. Joshua Rodrigue (Rector/President Notre Dame Seminary), Bishop Provost, and Cameron Fontenot.

Photography credit: Notre Dame Seminary