



# Catholic Calendar

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## Bishop Provost's 2025 Christmas Message

# 'May our hearts be open to receive the newborn Son of God'

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." *Isaiah 9:1*

If you would, please permit me to recount an amusing story from my early priesthood.

As a young priest just ordained, I brought Holy Communion to a lady homebound in the parish who would not rise from bed before late morning. She told me her friends would say, "You're missing the most beautiful part of the day — sunrise." So, she continued, she got up early one day to see what they were talking about. She concluded the sunrise was "highly overrated." I am afraid that many live their lives without experiencing the sunrise that is Christmas.

Isaiah proclaims to us a prophecy of the coming Messiah using the light of dawn. He writes, "Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone" (*Isaiah 9:1*). Prophets and poets have used

the beauty of the sun rising to describe the coming of something new for centuries. Homer described the experience in these breathtaking terms:

"[M]orning-born Dawn touched the sky with her fingertips of rose" (*The Odyssey*, Book 3, v. 491). However, nothing can equal the description of the prophets and the magnificent description of the first Christmas night in the Gospel of St. Luke.

Shepherds are keeping watch over their sheep by night. Suddenly, "[t]he angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them" (*Luke 2:9*). The dark chasm of night is breached by a heavenly apparition. God has shattered the midnight darkness, and His messenger proclaims the fulfillment of a mystery spoken of from ages past — "For today in the city of David a savior has been born" (*Luke 2:11*). The dreams of the Old Testament prophets are brought to completion at dawn. An "extraordinarily coherent narrative" — in

words of a noted modern, secular historian (cf. John Burrow, *A History of Histories*) — prepares the world to receive a message — "good news of great joy" (*Luke 2:10*). We are redeemed.

The "good news" transcends worldly concerns. The Messiah does not pierce the darkness to have us remain mired in material affairs. "[T]he glory of the Lord" comes to shed light on the shadowy figures that can inhabit our lowest instincts. We are not to place our faith in structures and a process. Our faith is directed to the Son — the Word of God made flesh.

This vision of a new day dawning in Christ inspired St. Paul to write, "He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (*Colossians 1:13*).

So, to return to my elderly friend, why do we remain asleep, missing the dawn, unable to rise from bed? Complacency, perhaps? Fear? Ignorance? We must not miss the dawn. God does not will our

death but our life. He wants us to live in Him. We must cast aside darkness and put on the vesture of light (cf. *Romans 13:12*). God did not create us to live self-centered lives of destruction, seeking fulfillment in the attractions of this world that lead nowhere. No, we are created to live good lives in conformity to God's Will here on earth with a hope in the life to come.

Therefore, let your Christmas be a new beginning. Put aside darkness. The light has dawned. A new day is appearing. There is always hope. I am moved to recall the prophet Isaiah's use of another image that appears at dawn, the dew. He writes, "Let justice descend, O heavens, like dew from above, like gentle rain let the skies drop it down. Let the earth open and salvation bud forth, let justice also spring up! I, the Lord, have created this" (*Isaiah 45:8*).

As the earth opens to receive the dew of dawn, may our hearts open to receive the newborn Son of God.

## Christmas Mass schedules throughout the Diocese of Lake Charles

### Bell City

St. John Vianney

(7120 Highway 14 East)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Big Lake

St. Mary of the Lake

(11054 Highway 384)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Carlyss

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus

(4822 Carlyss Drive)

4:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m. (Day)

### Creole

Sacred Heart of Jesus, East Cameron

(5250 West Creole Highway)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 10:00 a.m. (Day)

### DeQuincy

Our Lady of LaSalette

(203 South Grand Avenue)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 10:00 a.m. (Day)

### DeRidder

St. Joseph

(1125 Blankenship Drive)

4:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m. (Eve); 10:00 a.m. (Day)

### Elizabeth

St. Frances of Rome Mission

(204 Poplar Street)

8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Elton

St. Joseph

(209 Al Woods Street)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:30 a.m. (Day)

### St. Paul

(1100 St. Mary Street)

6:00 p.m. (Eve); 7:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m. (Day)

### Fenton

St. Charles Borromeo

(804 Third Avenue)

6:00 p.m. (Eve); 9:00 a.m. (Day)

### Hackberry

St. Peter the Apostle

(1210 Main Street)

5:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Iowa

St. Raphael

(213 South Thomson Avenue)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 9:30 a.m. (Day)

### St. Peter Claver Mission

(503 West Second Street)

8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Jennings

Immaculate Conception

(515 Bryan Street)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 6:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m. (Day)

### Our Lady Help of Christians

(710 North State Street)

3:30 p.m. Choir Concert (Eve)

4:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m. (Eve); 9:00 a.m. (Day)

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

(920 S. Broadway Street)

6:00 p.m. (Eve); 12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass

10:00 a.m. (Day)

### Johnson Bayou

Our Lady of the Assumption Mission

(6470 Gulf Beach Highway)

11:00 a.m. (Day)

### Kinder

St. Philip Neri

(607 Fourth Avenue)

4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:30 a.m. (Day)

### Lacassine

St. John the Evangelist Mission

(306 Ann Street)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 7:00 a.m. (Day)

### Lake Arthur

Our Lady of the Lake

(203 Commercial Avenue)

5:30 p.m. (Eve); 9:30 a.m. (Day)

### Lake Charles

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

(935 Bilbo Street)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 11:00 p.m. (Concert)

12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass

7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. (Day)

11:15 a.m. (Rubrics of 1962, Christmas Day)

### Christ the King

(7680 Gulf Highway)

4:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Immaculate Heart of Mary

(2031 Opelousas Street)

4:00 p.m. (Eve)

12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass

9:30 a.m. (Day)

### Our Lady of Good Counsel

(221 Aqua Drive)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. (Day)

### Our Lady of Fatima Mission

(1700 Graham Street)

7:00 a.m. (Day)

### Our Lady Queen of Heaven

(3939 Lake Street)

4:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m. (Eve)

12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass

7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m.,

and 5:30 p.m. (Day)

### Sacred Heart of Jesus

(610 Louisiana Avenue)

4:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m. (Day)

### St. Henry

(1021 Eighth Avenue)

4:00 p.m. (Eve)

12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass (Spanish/English)

9:00 a.m. (Day); 5:30 p.m. Spanish (Day)

### St. Margaret of Scotland

(2500 Enterprise Blvd.)

4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. (Eve)

7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. (Day)

### St. Martin de Porres

(5495 Elliott Road)

4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. (Eve); 8:00 a.m. (Day)

### CHRISTUS Ochsner

St. Patrick Hospital Chapel

(524 Michael DeBakey Drive)

9:00 a.m. (Day)

### LeBleu Settlement

St. Joseph Mission

(2110 Claude Hebert Road)

8:00 a.m. (Day)

### Moss Bluff

St. Theodore

(785 Sam Houston Jones Parkway)

4:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m., 11:00 p.m. (Eve)



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## NEW BEGINNING FOR 'LITTLE CHURCH BY THE AIRPORT' Christ the King breaks ground on new church

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — Almost 23 years to the day that Christ the King Catholic Church was established as a church parish (November 24, 2002), parishioners of the "little church by the airport" gathered to break ground on a new beginning.

On November 22, the eve of the church's patronal feast, the Solemnity of Christ the King, parishioners looked to the future in this Jubilee Year of Hope.

"How appropriate it is that we gather for this special occasion on the eve of our patronal feast and just days before Thanksgiving," said Very Rev. Matthew Cormier, V.F., Pastor. "What a wonderful way to give thanks to the good Lord."

Special guests for the "Rise and Rebuild" project were the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles; and Rev. Wayne LeBleu, founding pastor of Christ the King. Alison Kethman led everyone in singing "Holy Ground" as the mid-morning ceremony began.

"Five years, two months, and three weeks ago, Hurricane Laura's fury destroyed the little church by the airport, or rather it destroyed the church building," said Father Cormier. "It did not and could not destroy the Church."

A double-wide modular building on the property at 7680 Gulf Highway has served as a temporary worship space since December 19, 2020. The new church will be located directly across the highway.

The groundbreaking took place on the site of where the altar will be placed. Father Cormier chose this spot "since the altar is the focus of our worship, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

Father Cormier said that every church building is meant to represent the heavenly Jerusalem,



A groundbreaking ceremony took place at the site of the new Christ the King Catholic Church in south Lake Charles on November 22. The church will be built across the road from its current location at 7680 Gulf Highway. From left, are Joshua Hoffpauir with Hoffpauir Studio Architecture; Rev. V. Wayne LeBleu, founding pastor at Christ the King; Very Rev. Matthew Cormier, VF, current pastor; Bishop Glen John Provost; Jared Cavys, representing Pat Williams Construction; Lisa Henry and Mickey Richard, both trustees at Christ the King Parish. (Photography credit: Morris LeBleu)

whether it is St. Peter's Basilica or a little church by the airport.

"Our new church may not be a grand and magnificent basilica, but we will make sure it is still a house fit for a king," he remarked.

Special thanks were expressed to Rev. Rojo Koonathan who pastored the parish for four years after the storms; members of the finance and pastoral councils, the building committee, the Rise and Rebuild Capital Campaign committee, Shane Swire, J.W. O'Reilly Sr. Knights of Columbus Council 13931, and Mark Vail (for clearing the land).

Project Architect is Hoffpauir Studio, LLC, and General Contractor is Pat Williams Construction.

St. Joseph also played a big part in helping Christ the King Parish break ground.

"After some discouraging developments this past March, St. Joseph and I had a little conversation," said Father Cormier. "I told him that if he obtained for us some good news, specifically regarding FEMA, we would find a special way to honor him in our new church. On March 19, 2025, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, we received the FEMA obligation. It was clear who the patron of our rebuild should be."

Parishioners were also faithful in praying the Litany of St. Joseph after every Mass during the 30 days of the bid process.

"We entrusted our capital campaign to him," said Father Cormier. "After having raised over a million dollars over the course of several years, in just a few months, another one million dollars was pledged for the Rise and Rebuild Campaign, and here we are today."

Before the shovels went into the dirt, parishioners were invited to add small amounts of dirt from their yards since the new church will be their spiritual home.

Susan Reeds was one of those who contributed. She is the wife of Raymond Reeds who has close ties to the church dating back to 1955. Raymond's grandmother, Flavia Vincent Reeds, donated \$10,000 and 1.5 acres of land on which the

original Christ the King Chapel was built. It was all cattle pasture before that.

Holding a jar of dirt that she obtained from the original site of Christ the King, Susan said, "This is my family's dirt. Cattle have been produced off it. My extended family and I have walked and worshiped on this dirt."

Bishop Provost expressed his gratitude to Father Cormier as a "fine and competent pastor in helping bring this parish to this moment."

The bishop also thanked those who have given generously to the Rise and Rebuild campaign. "This could not happen without your generosity and enthusiasm."

## ST. LOUIS STUDENTS WITNESS HISTORIC DIALOGUE WITH THE HOLY FATHER Pope Leo connects with U.S. teens in first-ever digital visit

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — It was an encounter with the Holy Father like no one has seen before, and students at St. Louis Catholic High School watched as history-in-the-making unfolded before their eyes.

The first-ever live digital dialogue between Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican and U.S. Catholic teenagers in Indianapolis occurred on the morning of November 21. The unprecedented visit, lasting nearly an hour, took place during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) at Lucas Oil Stadium.

While high school students from the Diocese of Lake Charles were among the 16,000 attending the three-day conference, students on the campus of St. Louis were connected in more ways than one. Moderator for the historic event was SLCHS alumna, Katie Prejean McGrady (Class of 2007).

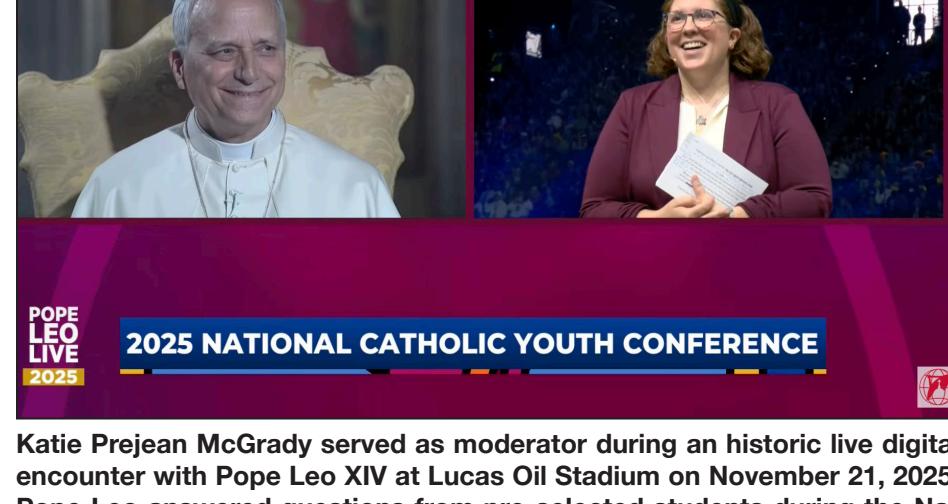
McGrady let it be known that she was wearing her pope socks for the special occasion, to which the first American-born pope responded that he only wears "White Sox," a nod to his unwavering loyalty to the Chicago baseball team.

In other breaking news, the Vicar of Christ shared that he uses a different word for Wordle day, "so there is no set starting word," the pope said about his pontifical strategy.

"Dear young people, dear friends, good morning! I am very glad to be with all of you through this digital connection," Pope Leo said in his opening comments. "I want to greet everyone gathered at the National Catholic Youth Conference, and I also want to greet all of you who are joining online or joining on television from across the United States or other parts of the world."

The Holy Father expressed his gratitude to those who made the dialogue possible even if it was only through a screen.

Speaking directly to the youth, the pope said, "You all hold a special place in my



Katie Prejean McGrady served as moderator during an historic live digital encounter with Pope Leo XIV at Lucas Oil Stadium on November 21, 2025. Pope Leo answered questions from pre-selected students during the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. McGrady is a 2007 graduate of St. Louis Catholic High School in Lake Charles.

heart, and I look forward to answering your questions."

Before the questions from five pre-selected students began, Pope Leo invited all to join him in praying the "Hail Mary."

Topics on the minds of those representing their teenage peers ranged from accepting God's mercy, distractions in prayer, balancing social media, giving worries to Jesus, technology, the future of the Church, overcoming anxiety, and more.

At one point, the NCYC crowd erupted into applause when Pope Leo reminded the youth that they are not only the future of the Church but also the present.

"Your voices, your ideas, your faith matter right now. The Church needs you. The Church needs what you have been given to share with all of us," he said, offering three challenges to the teens.

• What can I offer the Church for the future?

• How can I help others come to know Christ?

• How can I build peace and friendship around me?

### LOCAL REACTION

Several St. Louis students shared what was on their minds while listening to Pope Leo respond thoughtfully to the questions posed to him.

• Bayleigh Vincent, a senior, said that she could relate to everything the NCYC teens were asking.

"Something that resonated with me was the question about technology and how it can take over our lives. I liked Pope Leo's response in that we should make sure technology serves our lives and not the other way around," said Vincent. "I also like his suggestion of setting a timer for however long you spend on your phone. Putting it away and spending time with your family

can make a difference."

• Kaleb Katoch, a senior, said that he was glad to hear Pope Leo talk about the importance of discernment.

"A vocation is a big decision a lot of young people need to make. I am leaning toward marriage right now, but I am open to whatever God wants me to do," said Katoch. "I like the part when Pope Leo said we should pray for our future spouse that they will be able to help us grow in our faith."

• Laney Duhon, a sophomore, was glad the school offered the opportunity for the students to listen to the Holy Father.

"The pope's advice on prayer was great," she said, noting that she struggles with distractions at times. "I recently started getting into a big prayer life. His advice about quickly refocusing and turning back to God when we drift away in prayer was very helpful."

• Benjamin-Isaac Duplechin, a senior, said a couple of things the pope said caught his attention. One was when he cautioned the youth to use artificial intelligence in such a way that if it disappeared tomorrow, they would still know how to think.

"It was a good reminder to be prudent and careful when using AI. I also liked when he said we should be missionary disciples in every aspect of our life, to be intentional in the way we live out our faith."

• Lizzie Austin, a senior, said that for her the digital experience felt surreal.

"I am still processing it. It felt weird to listen to the pope speak and be able to understand his language," said Austin, "but I feel so honored that he chose to spend so much time with the youth. I kept thinking to myself that he is so relatable." Austin noted that a lot of what Pope Leo said is what she needed to hear.

"When he was speaking about having good friends, he emphasized making Jesus a good friend," she said, realizing, "when we talk to our friends about our struggles, it is important to share those struggles with Jesus, too."