



NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK: JAN. 25-31

Catholic education: Where vocations take root

By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles

There is something extra special about a Catholic education that provides good soil for vocations to take root. A vocation wall in the campus chapel of St. Louis Catholic High School celebrates alumni who heard God’s call and offered their lives in service as priests, deacons, and religious.

Schools in the Diocese of Lake Charles will have the opportunity to celebrate vocations and much more during National Catholic Schools Week scheduled Sunday, January 25, to Saturday, January 31. The theme is “United in Faith and Community.”

Catholic schools in the Diocese are St. Louis Catholic High School, Immaculate Conception Cathedral School, St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School, and Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School, all in Lake Charles; Our Lady’s Catholic School in Sulphur; and Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School in Jennings.

Several graduates of St. Louis who answered God’s call to the priesthood reflect on the importance of Catholic education in their own lives.

Very Rev. Ruben J. Buller Ordained on May 10, 2008

St. Louis Catholic High School (1996-2000)

St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School (1993-1996)

Father Ruben Buller is Pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception while serving as Rector of St. Louis and Chaplain at Immaculate Conception Cathedral School.

“The call that I experienced to the priesthood was nurtured in Catholic schools because of the fact that the schools offered an atmosphere to see the various calls of the Church and how one might be called to serve,” said Father Buller. “For that reason, when I first thought of becoming a priest, it was not a strange thing or ‘weird’ reaction. Since the atmosphere was Catholic already, it was normal to be able to think and pray about this lifestyle.”

In his role as Rector of St. Louis, he points out a unique feature is the campus chapel that offers a place for students, teachers, and staff to encounter Christ in the Eucharist.

“It is before the Eucharist that a person will hear the Voice of God which often seems like silence to us. There, one can hear how God is calling a person,” Buller remarked, also emphasizing the presence of priests on campus as an important aspect.

“At Saint Louis, Father Michael Caraway (Director of Vocations) is on campus almost daily, and Father Whitney Miller often stops by as well and goes to many sporting events there,” he said. “I make it a point to spend at least one morning at ICCS as well each week because the priestly and religious presence will then be part of that atmosphere that makes Catholicism the way of life in our Catholic Schools.”

Looking at the wall where vocations to the priesthood and religious life are acknowledged, Father Buller said, “It is heartening to see the number of priests and sisters who have decided to serve the Church in this regard. It is also heartening to see teachers return to teach at St. Louis and ICCS who are in good Catholic marriages and promote listening to God’s Voice in this matter as well.”

Father Buller noted that the current atmosphere at Saint Louis and ICCS are such that students often speak about the sense of a need to serve the Church. It is natural and good that they look at the priesthood and religious life.

“Overall, Catholic schools must be about preparing people for heaven with God,” he remarked. “Asking the bigger questions about how one might live one’s life is vital. It is why the Church exists and why she founded and promotes Catholic education!”

Rev. Andrew DeRouen Ordained on June 27, 2020

St. Louis Catholic High School (2007-2011)

Immaculate Conception Cathedral School (1997-2007)

Father Andrew DeRouen admits that the most important factor of his Catholic education was that his parents were fully invested in it from the beginning.

“I would come home after school and talk about the topics I was learning; we went to Mass together as a family every Sunday,” he recalls. “The classroom was where ideas were introduced, but the dinner table and the parish were where those ideas were enfolded, guided, and encouraged. In other words, Catholic education didn’t exist in a vacuum for me. Priesthood was not some far off, outlandish idea because I saw its effects in all the other aspects of life outside of school. I have my parents to thank for that.”

Currently a student at Catholic University of America pursuing Canon Law Studies, Father DeRouen said that he “deeply benefited” from curricula and teachers who adhered to what St. John Henry Newman envisioned in his work, *The Idea of a University*, namely, that faith is never contrary to reason, and that theology is part of the collective knowledge of human history and should not be withheld from the student seeking truth.

“Years of this freedom of being able to pursue my curiosity of God, as well as the frequent involvement of several diocesan priests on campus, proved instrumental in my later discernment of the priesthood,” he expressed.

From the time Father DeRouen was a student at St. Louis Catholic High School to the time he served as the campus chaplain, he said it has been beautiful to see the school grow “tremendously” in its Catholic identity.

“I look back on how Providential it was to be curious about studying Latin. It was the beginning of a linguistic revolution that would light my path through college, seminary, even twenty years later as I’ve returned to study



AT ST. LOUIS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, DEEP ROOTS OF FAITH GROW SAINTS FOR THE WORLD.

SPREADING ROOTS — GROWING SAINTS

We celebrate our alumni who heard God’s call and give their lives in service as priests, deacons, sisters, and brothers — planting seeds of hope, love, and holiness wherever they are sent.

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|  <p>SISTER GERALYN SPAULDING, O.S.B. Class of 1971 Order of St. Benedict</p> |  <p>FATHER TREY ANGE Class of 2002 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> |  <p>FATHER JOSH PAGE Class of 2014 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> |
|  <p>DEACON RAY MENARD Class of 1972 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> |  <p>FATHER JEFFREY STARKOVICH Class of 2003 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> |  <p>CAMERON FONTENOT Class of 2017 Seminarist at Notre Dame Seminary</p> |
|  <p>FATHER PATRICK CARR Class of 1982 Archdiocese of New Orleans</p> |  <p>FATHER ALAN PIPER, O.P. Class of 2004 Dominican Province of St. Joseph</p> |  <p>SR. MARY HUMBLE DAUGHTER OF THE MOST HIGH (Claire Basone, SLCHS 2020) Entered the religious order Servidoras</p> |
|  <p>† REV. CANON A. GERARD JORDAN, SR., O. PRAEM Class of 1985</p> |  <p>FATHER BERNARD BACA, O.S.B. Class of 2009 Benedictine Monks of Norcia</p> |  <p>MICHAEL DESORMEAUX Class of 2021 Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy</p> |
|  <p>FATHER ROBERT BOXIE III Class of 1998 Archdiocese of Washington</p> |  <p>FATHER ANDY DEROUEN Class of 2011 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> |  <p>LIAM LEONARD Class of 2021 Seminarist at Theological College, Washington</p> |
|  <p>FATHER RUBEN J. BULLER Class of 2000 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> |  <p>FATHER MICHAEL BEVERUNG Class of 2013 Diocese of Lake Charles</p> | |

WHERE VOCATIONS TAKE ROOT AND SAINTS GROW —

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canon law,” he reflected. “If anyone reading this comes across Ms. Laura Monk or Mr. Derrick Suarez, please tell them how grateful I am to have been challenged by their teaching. What an invaluable tool to give a young student, that he might unlock the treasures of the Church and communicate the Love of Christ — ever ancient, ever new — to the souls around him!”

Rev. Michael Beverung Ordained on May 22, 2021

St. Louis Catholic High School (2009-2013)

Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic School (1998-2009)

Father Michael Beverung, who serves as Parochial Vicar at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, said that he was provided with more than an academic formation at both Our Lady Queen of Heaven and St. Louis Catholic High School.

“My Catholic education gave me a lived experience of faith that was integrated into everyday life. Prayer, the sacraments, and the witness of faithful teachers and clergy helped me see that following Christ was not just something reserved for Sundays but a daily way of life,” said Father Beverung. “Over time, that consistent exposure to the Gospel being lived out and to the life of the Church helped me recognize that God was inviting me to serve Him and His people in a deeper way, ultimately leading me to discern a call to the priesthood.”

Father Beverung said that he will be forever grateful to his parents for giving him the gift of his Catholic education.

“Catholic school gave me the space and support to begin asking those deeper questions about my future and how God might be calling me to serve,” he said, noting that his vocation was nurtured through encouragement, example, and an environment where faith questions were taken seriously.

“Having access to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and being surrounded by adults who took their own faith seriously made it easier to imagine giving my life to the Church,” he remarked. “Teachers and mentors helped me understand that discerning God’s will is a process that involves prayer, trust, and generosity.”

A priest for nearly five years now, Father Beverung said that the environment at St. Louis fostered both spiritual growth and personal responsibility.

“Faith was not treated as an add-on but as a foundation that shaped the school’s culture, relationships, and expectations. Opportunities for prayer, service, and leadership encouraged me to reflect on how God was working in my life,” he explained. “Being in a community that valued discipline, service, and faith made it easier to listen for God’s voice and to take the idea of a priestly vocation seriously rather than dismissing it as unrealistic or out of reach.”

Rev. Trey Ange Ordained on June 3, 2017

St. Louis Catholic High School (1998-2002)

St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School (1997-1998)

Father Sam “Trey” Ange, Pastor of St. Henry Catholic Church, said that his Catholic education helped form the roots into his Catholic faith that grounded him into the rich soil of Catholicism.

“It was here that the seeds of vocation were planted and did not bloom until much later in life,” he recalls. “In the structure and lessons of Catholic school, I remember being taught to be open to all vocations, not just married life.”

The beginning of those seeds being planted happened when three of Father Ange’s favorite school formators at St. Louis Catholic High School were ordained deacons (Deacon Vic Bonnafée, Deacon Rick Hinchee, and Deacon Glenn Viau).

“I was very inspired and thought it was cool that all three men were ordained deacons at the same time,” said Father Ange. “My grandfather (Deacon Julius Garrett Caraway Jr.) was a deacon. At that point, I really thought about being a deacon, but I pushed away any thoughts of the priesthood because I liked girls way too much. (We all know how my story ends up though!)

In his theology class at St. Louis, Father Ange recalls a poster on the wall displaying the Golden Rule. He said that he was inspired by that poster to actually live the Golden Rule. “It made such a difference in how I saw life and other people.”

To highlight Catholic Schools Week, Bishop Glen John Provost will be the celebrant for a school Mass for St. Louis Catholic High School seniors along with eighth graders at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 28, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.



Diocese, St. Nicholas Center for Children agree to new Catholic academy

LAKE CHARLES — Bishop Glen John Provost of the Diocese of Lake Charles and Christy Papania-Jones of St. Nicholas Center for Children (SNCC) formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Thursday, January 8, 2026, agreeing to the establishment of a new independent Catholic school within the Diocese. The new school, to be known as St. Nicholas Catholic Academy, will be dedicated to serving children with special needs.

St. Nicholas Center for Children will continue its mission of transforming the lives of children with Autism, delays, and disorders by providing therapy and family support through its existing clinic. Additionally, SNCC will provide fiscal oversight and governance over St. Nicholas Catholic Academy.

For years, St. Nicholas Center for Children has been a trusted provider of therapy services and family support in Southwest Louisiana. This new initiative represents a natural expansion of that mission into education.

Building upon SNCC's long-standing commitment to children and families affected by Autism and other developmental disabilities, the Academy will provide a faith-centered educational environment intentionally designed for students who learn differently. Grounded in Catholic teaching, the school's mission is honoring the dignity, gifts, and potential of every student through



The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, signs a Memorandum of Understanding with Christy Papania-Jones, agreeing to the establishment of St. Nicholas Catholic Academy, a new independent Catholic school within the Diocese of Lake Charles. Christy is Founder of St. Nicholas Center for Children. Also present are, from left, Very Rev. Joseph Caraway, Chancellor; Very Rev. Mathew Panackal, MOC, Judicial Vicar, right; and standing, Chris Jones, CEO for St. Nicholas Center Worldwide, and Julie Ortego, Principal of St. Nicholas Catholic Academy.

Christ-centered formation of spirit, mind, and body.

“After years of success providing therapy and family support to children and families facing autism and other developmental disabilities, we are eager to create a setting that

truly caters to the unique gifts of children who learn differently,” said Christy Papania-Jones, Founder of SNCC. “We want to offer a space where independence can be fostered and encouraged, while also providing the support students need to reach

their fullest potential. Partnering with the Diocese allows us to do this within a strong Catholic foundation that recognizes the inherent dignity of every child.”

St. Nicholas Catholic Academy will operate as an independent Catholic school under the auspices of the Diocese of Lake Charles, ensuring alignment with Catholic values.

“The Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles welcomes this opportunity to collaborate and endorse the work of the St. Nicholas Catholic Academy,” said Bishop Provost. “Any program that enhances our outreach to our children for their formation is of great importance to us in the Catholic Church. The concept of an independent Catholic school is new to the Diocese of Lake Charles but has experienced great success in other dioceses nationwide precisely because these schools serve a vital need. May God bless this school's mission and work.”

The school is in the planning and development phase, with a targeted opening in the Fall 2027. Additional details regarding enrollment, grade levels, facilities, and staffing will be announced as planning progresses.

For more information about St. Nicholas Center for Children and future updates on St. Nicholas Catholic Academy, please visit www.stnickcenter.org.

JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE COMES TO A CLOSE

‘Circle of Friends’ makes most of local pilgrimages

**By Pamela Seal
Diocese of Lake Charles**

LAKE CHARLES — His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost formally concluded the Jubilee Year of Hope in the Diocese of Lake Charles on Sunday, December 28, 2025. The Closing Mass at 9:30 a.m. coincided with the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

As the holy year drew to a close, Bishop Provost encouraged the faithful to follow the example of the Holy Family, fostering hope and prayer as they continue their own journeys as Pilgrims of Hope.

Pope Francis called for the Jubilee Year — the 2,025th year since the Birth of Jesus Christ — inviting the faithful around the world to be “Pilgrims of Hope” and turn to the generosity of God's mercy. Pope Francis died April 21, and his successor, Pope Leo XIV, closed the monumental bronze doors on January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord.

The Church's next Jubilee Year will be in 2033 — The Extraordinary Holy Year of Redemption — marking 2,000 years since the passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus. The next ordinary Jubilee is slated for 2050.

“I pray we are better for the Year of Hope, this year of holiness,” Bishop Provost said as he encouraged the faithful to look to the Holy Family as our teacher in this classroom of hope. “May the school of the Holy Family instruct us. In praying, they became a family of hope because they trusted in God's plan to be fulfilled.”

Bishop Provost said that he likes to think of hope as a virtue of possibilities.

“When we hope, we walk in faith, not in fear,” he said. “We are confident because we accept how God has made us and live by His grace, aware of His presence in our lives, conforming our lives to Christ, and are at peace with the decisions we make.”

LOCAL PILGRIMAGES

Bishop Provost designated four pilgrimage churches and two pilgrimage holy sites in the Diocese of Lake Charles for the Jubilee Year. They included the Cathedral of the Immaculate



A “Circle of Friends” joins Bishop Glen John Provost following the Closing Mass for the Jubilee Year of Hope on Sunday, December 28, 2025, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The group of ladies completed pilgrimages to all six designated holy sites in the Diocese of Lake Charles. Front row, from left: Christine Foreman, Mary Alice Lauw, and Margaret Castille. Back row, from left, Laurie Cormier, Bishop Provost, and Carol Martin. Not pictured, Andrea Prejean. (Photography Credit: Pedro Carlucci)

Conception, Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Lake Charles, Our Lady of Prompt Succor Catholic Church in Sulphur, Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church in Jennings, the diocesan Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea in Cameron, and the parochial Shrine of Our Lady of LaSalette in Sulphur.

The Jubilee Year of Hope offered the faithful opportunities to gain a Plenary Indulgence by making a pilgrimage or pious visit to any of these churches and shrines.

Present for the Closing Mass were several ladies who completed pilgrimages to all six diocesan sites.

Laurie Cormier, Mary Alice Lauw, Christine Foreman, Carol Martin, Andrea Prejean, and Margaret Castille are part of a group called “Circle of Friends.” They have been meeting monthly since

Hurricane Laura for meals and fellowship.

Upon learning of the pilgrimage sites, Laurie proposed that they make visits as a group to include Mass, followed by a meal. With six sites and six women in the group, it was a team effort allowing for each person to coordinate a pilgrimage.

Often traveling together, Laurie recalled, “The journeys to Jennings, Sulphur, and Cameron provided opportunities for reflection, laughter, and catching up on life's recent events.”

A particularly memorable experience for Laurie involved a visit to the shrine and prayer garden at Our Lady of LaSalette. “A church office staff member kindly provided us with prayer cards,” she said.

Christine noted that the pilgrimages were a good way for the group to experience other com-

munities around the diocese.

“Every church has their own little traditions and customs. It was very interesting and endearing,” she said. “I enjoyed traveling with the ladies to all of the sites. It was a wonderful bonding experience to attend Mass and then pray together for the intentions of the Pope.”

Learning a little more about each community kept things interesting for Carol and others, too.

“I loved the curiosity of the parishioners seeing a group of new faces sitting in a row at their church,” she said. “It sparked conversation after Mass where we could share what we were doing for the Jubilee Year. More than one person expressed how inspired they felt.”

For Mary Alice, the series of pilgrimages throughout 2025 helped strengthen the bond between the six ladies.

“As we spent the time together, we have gotten to know each other better and developed closer relationships,” she shared. Describing them as “beautiful churches,” Mary Alice was glad to visit Our Lady of LaSalette and Our Lady Help of Christians for the first time.

While Laurie said she had visited most of the churches for various events over the years, her visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of LaSalette served as a valuable reminder of Our Lady's message of repentance and conversion for all of us.

The timing of the visit to Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church was on Sunday, January 19, the day before Martin Luther King Day.

“It was a very special Mass for the congregation to celebrate MLK,” recalled Christine. “We did not anticipate it, but we were delighted to be a part, and the congregation acknowledged us as guests. It was very touching.”

GROWING IN FAITH

The pilgrimages have made a difference in the faith journey of Carol, who said her spiritual life has been magnified by traveling to Italy in addition to the local diocesan sites.

“I definitely feel the Holy Spirit working through me in my daily life, guiding me, allowing me to inspire others on their faith journeys, giving me the words to say when I have none, giving me courage to step outside of my comfort zone,” Carol shared.

The Jubilee Year of Hope opened a door for the ladies to focus on praying together and for one another as well as being there for each other in whatever way was needed. This was not lost on Laurie as she said the hope she found was the understanding that she is not alone.

“It is a great comfort to know that I have these wonderful Catholic ladies in the Circle of Friends who have provided love, support, prayers, and care for me throughout this Jubilee Year of Hope, both during my brighter days and when I have faced challenges,” said Laurie. “This is a true blessing and gift from the Lord.”