



SACRED HEART, ST. LOUIS GRADUATE MAKING HISTORY

Father Boxie elevated to episcopacy as youngest Catholic bishop in U.S.

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — Reverend Robert P. Boxie III, a 1998 graduate of St. Louis Catholic High School and former parishioner of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Lake Charles, is making history as he is soon to become the youngest Catholic bishop in the United States.

He was appointed by Pope Leo XIV as one of two new auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of Washington. The news was publicized on May 1, 2026, by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop-elect Boxie is the 45-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert P. and Roxanne (Guillory) Boxie Jr. of Lake Charles.

He is the first alumnus from St. Louis Catholic High School and the third student from Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School to be elevated to the episcopacy. The two others being Bishop Harold Perry, Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of New Orleans; and Bishop Leonard Olivier, Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Washington.

Father Boxie was ordained to the priesthood on June 25, 2016, and has been serving as chaplain to Howard University in Washington, D.C. since 2020.

During a press conference on May 1 at the Pastoral Center of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington in Hyattsville, Maryland, Bishop-elect Boxie said that he was both “overwhelmed and deeply humbled but grateful to the Holy Father” for appointing him as one of the new auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of Washington.

“To say this is unexpected is an understatement. God’s plans are not always our plans,” he shared. “I sent a message to the students and community at Howard: You made your chaplain a bishop, and Holy Mother Church thanks you.”

Fighting back tears, which he credits as a gift from his father, Bishop-designate Boxie said, “This appointment represents something much bigger than me. It is an acknowledgment of the community where I come from, the community that has formed me in the faith, especially my family and my home parish of Sacred Heart.”

He went on to say that the appointment recognizes the community that he now serves, especially the students and young people at Howard University and parishioners at Immaculate Conception in D.C.

“It underscores the vitality, vibrancy, and diversity of this local Church here in Washington to which I belong,” he remarked.

Bishop-designate Boxie has also served as professor in the Archdiocese of Washington’s permanent diaconate program since 2018 and has been an assistant vocations director for the archdiocese since 2016.

In his closing comments at the press conference, Bishop-elect Boxie called to mind multiple graces from God.

“Today is spiritually rich and full of many graces — the graces of First Friday dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the name of my home parish in Lake Charles, La.; the grace of the intercession of the Blessed Mother as we begin this Month of May which is dedicated to her, and the feast of St. Joseph the Worker,” he remarked. “I ask for all these spiritual graces for me and for us that I will faithfully and joyfully serve this local Church in Washington.”

DIocese of LC REACTS TO HISTORIC NEWS

Second LC native appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of the Diocese of Lake Charles, expressed his congratulations upon hearing the news.

“I share in the joy of his parents, family, and the community here in Lake Charles in congratulating Bishop-elect Robert Boxie upon his appointment by Pope Leo XIV as Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, D.C.,” he remarked. “He joins a long list of distinguished sons from Sacred Heart Parish in Lake Charles who were elevated to the episcopacy. And he is the second Lake Charles native to be appointed an Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, Bishop Leonard Olivier being the first.”

He added, “Bishop-elect Boxie is a very



Reverend Robert P. Boxie III is joined by his parents, Robert and Roxanne Boxie, longtime parishioners of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Lake Charles, and his sister Robyn Boxie, who resides in South Carolina. Father Boxie has been appointed an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Washington, making him the youngest prelate in the United States at the age of 45. (Photograph courtesy of the family)

Parents grateful, proud of son’s appointment as auxiliary bishop

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — When Robert and Roxanne “Roxie” Boxie heard the news about their son Rev. Robert P. Boxie III being appointed an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Washington, they were both surprised and overjoyed.

Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, made the announcement on Friday, May 1, 2026, but Mr. and Mrs. Boxie, along with their daughter Robyn, were informed personally by the bishop-elect a few days earlier.

“I was surprised but also full of gratitude and tears of happiness and joy,” Roxie shared with the Diocese of Lake Charles. Her husband Robert said he was floored.

“That was not the news I was expecting since he has only been a priest just under 10 years,” Robert remarked. “I asked him, ‘What did you tell them?’ He said, ‘Daddy, I am sort of like Mary, a handmaiden of the Lord. Do with me as you will.’ I am so proud of him.”

Roxie said her son was always a humble child and thoughtful person. She credits his education at Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School in Lake Charles for him taking his faith to heart.

“When he played with kids in the neighborhood, he wanted to have church with them,” she recalled. “He even had an altar set up in his bedroom.”

Roxie remembers when her son was 8 years old, he told his parents that he wanted to be a priest when he grew up.

“On one of our family vacations to Disney World, we located a Catholic church

so we could attend Mass,” she said. “This particular church had a gift shop, so I asked Robert if he wanted a souvenir of Mickey Mouse. He said, ‘No, momma, I want a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary for my altar.’”

While in residence at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Washington, D.C., Father Boxie has captured the attention of a young boy there, according to Roxie.

“There is a 3-year-old boy, Kolbe, who attends Mass at Immaculate Conception. He has fallen in love with Father Boxie so much that his mother had to make him a little vestment,” Roxie shared. “He plays a priest at home and wants to be called ‘Father Boxie’ when his parents talk to him. It is so cute.”

Bishop-elect Boxie is one of two auxiliary bishop appointments to fill vacancies due to a retirement and a reassignment. Roxie said her son’s new role is providential.

“Father Boxie’s first assignment was at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Largo, Maryland, where Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell, Jr. has been serving as pastor and is now retiring,” Roxie said. “Bishop Campbell was Father Boxie’s mentor early on in his priesthood. Who knew 10 years later, Father Boxie would be taking his place.”

Soon to be the youngest prelate in the United States, Bishop-elect Boxie will always share a special bond with his parents and sister.

“Family has been everything to us,” said Roxie. “Even our birthdays are all in September, with Father Boxie and I sharing the same birthday of September 12. He was the best birthday gift.”

talented and gifted young priest. We are all very happy for him. May God be with him as he continues his ministry.”

‘Our Robbie’ is humble, courageous and gifted

Deacon Harold Nixon’s first words when he read the text message on his phone from Monsignor (Daniel) Torres about Father Boxie’s selection as a bishop were: “Alleluia! God is good ... all the time!”

“I have known Father Boxie since he and his sister (Robyn) were children at Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church and school,” Deacon Nixon shared. “He and I recently had lunch when he was here to lead the Lenten Mission at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish. I left that lunch with the reaffirmation that regardless of what the world sometimes seems to say, regardless of the questionable behavior that appears to be rewarded in the short term, character does matter most.”

Deacon Nixon describes Father Boxie as humble, courageous, and gifted.

“Our Robbie (and he does belong to all

of us) displayed his humility and courage by leaving a very prestigious and highly compensated secular position to answer God’s call to truly serve others,” Deacon Nixon said about Boxie being ordained to the priesthood. “And serve he does as a servant leader who puts others first. When he was here for our mission, someone asked me if he were my son. I smiled and said ‘No, but I am almost as proud of him as his parents are.’”

Catholic schools help foster, nurture vocations

Very Reverend Ruben J. Buller, Vicar General, Pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, and Rector of St. Louis Catholic High School (Class of 2000) once walked the halls of St. Louis with Father Boxie, expressing that the soon-to-be auxiliary bishop was well respected in high school.

“He was very intelligent, and everyone knew that. He had a gift for playing the piano. He was a leader and had an appreciation and a love for beautiful things and of knowledge as well,” Father Buller recalled,

also noting that Boxie was honored with the St. Louis Award his senior year.

Boxie earned a Bachelor of Engineering from Vanderbilt University (2002), a Juris Doctor from Harvard University (2007), and studied at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, earning a Bachelor of Sacred Theology (2015) and a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (2017) from the Pontifical Gregorian University.

“When he moved to Washington to clerk for a federal judge and then work in a law firm, no one from my time at St. Louis was surprised that he had begun discerning the priesthood.”

In his role as Rector, Father Buller expressed that Catholic schools work.

“Vocations have to be fostered and nurtured, and part of what we do at St. Louis is help foster the ability for young men and young women to ask the question if God is calling them to a life of service in the Church,” he said. “The designation of Bishop-elect Boxie is an affirmation of the fact that we have begun to do good work at St. Louis.”

Lenten Mission message rich in God’s Love and Mercy

Monsignor Daniel A. Torres, Vicar General and Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church said that he was very happy to hear the news about Bishop-elect Robert Boxie, who presented a Lenten Mission earlier this year at the Lake Street church.

“I have had the opportunity of seeing his spiritual growth from his days here in Lake Charles, Rome, and Washington, D.C. This past Lent in 2026, he delivered the mission at Our Lady Queen of Heaven. The message was simple but rich in God’s Love and Mercy,” said Monsignor Torres. “Bishop-elect Boxie is gifted in breaking open the Word. His humility and intelligence will continue to inspire many in this new chapter of ministry. May God continue to bless him and his parents.”

Fostering connections between past, present students

It has been more than 27 years since Kelly (Link) DeMolle (Class of 1999) attended St. Louis with Father Boxie. She still remembers him as an empathetic human with great integrity.

“He was kind to his classmates and treated faculty with respect. I remember him as quiet, but also one who still had the ability to inspire and guide others,” DeMolle reflected. “Father Boxie exuded humbleness and humility, and I have no doubt these gifts have carried into his calling as a priest and will continue into this new role.”

DeMolle, who now serves as principal of St. Louis, said that she was thrilled to hear of Boxie’s appointment by Pope Leo XIV and what this means for the students.

“This significant milestone not only fills our hearts with pride, but it also serves as a powerful example for our current students,” she remarked. “It illustrates the potential paths that can arise from their early faith formation and their time here at St. Louis Catholic High School.”

Strengthening the sense of community while fostering connections between past and present students is what DeMolle desires from Boxie’s achievement.

“We are hopeful that this announcement will further encourage our students to aspire to leadership roles within the Church and their communities, showcasing the impact of living a life dedicated to faith and service,” she added.

From Eternal City to nation’s capital

Reverend Andrew DeRouen was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Lake Charles in June 2020. A graduate of St. Louis Catholic High School in 2011, his time in the seminary in Rome overlapped with Father Boxie.

Presently residing in Washington, D.C. for Canon Law Studies at Catholic University of America, Father DeRouen lives a few blocks away from the bishop-elect.

“Whether Rome or Washington, whenever God’s Providence sent me away from home, there was Father Boxie, with whom I could share memories of St. Louis and our mutual affection for the city that shaped us both,” DeRouen shared. “He will continue to be a blessing for the faithful of the archdiocese.”



GOLDEN JUBILEE OF PRIESTHOOD ORDINATION

Monsignor Greig 'always at peace'

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

LAKE CHARLES — God used a young man's musical talent and readiness to serve his country by inviting his willing heart to the priesthood. On May 28, 2026, that young man will celebrate the golden jubilee of his ordination.

It was not until 21-year-old Harry Denis Greig II auditioned for the field band in the United States Air Force and was assigned to McChord Air Force Base in Tacoma, Washington (1968-1972) before he would begin noticing that "tug from God" to a higher calling. His clarinet skills opened the door to more than just entertaining people. In time, he would be an instrument to help God save souls.

After prayerful discernment, Monsignor Greig made the decision to enter the seminary in 1972 and said that everything just flowed naturally from there.

"After I entered Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, I can honestly say I never struggled with my decision," Greig shared as he reminisced on his journey to the presbyterate. "I was always at peace that I was moving in the direction where God was calling me. When I went to the seminary, my mindset was, 'Oh, I will see how this goes,' but every year seemed to be a natural progression."

Path to Priesthood

A lifelong Catholic, Greig was born on December 29, 1946, and grew up in Lafayette with his parents, Harry and Jessie (LeBlanc) Greig, and two siblings. He attended Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School, Lafayette Senior High School and earned an accounting degree from the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

"We never questioned the faith when I was growing up. We just practiced it," he recalled about his Catholic upbringing. "In the early 1960s at the time of the Second Vatican Council, I was attending USL in Lafayette and lived at home. It wasn't until I was in the Air Force that I began to see the vocation of priesthood as a possibility."

As the implementation of Vatican II was beginning to unfold, Greig attended adult religious education classes taught by the base chaplain. As a result of that, Greig taught CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) classes and began serving at daily Mass as an altar server and a lector.

"I was in the first group of men asked to be lay ministers of communion on the Air Force base. In those days, the military had this ministry before the Archdiocese of Seattle" he recalled. "My involvement in the chaplain program began growing to the point that while I was in the service, I started weighing the pros and cons of pursuing the vocation of priesthood."

Coinciding with his involvement of ministries, Greig attended a TEC Retreat (Together Encounter Christ) for young adults. He remembers "hitting it off" with the Archdiocese of Seattle vocations director who was helping with the retreat and who encouraged Greig to see the avenues and possibilities of priesthood.

"On the base, we had a Benedictine monk from a nearby monastery who celebrated Masses on weekends. He was the first priest who ever asked me if I had thought about becoming a priest," Monsignor Greig said. "I was 24 years old before I seriously decided to give the seminary a try."

On May 28, 1976, Greig was among five men ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Gerard L. Frey in Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church in Lafayette. He celebrated his first Solemn Mass on May 30, 1976, in his home parish of Our Lady of Fatima.

Assignments over the years have included St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church (Parochial Vicar) 1976-1980, and Administrator, July 1-November 14, 1986; Vicar General/Chancellor, Diocese of Lake Charles (1980-1988); Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, 1988-1991; Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church (Pastor) 1991-1995; Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Rector) 1995-2003; Vicar General/Moderator of the Curia for the Diocese, 2001-2003; Administrator for the Diocese, June 2005 – April 2007; St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church (Pastor) 2003-2017; and Secretary of Administration, 2007-2017.

Other relatives in his family who said "yes" to God's call are Monsignor Greig's second cousin, Rev. Matthew Higginbotham, a priest for the Diocese of Lafayette, who was an altar server in Greig's first Mass of Thanksgiving after his ordination. They both share the same ordination date of May 28. Also, Sister Camille Martinez from the Diocese of Lake Charles, is a first cousin to Monsignor Greig.

Some of the biggest changes Monsignor Greig has witnessed since the time of his



From entering the seminary in 1972 to his first priestly assignment in 1976 at St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church and everything in between, Monsignor Harry D. Greig II said that he has always been a happy priest and at peace in his ministry.

Mass of Thanksgiving planned on May 28 at OLQH

Monsignor Harry D. Greig will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Church, 3939 Lake Street. Immediately following, a reception in his honor will be held at OLQH Family Life Community Center graciously hosted by Monsignor Daniel Torres and the Parish Staff. All are invited.

ordination as a result of Vatican II include the option of face-to-face confession, receiving holy communion in the hand, and the age of confirmation being raised from the 8th grade to the 11th grade. He also recalls that St. Margaret Catholic School was the first school in Lake Charles that went to an all-lay faculty after having religious sisters and a convent on site for many years. In this transition Monsignor Greig took on the added responsibilities of being Religion Administrator of the School while remaining assigned to the parish.

Monsignor Greig points out that while Vatican II brought about many changes, the Catholic faith never changed.

"The practice of our faith has changed, but not the faith," he said. "It is the same faith that we have in Jesus Christ."

When in Rome

Among the many assignments for Monsignor Greig was his time spent in Rome for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith from 1988 to 1991. His boss was then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who would later serve as Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013).

"I have admiration, respect, and only high regards for Pope Benedict. His example of living his priesthood has always inspired me," Monsignor said and considered the late pontiff a mentor. "I am grateful for my association with him in Rome and for his leadership of our Church through the years." Pope Benedict XVI died on December 31, 2022.

Being in the hub of things when they happened at the Vatican was exciting for Monsignor Greig. He recalls President George H. W. Bush visiting Pope John Paul II.

"I, along with other Americans, was invited to an audience between President Bush and the Holy Father. To be in the audience hall and hear Americans belt out 'God Bless America' as the president and the pope walked into the room was very touching," he recounted.

Monsignor noted that Mother Teresa was often visiting at the Vatican.

"The first time I met Mother Teresa, I was with another priest. We were in a room the

size of closet," said Greig. "She was sitting on an orange crate, and when we walked in, she got up to give us the orange crate to sit down (what a humbling experience in the presence of a Saint). I also remember that when Mother Teresa walked into St. Peter's Basilica, she received as much applause as the pope."

Monsignor Greig had the opportunity to celebrate Mass multiple times with the Missionaries of Charity founder and now Saint.

"One of the most moving Masses was when Mother Teresa asked if she could speak at the end of Mass," Greig said. "She was getting ready to go back to Albania, her birthplace, for the first time since she was 13 years old. She was in her 70s at this time, and her only request was, 'Pray for me that I do not get in the way of God's work.'"

Beginnings of the Diocese

The Diocese of Lake Charles was established in 1980 with Bishop Jude Speyrer as its founding bishop. Monsignor Greig played a key role in those early years.

"It was an exciting time. Father Marshall Boulet, Monsignor Charles Dubois, Monsignor James Gaddy, Monsignor Irving DeBlanc, and myself all served on the Presbyteral Council for the Diocese of Lafayette, while being assigned to parishes in Lake Charles," Greig explained. "We became the core committee to plan the ordination for Bishop Speyrer."

The new Diocese of Lake Charles territory was taken from the Diocese of Lafayette. Greig remembers that initial period of teamwork among the clergy and the laity.

"We were four people — the bishop, a secretary, a financial person and myself as chancellor — and four offices as the new Diocese of Lake Charles," he recalled. "We had one fourth of a floor in the Calcasieu Marine Bank. Bishop Speyrer lived in the rectory at the Cathedral; I lived at the St. Louis Catholic High School rectory, and then eventually, we acquired a residence on Harrison Street. It took us a good five years to end up with all the services we have now. Some have been added over the years. As a small diocese, all our priests worked together and there was a wonderful spirit of community."

One of the first things Greig remembers doing as Chancellor was gathering with Bishop Speyrer and all the priests in several meetings to do charting for a vision to move forward. One of the outcomes was the Saint Charles Retreat Center which opened in 1995.

Blessings of Priesthood

People and ministries have brought much joy to Monsignor Greig over the past 50 years.

"Be it parish ministry, school ministry, the Chancery, or being in Rome, all of my assignments have provided life-giving experiences for me," he shared. "The opportunities to be a



Reverend Monsignor Harry Denis Greig II

part of people's lives and be invited into their homes was always a joy. I have been blessed to administer and celebrate the sacraments to multiple generations of families. I also feel very blessed for all the learning opportunities over the years."

Monsignor said that he thinks it is the greatest vocation pitch for people to see happy priests.

"I can honestly say that I have never been called upon to do anything in the priesthood that I have not been happy to do," he added. "When I was at St. Margaret (my first assignment), I loved being with the students and school community. Through the years, ministry in the various parishes where I have served has been a gift. I enjoyed the challenge of my role as Chancellor and Vicar General of the Diocese — it was exciting being part of the growth of the Diocese from the beginning."

On June 24, 2005, Monsignor Greig was elected Administrator of the Diocese of Lake Charles during the interim of waiting for the Holy Father to announce a new Bishop. The Administrator oversees the daily operations of the Diocese and ultimately is accountable for decisions that necessitate his leadership. Greig chose to continue serving as Pastor of St. Mary of the Lake Parish during this time, which turned out to be close to two years.

"Many of the clergy and the diocesan employees I had collaborated with during my time in the Chancery were still active and involved which helped during this interim," Monsignor Greig recalled.

A major challenge occurred on September 24, 2005, when Hurricane Rita impacted Southwest Louisiana. In addition to many of the church parishes sustaining damages, diocesan buildings — including the Chancery — were significantly compromised.

"We worked together through this tragedy, rebuilt and moved forward," Greig shared. "God's guiding hand was evident in the continued growth of the Diocese."

In February 2007, Greig recalls receiving a phone call from the Apostolic Nuncio in Washington, D.C., that Monsignor Glen J. Provost from the Diocese of Lafayette would be announced soon as the Bishop of the Diocese of Lake Charles. Bishop Provost was consecrated and installed as the third Bishop of the Diocese of Lake Charles on April 23, 2007.

Retired since 2017, Monsignor Greig said that he appreciates being invited to assist at various parishes. "I thoroughly enjoy seeing people from my past. I run into people from St. Margaret, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, the Cathedral, or St. Mary of the Lake, the parishes where I served."

A Few Final Thoughts

Having been a priest for five decades, Monsignor Greig offers some words of wisdom to seminarians and young priests.

- "Always be conscious of having a balance of the spiritual, academic, and pastoral incorporated in your life."
- "Ask questions. You can learn from the wisdom of the past."
- "Accept every aspect of the priesthood you are invited to live."
- "Learn to embrace the loneliness of the priesthood and being comfortable with it."
- "Develop your strengths, realize your limitations, and ask for help."
- "See your growth in your relationship with God as ongoing."
- "Remember that you are the messenger, Jesus is the message."
- "Trust that God is with you always."

Whether it be a challenge, obstacle, a joy, or whatever, Monsignor Greig realized early on that there are many things he has no control over. His mantra has always been, "If God brings you to it, he will bring you through it."



JOURNEY OF FAITH AND PURPOSE

Rosary, faithful friends lead Pedro and Layni home to Roman Catholic Church

By Pamela Seal

Diocese of Lake Charles

Because God writes straight with crooked lines, a boy from Brazil found his way to a girl in Sulphur and both eventually found their way home to the Roman Catholic Church as husband and wife.

Pedro Carlucci was baptized Catholic as an infant but was never brought up in the Faith. Layni Bevills was unbaptized, nor did she give it much thought most of her life.

They are both part of a growing increase of people who joined the Catholic Church at Easter 2026 in many U.S. dioceses.

In the Diocese of Lake Charles alone, Pedro and Layni were among 260 who were received fully into the Church at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4. A total of 111 of those were Catechumens (unbaptized) and 149 were Candidates (already-baptized Christians waiting for full participation in the Church).

Those numbers show a significant increase in the past couple of years. In 2025, the Diocese of Lake Charles welcomed 183 converts home to the Catholic Church, up from 168 in 2024, for a 155 percent increase over the past two years.

Both born in 2005 exactly six weeks apart and 5,000 miles away from each other, the journeys of Pedro and Layni Carlucci led them not only to the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” through Confirmation and the Eucharist, but also to the Sacrament of Marriage.

“I found the Truth that I had been looking for when God led me to full participation in the Catholic Church. I found something really special,” Pedro shared. “If you have an honest heart, it is hard to just keep it for yourself. That is the reason I wanted to get my wife on board with me, but not only that, I want to get more people on board with me. I don’t want to be selfish. Salvation is not just for me.”

Journey Home

Pedro said that he is eternally grateful for the friends God placed in his life who directed him to the Truth while helping strengthen his faith.

He came to Louisiana in August 2022 as an exchange student when he was 17 years old and attended Sulphur High School where he met Layni.

“In one year, I had to change host families three times, with one location being in Oregon,” he recalled. “By that time, I had already started dating Layni in Sulphur and did not know when I would see her again.” On the last day of the deadline for Pedro to find a host family back in Sulphur, he was offered the opportunity to stay with one of his teachers. A privately funded scholarship from a local company helped support Pedro’s studies at SOWELA Technical Community College, allowing him to extend his student visa.

“While I did not see it at the time, every little thing that happened — changing host families, going to Oregon, being separated from Layni — led me to where I am today, and where I am today is a really good spot. God had a plan for me,” Pedro remarked. “It was a moment of ‘Wow! Hold on!’ Those things did not happen by accident. There was a purpose for it. God was working in my life.”

Pedro realized that he needed to take his faith more seriously but did not know what kind of faith he would be going into.

“At SOWELA, I met one of my very good friends, Everett Thomas, who introduced me to his friends — Dallas Reeves and Thomas Watson,” he said.

It was not lost on Pedro how much his new friends led by example when it came to their Catholic faith. “They not only knew their faith, but they also lived their faith. I could see that they were Christ-centered people. I admired them a lot.”

Before committing to Catholicism, Pedro tested the waters of a few Protestant churches, but it never felt right to him. He knew there was something missing. His friends encouraged him to give OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) a try to learn more about what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.



Pedro and Layni (Bevills) Carlucci capture a special memory with Bishop Glen John Provost following the Easter Vigil in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Saturday, April 4, 2026. The two were fully received into the Roman Catholic Church following a period of formation and instruction through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA).

(Photography credit: Matthew R. Johnson)



Pedro and Layni Carlucci, center, are joined by their friends following the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4, 2026, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. It is because of the example of their friends’ Christ-centered lives that led Pedro and Layni to seeking the Truth of the Roman Catholic Church through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

“I feel like the Blessed Mother has been my guide and given me strength ... When I was doubtful, she carried me through all of it. I just love her.”

— Layni Bevills Carlucci

However, it wasn’t until he asked Dallas to be his best man (who refused because Pedro was planning to be married outside the Catholic Church), that Pedro decided it was time to start taking his faith seriously.

“Someone who calls you out for your sin loves you more than someone who lets you live in it,” he said.

After Pedro began OCIA at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and after praying many rosaries for Layni to join him, she still wanted to continue living life the way she wanted.

“I thought Catholics had too many

rules and I did not want that for my future,” she admits. “It wasn’t until Pedro taught me how to pray the rosary and we prayed it together for the first time that I had a moment with the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary. I realized this is what my purpose is. I need to start doing things God’s way. This is how I should be living my life. I knew then I should be baptized and confirmed Catholic and start my journey with Pedro. He was a role model for me.”

Layni chose Mother Mary as her confirmation Saint.

“I feel like the Blessed Mother has been my guide and given me the strength to get through the OCIA process,” Layni recalled. “When I was doubtful, she carried me through all of it. I just love her.”

Easter Vigil

From the beginning of his journey, Pedro wanted Layni to get on board with him, so it was emotional for him to watch her being baptized by His Excellency, Bishop Glen John Provost during the Easter Vigil in the Cathedral.

“The only feeling I had watching Layni be baptized was gratitude to God. He used me as a vessel for Layni,” Pedro said. “It was extra special for me thinking back to how hardheaded she was and me praying all those rosaries for her.”

Pedro knows there were many others, too, but is glad that he was a part of her journey. “To see my wife receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist was a gift,” he said, commenting that he teared up walking back to his pew after being confirmed himself and receiving the Body of Christ.

“I found the Truth that I had been looking for when God led me to full participation in the Catholic Church. I found something really special.”

— Pedro Carlucci

Layni said that her cheeks hurt from smiling so much. Being able to do everything with Pedro as husband and wife is what stood out to her the most.

“It was an overwhelming feeling of joy,” she said about the Easter Vigil experience. “Pedro and I have come such a far way, but here we are today saying ‘yes’ and being received into the Church together. I loved it.”

One of the things she likes about being a “baby Catholic” is when she doesn’t know what to pray, there are so many resources. “There is a prayer and a Saint for everything,” Layni remarked.

Pedro shared that since he and his wife are both Catholic, there is nothing better than being able to take part in the sacraments.

“Before being received fully into the Church, we were learning about the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist. I have always wanted to be part of being able to go to confession, be absolved of my sins and receive the Eucharist,” Pedro said. “It is amazing that Mass is offered every day, and we can receive the Eucharist daily. I am embracing that I have recourse to the sacrament of confession, that I have the support from the community of the Church, the priests, and the sacraments.”

Sacrament of Marriage

Pedro and Layni were blessed to go through their marriage preparation with Father Ruben Buller simultaneously with OCIA. They said this process helped strengthen the Sacrament of Marriage for them.

“As we learned more about the faith, we learned what the Catholic Church teaches about marriage and what our roles are as husband and wife,” said Pedro. “I am glad we were both going through OCIA while going through marriage preparation.”

Layni added, “We were two souls walking towards God together and going to Heaven. That is beautiful in itself.”

Giving Back to God

Pedro has a gift for sharing other people’s stories through his videography skills and hopes to do that to help evangelize to others. For his Confirmation Saint, he chose Saint Maximilian Kolbe.

“While most people know Saint Maximilian Kolbe for his great sacrifice in giving his life for another (which alone is already a big inspiration), he had also spent most of his life on a mission to evangelize and spread Christ through media,” Pedro said. “That inspires me deeply because I also hope to use my media talents to bring others closer to God. His devotion to Mary, Mother of God and his selflessness inspire me! God has a purpose for me, and I want to use my videography and media talents to glorify Him.”

♦♦♦♦

For more information on the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA), please contact the Office of Religious Education in the Diocese of Lake Charles at 337-439-7400.



Celebrating Catholic Contributions to USA on Semiquincentennial Anniversary Diocesan Consecration Mass set for June 11

As the United States of America commemorates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops joins this celebration by lifting up the contributions of Catholics and the impact of our faith on the history of this country.

In a historic moment, U.S. bishops will consecrate the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 11, 2026. This is a significant spiritual moment for our nation and an opportunity for everyone to join in prayer and devotion.

To participate locally, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of the Lake Charles, will celebrate the Diocesan Consecration Mass at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 11, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Bilbo Street, in Lake Charles. All clergy and laity are invited to attend this momentous celebration.



Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

On the Occasion of the U.S. Bishops Consecrating the United States of America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus:
You know the longings of our hearts, and you desire that we enjoy friendship with you.
From your pierced side, you have poured out the wellspring of life, for which we thirst.
Your heart burns with a love for all people to return to a right relationship with you.
We celebrate the abundant gifts you have given this nation, founded on the self-evident truths that our Creator has endowed all people with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
We make reparation for the offenses against you and against human dignity that have taken place in this nation.
May our hearts be united to yours, so that our families and communities enjoy peace and happiness; may broken relationships be reconciled, injustices repaired, and the wounds of our land be healed.
May your holy Catholic Church serve as a sign, pointing all people to your infinite love.
O Desire of Nations and Center of History, we ask you to bless these United States of America.
Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!
Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



Will Cullio, 'Stained glass, with paint-on-glass window, inside a cemetery sepulcher.' Paris, France. Unsplash Free License. © 2025, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.

DIocese OF LAKE CHARLES

ANNUAL MASS TO AVERT STORMS

Immediately following the Mass, a vehicle procession will travel to the Historic Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea, 135 Our Lady Road, in Cameron, where the "Prayer for Protection during Hurricane Season" will be recited.

Sunday, May 31, 2026, at 11:30 a.m.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Life Center
5250 West Creole Highway

'Mass to Avert Storms' planned May 31 at Sacred Heart in Creole

Vehicle procession to Historic Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea will follow

Bishop Glen John Provost will be the celebrant of the "Mass to Avert Storms" on Sunday, May 31, the day before the beginning of the 2026 Hurricane Season. The annual Mass will begin at 11:30 a.m. at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Life Center. The church hall is located at 5250 West Creole Highway, Cameron, LA 70631.

Immediately following, a vehicle procession will journey a short distance to the Historic Shrine of Our Lady Star of the Sea, 135 Our Lady Road, in Cameron, where the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto, blessings, and the Prayer for Protection during Hurricane Season will be recited. The Shrine has been granted the privilege of inserting the invocation of "Star of the Sea" in the Litany.

The Shrine 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 pilgrimage provides a plenary indulgence with the fulfillment of certain requirements, including recent confession, reception of Holy Communion, prayers for the Holy Father, and the recitation of the Creed.

This "spiritual bond" was granted — at the request of Bishop Provost — by His Eminence, Santos Abril y Castelló, the Cardinal Archbishop of the Basilica and His Eminence, Emmanuel Cardinal Montero de Castro, the Cardinal Apostolic Penitentiary following Bishop Provost's 2012 ad limina visit to the Holy See.

ST. LOUIS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2026

St. Louis Award presented to Wyninger, Dufrene

LAKE CHARLES — St. Louis Catholic High School awarded degrees to the Class of 2026 during a commencement ceremony in the Burton Coliseum Complex on Tuesday, May 12.

The Very Reverend Ruben J. Buller, VG, Rector of St. Louis and Pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, presented remarks while the Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, gave the Benediction for 123 graduates.

Bishop Provost also presented the St. Louis Award to Graham Wyninger and Reese Dufrene. Considered the most prestigious award of the school, the honor is given to the male and female seniors voted as the outstanding Christian student at the school by their peers and approved by members of the faculty, staff and administration.

The St. Louis Award goes to those who have shown Love of God and Neighbor, Strong Moral Character, Desire to Serve Community, Courage to stand up for Christian Principles, a Daily Christian Lifestyle, and Proper Use of God-Given gifts.

Benjamin-Isaac Duplechin was acknowledged as Student of the Year while the Scholar Athlete Award went to Rylee Keating and Bryson Tilton. The Keith Jones Award went to Brayden Boudreaux.

Kelly DeMolle is Principal, and Assistant Principals are Emily Pettaway and Blaine Wyninger. Chaplain is Reverend Michael Caraway.

More than \$9 million in scholarships, not including T.O.P.S., have been awarded. For a complete list of graduates, visit lcdiocese.org. Honor graduates from the Class of 2026 include:

SUMMA CUM LAUDE — Elizabeth Austin, Caroline Avery, Carter Brinkman, Madeleine Broussard, Sam Chung, Morgan Churchman, Ava Darbonne, Anabel David, Ava Dennis, Annie Ducote, Reese Dufrene, Benjamin-Isaac Duplechin, Madelyn Elliott, Brice Foreman, Christina Guidry, Grayson Hobgood, Kaleb Katoch, Noah Katoch, Rylee Keating, Matthew Landry, Alayna Lefort, Lillian Liles, Ava McCraney, Gabrielle McKinley, Natalie Obluda, Halle Poncho, Alexander Richards, Owen Richert, Megan Sanders, Marianna Santacoloma, Austin Schlang, Olivia Tassin, Jordyn Thomas, Bryson Tilton, Hannah Trahan, Michael Vice, and Grayson Wimberly.

MAGNA CUM LAUDE — Grace Adams, Caden Blalock, Brayden Boudreaux, Halie Broussard, Margeaux Darbonne, Catherine Filo, Caroline Melancon, and David Tadlock III.

CUM LAUDE — Camille Zeringue.



Graham Wyninger and Reese Dufrene were chosen by their peers to receive the St. Louis Awards at the May 12, 2026, commencement ceremony. The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, presented the award plaques to the honorees. (Photography credit: Victoria Watson)