

Our Lady of Prompt Succor Parish News

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PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Hope Springs Eternal

Dear Parishioners of OLPS Church and School:

Something we cannot live without is hope. How often people are seeking for that which helps realize their hopes and dreams. How often we seek an outcome that may make our lives better in some way, or that may make a tough situation more bearable. Hope allows us to envision a better future and can even motivate us to take the steps to make it happen.

Someone has said, "I'm still waiting for the good luck from the black-eyed peas I ate last January 1 to kick in!" We may smile at this, as the New Year is around the corner. Even amid the troubles of unrest in the world, and too many acts of firearm violence of which we hear regularly, we are all looking with hope to 2026, hope for a better future! In the words of the English poet Alexander Pope, "Hope springs eternal in the human heart."

During Advent, we join the people Israel in such expectation. For four weeks leading up to December 25, we watch and wait ... light candles that scatter the darkness ... and pray fervently for the coming of the Lord. This focus is much more than "good luck," it is a founded HOPE in what GOD has promised and what God will do!

The prophet Isaiah, our Advent prophet, says to the expectant people Israel who had experienced many tribulations: "On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord" (Is. 11: 1-2).

We believe this Old Testament promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, born in the town of Bethlehem and laid humbly in a manger (Lk. 1-2). So wondrous was His birth among us, even recognized by an assembly of angels, that we celebrate it every year.

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Restored crucifix labor of love by parishioners

By Susan Harrison

For decades, OLPS parishioners have longed to have a crucifix over the tabernacle in the sanctuary, according to Pastoral Council President Steve Gauthier.

When he became a member of the council three years ago, he decided to "make another run at it."

He began by gathering input from parishioners and consulting with Pastor Fr. Rusty Rabalais to ensure the project aligned with the parishioners' wishes. Through these discussions, it became clear that the addition of a crucifix would hold great spiritual significance for many members of the parish.

The original crucifix over the baptistry was thought to be too big to fit, so other options were explored. But they kept coming back to the crucifix that had hung in the original OLPS sanctuary built over 75 years ago.

The cross was 10 feet long and only a 7-foot cross would fit, so Steve cut three feet off the cross. While he was at it, he cleaned 75 years of candle soot off the cross and refinished it.

The next step was to have the corpus refinished and Steve knew just the person for the job.

About eight months ago, parishioner Heather Moylan received a call from Steve, asking her to look at the crucifix. Through their mutual participation in the ACTS ministry, Steve knew Heather was an artist.

After much prayer she began her seven-month process of stripping down the corpus completely and creating the masterpiece that now hangs in the OLPS sanctuary. The Glorified Jesus cross that was over the tabernacle has been hung over the baptistry along with the slightly elevated replica of the Our Lady of Guadalupe tilma.

Heather showed promise as an artist as a small child and pursued a college degree in painting and drawing. The pressure of creating for grades "sapped the joy" out of art for her, so she continued her education in dental and orthodontics school.

She abandoned her artwork until five years ago when she attended an ACTS retreat. She had a reversion to the Church that sparked her love of art and led to her painting again. She was asked to do the next three paintings for ACTS retreats. Her husband was teaming a fourth retreat and suggested she take a break from painting for that one. Three weeks later Steve Gauthier called her about the crucifix.

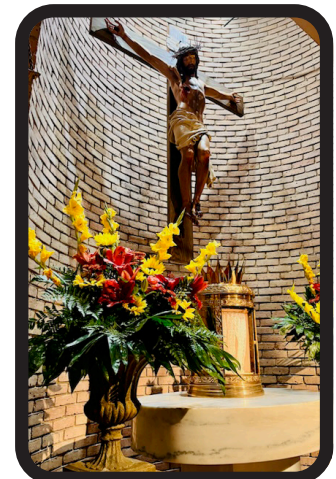
She Googled skin tones native to the Middle East to get Jesus exactly right. Her meticulous details of his wounded side, bloody hands and feet and skinned knees and shins were a labor of love.

"God worked through me," she said. "It was a very prayerful process."

She knew the details would be lost where He would be hanging, but she had to go where God led her. For several weeks, the refinished crucifix hung in the church vestibule so parishioners could appreciate the details in the work of art Heather and Steve restored for God's glory.



Crucifix Workers



Restored Crucifix

Cindy Naus, as an all around volunteer, is a witness to ‘a joy of serving’

By Bob Tompkins

Aubrey and Elizabeth Hebert got married at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in 1948, the first year of the church's existence, and one of their three children, Cindy Hebert Naus, is a prominent volunteer around the church and school campus.

A widow and retired teacher, Cindy is a substitute teacher for first and second grades, she is an Extraordinary Minister of the Holy Eucharist, an occasional lector and altar server at daily evening Mass, and she helps at book fairs and works playground and carpool duty.

"I've told them I'd do anything they wanted me to do," said Cindy, a self-described "Army brat" who learned early in life – while packing and moving about every 18 months from base to base -- to pitch in and help others.

"Cindy helps in various ways around both our church and school," said Father Rusty Rabalais, OLPS pastor. "She is ever cheerful in doing so, witnessing to a joy of serving the Lord and serving Him in others."

A native of Atlanta, she was part of Alexandria Senior High's first graduating class in 1969-70. She met her husband, Allan, an airman at England Air Force Base in Alexandria, and they got married in Germany in 1972. That was about the time Allan began serving in Vietnam. When he returned to the States, they took residence in Tampa, Fla., and Cindy got her degree in 1978 from the University of South Florida.

They eventually found their way back to England AFB in 1984 and lived in Martin Park. Allan retired as an Air Force captain in late 90's, and in 2006 they moved to Wimbledon Drive, three years before Allan died.

When Cindy taught adults at the Central Louisiana Technical College, she taught several different courses from business math to speed writing, but her favorite course to teach was English.

"I learned 'em English," she quipped.

Cindy found a faith home at OLPS while Father Dan O'Connor was pastor, and she made a women's ACTS retreat in 2011, even though she was at first hesitant to do so.

"A couple of friends approached me and said, 'You've got to go,' and I did, and It got me hook, line and sinker," she said. "The way it was presented, it opens your mind and heart to what the Lord wants to give you. I'm still learning about my faith, and it makes me so happy."

Cindy served on ACTS core as treasurer for three years and has teamed on numerous retreats.

As an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, she finds special joy "when the children come up. My heart opens up to them. They're such a joy."

Although she and Allan "were not blessed" to have children, Cindy has a beloved 9-year-old niece, Lainey Hebert, and she finds great companionship with her 7-year-old Yorkie rescue dog, "Puck."

The children she encounters at carpool duty invariably delight her in one way or another. "On Saint Patrick's Day, one girl got out and said, 'You don't have green on' and pinched me."

Subbing as a teacher for the young students is not a bother, she said, particularly when the regular teachers give her good lesson plans. And as for her playground duty, she has been grateful to be around to help, as she was one day when there were three accidents in one play period, and she helped get the students to the school nurse.

"It gives me a feeling of being needed," she said. "It feels good when people depend on you for something, no matter how big or small it is."



Cindy Naus and her rescue Yorkie Puck



Pastor's Message continued from page 1

We must always remember the uniqueness of what Christ has done for us. We were born to live. However, Jesus was born to die ... so that WE might live! The restored crucifix of the original OLPS church, once again at the center of our parish sanctuary, expresses this truth and fundamental reality.

Because of Jesus, His birth, cross and resurrection, we have a future! "For in hope, we were saved" (Rom. 8: 24). The greatest enemy we may face, death itself, has been overcome by the child born in Bethlehem. Oh, what HOPE this gives us: to share one day in the glory of Heaven whence came the Word-made-flesh!

At our Lord and Savior's birth, "there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the Angel, praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests' " (Lk. 2: 14).

My prayer for Christmas is that our parish families may experience the hope of this season, the renewal and love inspired by Christmas, a family-oriented time. Our God has come to meet us, has become one like us in all things except for sin. God truly understands. *Gaudium et spes*: what joy and hope this gives us.

My prayer for the New Year is that the Lord may bless and guide us as we journey together, seeking to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and with the helpful intercession of our Blessed Lady. Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to our help!

Merry Christmas! May God bless and keep you and your family.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Rusty Rabalais

Historic Mass and candlelight procession honors Our Lady of Guadalupe

By Stephanie Kidd

On December 12, Father Thomas Kennedy, assisted by Deacon Les Glankler and numerous youth altar servers, celebrated a solemn candlelight Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

It's believed to be the first such candlelight Mass celebrating Our Lady in OLPS history.

Afterward, a candlelight procession with recitation of the Holy Rosary took place on the church grounds. A litany honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe followed as families entrusted their intentions to her maternal care. Young parishioner Rhett Wilkerson read the history of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Mark Turner served as cantor during the Mass.

Although not a holy day of obligation, hundreds attended the Mass and procession.

The December 1531 story about Our Lady is that she appeared outside present day Mexico City several times to a humble indigenous man named Juan Diego on a hill called Tepeyac. The woman appeared with child, marked by the ancient Aztec symbols on her dress confirming she was a mother-to-be. She announced herself to Juan Diego as the mother of the True God and that she had come out of love for her children.

She spoke to him in his native language and asked that a church be built on that site. Juan Diego took the message to the local bishop, who asked for proof. Despite his efforts, the bishop did not believe him. Juan became preoccupied with tending to his sick uncle and tried to avoid her. Mary reappeared to him and said, "Do not let your heart be troubled, and let nothing upset you. Is it not I, your mother, who is here? Are you not under my protection? Are you not, fortunately, in my care? Do not let your uncle's illness distress you. It is certain that he has already been cured."

She then instructed him to gather roses, miraculously blooming out of season, and carry them in his tilma (cloak) to the bishop. When he opened the tilma before the bishop, the roses fell out, and on the fabric suddenly appeared the precious image of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

The bishop accepted this as a sign and a shrine was built at Tepeyac. The image became known as Our Lady of Guadalupe and remains on the tilma in the same condition as when it first appeared. Our Lady of Guadalupe is honored as patroness of Mexico and the Americas, symbolizing compassion and God's closeness to the poor.



Father Kennedy celebrated a candlelight Mas honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe

After the procession, seminarian Blake Bernard gave a testimony reflecting on Our Lady of Guadalupe's gentle outpouring of love and enduring message of peace in his life. He spoke of Mary not only as the Mother of God, but as a loving mother to all, who assures that her children are safely held in the crossing of her arms, loved and protected.

Our Lady of Guadalupe invites us all to live as instruments of peace through service and love in our everyday lives as she continues to draw all hearts to her Son.

Landscaping project for playground area to begin

By Janet Tompkins

With the solid fencing completed around the OLPS school campus, the next improvement moving forward will be to landscape this area.

"After building the new fence, we wanted trees outside the fence and vines on the fence to make it look beautiful and not institutional," said Meredith Rhoads, school principal. The project, with the assistance of landscape architect Jeff Carbo, will add 25 gingko trees to the Chester Street area outside the fencing. Sponsorships for 24 of the 25 trees at \$1500 per tree have been garnered thus far.

The slow-growing trees will present their notable golden leaves in fall. The Princeton Sentry variety of Ginkgo biloba is a good fit for parkways and yards. Vines will also be established to cover the solid fencing.

Two large plaques will be hung outside the Madonna Room to name those memorial donors for the grove project. For more information on the project, please call the school office.



Pregnancy Center 'overwhelmed' by Catholic Daughters' Giving Tree

By Betsy Lanclos

The OLPS Catholic Daughters (Court Notre Dame 1492) again hosted a Cenla Pregnancy Center gift tree for the second straight year – much to the appreciation of COPC executive director Kim Lyons.

"Cenla Pregnancy Center is truly grateful for the generosity of OLPS," said Lyons, a Prompt Succor parishioner. "We are overwhelmed – in the best way – by the incredible donations collected through the Giving Tree."

Parishioners were asked to select a tag or two and purchase those items on the tag for the boutique at the CPC. Items range from the inexpensive such as pacifiers, feeding spoons or bibs to more costly fare such as car seats, strollers and swings. The tags were replenished on the tree as they are selected.

Clients of CPC earn boutique bucks to purchase these items by taking educational courses on infant and early childhood care and answering questions about their selected courses. It's a way for mothers to earn necessary supplies for their children.

The gift tree is a way for parishioners to give back to the community and fills a void the Sheperd Center left behind after its closure, ending its Christmas Cheer program.

"Please know this kindness is more than a donation," said Lyons. "It's a tangible reminder to the families we serve that they are seen, valued and not alone."

As vice regent of Court 1492 and as an education volunteer at CPC, I think that OLPS should make the tree an annual service project. It's a way to give back to the community and share necessary gifts for newborns and their mothers to enjoy. It also allows the mothers to earn needed items for their children's care and attain some education and goods for their children.

Kim Herrington, recording secretary for the Catholic Daughters (CDA) shares a St. Augustine quote which sums up the giving tree perfectly.

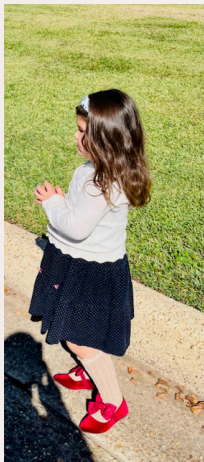
"In the 4th Century," Herrington said, "Saint Augustine of Hippo wrote this about giving (which he calls charity): 'Charity is a virtue which, when our affections are perfectly ordered, unites us to God. For by it we love him.'" (Continued on page 4)





Photo Galleries

Christ the King Procession
Sunday, November 23



Our Lady of Guadalupe Candlelight Procession Sunday, December 12



Photo by Phil Brocato



STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

My parish is composed of people like me. I help make it what it is. It will be friendly, if I am. It will be holy, if I am. Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them. It will do great work, if I work. It will be prayerful, if I pray. It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver. It will bring others to worship, if I invite and bring them in. It will be a place of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, of compassion, charity and mercy, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these same things. Therefore, with the help of God, I now dedicate myself to the task of being all the things that I want my parish to be. Amen.

Continued from page 3, the Catholic Daughters Giving Tree

Many other church organizations and local businesses are also participating in the CPC giving tree program this year. The goal is to collect as many items as possible to replenish the boutique for several months. The "earn while you learn" program is a favorite part of client interactions at the center.

"Thank you especially to the Catholic Daughters," said Lyons, "for choosing to partner with us and for helping us share hope in such a meaningful way."

CDA would like to thank the OLPS office staff for setting up the tree. Susan Harrison, Dee Gilbert and I decorated it. The tags were also replenished as parishioners selected them off the tree. All gifts were due back to the church rectory by December 15 and the OLPS Knights of Columbus brought them to pregnancy center.

OLPS Mission Statement

Our mission is to know Christ Jesus.
We are family, and this is my home.