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#### The Wise Words of Pope Francis

"How essential the family has been to the building of this country! And how worthy it remains of our support and encouragement! Yet I cannot hide my concern for the family which is threatened, perhaps as never before, from within and without."

Referencing the World Meeting of Families
 Visit to the Joint session of the United States Congress
 September 24, 2015

## Harvest (

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Former Josephite parishioner, Ajani Gibson, is the assistant to the director of Liturgy at the Basilica of the National Shrine. Read about his interaction with Pope Francis.

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The Josephites are pro-life, standing for safeguarding the right to life of every human being; pro-family, promoting the dignity and sanctity of marriage; pro-chastity, upholding the virtue all are called to embody in their state of life.

The mission of The Josephite Harvest is to assist and promote the evangelizing ministry of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart. It is the voice of the Society to summon both men and means to our work and to establish enduring bonds with our benefactors. It shall encourage devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to our Patron St. Joseph, and to the Patron Saints of our Society. It shall foster racial and cultural understanding and reconciliation. It shall make known the achievements of African Americans that reflect the influence of the Catholic faith. It shall recognize the labors of clergy and lay persons who work for the evangelization of African Americans.

The Josephite Harvest (ISSN 0021-7603, USPS 277-080) is the oldest Catholic mission magazine still publishing in the United States. Established in 1888, it is published quarterly by the Josephites (The Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart) to keep our readers abreast of the work in the Josephite apostolate. Periodicals postage paid at Baltimore, MD. Title and seal represent accepted trademark. Contents may be reprinted with permission of the St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, Inc.)



#### —FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL-



Father Michael Thompson, SSJ, Superior General

#### Dear Friends of the Josephites,

It is a privilege to share this issue of *The Harvest* with you. Each of you is special to the Josephites and our vibrant mission in the African-American community in parishes, schools and special ministries across the United States. Your support and encouragement through prayer, advocacy and donations make it possible for the Josephite priests and brothers to fulfill our mission.

I was elected Superior General last June. Since then, I have been traveling to our parishes, schools and seminary. I have been learning first hand of the joys and challenges that our Josephite priests and brothers work with each day. I have been so inspired by the faith, hope and love of the parishioners who collaborate in the African-American communities. I have seen first-hand how important the parishes are to neighborhoods. Yes, our challenges are many and our opportunities are great. But I know that Jesus is walking with us.

Several of our parishes are highlighted in this issue. They are celebrating their rich history as they mark anniversary celebrations, expansion of facilities and growing outreach programs. I am especially grateful to the women religious who have worked with Josephites throughout our history. As we move to the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life, I am pleased that their contributions to African -American ministry are being recognized.

Also, I want to express a word of thanks to Father W. Carroll Paysse who recently concluded his service as director of the Black and Indian Mission Office. He has been a generous advocate for Josephite needs. As he takes on his pastoral responsibilities in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, I know that we will continue to work with him in our schools and parishes there.

Finally, I want to highlight how encouraging it was to participate in the visit of Pope Francis to the United States. I was one of the priests who concelebrated Mass with him at the Catholic University of America in Washington. Connecting with the Holy Father is always a powerful reminder that we are a universal church. We are all made in the image and likeness of God and we march together in faith.

Please know that all Josephites are grateful for your support of our ministry. In this issue there is a special opportunity to support the Josephites before the end of 2015. Please consider a gift! You will be especially remembered during our Christmas day Masses. Wishing you a Holy Advent Season and a joyous Christmas.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

www.ampsinc.net

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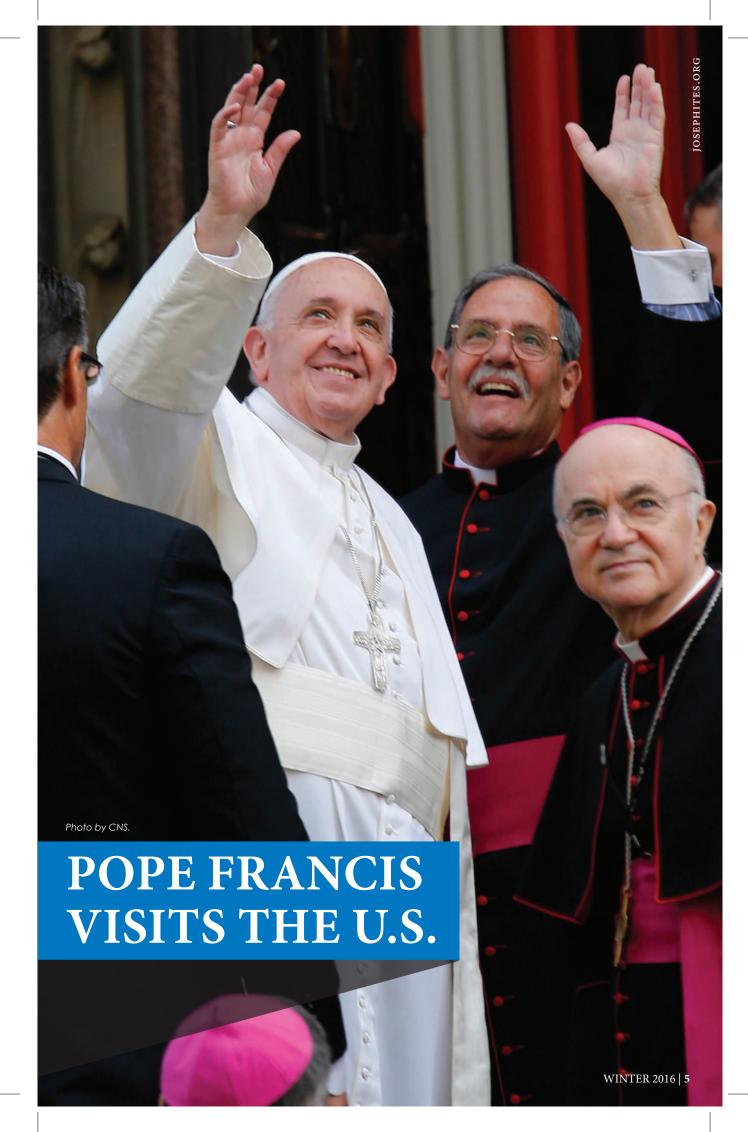
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Father Michael L. Thompson, SSJ Superior General





#### **Our Lady Star of the Sea Church** Houston, TX

Parishioners at Our Lady Star of the Sea Church in Houston, TX, were encouraged to follow the pope during his visit to America. "The most memorable part of the pope's visit was when he went to visit prisoners. The pope sent a resounding message that we must not forget those who are incarcerated and that we must offer forgiveness to all. It was a great message," said Father Rodney Armstrong, SSJ, pastor at Our Lady Star of the Sea Church.

During a homily, Father Armstrong discussed some of Pope Francis' views on controversial topics. "I thought the pope was very clear about certain issues. He took the moral high road in articles of immigration and capital punishment. People were amazed with how firmly the pope stood his ground on moral topics. All of the concerns he talked about formed the core of the church's teachings," the pastor said.

## Washington, D.C.

St. Luke parish in Washington was filled with excitement during Pope Francis' visit to America. Father Cornelius Ejiogu, SSJ, pastor at St. Luke church, attended the papal Mass at the National Shrine. Additionally, three children from St. Luke's were granted the special opportunity to meet the pope at the Vatican Embassy. Father Ejiogu deeply resonated with Pope Francis' speech to Congress. "He said that we need to do unto others as they would do unto us. That is the gospel of the Lord. He explained that we need to learn to treat people with respect."

#### **Corpus Christi-Epiphany Church New Orleans, LA**

Father Henry Davis, SSJ, pastor at Corpus Christi-Epiphany Church in New Orleans, reflected on Pope Francis' speech to Congress. "I like how Pope Francis pointed out that there's a natural law and then there's God's law. He explained that ultimately, we need to make choices that are good for people of all faiths. He pointed out that liberty, justice, taking care of one another and spirituality are of utmost importance."



Pope Francis meets with youth. Photo by CNS.

## Young Josephite parishioners

## MEET POPE FRANCIS

**BY DAVID ANDREWS** 

Parishioners at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Washington, D.C. won't soon forget the pope's visit to the United States. In addition to many parishioners attending Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine, six youth from the Josephite parish were blessed with the experience of a lifetime.

Donald Hawkins, Morgan Holliway, Donta Bowser, Michelle Marshall, Aija Stevenson and Daryl Tucker were selected to greet Pope Francis at the Vatican Embassy in Washington as he made his way to

the White House.

Michelle Marshall, current third grader, said she had to get up early to get on the bus, but said it was worth it to see the pope. "He shook my hand before I had a chance to shake his!" she said.

Morgan Holliway, a tenth grader, said she was in the front row when the pope made his way to one side of the crowd.

"I thought he was just going to wave but he was nice and went through the entire line. He was just taking his sweet time shaking everybody's hand even though he had an appointment at the White House," said Ms. Holliway.

What was she thinking when making contact with the pope? "The pope's hands were soft. I was thinking, what does he put on his hands?"

The importance of this unique experience wasn't lost on the tenth grader, who realized it wouldn't have been as special for everyone. "Some people said why do you want to go see the pope? I said because it's a part of my faith. I went because I wanted this opportunity in my life," said Ms. Holliway.



# ST. JOSEPH, ST. JUNIPERO SERRA THE POPE

#### BY FATHER JOSEPH DOYLE, SSJ

When Pope Francis canonized Junipero Serra on Sept. 23 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., many Josephites, from seminarians to the Superior General, were privileged to attend and concelebrate the Mass with him.

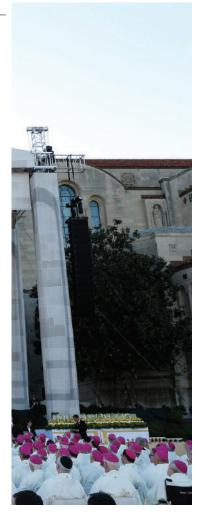
This was very appropriate because the new saint and Pope Francis had something in common – a special devotion

to St. Joseph. "Junipero" was the name taken by Miguel Jose (Michael Joseph) Serra when he made his religious profession as a Franciscan in 1731.

After his ordination about seven or eight years later, he made it a practice to celebrate a Votive Mass of St. Joseph every Wednesday when it was permitted liturgically. During his life as a Franciscan missionary in Mexico and California, he often called upon St. Joseph in time of

need.

Such was the case when he began his missionary labors in San Diego in 1770 and the Franciscan friars and Spanish soldiers ran out of food. Commander de Portola gave orders to return to Mexico City, but Father Junipero proposed a novena to St. Joseph instead. On March 19, the Feast of St. Joseph, the ship, "San Antonio," loaded with supplies, was spotted in the bay and Mission San Diego was saved. Today, it is



Top: The serene setting of the Canonization of St. Junipero Serra at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. Photos by CNS.

Right: Pope Francis pauses in front of a statue of St. Junipero Serra in National Statuary Hall in Washington. D.C.



one of the most beautiful cities in California.

Just like St. Junipero Serra, Pope Francis has had a devotion to St. Joseph throughout his life. "He has been a support and an inspiration. He is the one I go to whenever I am "in a fix," Pope Francis told a gathering at St. Patrick parish in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 24.

He continued, "Joseph was someone who asked questions. But first and foremost, he was a man of faith. Faith gave Joseph the power to find light just at the moment when everything seemed dark. Faith sustained him amid the troubles of life. Thanks to faith, Joseph was able to press forward when everything seemed to be holding him back."

Today, the virtue of faith enables the Josephites to honor their commitment to protect human life, marriage and the family. We "go to Joseph" for assistance in winning the battle against Satan and his legions who are out to destroy these three God-given gifts.

Pope Francis calls upon all Catholics to be missionaries – not necessarily in the same way as St. Junipero Serra, but missionaries to married couples, Christian families and the protectors of human life.

Someone has said that we Catholics have been catechized, but not evangelized. Thus, evangelization is our missionary task at home and to the whole world.

St. Junipero Serra, pray for us. Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ, is director of novices for the Josephites.



## **BREATHING NEW LIFE** into Epiphany Church

#### BY PETER FINNEY JR.

When the Archdiocese of New Orleans closed Epiphany Church after Hurricane Katrina, the painful decision was even more emotional than many other closures because the fathers and grandfathers of Epiphany Parish - many of them members of the proud 7th Ward community of carpenters, masons and plasterers - literally had built the church in 1948, brick by brick.

For 10 years, Epiphany Church has remained shuttered, with plywood sheets protecting more than a dozen stained-glass windows. Epiphany Elementary

School next to the church was so damaged by Katrina that it was torn down.

But on Sept. 29, there were beaming smiles and soaring expectations as the archdiocese sold the former church, convent and rectory to the New Orleans Delta Foundation, a non-profit arm of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, the largest African-American sorority of college-educated women in the country.

#### Big community investment

The foundation plans to invest \$4.5 million in renovating all three buildings to provide meeting space for its 562 local members and offering after-school tutoring services to students, programs for the elderly and space for other community and business events.

The church will be refurbished with new mechanical systems, and the stained-glass windows will remain in place.

At the ceremony in which the property was officially sold to the Deltas for \$375,000, New Orleans Archbishop Gregory Aymond expressed his gratitude for the vision the women are offering to the neighborhood, anchored by St. Augustine High School just a few blocks from the church.

#### **Archbishop Aymond grateful**

"We are indebted to you," Archbishop Aymond told dozens of Delta sorority members who attended the signing. "The Delta Foundation can do a lot; we as church can do a lot. But together, we can do more. You're doing this to build up this community, and we are grateful. We have great admiration for you, and this is a great blessing."

Shelia Danzey, president of the New Orleans Delta Foundation, said the purchase culminated several years of searching for a new local headquarters for her organization, which lost its building in Gentilly Woods after the storm. The group has been meeting at Xavier and Dillard universities since then.

The Deltas first tried about three years ago to acquire the former St. Raymond Church and School, closed after the storm, but those talks did not work out. Negotiations with Corpus Christi-Epiphany parish for the Epiphany property started in earnest in January.

"Our intent was to try to identify churches that were closed in African-American neighborhoods because we thought we could help with the healing process," Ms. Danzey said. "This is a great deal simply because of the history of the people in the community who built the church. We want to maintain that history."

#### No changes planned

Ms. Danzey said her organization would not make many changes to the current design of the church.

"We're going to keep it as it is and try to get it designated as a historic place – in the historic 7th Ward," she said. "It will be here when we are far gone, and we will have a place for our daughters and sisters and grandkids to say, 'This is what we built.' We want to be active in projects for the elderly and for youth. That's what our mission is."

Josephite Father Roderick Coates, who was pastor of Corpus Christi-Epiphany when the purchase talks began, said he and the pastoral council were very conscious of the emotional ties former parishioners had to Epiphany Church. He said the Deltas' vision of community service matches the parish's vision.

"They have great respect for the reverence of the building, not just as a church building, but because of the labor and love that the people of Epiphany put into that," said Father Coates, who was selected vicar general of the Josephites in June and has moved to Baltimore, MD. "The people of

THE DELTA FOUNDATION

CAN DO A LOT; WE AS

CHURCH CAN DO A LOT.

BUT TOGETHER, WE CAN

DO MORE

the parish are very comfortable that they've turned it over and put it in good hands."

Father Coates said the sale represents just another step in the city's recovery and healing process since Katrina.

"You see change, you see life," he said. "Ten years is a long time. People no longer have to look at the past nine years in a bad sense but look to the future. It's been a long wait, but it's been worth it."

Demetric Mercadel, Corpus Christi-Epiphany's pastoral council president, said the cherished property has been "put in the best hands possible."

"We know what this church means to our community," Mr. Mercadel said. "Our parishioners built (Epiphany) parish, brick and mortar. We have families of the original builders. I am beyond elated to bring activity and commerce back to that neighborhood. It's something

that they so desperately need."

Ms. Danzey said one of the exciting programs the Deltas will lead is the after-school tutoring program. She believes many St. Augustine students and students from other schools will take advantage of the extra homework time.

"We want to become a partner with St. Aug and do mentoring, because a lot of our membership is retired teachers and principals," Ms. Danzey said. "This is going to be a community resource center."

Patricia Heisser, a former Epiphany parishioner, said her late brother-in-law, Calvin Moret, would have been pleased by the new life given to the church.

"He was so worried about the church, like all of us, because that was all we knew until Katrina," said Ms. Heisser, now a member of the Corpus Christi-Epiphany pastoral council. "I listened to the ladies and their plans, and I just had a very good feeling about what they're doing for the neighborhood. They're keeping the church as it is."

Ms. Heisser said she has been harboring a personal dream for a long time. In three years, she will celebrate her 50th wedding anniversary. She asked Ms. Danzey if she could renew her vows in the church where she grew up.

"She said she's going to bring it up before the board," Ms. Heisser said. "I bet my tears during my wedding are still on that floor, I cried so much."

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, founded in 1913 by 22 students at Howard University, is an organization of college-educated women committed to public service, with a primary focus on the African-American community. The sorority has 1,000 collegiate and alumnae chapters in the U.S. and worldwide. With 200,000 members, it is the largest African-American women's organization in the country.

Peter Finney Jr. is editor of the New Orleans' Clarion Herald.



## THE 95<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY Our Lady of Perpetual Help celebrates

BY ALLIE BLAIR

Throughout the year, Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish, located in the District of Columbia, has been celebrating its 95th anniversary as a flourishing Josephite parish.

Carlos Graham, a parishioner, believes that active parish committees are a key aspect to the continuing prosperity of a church. Our Lady of Perpetual Help hosts numerous events throughout the year, such as a Christmas bazaar that "sells out every year." The parish also held several events in celebration of its anniversary, such

as a black history program, gospel brunch, school reunion, youth camp-out, tent revival, family fun day, Founders' Day Mass, pinochle tournament and a 95th Anniversary Gala.

Mr. Graham has been a parishioner for six years at the parish, where his marriage was celebrated and where he has become an active member of the parish community.

"It's a family atmosphere. We still have descendants of the starting family members here at OLPH. They help to carry on our traditions and successes," said

Mr. Graham. He said that Deacon Timothy Tilghman has been with OLPH since 2010. Deacon Tilghman's great grandparents helped to establish Our Lady of Perpetual Help in 1920.

According to Mr. Graham, the East of the River Revival, an event offering four days of revitalizing and renewing of one's faith, began at Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The event is hosted at a different parish each year. This year, the 26th annual revival took place at Holy Family Church in Hillcrest Heights, MD. Bishop John Ricard, SSI, celebrated the closing Mass.

Muriel Bowser, mayor of the District of Columbia, sent Charon P.W. Hines, director of the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs, and LaRuby May, councilmember, to give Our Lady of Perpetual Help her congratulations and token of thanks on 95 years as a successful parish.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help continues to thrive and grow as a family-centered parish committed to "serving God and sharing its spirituality through fellowship."

Father Thomas Frank, SSI, is the pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual *Help Catholic Church.* 



## **OUR LADY OF FATIMA**

#### Commemorates 110 years as a parish

#### BY ALLIE BLAIR

Throughout the month of October, Our Lady of Fatima church, located in Birmingham, Alabama, celebrated it 110th year as a thriving Josephite parish.

The parish hosted several events in honor of its anniversary, according to Father Godwin Ani, SSJ, the pastor. An important occasion that took place on Oct. 3 was the parish Octoberfest. Parishioners enjoyed playing games and winning prizes. "It was a fun time for the children. Family and friends came together to celebrate the history of our parish," said Father Godwin.

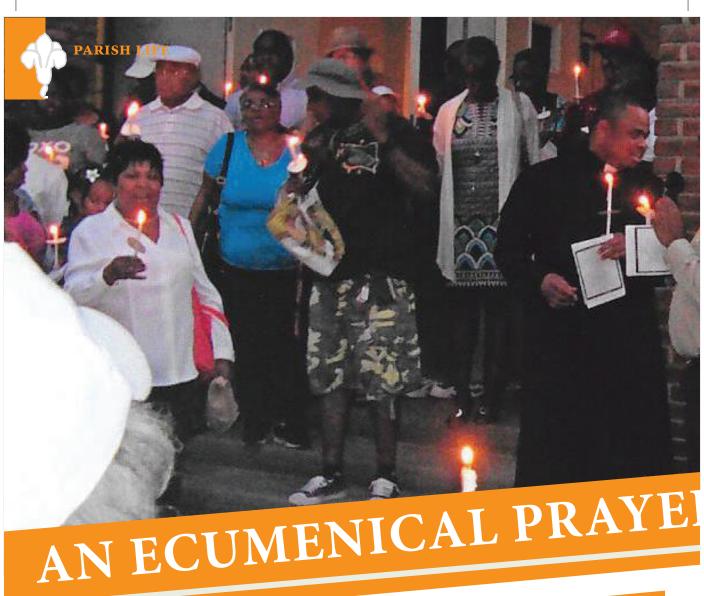
The Bishop of Birmingham, Bishop Robert Baker,

was the main celebrant for the commemorative Mass on Oct. 11.

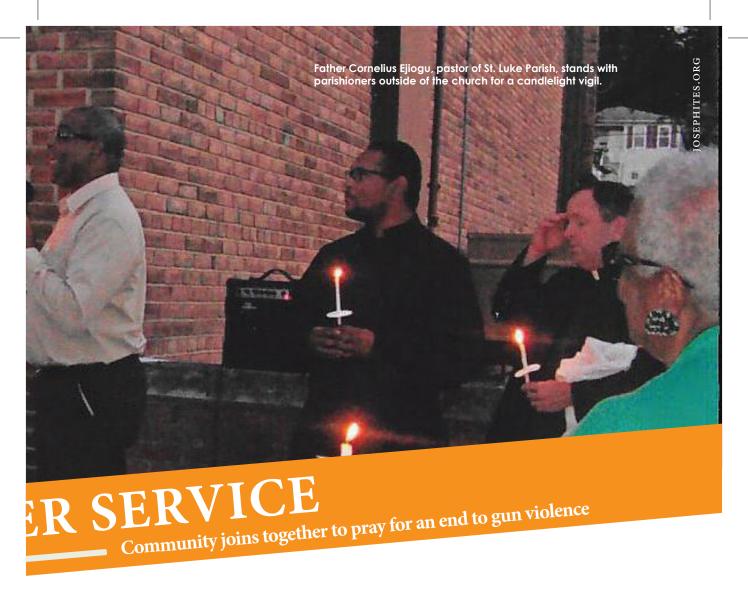
Also, a brunch and a youth gospel choir concert were held on Oct. 10 and Oct. 18. "The intention of the choir concert was to bring all of our parishioners together through music and to thank God for our wonderful blessings received through Him," said Father Godwin.

He said that parishioners are actively involved in the spiritual growth of their church. "Fellowship is a continuity of God's love. We continue to express that love by coming together in prayer and service. That is what has kept our community together," said Father Godwin.









#### BY DAVID ANDREWS

The Southeast D.C. community surrounding St. Luke's Church was rocked by tragedy when Amari Jenkins was shot on the church steps Aug. 18. A week later, 300 community members from 10 area churches, Protestant and Catholic, joined St. Luke parishioners at an ecumenical memorial service of healing and celebration.

St. Luke parish is host to many civic and community groups which meet at the church regularly. Mr. Jenkins was not a parishioner but had been a participant in a criminal justice re-entry program administered by the justice department.

Father Cornelius Ejiogu, pastor of St. Luke's, said this kind of tragedy was new to the parish

and left many parishioners with a sense of fear and tension. Father Cornelius also thought it was important to pay respect to the victim's mother, who many felt had been mistreated in media reports.

"The media didn't respect her," said Father Cornelius. "They only showed her when she was wailing and rolling on the ground, and that's the image that people had. I wanted people to know that she is strong and courageous."

Maureen Jenkins agreed to speak at the ecumenical memorial service on Aug. 25 to honor her son, Amari. She prayed for an end to violence and said she never wants another mother to feel the way she did after losing

People were very moved with her ability to call for peace and for calmness. "She wasn't angry, she was courageous," said Father Cornelius.

The service also featured additional reflections on gun violence, prayers for victims of violent crimes along with a candlelight vigil to remember Amari.

"It was a huge sigh of relief for us. You could see the fear and tension with the older parishioners because they didn't know what to make of the incident," said Father Cornelius.

Police officers also attended the service to provide security and solidarity.

"Parishioners told me they enjoyed the service and it was a good opportunity to pray as a family and let the Holy Spirit do its work," said Father Cornelius. "At the end of the day, it's a community affair. It may have happened at our church, but it was a victory for community solidarity."



## Before this year ends

## YOU CAN HELP THE JOSEPHITES



Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.

During the Christmas season, we Josephites are especially mindful of all of the gifts that our benefactors have given to us. Your support – in prayers and donations - makes it possible for us to minister in the United States. Each child who is served in our pre-school programs is blessed by your generosity. Every inner city parish – often a beacon of hope in an urban neighborhood benefits from your goodness. Every school we oversee, every group and organization that we nurture is possible because of your commitment to join with the Josephites in this journey of faith in the spirit of New Evangelization.

You have faithfully supported our ministry. We are hopeful that we can count on you again to send a Christmas offering. An end of year gift is a worthy commitment to support ministry in the African-American community. For some, the end of year donation reduces their tax responsibilities. For others, it continues a legacy started years ago by grandparents and parents. In this year of financial change and challenge, your gift is more important than ever.

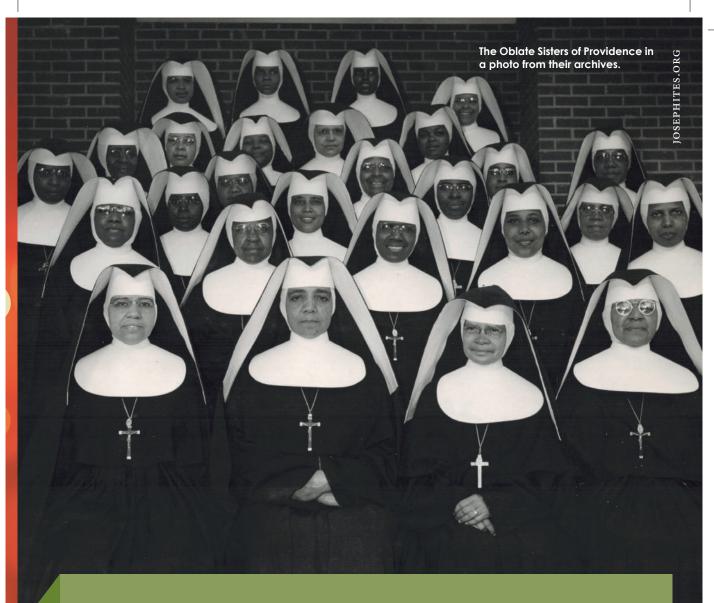
You can help. Please use the enclosed

envelope to make an "End of Year" Christmas offering and do not forget to include your prayer intentions as well. You and your intentions will be remembered in the Christmas Novena of Masses.

Thank you for your support, encouragement and prayers. We Josephites give thanks for all who provide the financial resources needed for Josephites to serve the African-American community. With God's grace and your help, we will continue the journey for many more years to come.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with many blessings.

WE JOSEPHITES GIVE
THANKS FOR ALL WHO
PROVIDE THE FINANCIAL
RESOURCES NEEDED FOR
JOSEPHITES TO SERVE
THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN
COMMUNITY.



## CELEBRATING RELIGIOUS WOMEN

#### Josephites collaborate with religious communities

The Josephites are a religious community of men, dedicated to ministry in the African-American community, since their founding in 1871.

Throughout the decades, the Josephites have collaborated with a number of other religious communities to run parishes, schools and special ministries. Three of these communities of religious women have partnered with the Josephites for decades.

As the Year of Consecrated Life comes to a close on Feb. 2, 2016, please pray for vocations to religious life. These men and women, and the religious communities they represent, have provided us with a rich history, a vibrant present and a hopeful future. >>



#### The Oblate Sisters of Providence

#### The first religious community for African-American women

#### BY ALLIE BLAIR

The Oblate Sisters of Providence were founded in 1828 to build a sisterhood whose mission was to teach and care for African-American children.

The Oblates are the first Roman Catholic sisterhood in the world established by women of African descent. It was the work of a French-born Sulpician priest and four women, who were part of the Caribbean refugee colony, which began arriving in Baltimore, Maryland in the late 18th century.

Father James Hector Nicholas Joubert, a Sulpician priest discovered it was difficult for the Haitian refugee children to master their religious studies because they were unable to read. He heard of two devout religious Caribbean women who were already conducting a school for black children in their home in Baltimore.

In 1828 those two women, Elizabeth Lange (later Mother Mary Lange) and Maria Balas accepted a proposal to start a sisterhood with the primary mission of teaching and caring for African-American children. After adding two more women, Rosine Boegue and American-born Theresa Duchemin, they began studying to become sisters and opened a Catholic school for girls in their convent in Baltimore. Thus began

American Catholic community.

During the Year of Consecrated Life, Sister Marcia Hall, OSP, vocations director, made and continues to make an effort to promote vocations by taking the message various local parishes. She speaks with those who are interested in teaching about what it means to discern and live out

## "WHEN OUR SISTERS TALK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH THE JOSEPHITES, IT'S ALWAYS IN A POSITIVE LIGHT."

St. Frances Academy, the oldest school for black Catholic children in the United States

Currently the order has approximately 80 members. The Oblate Sisters now serve in Maryland, Florida, New York, Washington, D.C. and in Alajuela and Siquirres, Costa Rica.

The Josephites share a close association with the Oblate Sisters of Providence, as they both originated to serve the African religious life.

"Prayer and having a spiritual director is of utmost importance so that you can have someone to answer your questions and guide you. You also must be active in the church to understand what it means to discern a vocation," said Sister Marcia. "Talk to different people. Spend weekends with different religious communities so that you can find what you're looking for."

## HITES.ORG

## The Sisters of the Holy Family

Working side by side with Josephites to educate youth, promote vocations.

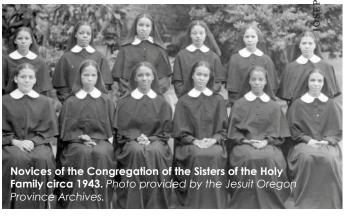
#### BY DAVID ANDREWS

In 1842, before it was legal for such a Congregation to exist, the Sisters of the Holy Family were founded in New Orleans by Henriette Delille, a free woman of color. Co-foundresses of this religious community of African-American women were Juliette Gaudin and Josephine Charles.

Destined by the mores of the time to live a life of ease in the tradition of their female ancestors, Henriette, Juliette, and Josephine instead chose to follow God's call. They taught the slaves, cared for the elderly, and shared what they had with the poor and the needy.

For over 170 years, the Sisters of the Holy Family, in the spirit of their foundresses and early predecessors, have continued to serve the youth, the elderly, and the needy members of society. The Sisters have not only served the New Orleans community, but also many people throughout Louisiana; Texas, California, Washington, D.C., Oklahoma, Alabama, Florida, Belize, and in Panama, Central America; and Benin City, Nigeria, Africa.

The religious community currently has 96 members. The Sisters of the Holy Family have had a long history of working with the Josephites. Based in New Orleans, the Sisters of the Holy Family work in St. Francis Xavier parish in Baton Rouge and St. Joan of Arc in New Orleans.



"Our relationship with the Josephites has been a good one, as they've been supportive in our effort to fulfill our educational mission in the schools," said Sister Greta Jupiter, SSF.

"We believe in developing the whole person," she said. "We don't want to see that only the body is nourished, we want to ensure that the mind and soul is nourished as well."

Together, the Sisters of the Holy Family and the Josephites strive to achieve enrichment in their schools by starting and ending each day with prayer. By promoting the Catholic faith, the Sisters of the Holy Family and Josephites exemplify a religious life steeped in joy and happiness.

## The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Partnership with Josephites has proven beneficial for both parties

#### BY DAVID ANDREWS

The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were founded by Saint Katharine Drexel in 1891. Similar to the Josephites, they minister among the African-American community and are called to address the hungers of the world in a spirit of generosity, joy and gratitude.

For decades, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament have worked side-by-side in Josephite parishes and schools to promote the Catholic faith throughout the African-American community.

"When our Sisters talk about their experiences working with the Josephites, it's always in a positive light," said Sister Donna Breslin, Mother Superior of the Sisters

During the Year of Consecrated Life, the Sisters collaborated with the Josephites to promote vocations.

"It wasn't always a conscious attempt to promote Josephite vocations, but Sisters who taught in schools and parishes were able to plant the seed for young men and women to pursue religious life," said Sister Donna. "The Sisters set the example that a religious life is a joy-filled life."

Sister Donna said the Sisters are happy that the Josephites have established their House of Formation

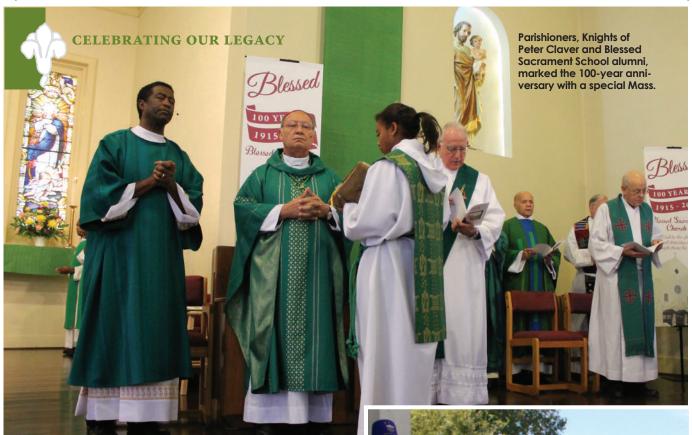
in Nigeria, which helps to mold young men into men of God.

"To us, it's a very encouraging sign that they're spreading the good news beyond our borders and are offering the gift of priesthood in Nigeria," said Sister Donna.

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament serve in northern cities as well as cities and rural areas of the South and the West. They also have missions in Haiti and Jamaica.



At the Children's Mass in 1989 at St. Ann's Church, Lawtell, LA, Sr. Agnes McDevitt of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament receive communion. Photo provided by Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.



#### Blessed Sacrament Parish

## CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

#### BY DAVID ANDREWS

Blessed Sacrament, the Josephite parish in Beaumont, Texas, recently concluded a yearlong 100th anniversary celebration.

The 2015 celebration started with a blessing of the marriages that had taken place in the parish in the last 100 years. The Sunday after Easter featured an all age fashion show that included the pastor, Father Joseph Benjamin, SSJ, wearing his traditional African attire.

In June, the Blessed Sacrament family and friends joined for a parish picnic following the 11:30 a.m. Mass. The parish also had an anniversary dance and a banquet in September.

With Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, SVD, bishop of Beaumont, as main celebrant, parishioners, Knights of Peter Claver and Blessed Sacrament School alumni, marked the 100-year anniversary with a special Mass on Oct. 4.

"The Mass was a culmination of all of the activities throughout the year. The church was completely packed and people were even standing outside," said Father Benjamin.



Father Joseph Benjamin speaks with parishioners after the 100th anniversary celebration Mass. Photo by East Texas Catholic.

The theme of the anniversary was "To God be the Glory: Drawing strength from the Lord."

As part of the anniversary, the parish hosted a Gospel Extravaganza on Sept. 20 that included choirs and soloists from neighboring parishes. The concert was such a success that it may become an annual event.

Father Benjamin called it a blessing to be pastor during the 100th anniversary celebration. "People here really know each other so the parish is really like a family."

## 'PASTORING IN BLACK PARISHES'

#### Annual conference informs and inspires

Leaders of African American parishes from around the country gathered Nov. 9-12 to discuss "Pastoring in Black Parishes."

The second annual event was organized by the Josephite Pastoral Center and held in Arlington, Virginia.

With a packed agenda of speakers, presenters and learning sessions, the 75 registered attendees also gathered for prayer and fellowship.

Father Michael Thompson, superior general of the Josephites, said the conference is beneficial to offer growth and development for African-American parish leaders. "People have expectations to be better preachers and teachers of the Word. This conference gives us the opportunity to learn and to get the new tools we need to be better ministers."

He said the Black church in America is a very diverse church. "At these sessions we are leaning to appreciate the gifts of the local black Catholic community. We are discussing how we can bring together the diversity and the universality of our church. We have a universal liturgy but we also can be unique in our worship."

Bishop John H. Ricard, rector of St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C., said the four-day event was designed to help participants learn more about the challenges facing ministers in the African-American community. "We need skills, wisdom and guidance," he said. "This is a forum to sharpen the skills to be a better convincer in God's vineyard."

The bishop called on the parish leaders to use "moral authority that comes from prayer, reflection, the Eucharist and a good and holy life. By using our moral authority, we can change the world and change our communities."

Cheryl Holley, executive director of the Josephite Pastoral Center, said she was pleased with the program. "It was all very uplifting," she said.

This year's conference included women who have leadership roles in parishes and she said that innovation was well received.

Several participants asked if the conference could be presented at various locations around the country. Mrs. Holley said that request would be considered for future Black Pastoring conferences.









# Nine years of dedicated service

## Father Wayne Paysse

#### BY ALLIE BLAIR

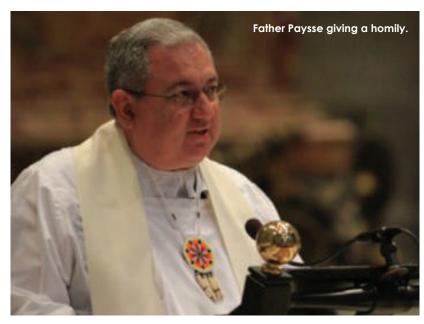
After nine years of serving as the executive director of the national Black and Indian Mission Office in Washington, D.C., Father Wayne Paysse returned home to the Archdiocese of New Orleans in July and is now assigned to Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Slidell, Louisiana.

A long time friend and associate of the Josephites, Father Paysse is closely connected to the Josephite parishes in New Orleans and Father Kenneth Howard, SSJ, his classmate and good friend.

That association continued in a new and important way when Father Paysse was appointed to direct the Black and Indian Mission Office, which descended from the ministry of St. Katharine Drexel.

The Black and Indian Mission Office consists of three separate organizations: the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, the Black and Indian Mission Collection and the Catholic Negro Mission Board. Together, the organizations serve to support the needs of Catholic Native Americans, promote missionary work among African-American and Native-American Catholics and aid in building up the Church in African-American communities.

Father Paysse's role as executive director was to help bishops



take up a national collection to fund evangelization activities in the African-American, Native-American and Alaskan-Native communities. According to Father Paysse, the Black and Indian Mission Office uses the money for a variety of causes, such as paying salaries of missionaries, funding schools, purchasing catechetical materials, educating priests and religious and supporting with special diocesan projects.

"One of the biggest things that I bring away with me from my nine years at the Mission Office is a sense of gratitude to God for giving me the grace and the opportunity to work and to minister among the black Catholic communities, as well as the indigenous communities across the United States." Father Paysse told *The Harvest* in a phone interview. "I had the opportunity to have a bird's-eye view of how the Church operates nationally. I was able to see how all of these wonderful diocesan programs and projects are accomplished. They're accomplished because people are committed."

Father Paysse focused his efforts on black Catholic communities that needed financial aid and catechetical resources.

He recalled one project. "We assisted in the purchasing of



Father Wayne Paysse speaks to a second grade class.

hymnals for a parish that needed help with the funding. It's a beautiful story. When I went to visit the parish, members of the choir were standing outside to welcome me. They said, 'Father, we have a gift for you, but it's not wrapped up in a box. Can you please sit here in the pew?' All of a sudden, the choir started singing beautiful spiritual hymns. It brought tears to my eyes."

He added, "I was once told,

'You are our eyes and our heart. You represent the Church before these communities.' I took that mandate very seriously and I often heard those words echoing in my heart. My time at the Black and Indian Mission Office taught me to be grateful and it taught me to be mindful of how I had to teach the people to continue to pray and to be grateful as well ... I learned that we must be like the Holy Family. We must care for

God's family. What better way to care for God's family than to care for our African-American sisters and brothers?"

Father Paysse said he was pleased to have the role of speaking on behalf of children and teachers and missionary priests and religious women in need.

He said he was thankful for all of the generous donors who were supportive of the Black and Indian Mission Office.



## MASTER OF CEREMONIES FOR POPE FRANCIS

#### Liturgist coordinates 'big Masses' at Washington Shrine

BY ALLIE BLAIR

When Pope Francis processed to the altar erected outside of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington in September, the more than 30,000 faithful joined him in song and prayer for the outdoor canonization Mass.

Even in a church that is accustomed to hosting extraordinary liturgical events, the papal Mass was a big celebration, requiring careful planning and coordination.

One of those who make these extraordinary Masses seem routine is a small group of liturgists and masters of ceremonies who work behind the scenes to make the worship experience both prayerful and joyful.

One of those in this small, dedicated group is a former parishioner of a Josephite parish and graduate of the Josephite's high school in New Orleans.

Ajani Gibson is the assistant to the director of Liturgy at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. He is responsible for coordinating over 300 liturgical volunteers who serve at the National Shrine. Mr. Gibson also assists the principal Master of Ceremonies during Mass.

Mr. Gibson is the second oldest of five siblings. He grew up in New Orleans, where he was an altar server at the former Josephite Parish, St. Peter Claver. He also attended St. Augustine High School.

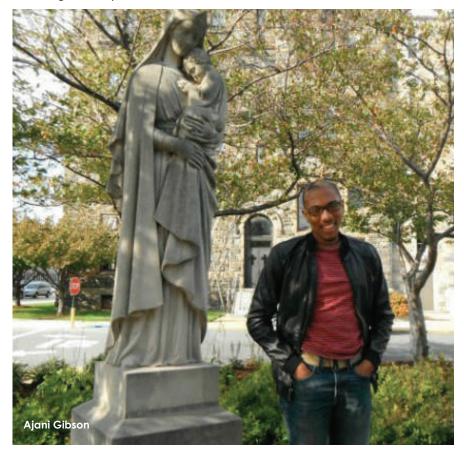
He moved to Washington, D.C., to pursue his degree in Theology. Presently, he is working on his master's degree in Liturgical Studies and will graduate in 2017.

"It is my hope to be at the service of my community, especially the African-American Catholic community throughout the country," said Mr. Gibson. "I hope one day to be able to create a liturgical commission for African-American Catholics that helps to synchronize black Catholic culture in a way that helps inform black Catholics how the richness of our culture has a place in the liturgy. The liturgy calls for our cultural expression."

As for the Mass with Pope Francis, Mr. Gibson said the Holy Father graciously took time to IT IS MY HOPE TO BE AT THE SERVICE OF ... THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

greet the altar servers and others who helped with the Mass.

Mr. Gibson said of his encounter with the pope, "It's something that I will never forget. I am blessed to have had such an opportunity." Mr. Gibson assisted the Mass of over 30,000 people, 200 bishops and 1,000 priests, as one of the supporting Master of Ceremonies.



## FORTHCOMING BOOK DOCUMENTS HISTORY OF BLACK SISTERS IN U.S.

#### BY DAN STOCKMAN

Shannen Dee Williams stumbled on the subject of black nuns by accident. Later, she would wonder if she had done the right thing by digging further.

"Had I known what I was going to uncover, I probably wouldn't have done this project," Williams said. "I was naive. I didn't get it."

What she didn't get was that the history of black women religious in the United States is replete with shocking examples of racism, racial segregation and marginalization, perpetuated by their white religious leaders and peers. At their peak around 1965, there were about 1,000 African-American sisters, Williams said, but there are only about 300 today.

Her project is now a book, "Subversive Habits: Black Nuns and the Struggle to Desegregate Catholic America after World War I."

Williams is an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she teaches courses in U.S., African-American, women's, civil right's and religious history.

Williams came across a news item about the 1968 creation of the National Black Sisters Conference. Intrigued, she wrote to some of the founders, mainly just to see if they were still alive. Then the letters started pouring in, saying things like, "We've been waiting on you. We're so glad someone's trying to tell our story."

Their stories were heartbreaking, she said, and she's been collecting oral histories ever since.

The reason there are so few black sisters today, Williams said, is that for about a century – from the Civil War until the 1970s – they were often either kept out of religious life entirely or they were forced or hounded out later.

"Their history in religious life is not new," Williams said. "There is a black Catholic tradition that is old, that goes back to the beginnings of the church."

Williams said the record shows that in the late 1800s, many religious orders in the United States specifically excluded black women.

After World War II, some white orders slowly began to accept black sisters, but they were treated poorly, Williams said. One black sister reported that every time she moved, they burned her old sheets because no one else would sleep on them. White sisters refused to use the silverware she used. Some orders accepted black sisters but made them take their vows separately, in the sacristy.



Sister Cora Marie Billings, who in 1956 desegregated the Philadelphia province of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, is a part of the forthcoming book. Photo by CNS.

And when the civil rights movement began, things got even worse.

Black sisters who became outspoken about civil rights were often pushed out or hounded to quit. One had her final vows delayed seven years, some had their final vows delayed indefinitely.

Williams said that the oral histories and papers she has collected show that black sisters began leaving religious life at double the rate of their white peers after Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed in 1968.

Of course, things are much different today. The sisters' conference is different, too – instead of sisters forced out of or marginalized by their communities, Conference members are now in leadership positions, she said.

It is the sisters who stayed and persevered who keep her going, Williams said. "It's a powerful history, a powerful story and I'm honored to write it," she said. "But at the root of it is faith. … I'm staunchly Catholic because these women and their faith demand it."

Williams said that despite all she has uncovered, there is not only hope, but also a great reason to hope.

"Sisters are so diverse, but they all agree that racism has no place within the church, and that's different – that suggests the future is going to be okay," she said.

Stockman is national correspondent for Global Sisters Report, a project of National Catholic Reporter. The website is www.globalsistersreport.org.

## If you would like to see your photos of Josephite parish activities featured in ACES *The Harvest, submit your pictures by* Email to: harvest@josephite.com LACES

#### REMEMBERING TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

Dr. Calvin Moret, husband of Bernice Moret, and noble friend of the Josephites, entered into eternity on Sept. 11 at 90 years of age. Dr. Moret was the last Louisiana member of the World War II Tuskegee Airmen, a renowned unit of African-Americans serving in the U.S. military. He was the

owner of Moret Printing before Katrina. Corpus Christi-Epiphany church in New Orleans honored the life of their beloved parishioner. Father Henry Davis, SSJ, is the pastor and Father David Begany is the associate pastor of Corpus Christi-Epiphany Church in New Orleans, LA.

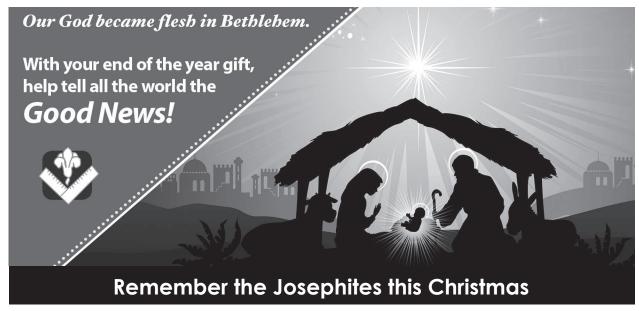




#### MOTHER OF MERCY & HELPING THE SICK

Our Mother of Mercy church in Beaumont, Texas, continued its ongoing ministry to the sick. Father Lowell Case, SSJ, pastor of Our Mother of Mercy, said the church is an old Creole parish

that tries to visit those in need on the first Friday of every month. Renee Granger is in charge of the ministry, which brings communion and the sacraments to those in need.



#### JOSEPHITE PARISH PARTICIPATES IN 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILLION MAN MARCH

On Oct. 10, parishioners from St. Joseph Church, in Alexandria, VA, participated in the Million Man March. The year was the 20th anniversary of the event, leading to the launch of a new campaign named Justice or Else! Father Donald Fest, SSJ, is the pastor, of St. Joseph Church in Alexandria, VA.





## PARISH CLOSES SUMMER WITH PROJECT WONDER SUMMER BIBLE CAMP



St. Peter Claver parish, in Baltimore, said goodbye to summer with a bible camp for their youth. Campers designed their own mugs during craft time, had cookouts, went swimming and played laser tag! Father Ray Bomberger, SSJ, is the pastor, of St. Peter Claver parish in Baltimore, MD.

#### A POEM ABOUT JOSEPH'S COURTSHIP

Before Cana came the temple wooing of the virgin to select her second spouse. In a row of bearded patriarchs' sons Joseph stood out, his oaken staff cavalcading with lilies.

In the high priest's garden, air like roses and myrrh floated over the twelve suitors, only one of whom would raise a son who would outlive his tomb. Resurrection had not happened yet. When she entered, they saw God's favor pass over them and rest on him like a dove on a prophet's tree.

Hewn from ark wood, his home sheltered her and though he vowed to be chaste he fathered saints more numerous than the stars.

Philip C. Kolin is a professor of English at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

## CONTINUING T H E MISSION

#### THIS YEAR **OF MERCY**



Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has announced an Extraordinary Jubilee Year that has at its center the mercy of God. He said, "We want to live in the light of the Word of the Lord: 'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (cf. Lk 6:36) This Holy Year of Mercy begins on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and concludes on Sunday, November 20, 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.

One of my favorite scripture passages is "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Mt. 5:7) I am attracted to this verse because it is a good reminder that if I want mercy from God, then I have to render mercy to others. I want all the mercy I can get! So, I figure I will store it up as high as I can, as long as I can. This thought alone keeps me on my toes when it comes to judging others, much less to condemn someone.

A Gospel song says, "He looked beyond my fault and saw my need." I like that thought because it reminds me that God is merciful and forgiving. When God has been so gracious and forgiving to

me, who am I to judge another without mercy? Not to offer forgiveness and mercy to another would be hypocritical.

The Year of Mercy offers us many ways of framing this virtue. What does "mercy" means for you? Have you ever experienced mercy? Where might you become more merciful? Where is mercy needed - in your life, in your family, in our world?

A good place to begin is to review what we learned in our grade school religion classes: the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. From there, we can do a "self-evaluation." You might have to pull out your catechism to get the list. (Every Catholic home should have a catechism handy for the family.) While you are searching for the works of mercy also spend some time re-discovering the subject of "indulgences." A big part of this year of mercy is indulgences - a unique way we can experience God's mercy.

In a recent talk, Pope Francis identified several ways to experience a true encounter with the mercy of God and receive the Jubilee Indulgence. He invites all able body individuals to make "a brief pilgrimage" in which they walk through the Holy Doors of their cathedral church or designated shrines of mercy throughout the world. He also mentions those confined because of sickness and age. He said that prayers and Holy Communion can merit them a Jubilee Indulgence.

Pope Francis even finds a way for those incarcerated, whose freedom is limited, to participate in the Holy Year. They can achieve the indulgence each time they pass through the threshold of their cell if it is their intention to have the mercy of God transform their heart.

Each act the faithful perform of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy will obtain for them the Jubilee Indulgence and the pope says that in any of these situations, the Jubilee Indulgence can be obtained for the deceased.

Thus, we are challenged to make the most of this Holy Year.

Father Donald Fest, SSJ, is pastor of St. Joseph Church in Alexandria, Virginia and serves on the editorial planning board of The Harvest.

## JOSEPHITE PERPETUAL ENROLLMENTS



#### FOR THE LIVING AND THE DECEASED **JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2015**

Many thanks to all of our Sustaining Partners, who together with loved ones, have been enrolled as Perpetual Members of the Josephites, benefiting them with prayerful daily remembrances by all Josephites.

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## JOSEPHITE PERPETUAL ENROLLMENTS

#### Continued

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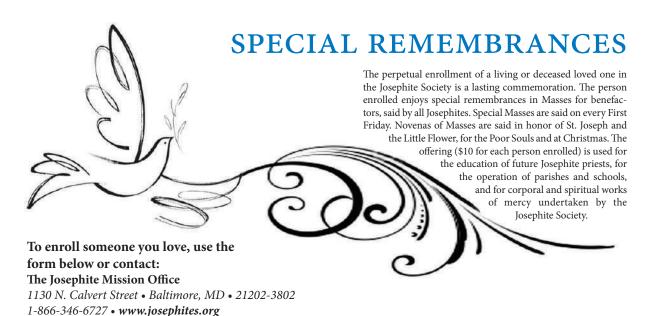
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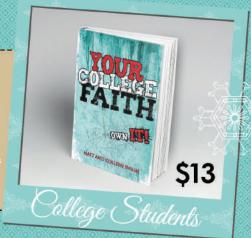
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