

e-Echo

e-Newsletter of the
Department of Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Mobile
August-October 2026

Here's a portion of a recent daily reflection from Bishop Barron:

Friends, in today's Gospel, Jesus summons apostles whom he shapes and sends on mission. Priests, through the centuries—from Augustine and Aquinas, to Francis Xavier and John Henry Newman, to John Paul II—are the descendants of those first friends and apprentices of the Lord. They have been needed in every age, and they are needed today, for the kingdom of heaven must be proclaimed, the poor must be served, God must be worshipped, and the sacraments must be administered.

Spiritual fathers are required especially in our time, when a rising tide of secularism threatens to overwhelm the religious impulse. We are wired for God; we will never satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts apart from God.

The secularist ideology teaches that sufficient amounts of wealth, pleasure, power, or honor will make us happy. Who will counter this? Who will speak to this culture of the beauty of God? Who will remind us that our lives are not about us? Who will break open the words of the gospel and spread out the banquet table of Christ's body and blood? This is why we need priests.

Perhaps we can keep this reminder front and center this school year! How can we support our priests? How can we encourage others to do so?

And a reminder to our PCLs, YMLs, OCIA Coordinators and Adult Faith Formation Teams—that you only have until Aug 3rd to sign up for the Summit Retreat. Details and QR for sign up are on pg. 10!

Finally, please help us advertise our upcoming Masses for Healing and Remembrance for all who have experienced the death of a child at any age or stage of life including miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, or infant or older child death. More information can be found on the flyer on pg. 12.

Hail Mary, full of grace,



the Lord is with you!

Reminder from the Office for the Protection of Minors and Adults about the 2026 Youth Safe Environment Training

It is once again time to plan for Safe Environment training for all minors enrolled in our schools, religious education programs, and youth groups. Please keep in mind the following points while planning for these annual lessons:

- The curriculum should be taught during **October**. Makeup sessions should be conducted for absent students. Parents should be notified before these lessons take place. This can be done by letter, newsletter, take-home folder, etc.
- Two adults who are current in their Child Protection training/annual retraining must be present during the lessons.
- If a parent refuses to allow his/her child to be present for the lesson, then he/she must sign a refusal letter.

Every effort should be made to reach 100% of the students.

More information along with the appropriate forms will be provided in September. Please call the OPMA office at 251-434-1559 or email me at klollis@mobarch.org if you have any questions.

Important Reminder!!!

**Have the people who work with you completed their
Child Protection initial or renewal training???**

Not sure???

Contact the OPMA office to find out!

251-434-1559

Kathy will be happy to help!

Important Dates coming up...

Aug 7—Seminarian Gala

Aug 15—Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary

Sept 8—Feast of the Nativity of Mary

Sept 11, 12:10pm—Blue Mass (Cathedral)

Sept 25, 12:10pm—Red Mass (Cathedral)

Oct 17, 12:10pm—White Mass (Cathedral)

PCL Reminders for August-October



ADMINISTRATION

August:

Review, update and if necessary develop forms for:

- registration

- attendance

- RE program handbook

Review, update and if necessary develop guidelines for:

- discipline

- safety

- cancellation due to weather

- attendance

Finalize the program calendar for the year, checking parish, OEFL, Catholic school(s) and public school calendars (be sure to schedule student Child Protection training in October!)

Finalize catechist and parent calendars

Develop grade level rosters from registration forms

Develop an Emergency Plan (i.e. weather, fire, etc.)

Identify persons with special needs and/or disabilities and working with their parents, arrange for suitable faith formation program for each individual

Monthly during school year:

Prepare administration report for pastor

- registration

- budget update

- concerns

Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

September:

Prepare for and facilitate the initial Parent Meeting

Check fire drill regulations and verify routes are posted in each room

Put together first aid kits and have readily available. Make sure that all catechists know the location of the kits.

Purchase office and teaching supplies as needed

Discuss and plan with pastor Catechetical Sunday celebration (September 20, 2026)

Update permanent records and make records for new students

Collect Baptismal records for Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation candidates

Prepare a fall newsletter for families

Create a RE bulletin board and place pictures of events, articles, notices, etc

October:

Meet with Pastor and appropriate catechists to plan the celebration of sacraments (Baptism, Reconciliation, Communion, Confirmation, RCIA)

Hold Parent Meetings for sacramental preparation

Take advantage of all forms of communication at your parish and keep parents informed about events.

PCL Reminders for August-October

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

August:

- Identify returning catechists -- grade level, day, etc.
- Continue to recruit new catechists or group leaders, taking care to ensure that new recruits receive initial Child Protection training.
- Facilitate Catechist Meeting prior to first class day. Distribute Catechist Handbook, teacher texts, resources and other materials. Ensure that "Catechist Agreements" are returned to you prior to the first class.
- Assign rooms for RE events and classes. Check furniture for safety.
- Check textbooks and resources, order where needed
- Check all AV equipment and resources for repair, replacement or safety
- Collaborate with the support staff of parish and school

September:

- Ask Catechists to contact those who haven't attended first classes
- Update and revise class lists
- Obtain or check supplies for catechists
- Recruit substitutes and catechist aides

October:

- Provide information for All Saints and All Souls
- Ensure each catechist's and volunteer's compliance with Child Protection policies (contact OPMA if you have questions concerning this verification)
- Confirm that catechists plan for and implement Child Protection curriculum in classrooms
- Assist Catechists in providing parents with list of prayers appropriate for child's age level
- Ongoing affirmation and communication

Catechetical Sunday 2026 - September 20, 2026

Catechetical Sunday was inspired by the Vatican document *Provido sane consilio* (*On the Better Care and Promotion of Catechetical Education*) published in 1935. This document asked every country to acknowledge the importance of the Church's teaching ministry and to honor those who serve the Christian community as catechists.

We continue this tradition today by recognizing all those who serve in catechetical ministries. Talk to your pastor about recognizing all those who serve at one of the Masses on the weekend of 9/20.

Check out the available [resources on the UCCB website](#). Certificates, posters and prayer cards are available for free download in both English and Spanish. If you prefer, the resources can be ordered through Our Sunday Visitor (link on USCCB webpage).



DCE Dates to note for 2026-2027

Parishes:

Parish Educational Ministry “Summit Retreat” - August 14-16

Masses of Healing and Remembrance (for those who have lost children from miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth or the death of a child of any age)

Saturday, October 3rd, 10am: St. Pius X, Mobile

Saturday, October 10th, 10am: St. Patrick, Robertsedale

Saturday, October 31st, 10am: St. John the Evangelist, Enterprise

Saturday, November 7th, 10am: St. Peter, Montgomery

ACYC Jr. - Oct. 9-11

SEEK 27—Jan 1-5, 2027 (San Antonio)

Rite of Election 2027:

Thursday, Feb. 11th at 7pm – St. Columba, Dothan

Saturday, Feb. 13th at 10am – St. Joseph, Prattville

Saturday, Feb. 20th at 2pm – St. Lawrence, Fairhope

Sunday, Feb. 21st at 3pm – Cathedral-Basilica of the Immaculate Conception

ACYC—Feb 19-21, 2027

Schools:

Religion Chair Meetings 2026-27:

Monday, September 21, 2026 – curriculum mapping

Monday, November 16, 2026

Monday, January 11, 2027

Monday, March 15, 2027

School ARK testing window: April 6 – 16, 2027

Catholic Challenge Cup for Catholic Schools—Thursday, April 15, 2027

DID YOU KNOW...

That the OEFL has a [Resource for the Sacrament Preparation of Children & Youth?](#)

If you help children or youth prepare for Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, or Confirmation, or if you work with youth in your parish’s OCIA program, this resource is for you!

Check it out!



Still looking for team members for your ministry?

Consider these strategies:

1. Shift from "Pulpit Pleading" to "Personal Invitation"

Most people do not volunteer because they assume someone else will do it, or they feel unworthy. Broad announcements often attract people who are looking for a task, whereas personal invitations call forth spiritual gifts.

- **The "I See in You" Approach:** Look at your parish community. Identify individuals who possess the fruits of the Holy Spirit (patience, joy, kindness). Approach them individually and say: *"I've noticed how deeply you care about the kids in our parish during Mass, and I see a real gift for teaching in you. Have you ever considered sharing that gift with our confirmation youth?"*
- **Ask for Recommendations:** Ask your current trusted volunteers, *"Who is one person in this parish you think would be an incredible addition to our team?"* People trust the endorsement of their peers.

2. Lower the Barrier to Entry with "Test Drives"

The fear of a permanent, multi-year commitment scares away busy but holy parishioners. Give them a safe way to try out the ministry without feeling trapped.

- **The Shadowing Method:** Invite a prospective volunteer to simply come and sit in the back of a youth group night or a religious education class. Tell them, *"No obligation to do anything. Just come watch how we do things and see if it's a good fit for your heart."*
- **Micro-Commitments:** Break large roles into smaller, manageable chunks. Instead of asking someone to commit to teaching for 30 weeks, ask if they would lead a small group for a 6-week Advent/Lent series, or if they would bake snacks and pray for the team behind the scenes.

3. Lead with Vision, Not Hard Work

People do not want to volunteer for a "program," but they will sacrifice their time for a **mission**. When you talk about the ministry, focus on the *impact*, not the logistics.

- **Wrong Pitch:** *"We need people to help supervise kids from 6:00 to 7:30 PM on Wednesdays so we can maintain our safe-environment ratios."*
- **Right Pitch:** *"We are building a team of mentors to walk alongside our middle schoolers as they navigate a really difficult culture, helping them discover that Jesus loves them. We want you to help us build that safe space."*

4. Address the "I'm Not Holy/Qualified Enough" Objection

The number one reason good parishioners say no to education and ministry roles is intimidation. They worry they don't know the Bible well enough or can't answer tough theological questions.

- **Assure ongoing accompaniment:** Let them know immediately that they will not be left alone. Use phrases like: *"We supply the entire curriculum, we train you step-by-step, and you will always be paired with a partner in the room."*
- **Value witness over expertise:** Remind them that the parish doesn't need theologians; it needs witnesses. Young people and families are converted by someone who loves Jesus and listens to them, not someone who has a degree in theology.



PCLs, YMLs, Principals, Catholic School Teachers, Catechists, Youth Ministry Team Members—Let's work with our parents!

Let's supply our families with the tools they need live our faith at home!

August — month dedicated to The Immaculate Heart of Mary

- ⇒ In honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, say one decade of the Rosary together as a family to ask for Mary's intercession and protection.
- ⇒ Start "Two-a-Days" - As schools or sports leagues head into late-summer training camps, try starting a spiritual "two-a-day" routine with your kids. Spend just two minutes offering your day to God in the morning, and two minutes praying an evening Examen or prayers that they are learning before bed.
- ⇒ **Back-to-School Backpack Blessing:** Before the first day of school, gather your children's backpacks. Pray over them and their school supplies, asking the Holy Spirit to give them wisdom, courage, and kindness in the new school year.
- ⇒ **August 4 — Feast of St. John Vianney:** As the patron saint of parish priests, this is a perfect day to have your children write a thank-you note, draw a picture, or bake a treat to deliver to your parish priests.
- ⇒ **August 11—Feast of St. Clare:** St. Clare is the patron saint of television because, when she was too sick to attend Mass, she miraculously saw it projected on her wall. Consider setting up a family movie night to watch a faith-centered show or movie in her honor.

September—month dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows

- ⇒ Learn more about the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows and be inspired to make a heart-shaped cake [here](#). Talk to your kids about how we can bring our own sadness and worries to Mary, who understands suffering.
- ⇒ **Morning Car Prayers:** If mornings feel rushed, use the commute to school or daycare for a quick prayer routine. Praying a single decade of the Rosary, the Guardian Angel prayer, or simply asking for a specific saint's intercession on the drive can completely reset the tone of the morning.
- ⇒ **September 23 — Feast of St. Padre Pio:** This modern mystic and saint famously said, "Pray, hope, and don't worry." Take this day to teach your children a simple short prayer to say whenever they feel anxious or stressed.
- ⇒ **September 29 — Feast of the Archangels (Michaelmas):** Celebrate Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael! Michaelmas is an ancient, joyous festival. A fun family tradition is to roast a chicken or bake a blackberry pie (tradition says that when Lucifer was cast out of heaven by St. Michael, he fell into a blackberry bush!). It's also the perfect day to re-memorize the St. Michael Prayer together.

October—month dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary

- ⇒ **The "One Decade" Rule:** Praying an entire Rosary can be difficult for young children (and busy parents!). Instead, commit to praying just *one decade* together after dinner or right before bed. Let your children take turns leading the prayers and announcing the mysteries.
- ⇒ **Carve a Christian Pumpkin:** While carving pumpkins, turn it into a prayerful allegory. Talk about how God picks us out from the patch, cleans out all the messy stuff inside us (like Confession), and puts His light inside us to shine for the world to see. You can even carve a cross or a Marian monogram into your pumpkin.
- ⇒ **October 15 — Feast of St. Teresa of Avila:** This great Doctor of the Church famously wrote, "*Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, all things are passing away: God never changes.*" Introduce your children to this short, peaceful prayer to help them whenever they feel overwhelmed by schoolwork or stress.
- ⇒ **October 22 — Feast of Pope St. John Paul II:** Celebrate this beloved modern pope by enjoying some of his favorite things as a family: spend the afternoon outdoors, go for a hike, or enjoy a Polish dessert like cream cake (*Kremówka*). Remind your children of his famous words: "*Do not be afraid!*"



[Selecting a Patron Saint for Your Classroom](#)
Catechist Magazine

[The Power of Prayer: Three Ways
To Model Discipleship](#)
Catechist's Journey



[5 Ways for Catholic Teachers to
Prepare for the School Year](#)
Catholic-Link.org

[10 Ideas for a Great First Day](#)

Lumen Christi Parish



[Teaching about St. Maximilian Kolbe](#)

Look to Him and Be Radiant

August 14

[First Day of School Worksheets & Printables](#)

The Religion Teacher



[St Teresa of Calcutta Lesson Plans and Worksheets](#)

The Religion Teacher

September 5

[Leaders' Toolkit Faith Formation](#)

Respect Life

USCB



From Springtide Research

Research on young people's vocation and sense of purpose

How teens and young adults define and discern their life's purpose

The word "vocation" appears often in conversations about young people's futures, yet people use the term in different ways. "Vocation" can be described as a calling from a higher power or as a broader sense of meaning and purpose in life.

In 2025, the Christian Brothers Conference commissioned Springtide Research Institute to survey over 3,500 young people and interview 35 more to examine how teens and young adults understand the direction of their lives, discover a sense of purpose, and see how, if at all, the word vocation resonates with them.

[Access free download](#)

From Team Initiation

A better way to think about recruiting (OCIA) sponsors

When a new seeker shows up, do you start stressing over how to find a sponsor for them? Finding sponsors is often one of the most challenging parts of catechumenate ministry. But maybe that's because we've been looking at recruiting in the wrong way.

In this video, we explore why you may need to ask more of your potential sponsors to get them to say yes. We discuss the benefit of looking on the margins of the parish for ordinary Catholics, asking them to walk alongside someone discovering Jesus for the first time.

[Watch](#)

Article from Aleteia to share with grade school parents

How often should my 8-year-old go to confession?

Parents of First Communicants sometimes ask the question, "How often should my child go to confession?"

This question is certainly a valid one, as odds are likely your children won't be begging you to take them in for the sacrament.

They might be conscious of sin, but confession is still new to them and certainly isn't yet a habit. They realize confession is a good thing, but don't always think of it.

It's not even that they are scared of confession, necessarily. Some kids may be afraid of the priest, but many children enjoy going to confession. They think it is "fun" and like talking to the priest.

So what should a parent do when their child doesn't nag about being taken to confession?

Take them to confession!

[Read more](#)

From The Catholic World Report

Social contagion and the rise and fall of transgenderism

For more than a decade, the United States and much of the Western world witnessed a dramatic rise in transgender identification, especially among female adolescents and young adults. The speed, the scale, and the demographic concentration of this shift were unprecedented. Between 2013 and 2023, referrals to gender clinics in the U.K. rose twenty-fold or more in some regions; Sweden's Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital reported an annual doubling of cases for several years; Australia saw referrals jump from 18 in 2012 to 200 in 2017. In the United States, elite campuses such as Brown University reported a 793 percent increase in LGBTQ+ identification since 2010, with the steepest growth in the newest identity categories.

These patterns were not evenly distributed across geography or age. They clustered—tightly—around specific social environments: elite schools, progressive cities, online communities, and peer groups.

The Church's fidelity in the face of social contagion

It is no longer possible to deny that the most plausible explanation for this pattern is social contagion. Not contagion in the medical sense, but in the sociological one: the spread of ideas, identities, and behaviors through imitation, visibility, and the desire for belonging. When a new identity becomes highly visible and socially rewarded, it becomes easier for others—especially adolescents—to imagine it as a meaningful framework for understanding their own distress.

[Read more](#)

From The Catholic Exchange

How MAiD is Counted and Not Counted

EUTHANASIA, CAUSE OF DEATH, AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ACT

The normalization of euthanasia rarely happens all at once. It usually advances by a series of softenings. First the language changes. Suicide becomes "physician-assisted death." Then it becomes "medical assistance in dying." Finally it becomes MAiD, an acronym so gentle and bureaucratic that the physician, the patient, and the lethal act almost disappear from view.

But there is another, less visible stage in this process: classification. A society does not only reveal its moral convictions by what it permits. It also reveals them by how it records what it permits. The question is not only whether euthanasia is legal, but whether society can still name truthfully what has happened when a patient dies by lethal medical intervention.

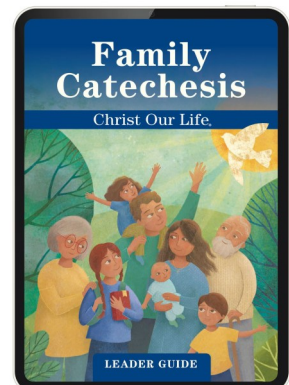
[Read more](#)

Have you seen Loyola Press' "Christ Our Life Family Catechesis" Program?

Check out this [2 minute overview](#)

If you are looking for a way to bring parents into the faith formation process, this may be what you are looking for! It's customizable to meet your parish's specific needs. The parent portion could even double as Adult Faith Formation for seven times a year!

If you are interested in exploring Family Catechesis options, please contact Janet in the OEFL. She's more than happy to help pastors and PCLs bring parents into the faith formation loop!



From Team Initiation

Seven sources of catechesis for your OCIA formation process

Are you looking for the “perfect” textbook for your catechumenate process? You might be asking the wrong question.

In this video, I discuss the seven sources of catechesis identified by the Directory for Catechesis. Discover how to enrich your catechesis by exploring the Word of God (Scripture and Tradition), the Magisterium, the liturgy, and even beauty itself. These and several other sources are vital tools for accompanying seekers on their journey of faith.

Watch now to learn how to broaden your approach and more deeply unfold the mystery of Christ for your seekers.

[Watch now](#)

From Zenit

More than 1 million babies legally killed in the U.S. in 2025, according to a report: the killing of babies through medication is on the rise

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022 through its landmark Dobbs decision, many observers predicted that abortion numbers would decline substantially as states regained authority to regulate or prohibit the procedure. Four years later, a new set of figures suggests a far more complex reality.

According to the latest estimates released by the Society of Family Planning’s #WeCount project, approximately 1,126,760 abortions were performed in the formal U.S. healthcare system during 2025. That represents a 1.6 percent increase compared with 2024 and places the annual total above pre-Dobbs levels, despite the enactment of abortion restrictions in numerous states.

[Read more](#)

From the USCCB

brief one-page education resource – [What are Abortion Pills?](#)

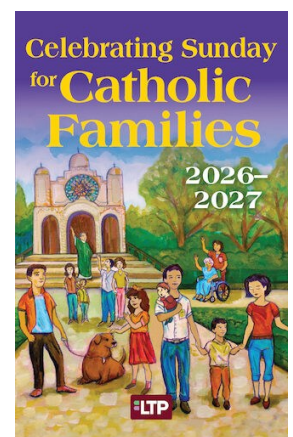
Available in English and Spanish

This can be shared with clergy, parish leaders, and in websites, social media, and parish bulletins.

Have you seen this resource for families from Liturgy Training Publications?

[Celebrating Sunday for Catholic Families](#)

Encouraging family attendance and participation at Sunday Mass, this resource provides parents with a guide for reflecting on the Gospel as a family. Prompts for conversation on the way to and from Mass inspire children to focus and engage with different aspects of the liturgy, while simple family activities reinforce the connection between the Gospel stories and daily family life. Bulk pricing makes this affordable, allowing you to give it to every family of your parish.





SUMMIT | **AUG. 14-16** **HOLY SPIRIT HALL**

A weekend of spiritual renewal, strategic planning,
and community building for Parish Education Ministry Leaders,
including Youth Ministry Leaders, Parish Catechetical Leaders,
Leaders of OCIA, and Leaders of Adult Education

Friday, August 14 (doors open at 6pm)
until noon on Sunday, August 16

(Late arrivals or early departures available)

Location: Holy Spirit Hall - 18673 Scenic Hwy 98, Fairhope

What to Expect:

An Opportunity for Rest and Relaxation
on beautiful Mobile Bay

Collaborative Learning

Peer Networking

Spiritual Renewal

Registration Details:

Cost: \$80 per person
(scholarships available!)

Deadline: Aug 3 or until our
90 spots have been filled, whichever
comes first

How: Scan the QR code below or visit:
mobarch.org/summit

Includes:

4 meals (3 Saturday and 1 Sunday
plus heavy hors d'oeuvres on Friday)

Bunk accommodations at Holy Spirit Hall

All Summit and Retreat materials



Hosted by the Department of Catholic Education. For questions, contact:
dstein@mobarch.org OR jmasline@mobarch.org



Masses of Healing and Remembrance

For Those Grieving the Loss of a Child

Whether your loss was recent or many years ago, you are not alone. Join Archbishop Rivotuso and our faith community to honor and remember these precious lives, held forever in the hands of God.

These Masses are offered for all who have experienced the death of a child at any age or stage, including miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, or infant or older child death.

October 3, 2026

St. Pius X Parish

217 S. Sage Ave., Mobile
10:00am

October 10, 2026

St. Patrick Parish

23035 Hwy 59, Robertsdale
10:00am

October 31, 2026

St. John Parish

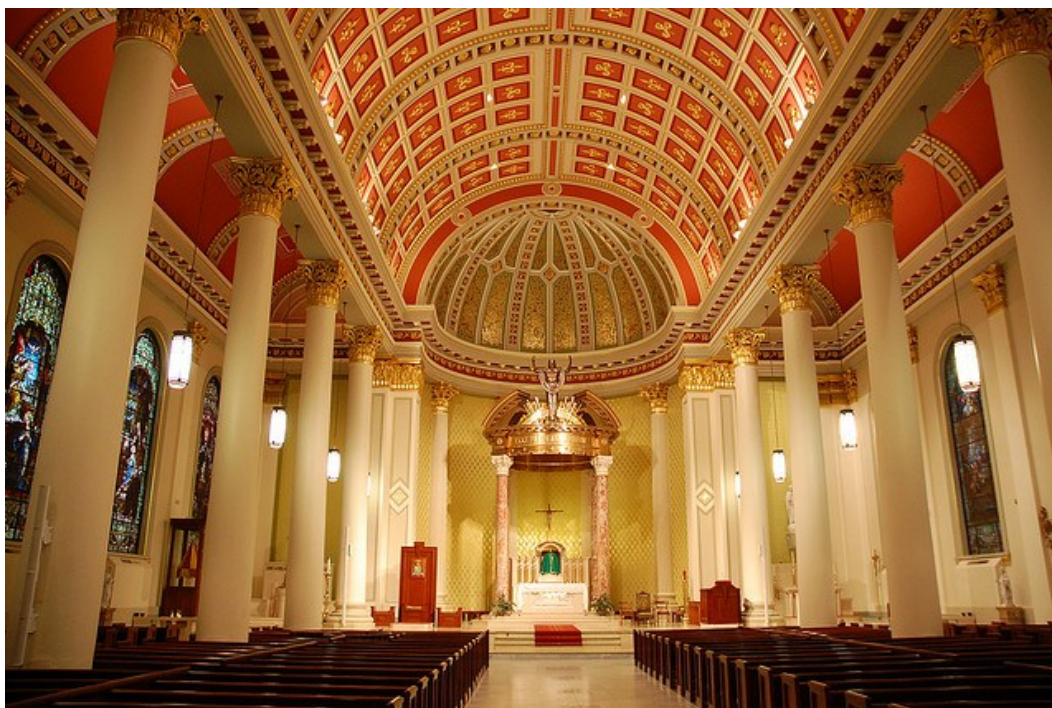
123 Heath St., Enterprise
10:00am

November 7, 2026

St. Peter Parish

219 Adams Ave., Montgomery
10:00am





Department of Catholic Education

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