



# Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church



**8968 Highway 23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037 † 504-394-0314 † Fax: 504-394-0376**  
Web: [www.olphbc.org](http://www.olphbc.org) † Email: [churchoffice@olphbc.org](mailto:churchoffice@olphbc.org)

**OFFICE HOURS**—Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.  
Please call between these times for routine parish business.

## PASTORAL TEAM

**Rev. Kyle V. Dave, Pastor**  
[kdave@arch-no.org](mailto:kdave@arch-no.org)

**Rev. William F. Maestri,**  
*Ministry of Sacraments & Education*

**George "Ed" Merritt, Jr., Deacon**  
[emerritt@arch-no.org](mailto:emerritt@arch-no.org)

**Brittany Breaux, School Principal**  
[bbreaux@olphbcschool.org](mailto:bbreaux@olphbcschool.org)

**Dawn Bassett, Administrative Assistant**

**Suzette Perrin, Coordinator of Religious  
Education and Adult Formation**  
[cre@olphbc.org](mailto:cre@olphbc.org)

**Angel Boyd, Receptionist**

**Debbie Fagnano, Director of Music Ministry**

**TJ Lejeune & Kenneth Pouwels,**  
*Maintenance Supervisors*

## OLPH SCHOOL

8970 Highway 23 † 504-394-0757

## PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION

8968 Highway 23 † 504-394-0314

## K.C. HALL

9016 Highway 23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037

## MASS SCHEDULE

<b>Saturday</b>	7:30 a.m. & Vigil 4:00 p.m.
<b>Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
<b>Monday</b>	7:30 a.m.
<b>Tuesday</b>	7:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
<b>Wednesday</b>	8:30 a.m. During the school year (7:30 a.m. when school is not in session)
<b>Thursday</b>	7:30 a.m.
<b>Friday</b>	7:30 a.m.
<b>First Friday Adoration:</b>	8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
<b>Holy Days:</b>	Consult the bulletin.

## SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

5:30 p.m.—6:15 p.m.  
2:30 p.m.—3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

## SACRAMENT OF THE SICK (ANointing)

By appointment only

## MISSION STATEMENT

*We, the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, are a living and growing Catholic community of faith, striving to follow and serve Christ. We are an evangelizing community, and we welcome others to fullness of life in Christ. With Mary we say "Yes" to God's call to pray together, worship consciously, and serve joyfully.*

To visit our  
church website  
scan the QR  
code below:





## NEW PARISHIONERS

We welcome you to a very friendly and enthusiastic community. Please fill out the information in the Binder on the Welcome Table located in the back of church or register at the Church Office. A Census Form can also be found on our website at [www.olphbc.org](http://www.olphbc.org).

### Sacraments



**SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:** Baptisms are usually celebrated after any weekend Mass. Currently we only schedule one family at a time. Parents and godparents are required to attend a seminar prior to the Baptism. The seminar is usually held on the third Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Day Chapel in Church. More information and required forms can be found on our website.

**SACRAMENT OF FIRST COMMUNION:** First Eucharist is celebrated the first Saturday of May for students in the 2nd grade or above. Children older than 2nd grade will be prepared on individual situations. The Sacrament of Reconciliation must be celebrated prior to Communion.

**SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION:** Confirmation is celebrated in the Fall of 11th grade. Candidates who attend Catholic high school or are enrolled in the High School of Religion program come together for Sacramental preparation. All candidates are asked to pre-register in their freshmen year and no later than December of their 10th grade year. Information and registration can be found on our website: [www.olphbc.org](http://www.olphbc.org).

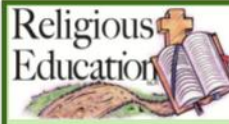
**SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE:** Contact the Church Office at least nine months prior to the planned date. No other arrangements should be made before contacting the Church Office.

**For more information on any of our Sacraments, contact the Church Office or email [cre@olphbc.org](mailto:cre@olphbc.org).**



**VISITATION OF THE SICK:** Inform the Church Office when someone is sick, shut-in or hospitalized and unable to attend Mass.

**FUNERALS:** Inform the Church Office as soon as possible when someone in the family dies, preferably before contacting the funeral home.



### Religious Education

The mission of OLPH's Religious Education program is to bring the "Good News" of God's love to all children and their families and to call them to commit their lives to Christ. Religious Education is available for children in Kindergarten through adults. We encourage parents to be parishioners of OLPH when registering students for Religious Education classes. Census forms can be obtained from the Parish Office during regular business hours, on the Welcome Table located in the back of church or you can register online. Call the church office at (504) 394-0314, or email [cre@olphbc.org](mailto:cre@olphbc.org) for more information.

**SUNDAY LITURGY OF THE WORD:** Children in grades K-2nd are invited with a catechist during 11:00 a.m. Mass to the Day Chapel for the Liturgy of the Word for Children (September-May). A summary of the readings of the day is discussed on their level.

**PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION:** Our PSR program is divided in two parts. Family Faith Formation is the "academic" part with the textbook discussed at home as a family. Our Encountering Engaging Events are a chance to come together as a community to worship together, do crafts, or engage in traditional events like our Nativity Play and Living Way of the Cross.

**HIGH SCHOOL OF RELIGION:** Students in 9th through 12th grade not attending a Catholic High School are offered Faith Formation with academics at home, working at their own pace, but also some time to get together to discuss what they have learned with their peers about three times a year. It is intended to be an informal study with honest Catholic answers.

**RCIA:** Are you or someone you know interested in becoming Catholic or completing Sacraments? Please join our RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). We have a Year-Round RCIA process that you can enter into whenever you are ready. This is for you if you have never been baptized, if you have been baptized into another denomination and now want to become Catholic, or if you are an adult Catholic but have never been confirmed. Sessions will be held in person on Tuesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. (day and time can be adjusted to personal schedules). For additional information and to register, contact the Church Office or email [cre@olphbc.org](mailto:cre@olphbc.org).

**Archdiocese of New Orleans Safe Environment—** Refer to the Web Site: <http://www.nolacatholic.org/safe-environment> for policies and procedures concerning safe environment and child protection.



## Scripture Readings & Events this Week

**Saturday, June 8, Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary; 2 Tm 4:1-8; Ps 71:8-9, 14-15ab, 16-17, 22; Lk 2:41-51**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 p.m. (Fr. M)  
Confessions, Church—2:30 p.m.—3:30 p.m.  
Vigil Mass, Church—4:00 p.m. (Fr. K)

**Sunday, June 9, Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time; Gn 3:9-15; Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; 2 Cor 4:13—5:1; Mk 3:20-35**

Masses, Church—8:00 a.m. (Fr. K) & 11:00 a.m. (Fr. M)

**Monday, June 10, 1 Kgs 17:1-6; Ps 121:1bc-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; Mt 5:1-12**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 a.m. (Fr. M)  
Church Office Closed

**Tuesday, June 11, Memorial of Saint Barnabas, Apostle; Acts 11:21b-26; 12:1-3; Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4, 5-6; Mt 5:13-16**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 a.m. (Fr. M)  
Church Office Hours—9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. or by Appointment  
Confessions, Church—5:30 p.m.—6:15 p.m.  
Novena—Mother of Perpetual Help, Church—6:50 p.m.  
Daily Mass, Church—7:00 p.m. (Fr. K)

**Wednesday, June 12, 1 Kgs 18:20-39; Ps 16:1b-2ab, 4, 5ab and 8, 11; Mt 5:17-19**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 a.m. (Fr. K)  
Church Office Hours—9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. or by Appointment  
KC Meeting, KC Hall—6:30 p.m.

**Thursday, June 13, Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua, Priest and Doctor of the Church; 1 Kgs 18:41-46; Ps 65:10, 11, 12-13; Mt 5:20-26**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 a.m. (Fr. K)  
Church Office Hours—9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. or by Appointment  
Catholicism Class, KC Hall—7:00 p.m. (Fr. M)  
CYO Event, Church—7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

**Friday, June 14, 1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-16; Ps 27:7-8a, 8b-9abc, 13-14; Mt 5:27-32**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 a.m. (Fr. M)  
Church Office Hours—9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. or by Appointment  
Riverbend Mass—10:00 a.m.

**Saturday, June 15, 1 Kgs 19:19-21; Ps 16:1b-2a and 5, 7-8, 9-10; Mt 5:33-37**

Daily Mass, Church—7:30 p.m. (Fr. M)  
Confessions, Church—2:30 p.m.—3:30 p.m.  
Vigil Mass, Church—4:00 p.m. (Fr. K)  
Altar Society Bake Sale after all Masses

**Sunday, June 16, Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Masses, Church—8:00 a.m. (Fr. M) & 11:00 a.m. (Fr. K)  
Choir Rehearsal, Church—10:00 a.m.  
Altar Society Bake Sale after all Masses

## Mass Intentions

**6/8, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.**— for the intentions of the Priest

**6/8, Saturday, 4:00 p.m.**— Jerry Pignoli, Eric Hansen, Larry Avist, Sr., Peter “Trae” Vujnovich III, Johnnie Pennison, Oliver & Margaret Koch, Michael G. Tredinich, Beverly Hebert, Francis Gainey, Mason Cappiello, Darrell Roy, Harold & Mary Pellegrin, Alexandra “Allie” Boteler, Delton & Ethel Lejeune, Evelyn Mistich, Brooks Michael Bourgeois

**6/9, Sunday, 8:00 a.m.**— for the Parishioners

**6/9, Sunday, 11:00 a.m.**— Vincent & Belle Ladner, Eric Hansen, Barbara & Donald Verret, Sr., Seth David Chedville, Blaze St. Marie, Allyson Kirby, Gary Buras, Sanders & Dobard Families, Lynwell Wilson, Kevin Hebert, Rosa C. Lopez Flores de Porche

**6/10, Monday, 7:30 a.m.**— for the intentions of the Priest

**6/11, Tuesday, 7:30 a.m.**— for the intentions of the Priest

**6/11, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.**— Blaze St. Marie

**6/12, Wednesday, 7:30 a.m.**— Kerry M. Casler

**6/13, Thursday, 7:30 a.m.**— for the intentions of the Priest

**6/14, Friday, 7:30 a.m.**— Harold & Mary Pellegrin

**6/15, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.**— for the intentions of the Priest

**6/15, Saturday, 4:00 p.m.**— for the Parishioners

**6/16, Sunday, 8:00 a.m.**— Johnnie Pennison, Michael G. Tredinich, Edward J. Tredinich, Farrell Nolan, Woody Wilson, Rennie Coludovich, Jr., Donald Folse, Sr., Kevin Bassett, Sanders & Dobard Families, Lynwell Wilson, Gabriel LaFrance, Sr., Clarence Sylve, Sr., Clarence Sylve, Jr., Felix LaFrance, Intentions of Eddie LaFrance, Sr.

**6/16, Sunday, 11:00 a.m.**— Eric Hensen, Ante & Ane Jurisic, Francis Gainey, Ivo Tesvich, Ante Tesvich, Stipo Cibilich, Mihovil Juricevic, Christopher Lincoln, Dinko Popich, Blaze St. Marie, Andrew Pobrica, Gary Buras, Ray Oncale, Wheldon Boyd, Sr., Wheldon Boyd, Jr.



## Newly Baptized In Christ

OLPH would like to welcome our new parishioners that were Baptized in May: **Banks Gerard Pouwels**, child of Maci and Bart Pouwels; and **Quinn Michel McIntire**, child of Alanna and William McIntire.



*Do Something Beautiful for God*

*June 10th*

Try to put in the hearts of your children a love for home. Make them long to be with their families. So much sin could be avoided if only people really loved as family.



**HURRICANE PRAYER:** Our Father in heaven, through the powerful intercession of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, spare us from all harm during this hurricane season; and protect us and our homes from all disasters of nature. Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to help us. AMEN



## OLPH School News



### Pope Francis' Prayer Intentions for the Year 2024

#### *June—For Migrants Fleeing Their Homes*

We pray that migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys full of danger and violence, find welcome and new opportunities in the countries that receive them.



### Bible Verses for the Year!

#### *June—KINDNESS*

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience...  
Colossians 3:12





## TEC Summer Retreats

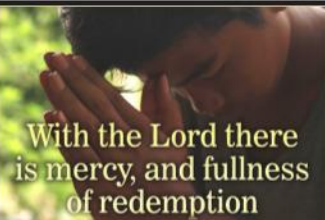
**What is TEC?** TEC, a Ministry of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, offers youth (who have completed at least their sophomore year of high school) and young adults the opportunity to encounter and integrate the Paschal Mystery at a time of passage into young adulthood. What the Church celebrates annually through the seasons of Lent-Easter-Pentecost and through the sacraments of initiation, TEC condenses into a 3-day experience. It provides a lived experience of the essential truths of our faith, drawing youth/young adults to a commitment to Christ and empowering them to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. Through evangelization and catechesis, this intergenerational movement facilitates spiritual growth of youth and young adults within a community of adult mentors.

**When and Where?** TEC 148 will be held June 22-24, 2024 (registration due June 17, 2024) and TEC 149 will take place July 27-29, 2024 (registration due July 22, 2024) at the Rosaryville Retreat Center in Ponchatoula, LA. The Cost is \$225.

### How to register?

Online at [www.tecneworleans.com/applications](http://www.tecneworleans.com/applications).

**Questions?** email [tecneworleans@arch-no.org](mailto:tecneworleans@arch-no.org) or visit their website at [www.tecneworleans.com](http://www.tecneworleans.com).



## Blameless Not Blamers

If you spend any amount of time around young children, you will quickly realize that they like to pass the blame. If you're lucky, they may even accompany it with an irritating whine. What are they trying to accomplish with this behavior?

They are trying to get out of trouble, to avoid punishment, often even twisting the truth to do so. Where do they learn this behavior?

The short answer is from our first parents, the founders of Original Sin. In today's first reading, we see Adam passing the blame to Eve, who then passes the blame to the serpent. While neither of them were untruthful, they were definitely trying to avoid punishment. They knew instantly that they had done wrong and disobeyed God. We all know what happens next. They are evicted from the Garden of Eden and begin to experience pain, hunger, illness and ultimately death. Although we might be tempted to let this first reading get us down, the second reading reminds us of God's promise of redemption: "the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also...Therefore, we are not discouraged... For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven."

That is why we can exclaim with joy, "Oh happy fault, Oh necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!" Because of Adam's sin, Jesus came down from heaven to save us. But not only did he save us, he made us members of his own family: "For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Knowing we are members of God's family should motivate us to end the cycle of blaming and finger pointing that Adam and Eve started and that we and our children continue. It should encourage us to humbly accept our faults, confess our sins and seek to be blameless in God's sight. It should drive us to instead lift others up by sharing the good news of God's unconditional love. Let's take one small step toward making that happen today. Tami Urcia



## ATTENTION MEN!

Westbank ACTS  
Catholic Coalition  
MENS RETREAT

**June 20-23, 2024 at Holy Cross College**

The retreat is open to all men 18 years and older. Registration is \$375 per person (includes housing and meals). A deposit of \$100.00 must be submitted in advance to reserve your place on the retreat, with balance due at check-in on June 20th. Note, financial difficulties should not prevent anyone from attending the Retreat. If you are unable to pay part of the fee, please contact one of the Leadership Team members listed below to make arrangements.

**Check in on Thursday, June 20th at 5:00 p.m. at St. John Bosco;** Retreat ends Sunday, June 23rd with 12 p.m. Return Mass, followed by a fellowship meal. **Round trip transportation to and from the retreat center will be provided for all retreatants.**

The retreat is based on the ACTS model: Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service. It will be an opportunity for spiritual renewal and the making of many friends! The goals of the retreat are to allow each person to focus on their faith and its application during their daily lives, to build purpose in their prayer life, to increase their presence at the liturgy, and to cultivate friendship among members of the church community. ***Don't miss this opportunity to renew your spiritual life and become the man God created you to be.***

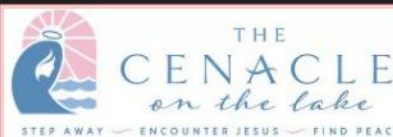
For Further questions, please reach out to the following:

Kevin Nanney (Director) at (504) 301-6123

Wade Perrin (Co Director) at (504) 340-6776

Ray Davis (Co Director) at (504) 495-6630 or

John Dalton (Spiritual Companion) at (504) 782-5705



### The Cenacle on the Lake

The Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center  
5500 St. Mary Street,  
Metairie, LA 70006  
Phone: (504) 887-1420

## ATTENTION WOMEN!

**Women of  
Manresa-Silent  
Women's Retreat**

**June 21-23, 2024**

**Presenter:** Fr. Anthony Rigoli, OMI

**Theme:** "Be still and know that I Am God". In a world where we are always busy and on the go, we long for peace. This retreat calls us to find God in the silence to stillness. How often do we wish for just a day of quiet and peace? We long for those moments where we can reflect and look at our life and enjoy the moment. If you long for peace, this retreat is for you.

**Cost:** \$350.00 per person (includes meals and accommodations) (A non-refundable deposit of \$100 is required to register with balance due at check-in)

**Time:** Check in is between 3:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m. on Friday, and concludes after lunch on Sunday.

**Register:** Go to <https://neworleansretreats.com/june-21-23-2024-1> or call the retreat office at 504-267-9604.

*Next Sunday is the  
Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**Ezekiel 17:22-24.** I have made the small tree great.

**2 Corinthians 5:6-10.** Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing the Lord.

**Mark 4:26-34.** The mustard seed, the smallest of all the seeds, grows into the biggest shrub of all.



The flowers in church this week were donated in loving memory of:

**Cathy Madere**, requested by The Madere Family.

*Church Flowers—Anyone who wishes to donate the flowers in church in memory of a loved one for a particular weekend may call the church office. The donation is \$50 payable to the Altar Society.*



**Mass Intentions & Cards**

If you would like a Mass for a deceased person, please contact the Church Office. A beautiful Mass card with an image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help will be mailed to the person of your choice for an offering of \$5 per Mass. Send your \$5 donation to the Church Office, with the name of the Mass intention, name and address where the card is to be mailed, and who's making the request.

**NOTE:** Mass intentions can be scheduled for weekday and weekend Masses. Some guidelines include:

- An intention may be for the deceased or the living (i.e. "The Healing of...", "The intentions of ...").
- Each weekend, one Mass is reserved for "All Parishioners' Intentions."
- Only one intention can be offered at each Weekday Mass, except for Holy Days of Obligations that fall during the week.
- Mass can be said for an individual (e.g. "John Smith"), a married couple ("Joe and Mary Smith") or a family (e.g. "The Smith Family").



**Rite of Christian Initiation  
of Adults (RCIA)**

Do you or someone you know want to become Catholic? Are you an adult who has never been Confirmed in the Catholic Faith? Our program welcomes people all year long. Everyone can work at their own pace and attend gatherings as they like. Sharing our faith with one another is a huge part of our Baptismal call. For more information you can contact Suzette Perrin at the church office (504) 394-0314 or by email at [cre@olphbc.org](mailto:cre@olphbc.org).



*The Sanctuary Light by the tabernacle burns to remind us of the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ. It is a mark of honor to remind the faithful of the presence of Christ, and is a profession of their love and affection.*

The Sanctuary Light will burn this week in loving memory of: **Cathy Madere**, requested by The Madere Family; **Evelyn Mistich**, requested by Dolly Roy; and **Kerry M. Casler**, requested by Les & Rita Casler.

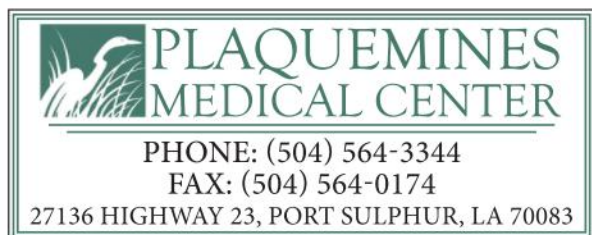
*If you would like to have the Sanctuary Light burn in memory of a loved one, call the Church Office. The donation for the Sanctuary Light is \$10.*



**Church Office Closure**

Beginning May 27, 2024, the church office will be closed on Mondays during the summer. If you have an emergency, call the church office and select the voice mail option for emergency. Otherwise, we will get back to you on Tuesday.

**Sponsor of the Week:**



Look to the back now! Look and remember to support these businesses when you need a product or service. Also, tell them "thank you" for their interest in Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

**Stewardship**  
*All things are possible with God*



Devote Time

Share Talent



Give Treasure

A way of life

**Church Financials  
Fiscal Month Ending  
March 31, 2024**

Total Income \$ 557,000

Total Expense \$ 544,000

Net Gain/(Loss) \$ 13,000\*

\*includes Fair Net Proceeds of \$90,000 and Rectory Roof Replacement of \$(43,000).

*Thank you to our parish family members who faithfully support our parish. May God bless you for your generosity!*

Online Giving Is Available on Our Website at [www.olphbc.org](http://www.olphbc.org) (click on Give Online), or simply scan the QR code with your phone. You can easily create your donation account online and make changes at any time.





## The Tenth Sunday of Ordinary Time



### Straight Talk by: Father William Maestri Gulping the Gallop Poll

The recent Gallup Poll (3/2024), on the state of religion in America, produced the following headline: "Church attendance declines in most U. S. Religious Groups". Intuitively the Gallup data comes as no surprise. Many Catholic churches have closed, been sold, and/or consolidated. The U. S. Census Bureau Records report that every year 4,000 churches close, while 1,000 new churches have opened. At present, there are more than 20,000 Catholic places of worship in the U. S.

The Gallup Poll also uncovered: 3 in 10 Americans attend weekly or almost weekly services, 11% once a month, and 56% seldom or never attend. Among the major U. S. Religious groups, the highest weekly observance is by Mormons (54%), followed by Protestant/Christian denominations (30%), those of the Islamic faith reported (28%) weekly observance, Catholics report weekly attendance at (23%), Judaism (16%), Orthodox (15%), Buddhist (12%), Hindu (7%), None/Atheist/Agnostic (2%), and the Collective Other (16%).

Two decades ago, the average weekly attendance was 42%, a decade ago it fell to 38%, and in the most recent poll, the figure dropped to 30%. Those who claim NO religious affiliation (2000-2003) was 9%. Recently (2021-2023), the percentage of non-affiliated INCREASED to 21%. While most religious groups have seen a decline, the LARGEST DECREASE appeared within the CATHOLIC CHURCH. Between 2000-2003, 45% of U.S. population identified as Catholic, between 2021-2023, that number fell to 33%. An INCREASE of 4% was experienced within the Muslim and Jewish communities. Within the demographic aged 18-29 years old, 35% expressed NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION. Young adults, with or without affiliation, are LESS LIKELY to regularly attend religious services. For this age category - 22% attend regularly which is 8% BELOW the national average.

The above can give the impression that today's Catholic is left to choose between an institutional Church (dogmas, rules, structures), or to tailor one's religion from the smorgasbord of multiple options. Such either/or thinking is as simplistic as it is false. What is dismissed is the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church "in all truth" (Jn 16:13). The Church founded by Jesus and entrusted to Peter and his successors (Mt 16:18), is a historical reality which has changed in many ways throughout the millennia (Jn 14:26). It is also a Church with a global mission: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...behold I am with you always, until the end of the age". (Mt 28:18-20). Such a Church, a living communio, MUST change in order to facilitate the ENCOUNTER with Jesus and the Gospel. In order to be faithful to the Great Commission of the historical, global Church, those entrusted with authority must not be illiterate in reading the signs of the times nor blind or fearful of the doors opened and paths cleared by the Holy Spirit (Mt 16:1-4).

The Church, "ever old and ever new" (St. Augustine), is gifted with the living Tradition handed down by the Apostles (Catholic Catechism No. 84), while also discerning the ways in which the Tradition is given form: "...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 Jn 4: 1). Jesus is more blunt in the need for discernment: "Beware false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." (Mt 7: 15-20). And what are these fruits of the Spirit? St. Paul lists the following: "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.... If we live in the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit.... Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another." (Gal 5: 22-26).

Pope Francis has sought to expand the Church's arms of mercy, love, and reconciliation to those who have felt excluded and marginalized by the Church and society. He has called the universal Church to engage in a multi-year process - The Synodal Way. Pope Francis was moved to engage in this Church pilgrimage in response to the declining number of Catholics actively involved in living the Gospel as Catholics. On a deeper level, the level of the Spirit, the Church is to be the Forgiving Father who rushes to embrace those who have left, but touched by grace with the desire to return home. The Church is to welcome them with the kiss of peace, a loving embrace, and a celebration of new life (Lk 15: 11-32).

The Pope in his opening remarks, told the participants, "It [Synodal Way] is not easy, but it is beautiful.... the Holy Spirit is the protagonist of Church life...[who] leads the Church forth.... The Holy Spirit guides us by the hand and consoles us." While the general reaction to the Synodal Way has been received with controversy, especially with the inclusion of various groups and the review of established teachings, the Pope stressed the "priority of listening". Such a "listening" requires prayer, openness to the Spirit, and a fraternal love which respects the other as other. At the closing Mass of the first session (October 2023), Pope Francis said, "We have plenty of good ideas on how to reform the Church, but let's remember: to adore God and to love our brothers and sisters with His love, that is the great and perennial reform." Pope Francis has extended the Synod on Synodality to October 2024. A number of complex issues await. One might do well to heed the words of H. L. Mencken: "For every complex question there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong."

Pope Francis is wise by placing LISTENING as crucial for a Holy Spirit way forward.



**504-392-0554**



PHONE: (504) 564-3344  
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