



NOVEMBER 13, 2021

CLARION

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Memories of Hurricane Ida are preserved in a book published by St. Matthew the Apostle fourth graders

By **BETH DONZE**

Knowing that her own home – along with the homes of many of her students – had been socked by Hurricane Ida, St. Matthew the Apostle fourth-grade teacher Jeannine Thibodeaux was feeling a mixture of joy and dread when classes resumed on Sept. 13.

Thibodeaux was elated that all of her fourth graders would be returning to campus – unlike the loss of so many children following Hurricane Katrina. But she also worried that her 9- and 10-year-olds would be shell-shocked after experiencing the first major storm of their young lives, just weeks into the school year.

"It was very emotional for all of us," recalled Thibodeaux, who teaches English/language arts and

social studies at the River Ridge school. "But I told them on our first day back, 'I want you to know that at least we're here together; God has brought us here together so that we can support each other, no matter what we have going on.'"

That was the genesis of "Surviving Hurricane Ida," a compilation of the fourth graders' first-person accounts of Aug. 29, 2021 and its aftermath. The book, published by Student Treasures of Topeka, Kansas, also contains the authors' illustrations – images that recall everything from snapped power lines, to missing roof shingles, to state maps showing evacuation locations.

On Nov. 2, the 33 fourth graders received the first copies of their book at an afternoon



St. Matthew the Apostle fourth graders receive "Surviving Hurricane Ida" from teacher Jeannine Thibodeaux at their Nov. 2 book signing.

cookie party and book signing.

"I want to thank you all for the hard work you put in! You should be so proud of yourselves!" Thibodeaux told them, after distributing books and certificates to each fourth grader, trumpeting: "I'm a published author!"

The student essays were done as a writing project that took up part of language arts classes for about a month. The students learned that the book publication process didn't mean simply turning in a couple of paragraphs for a grade; their pieces went through three peer edits before going to Thibodeaux, who discussed the essays with their authors in a one-on-one conference.

"I had all of their drafts, so I could show them, 'This is where your story started and look at where you are now! Your structure is so much better. Your spelling is so much better!'" Thibodeaux said.

"I just wanted them to release whatever emotions that they had and know that everybody's story was important," she added. "Some evacuated before the storm and returned to devastation, and others lived

through the storm."

Although the damage to fourth grader Brooklyn Barrios' house included moldy walls, she documented some lighter moments from her evacuation to the beach in her essay entitled "Hiding from the Storm." Brooklyn "found a shell that had Saints colors," had fun searching for crabs and was stung by a jellyfish.

During her evacuation to Mississippi, fourth grader Aubrey Berry rescued a puppy "inches away from getting hit by a car."

"He dodged it," Aubrey writes. "We named him Tyler, and we call him Ty Ty. When I got home, my house was fine."

Cognizant that most of the fourth graders were born in 2011 – six years after Hur-

See **IDA BOOK** page 4 >

Abp. Aymond: Practice gratitude throughout the year, not just on 'Turkey Day'

Dear Young Church, My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Soon it will be Turkey Day, when you have some time off from school and, hopefully, gather with family and friends to enjoy a wonderful meal, play and relax.

This special time was established to recall God's bountiful provision to people who had left their homeland in search of religious freedom and who paused with others, who were native to North America, to give thanks for the abundant yield available in the wild or by means of their efforts at cultivation.

What are some ways in which you, the Young Church, can help to make this Thanksgiving joyful and memorable?

> You can attend Mass on Thanksgiving Day or the evening before. The Mass is the greatest of all prayers of thanksgiving!

> You can thank the priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders at your parish church and in your school.

> Your guardian angel, always with you to light, to guard, to rule and guide, also deserves your thanks.



> The efforts of people in government and the safety professions help you – and all of us – to live peacefully.

That you have leisure time, education, good things to eat and drink, helpers who keep you safe, the presence of women and men whose lives are especially focused on helping you to know and experience Jesus, an angel designated to watch over you – these are just some of the ways in which you can see that God is faithful!

What are some ways you

can show your gratitude?

> You can ask, "How may I help?" as your parents and others prepare, serve and clean up after the Thanksgiving meal.

> You can compose a list of people and things for which you are thankful, and then bring joy to those who love you by presenting that list to them. It can be a fun contest to see who comes up with the most names, or it can be a group effort to create the longest possible list!

I ask you, the Young Church, to have this spirit of Thanksgiving throughout the year, saying more often to God and to the people around you:

> "Thank you."

> "I appreciate you."

> "I am grateful for your kindness."

> "Your gifts are such a blessing."

> "You make things so comfortable for me."

> "Thank you for helping me."

Wishing you a special awareness of God's blessings this Thanksgiving, I am a brother in Christ,

+ *Gregory M. Aymond*

Most Rev. Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans

Scrutinizing Scripture: Jesus always speaks the truth

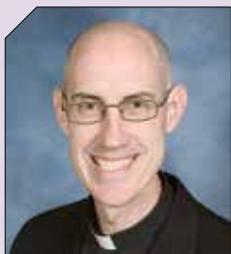
Kids' Clarion asked Father Christian DeLerno, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Church in Metairie, to reflect on the Gospel to be proclaimed on the Nov. 21 Feast of Christ the King (The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe). The full text of the Gospel is printed below.

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fight-

ing to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

— John 18:33-37

By **FATHER CHRISTIAN DeLERNO**
Guest columnist



Hi, kids! I hope you are all doing well at school, at play and at home.

In order to be able to understand anything in life,

we always need the truth. If someone tells us something, we have to know that they are telling us what is true in order to deal with the things around us, in order to learn and grow up, and just to know what to do next.

Usually, we assume that everyone is telling the truth. But there are many things that we may learn from TV, social media, the internet or our friends that may not be true.

Part of growing up to become an adult is being able to tell what is right and true and good, which is how God made us – to want to

be good and true. However, we sometimes need to ask our parents, teachers or people we really trust to tell us if something is true or not.

We should also always speak the truth ourselves so that people around us know they can trust us and what we say. And, when we don't know something, it's always good to just say, "I really don't know."

When it comes to Jesus, we can trust him and everything he says. We discover through reading the Bible and learning about Jesus that he is both God and a man.

In the Gospel reading for the Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 21 (see above), Jesus tells Pilate that he is a king from another world who has come into this world. This is a very big and important claim, which is completely true!

Jesus said he would die for us and then come back to life. He did! Over 500 people saw Jesus after

he came back from the dead. They claimed that he did come back from the dead, so he must be who he said he was. Many of these witnesses gave their lives to let us know who Jesus was. Nobody chooses to die for something they made up.

Jesus is God. He is the Messiah. He loves us and saves us from sin, and everything he ever said is true!

Some people in Jesus' time called him a liar. Some people in our own time call him a liar. We really need to figure this out for ourselves, because if Jesus is telling the truth, then living our lives as he wants us to is very important. Jesus says, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

It is through our coming to know the voice of Jesus that we can know that he speaks the truth and that we can trust him. We hear his voice not with our

ears, but with our hearts, through prayer, learning in class or at home with people who know Jesus.

Jesus came into this world to help us know the truth of who he is and why he came, which helps us to figure out who we are and how we should live. By following Jesus, we can best love God and our neighbor and make a big difference in this world.

God loves you!

Father Christian DeLerno, 53, was ordained to the priesthood in 2011. He is the pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Church in Metairie. A New Orleans native who grew up in Metairie, Father DeLerno attended St. Matthias and St. Edward the Confessor elementary schools and Archbishop Rummel High. He enjoys watching movies, having dinner with friends and making new friends of all ages. His brother, Father Kevin DeLerno, is also a priest, currently serving as pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Pearl River.

Fr. Cooper: Pumpkins can be autumnal reminders of our calling to be saints

By **BETH DONZE**

At their Nov. 4 school Mass celebrating the Feast of All Saints, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton fourth graders had the honor of processing up the center aisle of Divine Mercy Church, dressed as their favorite saints.

The young congregants listened attentively as their pastor, Father Robert Cooper, reminded them that the saints formally recognized by the Church were simply "ordinary people doing extraordinary things" with their lives.

"No one is born a saint; a saint, my brothers and sisters, is one who has



Father Robert Cooper shows St. Elizabeth Ann Seton students that pumpkins – and people – can only glow when their hearts are free of internal "goop."
(Photo by Beth Donze)

strived and struggled on the pathway, on the road, on the journey to holiness," Father Cooper said. "Everyone in this church this morning is called to be a saint – and I'm not talking about the football team!"

During the homily, Father Cooper told the children that the Halloween tradition in which many of them had just partaken – carving pumpkins – could be used as a powerful reminder of their journey to sainthood. To help the priest make his case, a teacher wheeled in two pumpkins – one uncarved and the other pre-carved into a "smiling"

jack-o'-lantern.

"God has picked us up from the pumpkin patch, he has picked us up from the field, and he wants each of us to become a saint," Father Cooper said, holding up the uncarved gourd. But first, "we have to go through something that's called a conversion – we have to strive and struggle to be a saint."

Father Cooper said that "conversion" could be likened to the first thing you do before carving a pumpkin: first you must cut off the top and scoop out the pulp.

See **SAINTS** page 4 >

Sr. Monica: How are you being called to bring God's love into the world?

Kids' Clarion continues its series that invites priests and religious to share a glimpse of their vocational journey with readers. This month, Sister of Charity Monica Gundler sheds light on the varied – and sometimes surprising – ministries undertaken by religious sisters.

By SISTER MONICA GUNDLER, S.C.
Guest columnist

In Scripture, God says to the Prophet Jeremiah, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go." (Jer 1:7)

One of my earliest memories is of being in Sunday school when I was about 6 years old. We were learning the story of how the friends of a paralyzed man could not get in to see Jesus. We built a little hut, cut a hole in the top and had some little plastic people lower the man down so Jesus could heal him. It made the story come alive in a unique way.

We learned about caring for others who might need help and about Jesus as a teacher, a healer and someone who called us to love one another as God loved us.

When I was in school, I had teachers who were religious sisters, and I knew that they had a special path of following God.

As I grew up, I knew that having a relationship with God was very important and that prayer was a part of that, but so was putting faith into action like the friends in the story who helped the paralyzed man. How could I follow Jesus with my life?

Eventually, even though I studied social work as a way to help others, I felt God was inviting me to something more. So I asked about becoming a sister. It was a lot of learning!



Most people may know that sisters are teachers, but do you know that some sisters are doctors, lawyers, social workers and even physical therapists? Ministry takes sisters to all kinds of places. There are sisters who are counselors, writers, college and university presidents, scientists, principals, nurses, chaplains in hospitals and jails, and so much more.

Sisters help feed the hungry, house the homeless, visit those in prison and advocate for justice. Sisters serve God in so many different ways!

For many years, here in New Orleans, we held a "Nuns Build" in which religious sisters from various communities came to our area to work on homes damaged in Hurricane Katrina. Some of them actually had carpentry experience and brought

their own tool belts!

Sisters come from many different backgrounds and have many different gifts. God calls each of us to love and serve others through our baptism, but how we are called to use our gifts requires a listening heart.

Part of growing up is learning new skills and finding your own unique gifts, and then asking God for the best way to use what you have been given.

God's call is always about love. How can you bring God's love to the world?

Sister of Charity Monica Gundler, a resident of New Orleans whose religious community is headquartered in Cincinnati, is a native of Hamil-

ton, Ohio. She attended Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati and the University of Denver, where she earned a master's degree in social work. Sister Monica took her final vows as a religious sister in 1994. In addition to serving as a member of her congregation's leadership team, she ministers at the House of Charity, a New Orleans residence in which visiting religious and lay people live in community while giving volunteer service in our area. "I love living in New Orleans and appreciate the wonderful people, culture and celebrations," Sister Monica said. "Ministry at the House of Charity combines service, prayer and community. I enjoy helping our visitors learn about the city, its social justice issues and current events."



Sister Monica Gundler is pictured at work with Nuns Build (left) and with her fellow women religious on Mardi Gras. (Photos courtesy of the Sisters of Charity)

Saintly Studies: St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the princess who had a heart for the poor

St. Elizabeth of Hungary
Feast Day: Nov. 17

By **BETH DONZE**

Born to King Andrew of Hungary in the year 1207, St. Elizabeth could easily have sat back and enjoyed a life of wealth and privilege; however, she chose the opposite route, dedicating her life to serving the poor, hungry and suffering in her midst.

At 14, Elizabeth married Louis of Thuringia (who also



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton fourth grader Reese Toscano portrays St. Elizabeth of Hungary. (Photo by Beth Donze)

went on to be canonized a saint) and became the mother of three children. She lost her husband in the plague after only six years of marriage.

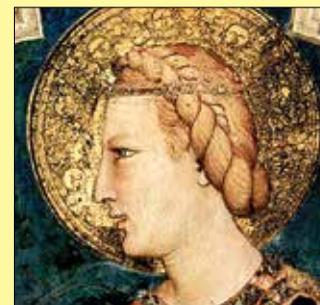
After Louis' death, Elizabeth's in-laws kicked her out of the palace, not liking her daily practice of bringing bread to the needy, dressing simply and living a life of poverty.

Elizabeth was eventually welcomed back into the royal household and she went on to establish a hospital for the

poor in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, the saintly role model who exemplified Elizabeth's own life of simplicity and fellowship with the poor.

In 1228, Elizabeth joined the Secular Franciscan Order, a group of Catholic men and women who strive to live out the Gospel of Jesus, following the example of St. Francis. She died three years later at age 24.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary is the patron saint of bakers, widows, Catholic Charities and the Secular Franciscan Order.



This stained-glass portrait of St. Elizabeth of Hungary is located in the cathedral in Assisi, Italy. (Image courtesy of Franciscan Media).

Children have been 'coming to Jesus' for 60 years at St. Joan of Arc, LaPlace

By BETH DONZE

Students, faculty, staff and alumni of St. Joan of Arc School in LaPlace came together Oct. 15 for a Mass marking their school's 60th anniversary, a celebration previously postponed because of Hurricane Ida.

St. Joan of Arc, the first Catholic elementary school in LaPlace, opened on Sept. 5, 1961, under the pastorate of Msgr. Edward Boudreaux, with an enrollment of 135 students in four grades.

To recall the school's establishment by the Dominican Sisters, two students costumed in authentic replicas of the Dominican habit led the procession, along with another student dressed in soldier's garb as St. Joan of Arc.

The two students portraying the religious sisters represented two real people: St. Joan of Arc's founding principal, Sister Mary Edmund Gibson; and Sister Mary Germaine Roussel – the last woman religious to serve as principal – who led the school for 27 years (1972-99). Their attire was recreated by Joan Ory, a talented seamstress, St. Joan of Arc lector, choir and Legion of Mary member, based on photographs of the two principals.

During the homily, Archbishop Gregory Aymond, principal celebrant, asked the young congregants two questions: What has changed and what has remained the same at St. Joan of Arc School over the last six decades?

"Wearing masks all the time," responded one student to the archbishop's first



Archbishop Gregory Aymond pauses before St. Joan of Arc School's 60th Anniversary Mass to meet with students portraying (from left) Dominican Sister and founding principal Mary Edmund Gibson (*Emelynn Arnett*); St. Joan of Arc (*Kaylee Milioto*); and Dominican Sister Mary Germaine Roussel (*Jacqueline St. Martin*), principal from 1972-99. (Photo by Beth Donze)

query. Other "changes" articulated by the students included expanded facilities, improvements in technology and the recent challenges presented by Hurricane Ida.

The students' list of things that had remained unchanged at St. Joan of Arc over the 60-year period included excellent teachers, loving parents, and, pointed out one student, "our courage and kindness."

"We never stopped loving Jesus," noted another youngster, a comment that reminded Archbishop Aymond of the main lesson of the Mass' Gospel reading from St. Mark: Jesus, aggravated that his apostles were trying to prevent the children from talking to him, tells the adults, "Let the children come to me!"

"Boys and girls, that's what Jesus says to you today, that's what he says to you every day of your life and that's what he says every day you come to St. Joan of Arc School," said the archbishop, commend-

ing Catholic education for its unique way of helping students identify and nurture their gifts to the fullest, while encouraging them to grow spiritually.

"That's what Catholic education is about," Archbishop Aymond told them. "It's a place where we can talk about Jesus, where we talk about God. It's about teaching you about your friend Jesus, your brother Jesus."

The student body presented the archbishop with a spiritual bouquet at the end of Mass and also received a gift of its own: a proclamation on St. Joan of Arc School's 60th anniversary milestone, read out in person by Jaclyn Hotard, president of St. John the Baptist Parish.

St. Joan of Arc's current principal is Jennifer Poulos, and the parish is led by Father David Ducote, pastor. The school motto is: "The Pursuit of Excellence through Christ."

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ricane Katrina – St. Matthew principal Tony Bonura told the young authors he regrets not keeping his own journal back in 2005. But thanks to the book, future St. Matthew students would know all about Ida.

"I picture you sharing this (book) with your own kids," Bonura told them.

Although Ida destroyed his bedroom, fourth grader Tyler Bergeron said the book project provided an outlet for his sadness.



Natalia Caceres' illustration reveals a blessing amid the chaos: a near miss.



Ida looms as Lily Thibodeaux (*depicted above*) comforts Lola, her grandmother's dog.

"I like that Mrs. Thibodeaux gave us a chance to write a book," Tyler said, "and I think we did pretty good the first time."



Reach out to Kids' Clarion!

Please keep us up to date on the things you're proud of at your Catholic elementary school or Parish School of Religion! Our popular Jokes section also welcomes your submissions for publication consideration. Questions and comments are welcome, 24/7!

Phone: (504) 596-3026

Fax: (504) 596-3020

Email: kidsclarion@clarionherald.org

Mailing address:

Kids' Clarion, Attn: Beth Donze
P.O. Box 53247 • New Orleans, LA 70153

From **SAINTS** page 2 >

"We call that 'conversion,' why? Because inside the pumpkin is all this gooey mess," Father Cooper said, comparing the pulp to the "mess" that we sometimes have in our hearts – being mean to a friend, not forgiving someone, or anything else that keeps us from "growing in holiness."

Father Cooper said the Mass' Gospel, in which Jesus gives his disciples the Beatitudes, contains Jesus' "blueprint for holiness" – virtues of Christian living that keep our "insides" light, clean and free.

After a fourth-grade volunteer helped Father Cooper clean out the uncarved

pumpkin, the priest lit a candle and placed it into the pumpkin that had already been cleaned and carved. Father Cooper noted that only by removing the interior "goop" – obstructions to holiness – could the pumpkin give off its beautiful glow.

"Let us open our hearts to the light of the Holy Spirit; the flame of the Holy Spirit; the fire of the Holy Spirit," Father Cooper said. "And let us go forth with a smile on our face, knowing that we are blessed and have been chosen and to have been sent off with the light of holiness."

After Mass, the fourth graders visited the classrooms of their younger schoolmates to introduce the youngsters to their chosen saint.