The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Savannah, GA
December 2013
The Cathedral Arts Project, an arts ministry program at the Cathedral, presented an Evening Prayer (or Vespers), on Sunday evening, November 3 at 5:00 PM. featuring the Cathedral choir, staff soloists Kelly Balmaceda, Jillian Pashke, Drew Hillis and Cyril Durant. Fr. Schreck was the Celebrant and Bishop Hartmayer, Monsignor O’Neill, Fr. Firmin, plus the Cathedral servers also participated. The Vespers was held in Commemoration of All Souls.

The service of Vespers is part of the Liturgy of the Hours includes several specified times of prayer. The most important times, called the “hinge hours,” are Morning Prayer (which takes place upon rising) and Evening Prayer (or Vespers, which takes place as dusk begins to fall). The practice of daily prayers grew from the Jewish practice of reciting prayers at set times of the day. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelite priests to offer sacrifices of animals in the morning and evening (Exodus 29:38-39).

Eventually, these sacrifices moved from the Tabernacle to the Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem. During the Babylonian Exile, when the Temple was no longer in use, the first synagogues were established, and the services (at fixed hours of the day) of Torah readings, psalms, and hymns began to evolve.

This “sacrifice of praise” began to be substituted for the sacrifices of animals. After the people returned to Judea, the prayer services were incorporated into Temple worship as well.

As time passed, the Jews began to be scattered across the Greco-Roman world in what is known as the Diaspora. By the time of the Roman Empire, the Jews, and eventually early Christians, began to follow the Roman system of conducting the business day in scheduling their times for prayer. In Roman cities, the bell in the forum rang the beginning of the business day at about six o’clock in the morning (Prime, the “first hour”) and rang the close of the business day at about six o’clock in the evening, the time for evening prayer.

The Cathedral Choir sang two anthems, one of which was composed by Sir John Tavener. Called Song for Athene, Tavener achieved global celebrity when this anthem closed the funeral service for Diana, Princess of Wales, televised from Westminster Abbey. Tavener (1944-2013), who died one week after the Cathedral’s performance, was quoted at age 60 as saying: “I think there are an awful lot of artists around who are very good at leading us into hell; I would rather someone would show me the way to paradise.”

Sir John’s music was distinguished by quiet passages that seemed to shimmer like dawn light and by its otherworldly intensity and moments of ecstasy. He spoke of some compositions arriving instantaneously in his mind. “If one is going to create this eternal, celestial music, one has got to listen, to be silent, to hear the angel of inspiration dictate”.

On December 24, the Cathedral Choir, accompanied by organ, harp and brass, will present the Office of Readings (the night vigil prayed before Midnight Mass), at 11:00 p.m. (Doors open at 10:30 p.m.) This service, which derives from the night vigil readings in monastic communities, will feature a series of scripture, instrumental works, congregational carols and choral anthems. The service ends with the singing of “Silent Night”; at Midnight, the Deacon will chant the Christmas Proclamation, and mass will begin. All are invited to keep watch before the First Mass of Christmas.
We find ourselves again in the middle of the beautiful Liturgical Season of Advent. It is characterized by something that we really don’t like to do, and that is to wait. The great Lutheran theologian, Paul Tillich, wrote about our waiting. He said: “Our time is a time of waiting; waiting is its special destiny. And every time is a time of waiting, waiting for the breaking in of eternity. All time runs forward. All time, both history and in personal life, is expectation. Time itself is waiting, waiting not for another time, but for that which is eternal.”

Children watch as a single candle is lighted on an Advent wreath and try to imagine how long it will take for all four candles to be lighted, because that will signal the nearness of Christmas and all that it brings. We adults are forced to wait for things that are more critical. At this time of year, we are particularly aware of those who are living with serious illness, who are waiting to know if and how a cure will come. We are also aware of those who are in the process of watching a loved one come to the end of earthly life, who wonder if that person will still be here next month, or next year for another Christmas. Tillich was quite correct: all of our time is spent waiting for that which is eternal. I suppose that it is the uncertainty, the not knowing, which is most difficult for us. It is a given that we must all wait, but how we wait is the real key.

It is most appropriate that we find ourselves waiting in Advent with Mary, the Mother of God. We honor her Immaculate Conception in the middle of this season. She herself was waiting for the days of her confinement and the birth of a Son, a Son of very mysterious origin. She would wait again, in grief, with his disciples, for his resurrection.

She would wait with them in Jerusalem after his ascension into heaven and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. She always waited with trust. “Let it be done to me according to your word,” as she replied to the Angel Gabriel. She continued to trust, even though she would find herself wondering what sort of child this might be. She kept all of those events in her heart and continued to reflect on them.

Because we can’t know the future and see it completely, we often feel as if we live in darkness. It is so appropriate that this Season of Advent comes when the days are shorter and nights longer. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was born into the darkness, into the poverty of our unknowing and our fear. He is the light that cannot be overcome by the darkness. And he has promised to be with us until the end of all time. I suppose that there is a tendency for us to experience sadness, despite the great joy of the Christmas holidays. We are aware of our waiting, and the uncertainty of so much. We are also aware of those whom we loved who are no longer here for Christmas.

This time of waiting compels us to find God, in the faces of those who suffer and are in need. The solution to our possible sadness is to love, freely and extravagantly. There are so many opportunities for charity during this season... for example, gifts for children in need, whose names and ages we find on a Christmas tree at Church. We find God in the love we show for our brothers and sisters, created in his image and likeness.

That sort of simple love makes the lights of Christmas so much brighter. It gives meaning to our waiting, and it testifies to our trust in God. It makes it possible to come to the beautiful Midnight Mass and proclaim that Jesus Christ was born, and will come again! In Jesus, eternity breaks into our history, and into our personal time of waiting.

Waiting

By Fr. Gerry Schreck
Sunday November 3, 2013 dawned a bright clear and although it was a bit cool and windy early on, this didn’t deter the volunteers who assembled on the Cathedral Plaza about 7:00 am to set up for our 5th Ministry Fair. Father Shreck and the other priests encouraged attendees to stop by after mass to explore the many possibilities to be of service to our Parish and they responded.

Deborah Wade, Chair of the Christian Service Committee, which organized the Fair, was very pleased. “The Ministry Fair was a huge success! We are so excited that our parishioners are willing to serve and contribute their ‘Time, Treasure and Talent’ to support our Cathedral Ministries. Almost 50 people volunteered to serve in a variety of different ministries and we expect more delayed signups from those who took forms and promised to send them in later.”

And Nancy Bachner added, “The Christian Service Committee had a wonderful day with many who signed up as well as others who took the sign-up sheet and promised to fill it out. Many questions were asked and answered about our committee’s functions and I believe we enlightened numerous people yesterday.”

According to Norene Buckstine, “Overall I think the Ministry Fair accomplished its purpose for several Ministries. The Parish Life/CCW Ministries had four potential new members who expressed an interest. Many people had a desire to help but were hesitant to commit to a monthly meeting so Anna, Alizon and I explained that a commitment wasn’t necessary if they could help with projects on an as needed basis.”

Gretchen Reese had similar success; “The Gala and Adoration Committees each had four new people sign up which is wonderful. Unfortunately some people still do not feel they must take an active role in the life of the parish. They think that coming to Sunday Mass is good enough. We need to continue to encourage all parishioners to fulfill their Christian duty to participate in the life of the Church. It’s getting better. Hopefully, as time goes by we will see an increase in participation.”

And Geraldine Pufahl saw the Ministry Fair as a wonderful opportunity for fellowship not only among parishioners after Mass but with fellow leaders of ministries. “I had eleven potential new members, interested in the Pro Life activities as well as other friends I didn’t realize were now parishioners at the Cathedral. Meeting & talking to friends, either before or after Mass, is such a blessing because usually most people leave unless there’s reason to linger (i.e. donuts or social event). It was an enjoyable social gathering.”

We will continue to “Spotlight” different ministries throughout the year at our Parish Suppers as well as in Twin Spires and hopefully get a few more volunteers. Perhaps a “Come & See” what we do might be helpful and could draw in more people?

A great deal of work is involved in setting-up and preparing for the Ministry Fair. A special thanks to Ernie Buckstine, Ron Bachner, Bill Wade and Deborah’s grandson Richard Guerard and his friends, Gage and Logan Winters, who did most of the heavy lifting moving tables and chairs from and back to the Parish Center. The ladies helped too, which was much appreciated.

And the prize winners visiting the most ministries are: Lauren Morris, Jeff Morris, Gerry Cowart, Andy Wallington and Jack Groover. And for those that missed the “Ministry Fair”, the latest Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist Ministry brochure can be picked up at the church office. Put your Faith into Action by joining one of our many ministries. Fifty parishioners responded to the call to serve. What about you?
Francis X. Gartland, born in 1805 in Dublin, Ireland, immigrated to this country as a child. Ordained for the Diocese of Philadelphia, he served there as a priest and later vicar general until he was named Bishop of the newly-erected Diocese of Savannah in July 1850. In the fall of 1854, yellow fever struck the city of Savannah, leaving more than a thousand dead in three months. The Bishop visited the sick tirelessly, administering the sacraments, until he himself was laid low by the fever. Mortally ill, he died September 20, 1854. He was 49 years old.

Cathedral Parishioners Receive the Gartland Service Award

Since 2000, the Diocese of Savannah has recognized long-standing service to the Catholic Church in South Georgia by conferring the Bishop Francis X. Gartland Service Award on honorees nominated by their pastors. The Award was established to recognize distinguished service to the Church community and the Diocese of Savannah in the tradition of our first Bishop, Francis X. Gartland, (served 1850-1854).

Cynthia Purvis and John Chat Howard of the Cathedral Parish were among this year’s recipients of the Gartland Service Awards presented by Bishop Hartmayer on November 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Christ the King, in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Congratulations to Cynthia and Chat on this well-deserved award and thanks to them for many years of volunteer service to the Cathedral.

The gold and blue Gartland Service Award pin combines elements of Bishop Gartland’s episcopal coat of arms with elements from the shield of the Diocese of Savannah. His motto Vincit Veritas, (Truth Conquers) is inscribed on the pin.
A few months ago, Mary Rooney, a new tour guide, had a discussion with a visitor from Marietta who vigorously argued that one of the stained glass lancet windows in the south transept was not St. Dorothea but rather Our Lady, Mater Admirabilis. She was adamant that a nearly identical window is in the church she attended as a child in Puerto Rico. Mary looked it up when she got home, and lo and behold, the visitor was right!

As previously reported, we have discovered that the information on page 37 of the Arts and Symbols booklet has misidentified a couple of the lancet windows in the south transept. The window on the right was erroneously identified as:

- St. Dorothea (circa 300)
- Feast Day: June 25
- Patron of Gardeners

But as confirmed by this cartoon from The Tyrolese Art Glass Company, the window our booklet incorrectly identified as St. Dorothea was indeed The Blessed Virgin Mary — Mater Admirabilis.

Mater Admirabilis is a fresco depicting the Virgin Mary, at the Trinità dei Monti, a church in Rome. It was painted by a young French girl, Pauline Perdrau, and has been associated with several miracles. Legend has it Pauline had been asked by the nuns at Trinità dei Monti to paint a mural of the Blessed Mother in 1844. After weeks of painting, Pauline finally finished her work. When the Mother Superior saw it, she said the colors were too bright and bold and immediately covered it with a large piece of fabric.

Two years later, on October 20, 1846, Pope Pius IX was visiting the convent. On the tour, the Pope questioned what was behind the drape. The Mother Superior tried to distract the Pope from it, but he demanded to see it. When he drew back the fabric, it revealed the painting Pauline had created years before. The colors had faded and blended together to create a softer image. It was transformed and beautiful. “Mater Admirabilis!” the Pope exclaimed. “Why do you cover such a wonderful work?” This exclamation of the Pope, “Mother Most Admirable!” became the title that she bears to this day.

Source: Society of the Sacred Heart, United States - Canada,
The 13th Annual Cathedral Heritage Gala was a big success with the highlight of the evening being the exciting Live Auction. The Gala began with a spectacular cocktail party including heavy hors d’oeuvres served to attendees who wandered through the three floors of the stunning, contemporary Jepson Center and viewed the art exhibit entitled Spanish Sojourns: Robert Henri and the Spirit of Spain.

Bishop Hartmayer welcomed everyone and encouraged their participation in our Live Auction to raise funds to benefit the Cathedral Endowment Fund, which is used to preserve the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. He expressed his gratitude to all the attendees whose presence was testimony to their support of our beautiful and historic church, which is such a glorious setting to worship God.

The highlight of the evening was the Live Auction led by John Wetherbee of WTOC as our auctioneer. Although it started a bit slow, O. C. Welch was the catalyst for escalating the level of excitement which helped propel our proceeds to a record level. When the Cocktail Cruise with Monsignor O’Neill went for $2550, he offered 2 more cruises for the same price and they were quickly scooped up. The pattern continued for the rest of the evening as the Heritage Golf Cruise, the Rector’s French Wine Dinner and Bishop Hartmayer’s Dinner all were sold twice, thereby doubling their proceeds.

The most excitement of the evening was generated by the show down over the Bishops’ Mystery Items. Bishop Hartmayer’s special homemade brownies containing a secret, legal ingredient, sold for $1,150 and 3 more people bought additional batches for $1100 or more. Not to be outdone, the bidding on Bishop Boland’s first painting was quite spirited and it ultimately sold for $4100.

When it was all over, the total sales proceeds stood at $47,600, a Gala Auction record. “Although the figures have not yet been finalized, this year’s Gala was a big success and we expect to raise somewhere close to $100,000,” according to Gala Chair Gretchen Reese. “We are most grateful to all who attended and supported the Gala. You have helped preserve the beautiful Cathedral of St. John the Baptist for generations to come.”
A presentation on the Shroud of Turin was held on Monday evening, November 4th, in the Lower Chapel of the Cathedral. The Shroud is believed to be the burial cloth that wrapped the body of Jesus Christ after his Crucifixion and Death. Owned by the Dukes of Savoy (former ruling family of Italy) until the late 1980’s, it is now the property of the Holy See of the Catholic Church. It is stored in a special reliquary in a chapel behind the altar in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy.

About 200 people came to hear a very entertaining talk given by Mr. Barrie Schwortz, the Official Documenting Photographer of an international team that performed the first in-depth scientific examination of “the Shroud” in 1978, with the approval of Pope John Paul II. Mr. Schwortz is the President of the Shroud of Turin Education and Association (STERNA), which oversees an extensive Shroud collection, as well as a website (shroud.com) that documents current activities surrounding the Shroud of Turin.

During his presentation Mr. Schwortz reviewed the compelling evidence that the Shroud was indeed a burial cloth of Christ and therefore, the most important relic in Christianity. The Shroud is a 14 ½ feet long, 3 ½ feet wide linen cloth that bears the ventral and dorsal image of a scourged, crucified man. Jewish burial custom at the time called for deceased to be wrapped with a long single piece of linen cloth from his feet over the head and back down the other side of the body to his feet. The cloth was then secured by strips of cloth. The Shroud image showed a front and back image which is consistent with this practice and the light and dark areas correlated with the distance of the cloth from the body.

The 1st photo was taken by Secondo Pio in 1898. Looking at the glass negative of a close-up of the face on the Shroud, Pio realize that image appeared as a positive photographic image, not a negative and he exclaimed, “I am looking at the face of the Lord.”

Schwortz reviewed the various elements of the anatomy and blood flow that supported the biblical accounts of Christ’s Crucifixion including the crown of thorns, flogging patterns, nail and spear wound locations. When the image was fed into a VP-8 image analyzer, it stood out in relief which does not happen with a normal photo, thus producing a 3-D image of the subject, presumably Jesus Christ.

After years of exhaustive study and evaluation of the data, the Shroud of Turin Research Project, Inc., (STURP) issued its Final Report in 1981. “We can conclude for now that the Shroud image is that of a real human form of a scourged, crucified man. It is not the product of an artist. The blood stains are composed of hemoglobin and also give a positive test for serum albumin. The image is an ongoing mystery and until further chemical studies are made in the future, the problem remains unsolved.”

One of the most controversial developments in the history of the Shroud was the Carbon dating performed in 1988 indicated that the Shroud dated between 1260-1390 AD thus disputing the theory that it was the burial cloth of Christ. Mr. Schwortz spent the rest of his talk reviewing the findings of a rigorous fiber and blood analysis on the fabric sample that was used to test the age of the Shroud of Turin in 1988. It concluded that “the sample was taken from a rewoven area of the Shroud and was not part of the original cloth of the Shroud of Turin. The radiocarbon data was thus not valid for determining the true age of the Shroud.”

There is no conclusive scientific evidence to prove that the Shroud is the burial cloth of Jesus, that judgement remains a matter of Faith.
“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” ACTS20:35
The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women has organized its annual Angel Giving tree again this year. Cathedral parishioners have always generously donated a gift or requested items for the children, families and those in need in the Savannah community. This year, we are supporting the efforts of the Social Apostolate and the West Broad YMCA. Sister Julie at the Social Apostolate has a great need for wallets, fanny packs, slickers and umbrellas for their patrons. These special gifts will serve a big need and bring many smiles from their patrons who will be so appreciative of this act of kindness. The West Broad YMCA has asked for learning games, sports equipment, building blocks, dolls and other toys. In the past, parishioners have generously donated to children and families, who would otherwise not have anything under their tree. We encourage the parishioners of the Cathedral to open their hearts and share with those less fortunate. God bless us, everyone.
LECTORS NEEDED

Lectors are special liturgical ministers whose principal duty is to serve the community by proclaiming the readings from Scripture during the Liturgy of the Mass. Prior to 1972, lectors were primarily ordained ministers, however after Vatican II, Pope Paul VI extended the opportunity to the laity to perform this liturgical role, by creating the non-instituted ministry of Lector. The two principle requirements for the present day lector are that they be truly suited to perform this function and that they should receive careful preparation.

Why is it important that a lector be truly suited for this assignment?

At every Sunday Mass, the celebrant delivers a homily based on a theme that emanates from the lector's proclamation of the Old and New Testament readings plus the reading of the Gospel. In the readings, explained by the homily, God is speaking to his people, opening them up to the mystery of redemption and salvation, and nourishing their spirit. Christ is present to the faithful through his own word. God is using the voices of ministers so that his people may hear Him.

Whenever a member of the parish expresses a desire to become a lector, they will be interviewed and auditioned to determine that they are truly suited to perform the function of lector.

We are interested in increasing the ranks of our lectors and would greatly desire to hear from you. If you would like to be a Lector, please contact Jan Cunningham in the Parish Office by calling 912-233-4709.