Our thanks to Brother Robert and his helpers.

The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist is beautifully decorated every year by Brother Robert and his numerous helpers.

Many of the visitors who come through the cathedral to view our decorations and marvel at the exquisite beauty and detail of the Crèche scene have said, “This is the most beautiful Christmas display in the United States.”

This year Brother Robert added a new version of the Christmas message to the display (left). We would all do well to remember the message of Christmas all year long.

Thank you, Brother Robert, for all you do to make our Cathedral beautiful at Christmas and throughout the year.

He was born in a stable
In an obscure village.
From there, he traveled
Less than two hundred miles.
He never won an election.
He never went to college.
He never owned a home.
He never had a lot of money.
He became a nomadic preacher,
Popular opinion turned against Him.
He was betrayed by a close friend,
And His other friends ran away.
He was unjustly condemned to death,
Crucified on a cross among common thieves,
On a hill overlooking the town dump.
And when dead, laid in a borrowed grave.
Nineteen centuries have come and gone.
Empires have risen and fallen.
Mighty armies have marched,
And powerful rulers have reigned.
Yet no one has affected men as much as He.
He is the central figure of the human race.
He is the Messiah, the Son of God,
Jesus Christ.
On Wednesday evening, December 5, 2012, the sweet strains of many favorite Christmas hymns rose to heaven from about 50 parishioners who were present for the *Light up for Christ* prayer service and supper hosted by the Knights of Columbus, Council 631 and the Cathedral Parish Life Committee, to increase awareness of the true meaning of Christmas.

“We had a lovely evening for the ceremony. In previous years the weather has been very cold, but this year it was most pleasant and there was a nice group of people attending,” said Rita Haneline. Former Grand Knight, Walt Harper, welcomed everyone and recalled that they used to hold this ceremony at the K of C Hall but six years ago Cathedral parishioner and fellow Knight, Mr. Frank Baker, began this tradition at the Cathedral believing that it would be seen by more people if it was moved to the front window of the Parish Center. He also thanked Brother Robert who was instrumental in the move.

Father Mark Van Alstine, Chaplain of Council 631, led the attendees in prayer, read several bible passages including the Gospel according to St. Luke (2:1-8), describing the birth of Jesus and then blessed the Crèche as the Knights turned on the lights.

Mr. Joe Ryan and the Fully Invested Barber Shop Quartet led guests in Christmas Carols including “O Come, All Ye Faithful”, “Lo, How a Rose”, “Away in a Manger” and ended with “Angels We Have Heard on High”.

Following the ceremony, the assembled throng converged on the Parish Center to attend a bountiful supper. It was a big turnout, over 125 people, which was one of the largest attendances ever for a Parish Supper. The enthusiastic crowd filled every table in the hall and additional tables had to be brought in from other rooms. Special thanks to the Knights of Columbus who provided pork tenderloins as the main entrée along with other delicious foods prepared by the ladies of the Cathedral CCW and other Parishioners who brought their favorite covered dishes. Norene Buckstine, Parish Life Chairman and her helpers, made the evening very special for everyone.

Parishioners came to not only enjoy the beautiful prayer service and delicious supper but to also honor Mrs. Bernadette Winters, organist at the Cathedral, upon her retirement after 39 years of faithful service. Joined by grandchildren and other family members, Bernadette was recognized by Monsignor O’Neill for her dedication, constancy and loyal service as he presented her with a gift of appreciation. Bernadette was also honored with a beautiful bouquet of roses and a lovely cake. The crowd joined in with an enthusiastic ovation, expressing their appreciation as well.

Bernadette thanked the Lord for her talent, the gift of her mentor, Mrs. Patty Schreck, who guided her in using her talent, her wonderful and supportive family as well as Monsignor O’Neill for the opportunity to serve. She will continue to teach Music at St. Vincent’s Academy and substitute as organist at the Cathedral when needed and will also be available for weddings and other events. God has blessed our parish with generosity, abundant talent and opportunities to serve. May we continue to see the good that we do and give glory to our Lord.

*Special thanks to Anna Kaluzne, Rita Haneline, Gretchen Reese and Joe Ryan for contributing to this article.*
The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist Worship Committee is responsible for enhancing and improving the liturgical celebrations of the Parish. While the ultimate responsibility for worship resides with the Pastor, this committee addresses itself to the spiritual needs of the Parish and reflects to foster on-going renewal, prayerful liturgy, and a sense of the presence of God in the life of the Parish.

The Worship Committee becomes the voice of the parishioners regarding the liturgical life of the Cathedral. It is responsible for gathering input and feedback from the parish and then advise, help and work mutually with other team members to enhance their individual ministries.

The committee deals with all aspects of worship for our Church community. The intent of the Worship Committee is to nourish meaningful liturgies that will inspire full, conscious and active participation from all those in attendance.

The following ministries fall under this committee:

**Altar Servers**
Assist the presider and other ministers of the liturgy, so the ceremonies proceed smoothly and are conducted in the most dignified fashion.

**Lectors**
Proclaim the Word of God in the Scripture to the people in the service of the faith.

**Ushers**
Greet all Mass attendees, help with seating, take up the collections and secure the money as well as direct people during communion and distribute bulletins.

**Music/Choir**
Music is the language that lifts our spirit and moves the soul into a joyful experience of worship. Their main goal is to musically enhance our liturgies and lead the congregational singing.

The first meeting of the year was held on Monday November 5, 2012. The committee discussed how to support these existing ministries through volunteer recruitment, announcements, and training support. A priority for the committee is to help with the Year of Faith experiences for the Parish. During this Year of Faith, Catholics are called to open their, “door of faith,” and rediscovers and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.

The Worship Committee meets four to five times a year with each meeting lasting approximately one hour. If you have a general interest for good liturgy and are willing to spend your time and talent on the work of the committee, or have suggestions, please contact Catherine Dunn Kostilnik (912) 429-7612 or ckostilnik@ccstudies.org.

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**In Praise of our Choir**

Dear Monsignor,

I sent a note to the choir and I wanted to share some of my thoughts with you also. I attended the choral concert on Sunday, Dec. 14th. It was beautiful. I was especially impressed with the selections chosen by the Director which reflected the season in song and scripture. Many of the local radio stations have been playing Christmas songs since early November, however none of them understand the concept of Advent. Those who attended the concert left with an appreciation of this Season of Anticipation and a sincere wish that concerts which celebrate the liturgical season could become a new tradition. Thank you for encouraging your choir to share their talents and to remind us of the beauty and joy of the Advent season.

Sister Rose Mary Collins

Dear Sister Rose Mary,

Thank you for your kind remarks. Instead of keeping this to myself, I will have it published in the Sunday Bulletin and also in the Twin Spires. Since only a few of our parishioners attended, we need to spread the word!

Msgr. O.
Meet Mac Fogle

I am from Louisville, Kentucky, the land of horses, bourbon and basketball. My family has resided in the bluegrass state since the 1760s. They mostly are and were employed as farmers, lawyers, teachers, and doctors, along with a few bootleggers!

I have been interested in music from an early age and have always been employed as a church musician, beginning at twelve years old. This led me to obtain degrees in Organ Performance and Choral Conducting from the University of Louisville (Bachelor of Music), the Manhattan School of Music, New York (Master of Music), Gregorian Chant studies with the Benedictine Order (St. Meinrad School of Theology and St. Johns University), and certification in Liturgy and Music (Archdiocese of Louisville).

My interest in Organ and subsequent conversion to Roman Catholicism developed from a six month German study course in Austria. After a weekend trip to Rome, where I encountered the beautiful architecture, art, music and profound sense of prayer and devotion, I returned to the US, switched my major from piano to organ and joined the Catholic Church while employed as an Assistant Organist and Choir Director at St. Francis of Assisi in Louisville. Eventually I became Director of Worship and Music for a six thousand member parish in Louisville, overseeing 400 liturgical ministers.

Four years ago, I became the Organist/Choir Director for St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, where I had the opportunity to develop a choir school for children under the auspices of the Royal School of Church Music (London).

Although my work at St. Marks was very successful, I felt that God was calling me back to the Catholic Church, so when I learned that the position at St. John the Baptist was open, I applied.

I am thrilled to become a part of this community; I love the liturgy, the history and the architecture of the Cathedral, as well as the Noack organ. The acoustics in the Cathedral are perfect for organ and choral music and I look forward to working with the choir. My first priority is to support the worship life of the Cathedral. I want to spend my time getting to know the people of the parish, the rich history of its music and its mission in Savannah and the Diocese.

My dream would be to develop a Cathedral Arts Program since historically, Cathedrals have been at the forefront of support for music, art and architecture. Combining those areas along with opportunities for dialogue and community building (lectures, recitals, Choral Vespers, Poetry/Music events) would help be an outreach to parishioners and non-parishioners. I am also deeply committed to educating our children musically as they are our future musicians, parishioners and choristers. Cathedrals have a rich tradition of choir schools; just this fall, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Charleston started a program that provides a wonderful opportunity for young people to learn the fundamentals of music and the rich tradition of choral music.

I love Savannah, its history, beauty and people, and feel deeply committed to the musical life of the Cathedral.

— Mac Fogle
The Cathedral Heritage Gala was advertised as “an especially lavish, festive celebration, characterized by sumptuous social pleasure” and it certainly lived up to its billing. For the past eleven years the “Heritage Ball” followed a more standard dinner dance format. In a break with tradition, Chairpersons Charlie and Cheryl Ganem, along with the Committee, developed the exciting new “Gala” format that presented the most sensational event ever held to benefit our beloved Cathedral. The Gala began with a spectacular cocktail party with heavy hors d’oeuvres served to attendees who wandered through the three floors of the stunning, contemporary Jepson Center.

The most exciting part of the Gala was the rare opportunity to have a private viewing of the Offering of the Angels: Paintings and Tapestries from the permanent collection of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. The attendees had an exclusive chance to view these exquisite paintings and tapestries as well as benefit the restoration and preservation of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.
Bishop Hartmayer expressed his gratitude to all the attendees. “What an honor it was to be ordained in our beautiful Cathedral. It is truly a gem of the Diocese. Your support of the Heritage Gala insures that our Cathedral will remain the celestial house of worship that we currently enjoy,” he said.

Chairpersons Charlie and Cheryl Ganem were very appreciative of all the support to maintain this extraordinary ecclesiastical landmark. “We extend our sincere appreciation for the loyal donors and sponsors who have supported this event in a multitude of ways. Your donations and contributions truly exemplify this year’s gala theme, “The Art of Giving.” You are truly givers beyond measure.”

As they toured the exhibit, the attendees were also able to view and bid on the many silent auction items. The highlight of the evening was the live auction. Spurred on by auctioneer Jere Myers from Jere’s Antiques in downtown Savannah, the spirited bidding on such items as a dinner at Bishop Hartmayer’s residence for 10 people or a pair of White Gold and Diamond Earrings raised almost $9,000. “Although the figures have not yet been finalized, we expect this year’s Gala to raise a record amount estimated to be in excess of $100,000 compared to $95,000 last year,” according to Charlie.
The Gartland Award was established to recognize distinguished service over a period of years to the Church community and the Diocese of Savannah, in the tradition of our first Bishop, Francis X. Gartland, (served 1850-1854).

Every year 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 gold and blue 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*, or “Truth Conquers,” is inscribed on the pin.

Dr. Gretchen K. Reese and Louis G. Waldhour of the Cathedral Parish were among this year’s recipients of the Gartland Service Awards presented by Bishop Hartmayer on November 25, 2012, the Solemnity of Christ the King, in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Congratulations to Gretchen and Lou on this well-deserved award and thanks for many years of volunteer service to the Cathedral.

Francis X. Gartland, born in 1805 in Dublin, Ireland, immigrated with his parents as a child to this country. He was ordained for the Diocese of Philadelphia and 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 was forced to leave his residence when a hurricane blew its roof off, and died September 20 at the home of friends. He was 49 years old.
“Faith draws the future into the present, so that it is no longer simply a ‘not yet.’” When the shepherds rushed to Bethlehem to find the infant lying in a manger, their actions anticipated the first words of Jesus in the Gospel of John: “Come and see…” (John 1:39) Their faith led them to act on their expectation, although they were not sure what they would find, they were compelled to believe what the angels said.

In this Year of Faith (Oct. 11, 2012-November 24, 2013), all Catholics are called to do something similar. We are asked to reach out to the Gospel, to embrace the reality of Christ more deeply, to “see” Jesus more clearly, as he reveals himself to us in the Sacraments and Holy Scripture, and to practice more faithfully his Words in our lives. Just like the shepherds over 2,000 years ago, we cannot be sure where this experience will lead us or how it may change us, but to ignore the call is to close the door on something very special in our lives.

The goal of the Year of Faith initiative is conversion and rediscovering the faith so that all members of the Church can become credible witnesses of truth. The onset of the Year of Faith on October 11 marked the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. These events in the Church brought with them new challenges for the faithful but also many important options for understanding and practicing our faith. The Catechism (1814) explains that the freely given gift of faith is “the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because He is truth itself.” With this virtue we can recognize and know the truth. Because Faith is a gift, we cannot earn it; it must be received. Pope Benedict XVI has said that “Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received.” (Porta Fedei)

So how shall we celebrate this Year of Faith and come to be purveyors of the truth. Perhaps we will commit to daily Mass, say a Rosary every day, spend time in Eucharistic Adoration each week, or read a portion of the Catechism daily, or attend one of the activities scheduled during to mark the Year of Faith, that will help us grow closer to our Lord and Savior.

These include ongoing sessions on Wednesday evenings studying the origins, history and practice of the Catholic Faith using Robert Barron’s excellent series on “Catholicism.” In addition, a parish mission has been scheduled from February 16–20. During the year, other activities will be scheduled and announced in our parish bulletin.

Each of us has a God-given vocation, a unique role to fulfill within the Church. That role extends beyond just the Sunday obligation. Attending Sunday Mass fulfills an obligation, but it does not fully open the storehouse of graces available to us as Catholics. Our job is to open ourselves to hear the call from God, to allow Jesus to help us deepen our relationship with and devotion to Him so that we can serve Him better. The Year of Faith is a good opportunity for all members of the Church to rediscover their faith in order to shed a clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ.

—Gretchen Reese
The tour guides in Savannah, regularly inform tourists of the four prohibitions contained in the Royal Charter of the Colony of Georgia, but I had never seen the actual Charter language in print. The Charter of 1732 was created by the trustees to keep the Colony of Georgia under control because it was a social experiment. The Charter did not allow blacks in because they believed it would lead to slavery, no liquor or liquor dealers were permitted and no lawyers because they wanted the colonists to settle their problems one-on-one instead of in court. One of the charter’s most important provisions was that no Catholics were allowed in Georgia. Although it was a couple of hundred years since the Reformation, anti-Catholic feeling was still quite strong in Great Britain. And Georgia was founded as a buffer colony against Spanish Florida to the south, so there was great concern that allowing Catholics to settle in Savannah would lead to sympathy with the Spanish Catholics in Florida.

I recently went looking for the Georgia Charter and found it on-line in the Georgia Historical Society Archives. Sure enough there, on page 132 of the Royal Charter, was the phrase, “there shall be a liberty of conscience allowed in the worship of God, to all persons inhabiting, or which shall inhabit or be resident within our said province and that all such persons, **Except Papists**, shall have a free exercise of their religion…” (Emphasis added.)

It’s hard to believe that there was a time when we did not enjoy this precious freedom.

By the end of the 18th century, our nations’ founders embraced freedom of religion as an essential condition of a free and democratic society. And subsequently, when the Bill of Rights was ratified, religious freedom had the distinction of being the first freedom proclaimed in the First Amendment. Religious liberty is indeed the first liberty.

In his homily at the “Faith and Freedom Mass” in Forsyth Park commemorating this nation’s commitment to freedom of religion, the first liberty guaranteed to all Americans under the Bill of Rights, Bishop Hartmayer said, “We ask nothing more than our God-given right to religious freedom be respected. We will not allow it to be taken from us, so help us God.”
A New Year’s resolution is a commitment that a person makes to one or more personal goals, projects, or the reforming of a habit made in conjunction with the beginning of the New Year. The tradition of the New Year’s Resolutions began in pre-Christian times, beginning with the Babylonians in March but was changed to January by the Romans. January gets its name from Janus, the two-faced god who looks backwards into the old year and forwards into the new. Janus became the ancient symbol for resolutions and many Romans looked for forgiveness from their enemies and over time resolutions began to reflect upon self-improvement. Some examples of resolutions include to lose weight, exercise more, eat better, drink less alcohol, quit smoking, save money, volunteer to help others, give to charity or get along better with people.

The U.S. bishops recently announced a new initiative which they stress is “not another program” but instead “part of a movement for life, marriage and religious liberty” which began the Sunday after Christmas. This five-part strategy some people have suggested are “5 Catholic Resolutions for 2013”. The bishops explain what prompted their decision to call for this nationwide initiative — namely, the unparalleled threat to these sacred institutions and rights:

“The call to prayer is prompted by the rapid social movements and policy changes currently underway, such as the mandate by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that coerces employers, including heads of religious agencies, to pay for sterilizations, abortion-inducing drugs and contraceptives, as well as increased efforts to redefine marriage.”

Here are the 5 Resolutions:

1. Starting with the Sunday after Christmas (Feast of the Holy Family) and continuing on or near the last Sunday of every month through Christ the King Sunday, November 2013, cathedrals and parishes are encouraged to hold a Eucharistic Holy Hour for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty.

2. Families and individuals are encouraged to pray a daily Rosary, especially for the preservation of Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty in the nation.

3. At Sunday and daily Masses, it is encouraged that the Prayers of the Faithful include specific intentions for respect for all human life from conception to natural death, the strengthening of marriage and family life, and the preservation of religious liberty at all levels of government, both at home and abroad.

4. Abstinence from meat and fasting on Fridays are encouraged for the intention of the protection of Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty, recognizing the importance of spiritual and bodily sacrifice in the life of the Church.

5. The celebration of a second Fortnight for Freedom at the end of June and the beginning of July 2013 is being planned. This Fortnight would emphasize faith and marriage in a particular way in the face of the potential Supreme Court rulings during this time. The Fortnight would also emphasize the need for conscience protection in light of the August 1, 2013 deadline for religious organizations to comply with the HHS mandate, as well as religious freedom concerns in other areas, such as immigration, adoption, and humanitarian services.

As Catholics we know that our most effective weapons are always prayer and fasting, and that any effective actions we take in defense of life, marriage and religious liberty must be rooted in these spiritual practices.

Please prayerfully consider if you can heed the bishops’ call to join them in making these five resolutions in 2013, and help spread the word! Building up our spiritual and ascetic life by keeping these five resolutions, after all, will help mold us into more effective and compassionate warriors focused on transforming the culture! What do you think — will you make the effort to add these 5 resolutions to your 2013 resolutions?
Address Service Requested