wow!
what a career!
Over the past year, I have been amazed at the size of our church roster which shows that we currently have 1063 families registered in the Cathedral parish family. When my wife Karen and I moved here from North Carolina 8 years ago there were, as I recall, around five or six hundred families in the parish. That’s pretty phenomenal growth, especially for an old, established, urban parish like ours! What’s going on here?

One of the things that’s going on is the breadth of lay ministries we have in our parish. There are 24 — count ‘em, 24 — lay ministries ranging alphabetically from Altar Servers to Ushers. One of the more active ministries is the Christian Services Committee, headed by Deborah and Bill Wade. This group has a tidy portfolio of tasks under its purview such as assembling Personal Hygiene Packets for the homeless, distributed through the Social Apostolate, managing the hugely successful annual food drive which goes to the food pantry, also at the Social Apostolate and running the biennial Ministry Fair held on the steps of the Cathedral, designed to acquaint members — new and old — with the wide variety of ways they could participate in parish activities and use their “Time, Talent, and Treasure” to serve the Lord. And finally there is a ministry to support Savannah Care, an organization helping unwed mothers get started with their new babies.

But there seemed to be something yet to do. When Karen and I first visited the Cathedral from our new home south of Richmond Hill, we met the pastor, Monsignor O’Neill on the cathedral steps and he put a parish registration form in our hands. We filled it out and then a week later he called to talk about the things we might be interested in doing in our newly found parish. We had the best of all worlds — the opportunity to worship in a beautiful setting, be part of a more traditional service with wonderful music and encouraged and welcomed by a member of the parish. We were hooked and sent in our parish census form.

Knowing the importance of personal contact has gotten the Christian Services Committee into a welcome program as its newest, and in many ways, its most rewarding ministry. It all starts with the registration form in the weekly bulletin. The vast majority of potential new parishioners make initial contact by completing this form and dropping it in the collection basket. It goes to Brenda Price in the parish office. In turn she mails a packet to the family which consists of a welcome letter from the rector, a list of the 24 parish ministries, a blank parish census form plus a recent copy of the bulletin or of Twin Spires, to provide a handy list of contact names and numbers for people, many of whom are just unpacking and settling in. The letter asks the family to complete and return the census form which is the formal step in joining the parish.

Then comes the fun part, which is a personal call followed by email contact by one of the members of Christian Services. It's amazing and rewarding to hear the friendliness come back down the wire when the newcomer at the other end realizes that it’s not just another marketing or political action telephone call. Some have said in the past that the Cathedral was not an especially welcoming environment for newcomers and with the large number of visitors in the pews, perhaps it is a little hard to get started and feel welcome surrounded by so many strangers. But a personal telephone call and an invitation to the next Potluck Dinner or Donut Sunday or just a rendezvous on the Cathedral steps after Mass brings smiles to folks’ faces. You can hear it! They come! The parish grows.
The Cathedral Heritage Gala will be held on December 8, 2012, and this year features a scintillating new format and venue. The Gala promises to be the most exciting event ever held to benefit our beloved Cathedral. This festive occasion will feature a spectacular cocktail party with heavy hors d'oeuvres served to you as you wander through the three floors of the phenomenal Telfair’s Jepson Center. You can roam through the 7,500 square feet of this stunning contemporary edifice designed by noted architect, Moshe Safdie. You will be able to view the Center’s gallery spaces including the magnificent Uffizi Art Exhibition.

Harry Haslam has graciously agreed to be the honorary chair of this event. Harry and his wife Kimi live on Tybee and are members of St. Michael’s Parish. Harry is a graduate of Benedictine and a member of the Benedictine Oblates. He is a member of the executive committee and past managing partner (1986-2011) at Hancock Askew & Co., LLP, a regional accounting firm with offices in Savannah and Atlanta. Currently, Harry serves on several civic and charitable boards including the St. Benedict Education Foundation, the International Benedictine House of Studies, the Memorial University Medical Board, and the Georgia Conservancy. We are delighted that Harry is on board with us.

The most exciting feature of the Gala is the opportunity to view the Offering of the Angels: Paintings and Tapestries from the Uffizi Gallery. Savannah was chosen as part of a four-venue United States tour to view this ancient and exquisite collection of art. This exhibition of Italian masterworks from the Renaissance through the Baroque period is from the permanent collection of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, one of the world’s most notable art museums. Founded in 1560, it began its storied history as the repository of the priceless collection of Florence’s Medici family. Offering of the Angels is comprised primarily of recently restored works taken exclusively from the Uffizi collection. This evening presents a rare opportunity to view exquisite paintings and tapestries as you support the restoration and preservation of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. You have the opportunity to mingle with a delightful group of guests from Savannah and around the state.

As in the past, there will be live and silent auctions whose proceeds go directly to support the Cathedral. Beginning on November 15th, you will be able to review items and bid early at www.charityauctionstoday.com. Not every auction item will be available for purchase the night of the Gala, so bid early.

Tickets for the event are $150.00 per person and include valet parking, delicious food, cocktails, dancing to live music, and admission to the art collection. This very special evening is dedicated to the ongoing preservation and restoration of our majestic Cathedral, considered an edifice of historical and architectural significance as well as a magnificent tribute to the honor and glory of God.

So put on your most elegant evening-wear and prepare to meet Botticelli, Titian, Il Parmigianino, Lorenzo Monaco, and others. We promise you will not be disappointed in this fabulous evening event!
The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women reports another successful Rummage Sale!

By Joyce Piersanti

Our generous parishioners made the Rummage Sale even more meaningful this year! And all of the Cathedral priests and Brother Robert shared some of their personal treasures with us as well!

The CCCW members worked for over 3 months accepting donations, and setting up the Parish Hall. Doors opened at 8AM and to a person everyone who came into the Parish Hall left with an armful of treasure. Even Brother Robert found an enormous stuffed dog to take home.

From kitchen goods, bath and beauty supplies, electronics, clothing, furniture, house & holiday decorations, a bookstore supply of every kind of books, videos, enough fabric, sewing machines and boxes of fashion patterns to open a sewing school.

A special thank you to the CCCW members who additionally worked overtime to making sure that at the end of the day, when our doors closed, everything we still had was utilized for good. Clothes and a bicycle went to the Social Apostolate, religious items went to St. Boniface, which is opening a Religious gift shop and a Religious library for their parishioners. Goodwill and the Junior League received all remaining items. Every single item will find a good home and surely make a difference in someone’s life.

Proceeds from the sale should exceed $5000.
The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist and the Diocese of Savannah honored Mrs. Patty B. Schreck, beloved organist, with an afternoon of musical selections and words of gratitude. On Sunday, September 9, 2012, clergy, parishioners and guests from throughout the diocese came to celebrate Mrs. Schreck’s musical contributions and retirement after 67 faithful years of service.

Monsignor William O’Neill welcomed all and led the guests in prayer. Mayor Edna Jackson congratulated Mrs. Schreck on her dedication to her ministry for the Catholic community of Savannah encouraging her to enjoy this next chapter of her life.

County Commission Chairman, Pete Liakakis, declared that September 9, 2012 would be “Patricia B. Schreck Day,” presenting Mrs. Schreck with a beautifully framed proclamation.

Mrs. Schreck, her children, Rev. Monsignor Christopher Schreck, Rev. J. Gerald Schreck, daughter Nancy and guests enjoyed musical selections from the Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Mr. Peter Shannon. Musical selections from Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, Mozart and Bartok filled the Cathedral with joyful song. The talented chorus serenaded the honored guests!

Bishop Emeritus, J. Kevin Boland, praised Mrs. Schreck for producing music for our souls. “You have spoiled us with your talent!” He also thanked her for her noble spirit, her positive nature and gift of family. Quoting from Arthur O’Shaughnessy, Bishop Boland read, “We are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams…Yet we are the movers and shakers of the world for ever, it seems…” He thanked her for serving as the Pied Piper for God.

Bishop Hartmayer was unable to attend the musical tribute as he was attending a Bishops’ training in Rome, Italy. Bishop Emeritus Boland shared with the congregation the beautiful, inscribed crystal vase that Bishop Hartmayer had presented to her at her last official Mass, recognizing her many years of dedicated service and making a joyful symphony.

On behalf of all the priests and parish communities, Bishop Boland and Monsignor O’Neill presented Mrs. Schreck with a

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Helping women choose life for their unborn children

By Gretchen Perez - Outreach Coordinator for Savannah Care

Over the past several years the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist has supported the Savannah Care Center through the Baby Bottle Drive, the Walk for Life and contributing items such as diapers, wipes, bottles, powder and shampoo placed into baby packets.

The Savannah Care Center (SCC) is a non-profit, Christian organization committed to offering support to and serving the needs of teens and women in Savannah who are in crisis and unplanned pregnancies. It was founded by a small group of Christians in 1985 in order to provide alternatives to abortion to women in a safe, caring environment. We opened our doors in 1986, and are located across the street from the abortion clinic. Learning of an unplanned pregnancy can be daunting and life-changing. SCC is dedicated to providing compassionate care by offering education, support and practical assistance; sharing the love of Christ and helping women choose life for their unborn children. SCC is not a medical facility and does not provide medical care.

Each month we serve between 80 and 100 women and their children. All of the services offered are free and open to the public as follows:

- Pregnancy testing, client advocacy, baby clothing, diapers, formula and food supplies
- Earn-While-You-Learn classes on pre-natal care, parenting, nutrition, finance and Bible study
- Community and medical referrals
- Post-abortion counseling
- Sexual integrity training for those who would like to live life free from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and the emotional trauma of multiple relationships.

The Savannah Care Center is clearly making a difference in people’s lives. There are many volunteer opportunities at Savannah Care Center. If you would like to make a difference please contact the office at 912-236-0916.

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE – Continued

bronze plaque to be enjoyed by all who enter the Cathedral. She also received a check as a token of their appreciation and gratitude.

Mrs. Schreck was very grateful and humbled by this beautiful and fitting tribute. “I don’t know why God singled me out for this job, but thank you.” She thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve. She thanked God for her beloved family who have brought her joy and continue to care for her.

“Great done, good and faithful, servant. Well done!” A beautiful reception followed at the Desoto Hilton.
Father Luis Fonseca was born and raised in Bogota, Colombia which prompted me to ask him, “How did you come to be a priest in the Diocese of Savannah?”

“I went to an interview with a coworker back in Columbia, to act as his translator. He was meeting with Monsignor Lawrence Lucree about entering the seminary program for the Savannah Diocese.

“During the interview, Monsignor Lucree seemed more interested in me than my friend. Over the next several years, Monsignor Lucree kept in touch with me via e-mail trying to rekindle in me the flame of the Holy Spirit to become a priest.

“I had been part of a religious community, the Salesians of Don Bosco, until I finished high school, completing the pre-novitiate and novitiate levels before I left and went back to the University. Upon receiving my Masters and Doctorate I taught German Philosophy and French Constructivism, in a couple of universities in Caracas and in Bogota from 1999 to 2002.

“After communicating with Monsignor Lucree for about two years, I came to the states and spent 6 months with him at Our Lady of Lourdes in Columbus where he was the pastor. He helped me get back in love with my original vocation to become a priest. In 2004, I entered the seminary program for the Diocese of Savannah and studied at St. Vincent’s Seminary in Latrobe, PA.”

During his diaconate year, he served at St. Paul’s Church in Pittsburgh and spent the summer at St. James here in Savannah. Father Luis was ordained on June 20, 2009 along with Fathers Scott Winchel, Pablo Migone and Matthew Ericksen.

Father Luis was initially assigned to St. John the Evangelist Parish in Valdosta where he served under Father Dan O’Connell until he came to the Cathedral.

“What was your impression when you heard you were coming to the Cathedral?”

“I was very excited. Although I had visited Savannah for ordinations, I never spent any time here and always wanted to celebrate Mass in this beautiful church. It has been a joy to celebrate the Eucharist in the Cathedral.

“One of my responsibilities will be to assist Monsignor O’Neill with the RCIA Program. This year we have about 16 people registered. I am very happy to be teaching again. I love it as it has been a big part of my life and I will be doing it to serve the Lord,” he concluded.

Monsignor O’Neill is very pleased to have Fr. Fonseca here at the Cathedral. “I’m glad Father Luis is here; he has been a big help to me. He makes good sermons.”

We are very happy to have him here too.
Another Successful Children’s Mass  
By Janee Przybyl 
Director of Religious Education 
Photos By Peter Paolucci

The second annual Children’s Mass took place on September 30th as the Children’s Religious Education (CRE) school year begins with enthusiasm and Catholic pride. The Cathedral’s CRE program faith formation studies started on September 23rd and will continue until May 19th with the popular crowning of Mary. The Children’s Mass was attended by many returning families as well as many new faces.

The goal of the Children’s Mass is to heighten each child’s desire to actively participate in the Mass. During the Children’s Mass the candidates preparing for Communion and Reconciliation took up the gifts. Their catechist, Mrs. Sherri Rachael processed up the center aisle with the children. This class of 8 children will return to take up the gifts when they make their first Eucharist in May after successfully completing their sacramental preparations.

During the school year we select a family from the CRE program to take up the gifts at each Sunday morning 10:00 Mass. To continue to foster active participation in the Mass, each student that has received the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation is encouraged to become an altar server. During this year’s Children’s Mass, 3 of the CRE children were servers; Ian Jones, Ethan Fisher and Emma Fisher.

Father Luis Fonseca celebrated the Mass in honor of the children, catechists and families that participate in the CRE program. He represented the Cathedral parish while he blessed the catechists as they embark on another school year and also...
blessed the families who make sure their children attend the faith formation studies every week.

This year we have 58 children enrolled in the program. We have so many children that we had to reopen one of the classrooms upstairs in the parish center building to accommodate the additional children. We have 10 children preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation which is the largest class in recent memory.

Elizabeth Cambridge Honored

An overflow crowd turned out at the parish covered dish supper on Wednesday, September 26, 2012 to honor Elizabeth Cambridge in recognition of her 30 years of service as the Cantor at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Monsignor O’Neill made a presentation to Elizabeth and thanked her for her dedicated and faithful service to the Cathedral parish. The attendees offered a toast and responded with a standing ovation.

With God’s blessings and the support of the Parish Council, the parish community, the faith formation catechists, the parents and the many children that represent our Catholic future we will have a wonderful year of faith formation. If you are interested in enrolling your child in the CRE program or would like to support the education of our children through catechesis please call the Cathedral office at 233-1709. We look forward to our best year yet of making disciples of Jesus Christ.
KELLY BALMACEDA, THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF MUSIC here at the cathedral, was born and raised Leonardtown, MD in St. Mary’s County, Maryland which is the site of the first Catholic settlement in the United States. After high school she went to Boston to attend the New England Conservatory of Music. Upon receiving her degree in Vocal Performance (Opera) in 2005, Kelly went to New York City where she worked as a Teaching Artist with the Metropolitan Opera, which brought opera to the school children of the city. During this time, Kelly reconnected with her old school sweetheart, Armell Balmaceda, and within a year and a half they were married. Armell Balmaceda is an officer in the U. S. Coast Guard and serves as a helicopter pilot. They relocated to Corpus Christi, TX in 2006. During this time, Kelly earned her Master’s degree in Vocal Performance at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, opened a private voice studio, and founded an opera company in Corpus Christi. They relocated to Savannah upon Armell’s transfer in June 2011. Kelly is now working as a member of the Applied Voice Faculty at Georgia Southern University and continues to maintain a private voice studio in Savannah.

I asked Kelly what was her impression when she first saw the Cathedral? “Majestic! The acoustics are incredible. It’s fun to make music in there and use the gifts that God gave us,” she unhesitatingly replied. Soon after arriving here, Kelly got involved singing solos at both the 10 and 11:30 Masses with Patty, on a variety of occasions. Monsignor O’Neill asked her to be part of the search committee to find a new music director and organist to replace Patty Schreck when she retired. She will fill-in as the Interim Music Director until the New Music Director, Mac Fogle, arrives at year’s end.

In conclusion, I asked what her hopes were for the Cathedral Music Program. “I would like to see increased participation by the congregation. While I would love for more parishioners to join the choir, I also think it is important for us to have a strong singing congregation. Whether you join the choir or just sing from the pews, I would encourage everyone to raise their voices to the Lord. A song is a prayer to God and he doesn’t care what kind of voice you have. To him, your prayer is beautiful. I would also like to see the Cathedral become a cultural center with a music program equal to the beauty of the building,” she said.

Consistent with that goal, there will be an Advent Concert Series in December.

- Organ Recital featuring our new Organist and Director of Music
- Advent Vespers featuring the Cathedral’s Schola Choir under the direction of Brian Taylor
- Cathedral Choir and Cantors Christmas Concert

In sweet music is such art

(Henry VIII)
A few years ago, Pope Benedict XVI said, “Among those totally dedicated to the service of the Gospel, are priests. A special word of thanks must be expressed to the priests who work faithfully and generously at building up the community by proclaiming the word of God and breaking the Bread of Life, devoting all their energy to serving the mission of the Church. Let us thank God for all the priests who have suffered, even to the sacrifice of their lives, in order to serve Christ.”

Since 2003, the last Sunday in October has been designated as Priesthood Sunday, a special day set aside to honor the priesthood in the United States. It is a day to reflect upon and affirm the role of the priesthood in the life of the Church as a central one. The reasons for this celebration should be obvious. The number of priests per Catholic has declined over the past 40 years. Without a priest, no parish is able to be a Eucharistic community. It is important to reaffirm the importance of the priesthood of Jesus Christ and its central place in the life of our Church.

Here in the Diocese of Savannah we have fared somewhat better with a significant number of priest ordinations over the past several years. In a recent Wall Street Journal article, published April 12, 2012, entitled “Traditional Catholicism Is Winning”, Anne Hendershott and Christopher White highlighted that there has been a recent increase in priestly vocations in the United States.

There were 467 new priestly ordinations in the U.S. last year and there is now a year-on-year increase in the numbers of young men opting for the priesthood across many U.S. dioceses. The WSJ article reported that the largest number of new priests are coming from dioceses led by courageous bishops and inspirational vocation directors. Sean Cardinal O’Malley, Archbishop of Boston, the epicenter of the priest abuse scandal, is now turning away candidates from a seminary that he was advised to close less than ten years ago.

There were also a substantial number of new priests ordained in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Chicago as well as less traditional Catholic strongholds such as Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska, which offers strong evidence that the tide may indeed be turning.

The most recent statistics show a similar story across the United States. Last year the Center for Applied Research at Georgetown University estimated that the 2011 seminary intake was up 4% over the previous year and had reached its highest figure in 20 years. Meanwhile, Rome’s North American College is full to its 250 capacity for the first time in decades. As recently reported by Father Timothy McKeown, “When I was a seminarian in Rome in the late 1990’s during the time of Blessed John Paul II, North American College had only about 150 students in the seminary program. This past August of 2011, it was at capacity with 250 students, 100 more seminarians than 15 years ago.” Fr. Tim believes that we may be seeing the beginning of the great springtime for Christianity, that Blessed John Paul II, who had so much hope for the Church and faith in the youth of the world predicted. “Keep your eyes open for the ‘new springtime’ that Blessed John Paul II spoke of. It is all around us,” Fr. Tim concluded.

So on this Special Day, October 28, 2012, please join me in praying for our priests, in praising God for their courage and their generosity. I urge you to make your appreciation for your priest known. They deserve our respect and thanks for giving so much that we may grow closer to God. A simple note, a smile or a phone call will assure him of your loving care and gratitude for his presence in your life and that of our Cathedral faith community. And let us also ask the Lord of the Harvest to send more good priests to serve his church.
As the new Vocation Director in our geographically large diocese, I highly value the good people in our parishes who are in daily contact with young Catholic men—some of whom are undoubtedly future priests.

If you know a faithful Catholic man who may make a good priest one day, will you pass his name along to me?

http://www.calledbyname.info/savannah/

Being able to contact men in our diocese—especially so we can invite them to retreats—is extremely valuable to the vocation office. Last year, because of your help, we had 20 men attend our annual retreat!

Just as valuable as you providing us with names (if not more valuable) is your personal contact with young men. I encourage you to be proactive in proposing the possibility of priesthood. Many, many men who have entered seminary say that they seriously thought about priesthood only after several people mentioned it to them. Here are some ideas for how to speak with young men:

http://www.calledbyname.info/a-sacred-moment/

Thanks so much for your help and prayers. May the Lord raise up many new priests to serve the people of God in our diocese!

In Christ,
Fr. Mark Van Alstine
Vocation Director