Once again the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist has received significant recognition, being selected as one of TripAdvisor’s top ten US Landmarks for 2014. This comes on the heels of being in the top 10 in their inaugural Travelers’ Choice Attractions Awards for U.S. Landmarks last year.

These accolades are particularly astounding when you reflect on some of the other landmarks in the top 10 including the Gettysburg Battlefield, the Lincoln Memorial, the Golden Gate Bridge and the USS Arizona Memorial, to name a few.

Visitors often call it breathtaking, stunning and amazing! It is always instructive to me to see what visitors are saying about our church:

“Worthy of the Name ‘Cathedral’”
“This Cathedral would do justice to many of the cathedrals in Europe. The artwork and stained glass windows are stunning. The self guided tour is free. You won’t be disappointed stopping in to see this gem.”

“Extremely Beautiful Interior”
“I have visited a countless number of churches around the country and in many European cities and I can easily say that you will not be disappointed by this church. The interior is as beautiful as any of the European churches.”

In view of this significant praise, we have begun to assess how to better capitalize on this recognition and attract more visitors to the Cathedral. The Savannah Chamber of Commerce notes that 12 million people visit Savannah every year. However only about 150,000 come annually to see the Cathedral. In order to increase the number of visitors, who are a source of income to maintain our beautiful Cathedral, we have become a member of the Chamber of Commerce. They have begun to aggressively promote the Cathedral in their various marketing materials and digital media as a “Must See” attraction in Savannah. In addition, we have created rack cards, which have been placed at the VisitSavannah Visitors Centers all over town, as well as at the Georgia Welcome Center on I-95.

Mary Clark Rechtien has a group of very knowledgeable tour guides on duty to provide visitors with many details about the history, art and symbols of the Cathedral. Special tours can be arranged upon request. Visitors are being encouraged to make a modest donation of $2.00 per adult to help maintain our beautiful church. This recognition of the Cathedral, as well as the regard visitors have for our magnificent structure, will hopefully produce increased donations from more visitors that will provide a substantial source of additional revenue for the upkeep and preservation of the Cathedral for generations to come.
Everyone in the Cathedral Parish is invited to attend the 2014 Cathedral Heritage Gala which will be held on Friday, November 21st. This year’s exciting new Gala program will feature a Plaza Reception and Cathedral Concert and a first-ever Dinner at the private Chatham Club located on the 14th floor of the DeSoto Hilton with its exquisite panoramic vista of the Savannah River and the Downtown Historic District, including an incredible aerial view of the illuminated Cathedral spires.

These new features, along with the ever-popular live auction and ads, are intended to expand participation throughout the Cathedral Parish, the Savannah Deanery, and the Diocese. The community at large is invited to participate in all events. The theme of this year’s Gala is “Sustaining Faith, Sustaining Community.”

The 2014 Gala program will include:

- Plaza Reception and Cathedral Benefit Concert - Prior to the Gala Dinner, there will be a reception on the Plaza in front of the Cathedral. Join your friends and neighbors as you enjoy hors d’oeuvres and beverages under the stars. The concert will be inside the Cathedral with its amazing acoustics. Under the direction of the Cathedral’s Music Director, Mr. McDowell Fogle, local musicians and singers will entertain you and your friends with an inspirational program of choral and instrumental music featuring our own Cathedral musicians and cantors. Tickets will be $50 each and will include admission to the concert and to a pre-concert reception.

- Cathedral Heritage Dinner – Following the concert, enjoy a fine dining experience of gourmet food and spirits at the Chatham Club of the Hilton DeSoto, with its beautiful views of the Cathedral and downtown Savannah. Tickets to the event will be $250 each and will include the Concert, Pre-Concert reception, and Dinner admission and valet parking.

- Cathedral Heritage Auction – After dinner, bid on a slate of unique, must-have and one-of-a-kind opportunities including the Bishop’s Mystery Item and many other valuable articles. Sonny Dixon, WTOC News Anchor, will be our auctioneer.

- Sponsorships – Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze – include admission to all events, valet parking, program advertising, and community recognition.

- Program Advertising – A number of options are available.

- Donors – Contributions will be accepted for any amount.

The Cathedral’s twin spires are symbols of faith for the Cathedral parish as well as for 77,000 Catholics of Savannah and South Georgia. The Cathedral and its spires attract visitors from around the nation and the world. For the Cathedral Heritage Gala, the twin spires represent our duty and opportunity to preserve this magnificent edifice for future generations.

The Cathedral Parish and the Gala Committee are extremely appreciative for the dedicated sponsors, donors, advertisers, and Gala Committee members who have made the Gala a success for the past fourteen years.

Since 2001 the Gala has generated over $100,000 annually and the Heritage Fund has grown to $1.8 million. The recently completed work on the Cathedral spires was partially funded by $250,000 from the Heritage Fund.

Go online today to become a sponsor, place an ad, or make a reservation for the dinner and/or the concert. Please contact the Committee Co-chairs at 912-308-7884 to assist the Gala Committee in organizing events. On behalf of the Gala Committee, thank you for your past participation and we hope that you will assist in making this very important effort a success again this year.

Photo credits: Skyline, Walt Kessel; Cathedral, Paul H. Camp
Those lyrics, so familiar to us from our hymnal, reveal the mission and the philosophy of the Christian Service Committee. Each year, the CSC asks members of the Cathedral Parish to become Christ’s hands in caring for the Body of Christ here in Savannah. The committee offers the opportunity for parishioners to feed the needy, give dignity to the homeless and minister to the vulnerable before, during and after a pregnancy.

Christian Service recognizes the great need here in Savannah and the great compassion of so many parishioners. Through your donations and support, several organizations benefit directly. The Social Apostolate, provided 28,496 services to clients in 2013 including: 21,111 meals, 822 birth certificates and ID’s, eye exams, eyeglasses, school uniforms, employment assistance, showers for the homeless, clothing, emergency prescription assistance and a host of other services for those most “at risk” in our community. To assist in this outreach, the CSC hosts a March Food Drive, an ongoing Personal Hygiene Packet initiative, as well as accepting financial donations to help with services.

The Committee keeps its hygiene pack supply filled with an Item of the Month drive. Items typically needed are toothbrushes, toothpaste, travel sized shampoos and conditioners, lotion, bar soap, razors and white washcloths. We deliver 30-40 of these hygiene packs to the Social Apostolate each month which are then distributed to new clients and anyone in need.

Savannah Care Center also receives a hand from Christian Service. The Care Center offers pregnancy testing, referrals, housing and adoption services, prenatal nutrition and parenting classes, and crisis pregnancy support and counseling. Throughout the year the committee asks parishioners to bring baby items that the committee bundles into “baby packets” and delivers them monthly to the Care Center. Items most needed are bottles, disposable wipes, newborn “onesies,” baby shampoo and lotions.

Other organizations like Safe Shelter also receive assistance from our parish. Safe Shelter is a home for at risk women and children. Christian Service puts together cosmetic bags filled with soaps, make-up, shampoos and hygiene needs for women seeking shelter.

The CSC does not forget its own. Since Cathedral parishioners come from all parts of the country, the committee extends a welcome to new members at the Cathedral with a hello call and email inviting newcomers to pot luck suppers, coffee and donuts and to consider joining a ministry.

Christian Service is only the instrument through which generous donors respond to the call to share. The ministry is most grateful to all who donate whether financially, with food and supplies, or with their time. Yes, we are many parts of the one body of Christ. And the gifts we have, we are given to share. May the Spirit of love, make us one, indeed! We are many parts; we are all one body.
Dear Parishioners,

It is my great pleasure to invite all registered Cathedral parishioners to a cookout in Lafayette Square on Sunday evening, October 5, 2014, from 5:00 PM until 8:00 PM. Hamburgers, veggie burgers and bratwurst will be on the menu along with side dishes.

The Knights of Columbus will be doing the cooking! Tables and chairs will be available and there will also be live music. Children are most welcome.

The purpose of this evening is to say a big and much deserved “Thank you” to our faithful parishioners who contribute so generously to the Cathedral, and who continue to offer their time and talent for the good of the parish and the wider community.

It will also be a wonderful opportunity to meet and spend some time with one another. Our Cathedral parishioners come from many different parts of the city and the region. Most people attend a particular Mass on Sunday and may not even be aware of their fellow parishioners who attend a different Mass! I think it is critically important that we all have a sense of who belongs to our parish community, and who we are who share in the mission of the Cathedral parish.

You don’t need to bring anything, and there is no charge to come for the cookout. All you need to do is call the Church office (912-233-4709) or email the Cathedral at csjbsav@aol.com and let us know that you plan to attend and how many family members will be with you. We need to have an accurate number so that we can plan the correct amount of food.

Please call the Church office or email us no later than Monday, September 29 to RSVP.

Please come! I look forward to seeing you there on October 5th. In case the weather doesn’t cooperate we will move to the St. Vincent’s gymnasium. We are most grateful to St. Vincent’s for allowing us to do that if the need arises.

Join us for The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist Stewardship Appreciation Dinner

Sunday, October 5, 2014 in Lafayette Square
5:00PM - 8:00PM

I invite all of our registered members to come. I want to thank you for your generosity to the Cathedral Parish. “Please come!”

Father Schreck

Rev. J. Gerard Schreck
Although Savannah is generally regarded as an Irish town, with its St. Patrick’s Day Parade and long tradition of Irish culture, about 13 years ago, several Cathedral parishioners including Otto Alifi, Peter Chiafalo and Frank Finicchiaro were involved in founding the Italian Society of Savannah to celebrate their shared Italian heritage. Over the years the society’s activities have grown to include hosting a Columbus Day Banquet annually and more recently, attending Mass at the Cathedral to honor Italian heritage on Columbus Day weekend and sponsoring the Frank Finocchiaro Scholarship.

As we approach Columbus Day some of us wondered how many of the saints pictured in the various Cathedral windows, murals and statues were of Italian origin. Most of the Cathedral’s 30 major windows depict scenes that feature Jesus and Mary, while the remaining windows show images of various saints.

The only window which survived the fire of 1898, located in southeast corner Our Lady’s Chapel, honors St. Cecilia and St. Agnes who were born in Rome. St. Agnes is depicted holding a lamb, the Christian symbol of innocence, while St. Cecilia, the Patron of Music and Musicians, is shown holding a portable organ.

And up in the choir loft, in the quatrefoil at the center of the beautiful rose window, emblematic of French Gothic architecture, there is another image of St. Cecilia, again depicted with a portable organ.

But it is in the murals that line the center aisle in the upper reaches of the Cathedral (the so-called “Procession of Saints”) where most of the Italian Saints can be found as 19 of the 46 saints pictured are of Italian heritage including:

- St. Denis — Patron of France - Born in Italy, known for his zealous preaching. He was martyred (beheaded) for his faith.
- St. Augustine of Canterbury — Apostle to the English was sent by Gregory the Great from Rome to evangelize the English.
- St. Ambrose — Bishop of Milan, considered responsible for the rise of Christianity in the West.
- St. Thomas Aquinas — Author of “Summa Theologica”; taught that divine truths could be reached through natural reason.
- St. Gregory the Great — Pope known for popularizing music known as Gregorian chant.
- St. Benedict — Authored a guide for spiritual formation used by the Benedictines and Carmelites.
- St. Francis of Assisi — Founded the Franciscan Order and was devoted to a life of poverty and serving the poor.
- St. Clare of Assisi — Impressed by St. Francis — Foundress of the Order of Poor Clares.
- St. Catherine of Sienna — Patroness of Italy and Doctor of the Church, author of “Dialogue” a record of her mystical experiences.
- St. Scholastica — Twin sister of St. Benedict and foundress of the Order of Benedictine Nuns.
- St. Helena — Mother of the Emperor Constantine, was credited with finding the true cross on a trip to Palestine.
St. Charles Borromeo — The Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. He worked to bring lapsed Catholics back to the Church.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga — Patron of Catholic Youth, was an Italian aristocrat who became a member of the Society of Jesus.

St. Tarsicius — Patron of First Communicants, was beaten to death while carrying the Eucharist to some Christians in prison.

St. Sebastian was an early Christian saint and martyr, killed during the Roman Emperor Diocletian’s persecution of Christians.

And finally, in the last mural on the left facing the altar, you see the Five Virgin Martyrs. Once again St. Cecilia of Rome (2nd from left) is shown with portable organ and St. Agnes (2nd from right) with a lamb, the symbol of innocence, along with St. Lucy of Sicily on the left, prayed to by those with eye trouble, whose eyes were plucked out by Emperor Diocletian, and St. Agatha on the right, Patron of Nurses. The pincers symbolize her torture and palm fronds which also signify martyrdom.

Lastly, in the rear northwest corner of the Cathedral is a statue of St. Frances Cabrini, the Patron of immigrants, emigrants and orphans. Born in Italy, “Mother Cabrini”, like many other Italian Americans, came to New York in 1889 and worked with impoverished Italian immigrants. She became the first citizen of the United States to be canonized a saint.

New Parish Council Leadership Elected

A new set of Officers and Committee Chairs was elected at the last Parish Council meeting in May.

Jim Gallagher (left) was elected as Chairman of the incoming Parish Council. Anna Kaluzne was elected as Vice Chairperson and Lynn Everett was chosen as Secretary.

The following individuals were elected as Committee Chairs:

Property - Walt Harper
Parish Life - Anna Kaluzne
Religious Education - Norene Buckstine
Christian Service - Deborah Wade
Worship - Lynn Everett
Development - Catherine Kostilnik
Finance Representative - Mary Alice Nadeau

Parish Council meetings are normally held on the last Monday of the month and interested parishioners are invited to attend.
Wise and beautiful words from the Prophet Isaiah. Each Sunday, at the 10 AM Mass, members of the Cathedral choir come together to put Isaiah’s words into practice. Each member brings a different gift to the choir, no two sounding exactly the same. We are all of different ages and vocal ranges, but when all are blended together, we hope that the offering we bring to the Sacred Liturgy and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will enhance the worship experience and above all else, glorify God.

We are currently at the beginning of our new choir year and are looking to add voices to our “new song”. There are no auditions, just a willingness to add your voice to the many already assembled. Rehearsals are held each Wednesday evening from 6:00 – 8:00 PM in the choir loft.

I hope that you will prayerfully consider joining us. As I celebrate my first anniversary in the Cathedral Choir, I can attest that the investment of your time and talent will come back to you tenfold through the friendship, fellowship and worship you will experience as you join in “singing His Praise” from what is truly the best seat in the house.

— Pattye Meagher