"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me."

By Peter Paolucci

Illustration, crop from Annunciation of the Angel to Zechariah by Domenico Ghirlandaio

On September 23, nine months before the Birth of St. John the Baptist on June 24, The Conception of the Venerable Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, John, is celebrated in the Eastern Rite Churches.

Seven centuries before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a voice of one crying in the desert:

"Prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!" (Isa. 40:3).

And the Prophet Malachi prophesied that before the Messiah’s birth His Forerunner would appear, and would herald His coming, “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.” Malachi 3-1. The Jews, therefore, in awaiting the Messiah, also awaited the appearance of His Forerunner.

The Gospel of St. Luke describes this… "In the days of King Herod of Judea," the angel Gabriel appeared to an elderly man named Zechariah, a member of the "priestly order of Abijab," who served God in the Temple. (Luke 1:5). Zechariah was married to Elizabeth, who herself was of priestly stock and a cousin of Mary, but the couple was childless.

Once when Zechariah took his turn as priest at the Temple of Jerusalem, he went into the Sanctuary to offer incense on the golden altar, just outside the Holy of Holies, a very great honor. Going behind the veil of the Sanctuary, he beheld an angel of God standing beside the altar of incense. Zechariah was terrified and halted in fear, but the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John” (Luke 1:13).

The angel foretold that the boy would minister to the "people of Israel ... with the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:13, 16-17). Zechariah could not believe the angel’s words, because he and his wife were already advanced in age. “How will I know that this is so?” he asked incredulously.

The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you the good news. Behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my words...."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and they were astonished that he had not come out from the Sanctuary after so long a time. And when he did come out, he was supposed to pronounce a blessing upon the people, but could not do so because he had been struck speechless. When Zechariah explained by gestures that he was unable to speak, the people then understood that he had experienced a vision.

The prophecy of the Archangel was fulfilled, and Elizabeth was delivered from her barrenness, and gave birth to John, the Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, our Patron Saint here at the Cathedral.

Sources:
Luke 1:5-25 (Announcement of the Birth of John);
Catholic Exchange
Dear friends,

Over the past several weeks I have communicated with you about the state of our parish finances. We are in great shape thanks to your generosity to the Cathedral Offertory as well as your annual support of the Cathedral Heritage Endowment Fund. We have been able to pay down the debt associated with Cathedral Renovation and Steeple Stabilization projects as well as fund several other projects, which were unplanned but necessary. We were able to do all of this without a Capital Campaign.

The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist has received numerous tributes which attest to its distinguished historic importance and artistic value. As the grandsons and granddaughters of faithful Catholics, who sacrificed to build this beautiful house of God, we are blessed to worship within it but are also responsible for its preservation.

I recently asked you to consider increasing your support to the Cathedral Offertory. Since Commitment Sunday we received many cards from parishioners who considered my request and did their best to be as generous as they could. If you haven’t already done so, I ask you to consider helping us take on our next project which will be quite exciting.

As a parish, we have embraced our mission as stewards of this historic house of worship and as hosts for fellow Catholics from throughout the Diocese and visitors from around the world. I believe that for our next project we should make an investment in us, in our parish life, specifically in a place for us to gather as a parish family, to make friends and connections, and support one another in our faith.

With the consent of the Parish Council, we have begun to explore the possibility of returning the downstairs Chapel to its original purpose as a parish hall for the entire parish family, plus an adjoining Chapel for Adoration, a rehearsal room for our Choir, a kitchen, and additional restroom facilities.

Originally, the undercroft or basement space provided by the architectural design of the Cathedral, was used for parish gatherings of various kinds as well as catechetical instruction of the young. As early as the late in 1870’s fund raising fairs were held in the undercroft. Supper booths and craft booths were lined up in the basement of the Cathedral for more than a week and a Christmas tree was raffled off to obtain funds to purchase an organ for the Sunday School children of the parish.

I envision a beautiful space, to be enjoyed by our parish and our diocese, one proper to and complimentary of the Cathedral itself. Our parish finance council is confident that we would be able to pay the cost of such a renovation with the combination of your increased offertory giving and the distributions from the Cathedral Heritage Endowment Fund. Again, we will not require any major capital campaign.

Please think about how you might help us with this investment in our parish by considering an increase in your annual giving to the Cathedral.

Thank you and god bless you.

Rev. J. Gerard Schreck
Rector
**Editor’s Note**: Director of Music Paul Thornock recently commented on the Friends of Cathedral Music Program for the coming year. He has been here at the Cathedral for one year and this year’s program will be the first that he has planned:

I am very excited about this season. It is really varied; no two concerts have similar repertoire on them. The programming is drawn from different styles, different parts of the world and different time periods. These programs came about after a good deal of thinking and planning. I generally sketch out the needs of a concert season a year in advance and add ideas along the way as I have them. Then, as the brochure deadline looms and I have time to reflect on events and the status of the choir, needs of the overall program, and input from the Board, all those ideas come together.

The first concert of the season on Friday, October 18th, will be *Musica noctis: Music of the Night*, performed by the Cathedral Choral Scholars, our resident professional choral ensemble. They will perform their premier concert of music composed for the evening offices of Vespers and Compline. The English cathedrals call their professional adult singers Lay Clerkes or Choral Scholars. We have adopted this name for our section leaders in the larger Cathedral Choir. Parishioners will recognize some of these faces as the cantors who lead the singing at the weekend masses.

I initially planned to perform an all-Renaissance concert. After I worked with the choir over the year, I realized they also do later music really well. I wanted to make sure that the audience had something more varied than just an hour of Renaissance polyphony. So, the program will include works by Renaissance masters Palestrina, Tallis, and Byrd, but also trace the evolution of these timeless texts through to the compositions of more recent composers, including Arvo Pärt and Herbert Howells.

This is music for Vespers (Evening Prayer) and Compline (Night Prayer). I took the structure of these ancient prayers and paired each liturgical moment and text with a piece of repertoire that would be engaging for the audience and within the wheelhouse of the musicians. Our Cathedral is such a special building for music; acoustically it is really great!

The November 8 concert, *The Glories of Notre-Dame Cathedral* will feature the Cathedral Choir accompanied by the Cathedral Brass to perform music associated with Notre-Dame Cathedral and other significant Parisian churches. After the devastating fire of April 2019, Notre-Dame’s preeminent place in music history has been on the minds of musicians and music lovers around the world. Polyphony, the performance of more than one simultaneous musical idea, began at Notre-Dame! The way that Cathedral’s organists play the Mass still informs the way music is made in great churches around the globe.

This concert began life in my head as an organ recital. Before the fire, I was scheduled to play an organ recital at Notre-Dame in March and planned to preview my recital in Savannah before I went to Paris. Well, the Paris
recital has officially been postponed until after the restoration, so I began thinking about the Savannah audience and how our music making still relates to what happens in Paris. We developed the idea of a program about the influence of Notre-Dame and the way their work radiates beyond their walls. The concert will be a tour of the major churches in Paris and feature works by famous composers associated with Notre-Dame and other important churches, including St. Sulpice, St. Gervais, La Madeleine, St. Germain, and others. A special collection will benefit the restoration of the choral and organ program at Notre-Dame Cathedral.

As is the custom, on Sunday, December 15, the Cathedral Choir and Cathedral Brass present their annual Christmas at the Cathedral, a program of music for Advent and Christmas. Scripture readings juxtaposed with choral music tell the story of the Christ child from the foretelling by the prophets to the visit of the Magi. The choir will be singing in various places in the building and some of the best brass players in the southeast will join forces with the choir. Once again, Craig Cramer, Organ Professor from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN will play the Noack organ. The program is loosely modeled after Lessons in Carols from King’s College in Cambridge. The audience also has the opportunity to join the choir, brass, and organ in singing the traditional carols of the season. This is one of our most popular events, so plan to arrive early! Last year there were hundreds of people out on the plaza who were turned away. One of the great benefits of joining the Friends of Cathedral Music is reserved seating for Christmas at the Cathedral!

The January 19 performance will feature CHANTICLEER, also known as “the world’s reigning male chorus” by the New Yorker. The San Francisco-based GRAMMY® award-winning ensemble, Chanticleer is known as “an orchestra of voices” for the seamless blend of its twelve male voices ranging from countertenor to bass and its original interpretations of vocal literature. It is one of the most famous choirs in the world.

This is a new big leap for the Friends of Cathedral Music and the Board has been working very hard behind the scenes to make this event a success. Part of our mission is to bring really great music to Savannah and there is no better acoustical environment in the city for hearing music than the Cathedral. I have heard them live several times and they are fantastic. This is the only ticketed event of the season.

The last event of the year will be held on April 8, Wednesday of Holy Week. Music for the Office of Tenebrae, which means “darkness” or “shadows” in Latin, has been practiced by the church since medieval times. Tenebrae is not really a concert but it is a liturgical service. The Cathedral Choir will sing the Thomas Tallis setting of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, penitential psalms, and other works for the Office of Tenebrae on this darkest of nights. All lights in the Cathedral are gradually extinguished to symbolize the temporary triumph of the prince of darkness over the Light of the World, and the loud noise, or strepitus, at the conclusion of the office suggests the earthquake described in the Passion narratives. A single candle left burning is the symbol and promise of Christ’s triumph over death and darkness. Tenebrae concludes with Gregorio Allegri’s famous Miserere. It promises to be a great season so plan on joining the Friends of Cathedral Music and enjoy these beautiful sounds in our acoustically inspiring church.
The Cathedral has teamed up with Bishop Robert Barron’s Word on Fire Ministry to offer every parishioner a new platform to explore all the goodness, truth and beauty of our faith. This innovative program is called Engage and provides access to all of Bishop Barron’s award-winning video’s, carefully designed mini courses, complete study guides, and a discussion forum to ask questions and share your thoughts. Bishop Barron’s Word on Fire ministry offers the highest quality Catholic content available. The program includes short videos and films that have been Emmy-nominated, aired on Public Television and viewed by millions of people around the world. They feature Bishop Barron, one of the most effective Catholic evangelists today, and have led to countless conversions, reversions and transformed lives. Here are just a few of topics you can explore through this program:

**The Last Things**: Five short, engaging videos on the last things (death, judgment, Heaven, Purgatory, Hell)

**Catholicism 101**: Master the basics of the faith and get up to speed with this series of 20 short videos.

**Heroes of the Faith**: Saint Benedict, Saint Augustine and many others

**Why the Church Matters**: Why being "spiritual, but not religious" is not sufficient.

**Prayer**: Teaches the basics of prayer and highlights the wisdom of great Catholic spiritual masters.

**The Eucharist and the Resurrection**

**The Mass**: Short video lessons explaining each part of the Mass.
On Evil & Suffering: It's one of the oldest - and strongest - arguments against God's existence: If God is all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? Through these four videos you will learn how to respond both intellectually and spiritually to the "problem of evil.

The Engage program is astonishingly easy to use. You just open the text message or email we send you and then click and play. You do not need any technical expertise. There are no barriers or extra websites between you and watching the content. There are no apps and no downloads so even if you have little to no technical expertise you can enjoy this opportunity. You will have access to Bishop Barron Digital video’s and mini courses to watch anytime and on any device. You can watch the videos on your own and/or participate in small groups that will be offered throughout the year.

If you want to join this fantastic and free program text, Engageme, (one word, no spaces) to the number 84576 from your cell phone or from your computer type in: CathedralSavannah.flocknote.com.

We also invite you the join us in our study of the what might be the most fascinating book in the Bible, Revelation: The Kingdom Yet to Come. This intriguing 11 session study program by Jeff Cavins pulls back the veil on the rich symbolism present in Revelation. Discover what the mysterious figures and images of Revelation mean and see how Revelation is more than an apocalyptic vision of the “end times.” Explore the Church’s teaching on the second coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. Understand how God and the Church, enter into a heavenly, holy, and mystical marriage every time we celebrate Mass.

We began in early September and are continuing every Monday night from 6-8pm in the Parish Hall Library for 11 weeks. Feel free to join at any time. If you miss any classes the videos are available free online to all registered participants.

If you have questions about the Engage program or the Bible study please email threenovacks@gmail.com

The fifth annual Stewardship Appreciation Dinner will be held on Sunday evening October 13, 2019 between 5:00 and 8:00PM in beautiful Lafayette Square.

Come and join your fellow parishioners to enjoy an evening of good food and fellowship in the shadow of the Cathedral’s iconic Twin Spires. Fr. Schreck would like to thank all our faithful parishioners who share their time and talent for the good of the parish and the wider Savannah community. He encourages all of us to attend and have a good time together in our beautiful “front yard,” with a lovely view of our magnificent, beloved Cathedral and celebrate all the good work that we have done together as a Parish.
Deacon Dewain Smith began the Potpourri Project a little over a year ago when his wife Diane passed away. There were so many flowers from her service that seemed to last forever. So rather than toss them away, Deacon Dewain and his family harvested the blooms, dried the petals with plans to save them. Now what? What use can be made from dried flowers? Due to the volume of flowers available at the Cathedral, on a weekly basis, why not harvest them, dry them and find a way to make potpourri packets for sale in the Cathedral, as gifts for Christmas. Although pleased with the project’s initial success, it was obvious that help was needed to sustain and expand the project.

Earlier this year he approached Gigi Lacanilao, president of the Cathedral CCW, looking for someone who could help with the project. She suggested Lisa Atwell, a new member of the parish and the CCW. Coincidentally, Lisa had been praying about how she could contribute to the parish in a meaningful way and had always been involved with flowers and gardening, so it was a match. Lisa joined the Flower Guild and is now heading up the Potpourri Project ably assisted by Denise LeMay.

Deacon Smith’s request that Denise take part in the project came shortly after her younger brother Mark, who had Down Syndrome and more recently was stricken with Alzheimer’s Disease, was called by God to be with Him in Heaven. God knew that Denise needed to be involved in something that Mark loved (FLOWERS!), so He had Dewain offer this opportunity to her. It was indeed
"Heaven Scent".

Since then other people have become involved, the project has expanded and ready to launch a new major product line for the Cathedral.

The ladies of the Flower Guild have a rotation schedule of dedicated volunteers who decorate the altars in the church. These talented floral artists provide weekly and seasonal rotation of flowers which are beautifully arranged to adorn the various altars in the Cathedral. The aesthetic arrangements remain on the altars for about a week. Once these blossoms that have enhanced sacred liturgies begin to decline, they are harvested by Lisa and Denise, taken to the drying room, and processed for use in the Potpourri Project. The individual petals are separated and dried. The drying process takes about three weeks. They are then blended with the fragrance mixture and packaged as potpourri. Gigi also suggested that the product line be expanded to include sachet bags which sounded like a good idea, so they were added.

Catherine Kostilnik collects orders from the website and sends them to Lisa for shipping.

Peggy Baker and Gloria Keane sell the products at the Docent’s Desk while Jan Cunningham and Brenda Price provide office support. Jimmy Sheehan set up the workshop on the 2nd floor of the school and keeps it supplied with boxes and whatever they need.

We now offer Cathedral Flowers Potpourri and Sachet products described as follows: “Handcrafted from dried cathedral flowers and fragrance blend to create gifts for home and special occasions.” Available in Lavender and Rose fragrance priced as follows:

- Sachet Packets $10.00
- Potpourri Bags $15.00

They may be purchased on the Cathedral website: savannahcathedral.org or at the Docent’s desk Monday through Saturday in the rear of the Cathedral.

Arrange special orders by email to Lisa Atwell: callowers.919@gmail.com. They may be picked up and paid for by check at the church office.
Glorious Mysteries vividly portrayed in the Cathedral

By Peter Paolucci

On October 7, the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, formerly known as Our Lady of Victory, the anniversary of the decisive victory of the combined fleet of the Holy League of 1571 over the Ottoman navy at the Battle of Lepanto. Pope St. Pius V attributed the victory to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was invoked on the day of the battle through a campaign to pray the Rosary throughout Europe.

This upcoming feast called my attention to the various mysteries of the Rosary, in particular the Glorious Mysteries. While praying each decade, an image always comes to my mind to match the mystery. After a while, I realized that all those depictions were located somewhere in the Cathedral.

On the first mystery, The Resurrection of Jesus Christ (left), I recalled the stained glass window which can be found, on the south side aisle.

For mystery number 2, The Ascension of Jesus to Heaven (center), the beautiful north transept window came vividly to mind.

The third mystery, The Descent of the Holy Spirit (below), is dramatically portrayed directly in front of us in the massive mural on the southeast transept wall.
And close by, the stained glass window in the south transept, contains images that represent the last two Glorious Mysteries, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven and The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth.

We are so fortunate to have these beautiful images here in the Cathedral to help us recite the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary in honor Our Lord's life and that of His Blessed Mother.
The Cathedral was recently featured in the Visit Savannah e-newsletter that goes out to several hundred group tour companies as the primary site on the tour of the Landmark Historic District.

A glorious sight to behold, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist is an architectural masterpiece. In the French-Gothic style, pointed arches and magnificent details make a breathtaking backdrop to the gorgeous Savannah skyline. Call ahead to the Cathedral to arrange for a trained docent to meet with your group and tell them all about the church's fascinating history. Elegantly restored, the church is regularly called "breathtaking" and "amazing"! TripAdvisor rated the Cathedral #6 on its list of Top US Attractions.

It's no wonder we had over 300,000 visitors last year.