Children’s
Religious Education
In a COVID Environment

By: Janee Przybyl

The CRE program began the school year on September 27 with 2 different methods of instruction: in the classroom and at home. We currently have 40 children enrolled in the in-school program and 32 children are studying religious education at home using textbooks provided by the Cathedral Basilica. This is the first time that we have had so many students studying at home.

The parents have been grateful to have a choice in their children’s faith formation process. To decrease the risk of COVID-19 for the in school children we have enacted 8 CDC recommended precautions before, during or after Sunday school classes. These precautions are:

1. All people who enter the parish hall building will wear a face mask covering their nose and mouth and have their temperatures taken.
2. Surfaces that children encounter will be sanitized before and after classes.
3. All students will be given personalized textbooks and school supplies.
4. Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms.
5. Upon arrival, parents/guardians are to walk their children to their classroom when told to do so by CRE staff. It is recommended that families remain in their vehicles until the entrance is clear.
6. Upon dismissal, parents are to remain outside until they see their children exiting the building.
7. Students will be socially distanced during classroom sessions
8. Air conditioning fans will be turned on in all classrooms.

To date we are not aware of anyone who has been involved with the CRE program and has been diagnosed with the virus. We will continue with the 8 precautions until the CDC or Georgia government officials indicate we are safe to eliminate all or some of the precautions.

The children who are learning from home use textbooks by Loyola Press provided by the Cathedral Basilica. After students complete a chapter they
fill out the chapter review tests, take a picture and text the material for evaluation. Their scores are recorded on a spreadsheet to ensure that they are consistent with their peers in the in-school program. The home-schooled children are invited to join the in school program whenever their parents feel it is safe to do so. One family has already chosen to resume in school education with other families discussing the possibility.

For the in-school program we are fortunate to have 5 returning catechists: Julie Estvander, kindergarten/first grades; Jamie Josselyn, First Communion prep class; Christine Wacta, 3rd /4 th grade; Shannon Lancaster, 5th /6 th grades, and Alizon McLaughlin, Confirmation prep class. We are also fortunate to have 5 newly confirmed teenagers who have volunteered to assist the catechists each Sunday. Additionally, we are pleased to have David Josselyn who volunteers to improve security and safety for our CRE program each Sunday.

We are very blessed to have so many volunteers whose primary desire is to pass along their Catholic faith to our parish children and keep them safe. For the first time in recent memory we have 10 students in CRE this year who are preparing to be baptized in the Catholic faith. We are planning a group baptism celebration for all the children in December.

This is so exciting for everyone involved and proves that it is never too late to have your children baptized. The CRE program is happy to participate in the sacrament of Baptism as well as Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation.

If you are a member of the Cathedral Basilica and are interested in enrolling your children in our CRE program, you are asked to call the rectory office at 912-233-4709. We will happily pass along our knowledge of the Catholic faith to your children in a safe and productive environment that is consistent with the needs of each child. The CRE program is also grateful to have the support of many parents, clergy and administrative personnel that help make our school year a success even in the COVID-19 environment of 2020. God bless us all.
Tourists keep on coming!
By John Pryor

Our beautiful Cathedral Basilica remains one of the top attractions in the City of Savannah! Before the Covid pandemic we were attracting 1,000-1,200 visitors a day. Our visitors were from all areas of the country with a large influx from the upper midwest and west coast along with many from Europe as well as Asia. Our visitors consisted of families on vacation to Savannah, Girl Scout Troops from all over the country, convention attendees plus a large contingent of people passing through Savannah going to and coming from Florida.

Our mix of visitors has changed over the last 6 months; very few girl scout troops from further than a 5 hour drive and no convention attendees as conventions were canceled. What has remained consistent and has increased, is the number of families as well as people passing through Savannah.

When tourists are asked about their visit and why they came to Savannah and chose to visit the Cathedral Basilica, the answers were quite consistent. Families that live within a 5 hour drive have flocked to Savannah and the Cathedral consistently say that they had to get their families “out of the house” and get away from being cooped up! Savannah was a natural choice as a place that was safe and welcoming and easy to get to. Their research told them that the Cathedral Basilica was the spot to be sure and see when in Savannah!

Our visitor counts are consistently in the 500 to 800 range with some days hitting 1,000 since we have reopened 6 months ago.

We have rules of entry that are followed strictly- wear a mask and sanitize your hands upon entry - we have zero push-back on these rules. Along these lines, Kathy Siler, our Wednesday docent, said she has seen an incredible amount of creativity in the masks being worn - big fangs, college logos, many homemade masks - some funny some scary - but they all wear masks!

Pete Connolly, our Tuesday and Thursday docent, says that families bring their kids and are keen on learning the history and symbolism of the Cathedral; the architecture, windows and stations of the cross are of great interest. They see their visit as an education for their kids in addition to seeing a thing of remarkable beauty.

It is nice to know that our Cathedral Basilica allows visitors to get out of their confinement and make strides toward a normal life again.
IGNATIUS PERSICO OFM/CAP
Savannah’s only Cardinal/Bishop

BY PETER PAOLUCCI

When visiting the Cathedral most of us look at and admire the stained glass windows but rarely do we take the time to look at the dedication of these beautiful decorative features.

I was recently sitting up-front on the right side of the Cathedral Basilica, in the section right in front of the Crucifix. When I glanced over to look at the lancet windows on my right, I noticed that the dedication on the St. George window read “In Memory of Ignatius Cardinal Persico, the 4th Bishop of Savannah”. It announced that he was the only one of our prelates to be named a cardinal. He passed away 125 years ago on December 7, 1895.

Cardinal Persico had a very interesting career. Ignazio Camillo Guglielmo Maria Pietro Persico was born in Naples, Italy, on 30 January 1823. In 1839 he began studies at the Capuchin Franciscans monastery in Naples and was ordained seven years later in 1846. After ordination he was assigned to Patna, India where he became the aide of the bishop and assisted him with the building of a seminary as well as the creation of the Catholic newspaper "Bombay Catholic Examiner." In 1854 he was consecrated a bishop and named auxiliary bishop to then Bishop Hartmann. After only a short while in this position he was appointed Vicar Apostolic. In 1860 the Sepoy Rebellion occurred in India with the Indian people rebelling against the British rule. He was threatened on numerous occasions and because of this and other events his health declined and he was recalled to Italy. After regaining his health he
was sent to the United States where he took part in the Council of Baltimore in 1866. Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston invited him to accompany him to South Carolina in 1867. As his health continued to improve, Bishop Lynch asked him to serve as a missionary priest at a black parish in Aiken. While living there, Bishop Persico took out papers to become an American citizen. In three years time, his health improved enough for him to be appointed as the fourth bishop of the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia, which at that time comprised the entire state of Georgia.

Soon after his appointment as Bishop of Savannah by Pope Pius IX on March 11, 1870, the Right Reverend Ignatius Persico determined that a larger Cathedral was needed to serve the growing Catholic population in Savannah. He inaugurated plans for the construction of a new building and secured the farm property located on Abercorn Street along Harris Street to Lincoln Street adjacent to St. Vincent’s Academy from the Sisters of Mercy in exchange for a parcel of land that the diocese owned on Whitfield Square. The Cathedral was ultimately built on the current site and St. Joseph’s Hospital was later built on the Taylor Street property; the Rose of Sharon stands on it today.

Bishop Persico’s poor health returned and he was forced to resign his position as bishop after only two years for reasons of ill health in 1872. He left office before the construction on the new Cathedral began, but remained in Savannah until the arrival of his successor William H. Gross on April 27, 1873 and then returned to Italy. Bishop Gross laid the cornerstone of the new Cathedral, planned by Bishop Persico, on September 19, 1873.

He was appointed a delegate from the Vatican to Canada in 1874 and five years later he was appointed Bishop of Aquino in Italy. In 1887 he was appointed titular archbishop of Tamiatha and apostolic delegate to Ireland. After six years as archbishop he returned to Rome where on 16 January 1893, he was created cardinal priest of the title of St. Peter in Chains by Pope Leo XIII. He died two years later from an attack of paralysis.

Source: Article by Rita H. DeLorme, The Southern Cross 12/22/2016
Bishop Parkes’ Coat of Arms

For those of who haven’t been to the Cathedral Basilica for a while, Bishop Stephen Parkes coat of arms has been added to the gothic arched panel in the upper portion of the Cathedra (bishop’s chair).

On the left side is the coat of arms of the Diocese of Savannah and on the other side are elements that are personal to Bishop Parkes.

At the top is a fleur-de-lys, a symbol of the Mother of God and the Patron of his home Diocese of Orlando.

In the middle is a palm frond that symbolizes martyrdom and honors St. Stephen after whom Stephen Parkes was named.

At the base is the Lamb of God. This image signifies the centrality of the Eucharist, the Supper of the Lamb, in the life of the Church and also alludes to Saint John the Baptist, the principal patron of the Diocese of Savannah.

Underlying the coat of arms is a scroll announcing Bishop Parkes personal motto, *Gaudete in Domino Semper* which means “Rejoice in the Lord Always”.

Source: The Southern Cross article,
Father Douglas Clark - October 1, 2020