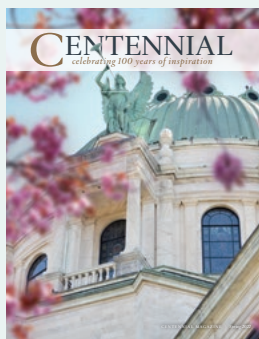


CENTENNIAL

celebrating 100 years of inspiration





EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma
David J. Kersten

CREATIVE TEAM

Juliana Conidi
Tom Lucia

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Sister Fran Gangloff, osf
Rev. Msgr. J. Patrick Keleher
Cindy Lee
Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf

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780 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY 14218
(716) 828-9648 | OLVCharities.org



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By Rev. Msgr. J. Patrick Keleher



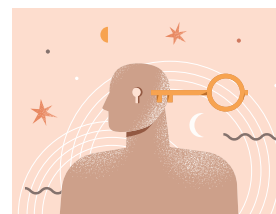
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About the Cover: Because they are so high above the ground, it can be hard to get a sense of the sheer size of the copper angels that are perched around the Basilica's dome. Each is 18 feet tall!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a blessing it is every morning to experience the transcendent beauty of Father Baker's crown jewel—OLV National Shrine & Basilica.

Sometimes I like to go over after it is closed at night. I turn on some lights and not a sound can be heard. In these quiet moments, I feel a deep connection to Father Baker, our magnificent church, and his ministries that continue to this day.

As the lights come on, and the full beauty of the Basilica takes hold of me, I walk over to the resting place of our saintly founder. I make the sign of the cross and I pray to him for guidance and grace, the wisdom to lead our faith community and our OLV organizations, and the strength to carry on his works.

When I'm with Father Baker, I let my mind wander and I wonder what it was like to experience the remarkable achievements he accomplished. What was it like to open the Infant Home? What was it like to raise thousands of "Baker Boys?" What was it like to build the Basilica?

While I will never get the chance to experience those things for myself, I was recently blessed to get a glimpse into what it might have been like due to our partnership with EWTN—The Global Catholic Network—on a TV show called "They Might be Saints."

In August of 2021, EWTN's camera crew came to our campus and filmed several re-creations of scenes from Father Baker's life. I was fortunate to play Father Baker in a few of them. No words can describe the emotion I felt while doing my best to portray him. The feeling of giving food and money to the less fortunate as he did or putting out cribs for unwanted babies ... I was—and still am—in awe.



I invite you to watch this amazing documentary by scanning the QR code to the left. I hope it brings you as much joy to watch it as it did for me to have a small part in filming it.

I pray that Father Baker continues to intercede for you, that Our Lady of Victory protects you, and that Almighty God blesses you and your loved ones.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in teal ink, reading "Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma
Pastor/Rector, OLV National Shrine & Basilica
President, OLV Organizations

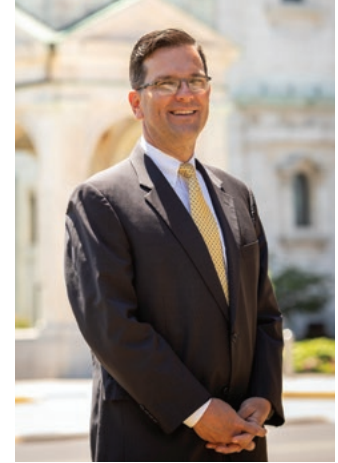


CEO'S MESSAGE

As the saying goes, “When you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life.”

Throughout my life and career, I have been blessed to have served in several Catholic ministries: Catholic parish and school administration, Catholic social services, and Catholic health care philanthropy. Each opportunity has proven to be enjoyable and incredibly rewarding.

Since joining OLV Charities nearly four years ago, I was particularly motivated by the opportunity to tell the profoundly impactful story of Father Nelson Baker to new generations, and how his love and compassion powers his legacy of caring today and hopefully for years to come.



With the support of our board and senior leadership team, OLV invested in and built a robust digital communications program that has enabled us to reach friends new and old. We placed a premium on our future (Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z), all while embracing messaging that would also resonate with our more mature audiences.

To reach viewing audiences ranging from 25 to 75+, we cast the widest net possible. Through web/TV content, livestreaming, and emerging social media trends, we have been able to use video to bring Father Baker to life by connecting with individuals through their mobile devices, computers, and TVs. To date, our digital Masses and videos have been viewed more than 230,000 times in all 50 states, Canada, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Additionally, OLV’s Masses that have been broadcast on WGRZ Channel 2—our local NBC affiliate—were viewed by more than 300,000 people in 2021.

We also placed a premium—like Father Baker did—on supporting new programs that encourage and support young people. Through Camp Turner, the Christian Leadership Institute (CLI), and Mazurek’s Bakery, we are providing youth with resources, experiences, and training that will allow them to heal, grow and succeed.

In this moment of isolation, division, and trauma, the ministries of Father Baker are ever so needed.

As we move forward with our work and with the OLV Basilica Centennial Celebration, we will continue to find innovative ways—like this issue of *Centennial* magazine you are about to enjoy—to introduce/reintroduce audiences to the moving and impactful works of Father Baker and his ministries.

On behalf of the entire OLV team, we thank you for your interest and support!

David J. Kersten

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David J. Kersten". The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the printed name above it.

CEO, OLV Charities

Stewarding the BASILICA

{ Restoration projects are underway! }

With winter weather (mostly) behind us, several of the critical restoration projects in and around the Basilica have gotten underway.

- It is expected that, within the next few months, the new storm drainage connections, both within the Basilica and those connecting to the municipal system, will be completed. Water infiltration has always been a concern and a new drainage system will make an immediate improvement.
- Renovations to two of the Basilica's community spaces on the lower level should be finished shortly after Easter.
- Restoration work will continue with upcoming exterior projects such as masonry and roof repair. These efforts will really get underway once temperatures moderate a bit here in Western New York.

After the Basilica's exterior envelope is secured through the improvements mentioned above, the plan is to take some time to monitor the interior, specifically, those areas where there was noticeable water infiltration and damage. If all looks good, interior repairs to water-damaged areas will begin, including plasterwork and securing the stained-glass window seals.

Funding for this first phase of work comes from a matching grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places and generous donors.

Stay tuned for more updates as these exciting changes take place!



VISIT THE BASILICA TODAY



Sometimes it's an exclamation of, "Wow! or, "Oh, my!" Sometimes it's a reach for a camera, a rush to capture the feeling that is whirling through the brain. And other times, it's silence—an awestruck gasp or a slight whisper of prayer. Father Baker's wondrous OLV National Shrine & Basilica has a way of generating an emotional reaction from all who enter its doors.

Whether you're a local, from out of state or out of country, get inspired by the Basilica and plan your visit today!

Basilica Hours:

The Basilica is open between 6:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and on Sunday. It is open until 7:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Tours:

Group tours may be scheduled any time between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. throughout the week except Fridays (provided they do not conflict with Masses, weddings, or funerals).

Visitor Information:

Ample parking is available behind the Shrine and is accessible off of South Park Avenue (Route 62). The Basilica is also wheelchair accessible via ramps and elevator.

Contact:

For more information, visit OLVBasilica.org/visitor-information or call us at (716) 828-9444.





HIDDEN BASILICA

{ *Secrets from the Shrine* }

When entering the Basilica’s bronze doors, the senses of first-time visitors may be overwhelmed by the multitude of murals, sculptures, and artistry.

For regular Shrine visitors, it may be easy to think they’ve seen it all. Well, let’s test that! Here are a few wonders of the “hidden Basilica,” things you may not have noticed or known about this wondrous place.

UNIQUE ITEMS

There are two items within OLV Basilica that are unique to churches that have received the designation of “Minor Basilica.” They include the canopeum (umbrella) and the tintinnabulum (bell). Located near the Main Altar, both would only be used for a Mass when the Pope is present.

LOOK UP!

Measuring 80 feet in diameter and located nearly 200 feet from the floor, a painting depicting the Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Mother is a jaw-dropping masterwork. A dove, representing the Holy Spirit, is at the very apex of the Shrine.

LOOK UP! (PART TWO)

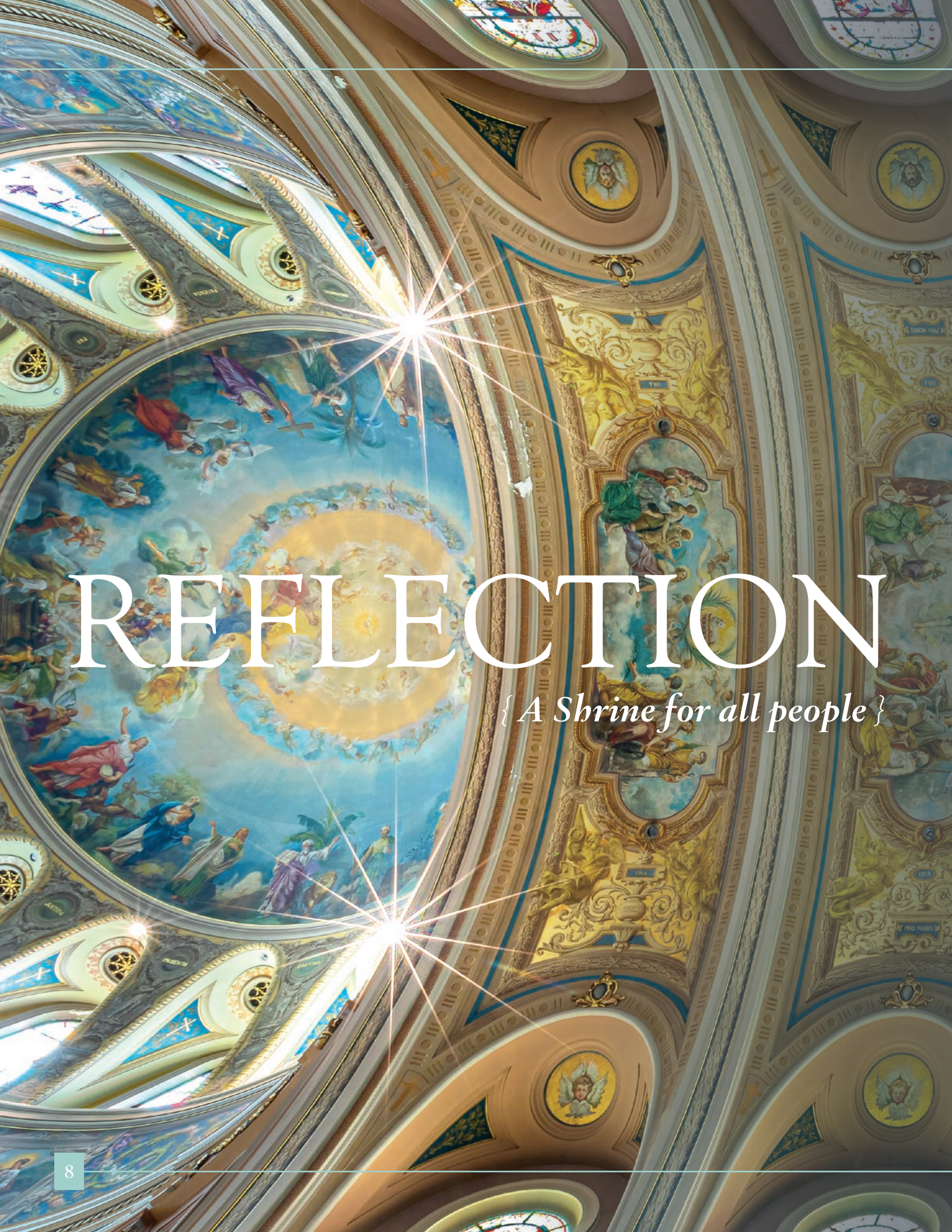
From the choir loft to the dome, the vaulted ceiling is covered by murals depicting important moments from the Blessed Virgin Mary’s life and some of the titles attributed to her.



A VERY SPECIAL SPOT

Due to his devotion to the Blessed Mother, Father Baker could often be found in front of the fourth Station of the Cross, the one titled “Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother.” Here, he would gaze at the sculpture, his back against a column, contemplating the powerful and emotional scene.

We invite all to come to the Basilica to discover the other “hidden” places within this holy and sacred space!



REFLECTION

{ A Shrine for all people }

535 miles US 219:

Tiny Virginia town to Buffalo suburb,
The very last mile it pops up, surprised.

Only ten seconds,

The distant dome in Lackawanna

Is there for sure, forever. AHA!

Nelson Baker, hoping for the priesthood,

Pilgrimage to Paris 1874, praised, gazing at a statue,
amazed,

Atop the main altar, a little boy is in a lady's church,

Notre Dame des Victoires.

Dream's seed shed and vision revelation,

There for sure, forever.

Fulfilled 100 years ago.

"From now on I shall devote my life forever to
your service."

Revelations: a friend's in Letchworth one
October afternoon

With it's rusty Autumn gilded glow

People who live there see Niagara staring every day

Revelations,

Sudden, swift, a couple seconds even

Seasoned, planted, to come back to.

Distant domes, Autumn golds, the rush of
falling waters.

The Irish call them thin.

Times and places

Where World meets Spirit

And we walk two worlds.

Forty-seven years later, aged seventy-five:

*"The Shrine will embody the truth of essential
oneness of God's children by its invitation for
all to come and worship under its illuminated
dome. A Shrine for all people, where Holy Church
will show her tenderness, her Motherly care and
solitude, where God's Mother will befriend all who
watch at her doors."*

The Dream lasted until his last weary breath aged 94.

A revelation, "all my thoughts and action" he vowed
in Paris,

His pilgrimage a vision, then a Dream:

The Infant Home, the Orphan Home, the Protectory,
the Working Boys' Home

Tens of thousands of homeless Baker boys, single
mothers, their children

Educated, trained, mature,

Readied with faith and love for God and Church
and country,

Skills and trades, bakers, farmers, grain growers,
chickens, hogs and horses.

Revealed early on where that vow could go.

They say you only take to heaven what you gave away.

Dying penniless himself, the Father of the Fatherless
gave all he had.

See what he has bequeathed us and dance when you do,

Surprised of course, for sure forever. AHA!



BY REV. MSGR. J. PATRICK KELEHER

*This piece was originally published in
Traffic East magazine, trafficeast.com.*

SISTER NORMA PIMENTEL, MJ

An Advocate For Refugees and Immigrants

In the fall, members of OLV's leadership team had the special honor of presenting the 2021 Father Baker Service to Youth Award to **Sister Norma Pimentel, MJ** at the 41st Friends of Father Baker Reception.



Born to Mexican immigrants, Sister Norma was raised in Brownsville, Texas. She is a member of the Missionaries of Jesus and has served for 15 years as the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

As an advocate and care provider for thousands of refugees and immigrants at the border between the United States and Mexico, she aims to restore dignity in every person she comes across. She's a trailblazer who advances the social mission of the Church in helping those in need and a symbol of compassion to the immigrants who arrive at the border hungry, in need of shelter, and desperate for medical assistance.

"When we see human suffering, we cannot turn our backs. We must respond," Sister Norma says.

In her work with the poor, she sees something more than the individuals who seek hope. "I've come to experience something beautiful—the presence of God himself in the immigrant and refugee. So, for me personally, it's transformative to be among the poor."

Sister Norma has become the very model of our calling to support those in need. Among the numerous recognitions she has received, *Time* magazine recently named her one of the world's "100 Most Influential People." In addition, she's often referred to as the "Saint Teresa of the Immigrants" and was recently lauded by Pope Francis, taking on the moniker of the "Pope's favorite nun."

Our staff and guests at the fundraising event who met Sister Norma and had the chance to listen to her speak were touched by her grace. Like her, may we show compassion to all and respond to suffering when we see it in our daily lives!

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, ofc



"When we see human suffering, we cannot turn our backs. We must respond."





ALL BROTHERS

{ Pope Francis' third encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, focuses on themes that directly parallel Father Nelson Baker's life story. }

On October 3, 2020, Pope Francis signed his third encyclical, entitled *Fratelli Tutti* (translated to mean “All Brothers”). The Pope’s writing not only provides us with a framework of how to live a life in service to those less fortunate, but also shines a light on those that have done just that. Anyone who is familiar with the story of Venerable Nelson Baker, OLV’s founder, will have no trouble seeing his reflection in the pope’s words.

DARK CLOUDS: CHAPTER 1

The first section of the encyclical reflects on disturbing trends in our world today. Issues such as selfishness and indifference toward the common good, racism, poverty, and the disparity of rights, to name just a few. Venerable Nelson Baker lived in a turbulent era. In his 20s, young Nelson saw the dark clouds of the U. S. Civil War and responded by enlisting in the Army. As superintendent of the OLV Institutions, he helped thousands through World War I and the 1918 Flu Pandemic, only to see the dark clouds of the Great Depression. During that time, he set up soup kitchens and taught his trade school students to bake bread and serve soup to the hungry.

GOOD SAMARITAN: CHAPTER 2

Am I a good Samaritan or do I just pass by? Who are my brothers and sisters? What do they need? The second chapter,

“A Stranger on the Road,” points to a society that, all too often, turns its back on suffering. Pope Francis encourages us to become neighbors to others. Father Baker built up an orphanage and protectory for children and established a trade school and farm. When he learned of bones of unwanted babies and toddlers being thrown into Erie Canal, he established the OLV Infant Home for mothers and babies. At times, he even slept on a couch so an expectant mother could sleep in his bed!



OPEN WORLD: CHAPTER 3

In this section, the Pope affirms that the right to live with dignity cannot be denied to anyone. Father Baker's "open door" policy welcomed all. In the Infant Home, a crib was located just inside the front door so that mothers in distress could leave their infants in the anonymity of the night. During the Great Exodus of African Americans from the South, Father Baker began the Black Apostolate during a time of intense prejudice and racism.

HEART OPEN TO THE WHOLE WORLD: CHAPTER 4

In this chapter, Pope Francis uses the phrase "welcome, protect, promote, and integrate" in urging Catholics to do what they can to help those who have been uprooted by war, natural catastrophes, and persecution. Countless times, Father Baker helped needy men, women, and families find work. And he continued to come up with ways to get concerned Catholics involved. In the 1880s, he famously sent letters to faithful women across the country so they could take part in his ministry.

PART OF A PEOPLE: CHAPTER 5

This section focuses on the Pope's desire to center politics squarely on human dignity. Father Baker included the excluded. When children arrived at the train station with a note that said "To: Father Baker's," he took them in, one and all. "There are no bad boys," he said. One of his first moves as superintendent of the Limestone Hill Institutions was to remove the bars from the windows of the protectory. And whenever steel plant or railroad strikes occurred, Father Baker didn't pick sides, he simply helped those who needed it in every way he could.

RECOVERING KINDNESS: CHAPTER 6

Here, Pope Francis writes about "Life ... as the art of encounter." Father Baker worked side-by-side with all the ethnic groups of Buffalo, hiring local Irish, German, Polish and Italian craftsmen to build Our Lady of Victory Basilica. In addition, Father Baker provided for Polish and Italian immigrants by starting the Mission parish on Abbott Road.





CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS: CHAPTER 7

In this chapter, the Pope emphasizes the idea that peace is connected to truth, justice, and mercy, and that society should be based on service to others. Father Baker knew that Christ of the Gospels reached out to the Poor—in word and deed. Once, when asked if those to whom he helped were worthy of it, Father Baker responded: “When I stand in judgment, do you think I will be asked if I thought they were worthy of charity, or do you think I will be asked if I gave?”

MUSIC OF THE GOSPELS: CHAPTER 8

Pope Francis writes that people can know “the joy born of compassion” when they are truly sisters and brothers to all people across the globe. In the days after Father Baker’s death in 1936, a local government official stated: “A man’s success in life should be measured by the good he does. By this rule, Father Baker was the most successful man in this country.” Surely, he knew all about the joy of impacting the lives of the needy as it powered every decision he made in his 60 years of his priesthood.

In 2011, Father Baker received the title of Venerable, the first major step on the path to sainthood. His heroic virtue stemmed from his self-sacrifice and zealous care for others. Decades after his passing, he continues to inspire others to heed the words of Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*—to live as one family in a common home with God as Father of all, with Christ as Good Shepherd of all, with the Spirit of God in the Prayer of the Encyclical:

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty, reflected in all the peoples of the earth, so that we may discover anew that all are important and all are necessary, different faces of the one humanity that God so loves. Amen.

*By Sister Fran Gangloff, osf
Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities*



Learning. Growing. Praying. TOGETHER

Young people are needed to be leaders in today’s world and church. And here’s great news! Thanks to OLV Charities, the Christian Leadership Institute (CLI) of Western New York—a program designed to empower young adults to become leaders in their community and church—is returning.

CLI, a national program, was created more than 40 years ago. When the Diocese of Buffalo signed on to host the program, it became just the second diocese in the country to do so. Though in the face of challenging financial times, its commitment ended in 2020. Understanding the importance of a program like CLI to the church’s future, OLV Charities stepped up to become its lead sponsor in 2022!

In his day, Father Nelson Baker believed in young people and was committed to nurturing their faith and talents. In his words: “We strive to give young people every advantage so they will be able to contribute to society and be a credit to our holy faith.” In offering CLI once more, OLV Charities desires to engage teenagers in its mission while empowering them to become leaders.

The institute is a week-long, overnight training program designed to foster the potential of each student, to teach practical skills (such as group dynamics, planning and decision-making), and to increase participants’ knowledge of the responsibilities that come with being a leader. Activities based around learning, playing, forming community, and praying together are parts of the daily schedule.

“Young people today need a place at the table in their local church. They not only need a place, but a voice and an opportunity to be a contributing member,” says Ron Thaler, Pastoral Associate at Our Lady of Hope Parish. “CLI helps transform our young people into effective leaders in a Church that desperately needs their gifts and talents.”

Through CLI, young people are welcome to come and GROW in their faith journey, ENGAGE in meaningful aspects of leadership grounded in Christian values, and be EMPOWERED to lead!

This year’s program will be held between June 26th and July 1st on the beautiful grounds of Camp Turner. Know a young person who’d be a great fit? Go to www.clinyny.org or call (716) 828-9657. Registration is now open.

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf





{ The Coronavirus pandemic continues to leave its mark on all of us, especially on those living with mental health challenges. }

The Coronavirus pandemic has changed everything. The past two years have seen us all make changes to the ways we work, play, and socialize. Our lives have been upended. But for those living with various insecurities—food, shelter, health, social-emotional—this time period has been particularly devastating.

Imagine you are a single parent with two children in elementary school. You've arranged your work schedule to get them on the bus in the morning and be home in the afternoon when they get out. Your job in the healthcare field does not come with a high salary, but you are grateful for the work, as it allows you to provide for your family. Then all of a sudden, your children's school closes. You have no daycare option available (or one you can afford) and your employer is mandating increased hours because of the pandemic surge! What can you do?

Since 2020, many of us have faced this scenario or one that is similar. The result has been a dramatic increase in people experiencing crises handling the day-to-day demands of life.

Their mental health is suffering. For those dealing with short-term challenges, reaching out for help is critical. But for those with more persistent issues, reaching out can be the difference between life and death.

There are nine identified social determinants of mental health: racial discrimination/social exclusion; adverse early life experiences; poor education; unemployment/underemployment; poverty/income inequality; poor access to healthy food; poor housing quality/housing instability; adverse features of the built environment (sidewalks, bike/walking paths); and poor access to health care. These factors, combined with the effects of the pandemic, have resulted in those needing the most help having the least consistent access to it.

But there has been a silver lining. The pandemic has seen the rise of alternatives to traditional care. Tele-health and tele-psychiatry options make access to medical and counseling services less intimidating and more practical.

Virtual solutions help those who are reluctant to enter in-person social situations have contact with other, caring individuals. People need people ... it's that simple.

As a leader in the delivery of behavioral health programs, OLV Human Services has been proud to support our community through these difficult times. Interestingly, as the evolution of Father Nelson Baker's social programs begun in the late 19th century, this is not our first pandemic—OLV's maternity hospital was converted to a general hospital to help people through the influenza pandemic of 1918!

Today, we work hard to help people from all walks of life overcome past traumas and debilitating mental health conditions. Our compassionate team members respectfully sit with those going through difficult times, providing support and empathy. At other times, we help them realize their strength, provide them a lifeline, and help them reach for support as they continue to persevere through their challenges.

As we envision how our world will look post-pandemic, I ask you to keep in mind how resilient all of us can be. We must offer grace to the courage, endurance, and strength people have when confronted with the challenges of these times. Resilience is one of the strongest contributing factors to being able to cope and overcome challenges, whether they be economic, familial, or related to mental health.



If you or someone you know is struggling, there is help. Locally, our licensed therapists and caring staff can be reached at (716) 828-9651. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline can be reached at (800)-662-HELP (4357).

*By Cindy Lee
Chief Executive Officer, OLV Human Services*

Cindy leads OLV Human Services (OLVHS), one of the region's largest non-profit entities. OLVHS and its affiliates cared for more than 3,500 children, teens, and adults in 2021 through a variety of outpatient, residential, and educational programs. To learn more, check out www.olvhumanservices.org.





THE CROSSROADS

{ Danielle's story }

Life is a journey that at times can be so challenging. It has been just that for a special young woman named Danielle.

Born in Ohio, she moved to Buffalo with her father, stepmother, and brothers when she was a young girl. As she entered her teen years, the relationship between Danielle and her stepmom began to fray and the family dynamic soon became, as she describes it, “toxic.”

The stress of past traumas—coupled with these new issues—became so severe that Danielle was forced to be admitted to a youth psychiatric hospital in 2016. Upon release, it was determined that her home would not be a good place to continue her recovery. A long-term placement was needed and OLV Human Services’ Residential Treatment Facility (RTF) was recommended.

It was here, on our campus, that Danielle’s journey came to a dramatic crossroads.

“As I had a lot of independence while living at the RTF, I left the facility one morning to walk to my school (Baker Hall School). But instead of going there, I just kept walking. I stopped at a nearby cemetery and waited. I called a friend who drove by and picked me up and we drove all the way to Rochester, N.Y., and I didn’t plan on ever coming back,” she remembers.

Her caring staff members immediately flung into action and ended up tracking her down. They picked Danielle up and drove her back to campus. But her reaction to this turn of events was not what one might expect!

“I was so glad to see them. To this day, I’m so grateful that my escape plan didn’t work out,” Danielle says. “That experience was the turning point in my life.”

From then on, she resolved to better herself by learning to cope with her challenges, becoming more self-aware and growing in self-confidence. She graduated from Baker Hall School, what she describes as her “greatest achievement and happiest moment ... so far!”

Loving the idea of working with children, Danielle applied for a teacher’s aide position at one of OLV Human Services’ pre-school programs and got it. Now in her twenties, she still works there, assisting in the care of four- and five-year-olds.

As Danielle continues her life’s journey, one that has seen so many bumps in such a short time, she hopes to obtain a college degree—she will begin coursework to become a medical assistant in May—to work in a hospital and one day purchase her own home. With her strength and determination, she’ll surely achieve those aspirations!

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf

CAMP TURNER

Back & Better Than Ever!

Just about this time last year, OLV Charities became the lead sponsor of Camp Turner, a summer camp for young people located in Allegany State Park. It was a great fit for OLVC, with the camp's mission—helping children and teens discover God's love through nature—aligning with Father Baker's own wish to engage and inspire young Catholics!

Last summer, in its first season after the pandemic cancelled the 2020 sessions, Camp Turner played host to 365 youth who were delighted to be back. "I am so grateful for the return of Camp Turner against some challenging odds over the last few years," said one parent. "Our daughter was excited from the minute she heard enrollment was open again!"

As the rains of Spring subside and thoughts turn to the Summer of 2022 and beyond, all are ready for a bright future and many magical moments to come. Among the things campers will be able to enjoy:

- A gift from Moore For Kids, the Robert and Kristi Moore Foundation, led to the purchase of two 15-passenger shuttle buses. They will make it easier for day trips as well as grant staff members the ability to offer transportation to and from camp for families in need.
- Thanks to a generous donor, the equine facility will be rebuilt and relocated in a more convenient location. It is hoped it is ready for the Summer of 2023.
- Over the next two years, Allegany State Park will complete a designated bike/footpath through the park that will be adjacent to Camp Turner. Campers will be able to utilize the bike path and a new biking program is already on the drawing board.

And that's not all. Future projects include Dining Hall renovations, an expansion of the "low-ropes" course, and upgrades to camper cabins. The best is yet to come!



CAMP TURNER
A Ministry of OLV Charities

**ADVENTURE AWAITS
IN BEAUTIFUL
ALLEGANY
STATE PARK**

If you know a young person who'd love to work at or attend Camp Turner, check out **CampTurner.com** or call **(716) 354-4555**.

If you'd like to support its mission through volunteering or a monetary contribution, please call **(716) 828-9610**.



Greetings from

FLORIDA

OLV Charities leadership made a visit to Florida this past March to connect with some of our wonderful friends & benefactors.



“National Ambassador” Profile

Proud Buffalonian Maggie Best inspires future “Father Baker Fans”



When one listens to Maggie Best talk about Father Nelson Baker and his legacy of caring—the OLV organizations—it’s hard not to get enthused.

“I am wholly inspired by the work of Father Baker. He saw with his own eyes the inflictions faced by the people of his community—no matter their color, their gender, or their beliefs—and worked incessantly to bring awareness to these issues and create programming and safe spaces that would remedy them. He was a progressive healer and advocate,” she says. “There was a time when many of us were raised to fear his name and his reputation. We had bags packed to be ‘sent to Father Baker’s’ if we acted up. I believe that sharing his story, as well as the story of OLV Human Services, is of the utmost importance to shed light on all the good work being done today.”
Well said, indeed!

Maggie was born and raised in Buffalo. She remains a proud Western New Yorker still, living in North

Buffalo with her daughter. She currently serves as Community Affairs Specialist at Lawley, focused on the insurance/benefits firm’s charitable giving efforts and community partnerships.

Recently, Maggie put her networking skills to work as the organizer of OLV’s recent *Father Baker on Tap* event. Geared toward engaging young

professionals, Maggie played a key role in reaching out to her colleagues, family members and friends. The result? More than 50 enthusiastic and energetic individuals gathered at the Father Baker Museum within the Basilica in March to learn more about the “Padre of the Poor’s” life, legacy, and impact on children, teens, and families.

In addition to running future *Father Baker on Tap* events, Maggie will be serving as a member of the 2022 Victory Nite Planning Committee. On behalf of those we serve, we are thankful for the gifts of time and talent Maggie has lent to our organizations. We are better for her involvement!





“BAKER BOY DOES GOOD”

Like so many children born to unwed mothers in the early 20th century, Gerald “Gerri” Cumiskey was brought to the OLV Infant Home shortly after his birth in 1928. Gerri spent his boyhood and teen years at the Infant Home, St. Joseph’s Orphanage, and finally, St. John’s Protectory, where he received his elementary and high school education, learned trades, took part in daily chores, and participated in sports and social activities.

At age 19, Gerri left “Father Baker’s” and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force where he was trained as an aircraft radio mechanic. He reenlisted in 1955 and would, ultimately, rise to the rank of Master Sergeant. Gerri remained in the military until his retirement in 1977, having proudly served our country in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.



After his military retirement, Gerri went on to receive a bachelor’s degree in Physics and even attended Technical Training School through the U.S. Postal Service. His “second career” there ended when he retired at the age of 69.

A lifelong bachelor who, according to him, “never found the right gal,” Gerri maintained a deep relationship with OLV,

Rev. Msgr. Robert Wurtz, and other staff members at the organization. He was so thankful for the life he had been given through the charitable works of OLV. Of the “Baker Boy” reunions that used to take place, he said, “They were living testaments of Father Baker’s service to mankind and his faith in Our Lady of Victory.”

Throughout Gerri’s 92 years, he supported OLV Charities with modest donations. But Gerri’s gratitude to the life he was given came upon his passing when he left his entire \$3 million estate to OLV. According to a close friend, Gerri had little idea of his wealth. He lived in a modest, barely furnished home.

Gerri’s “thank you” to Father Baker will impact the critical work being done for children and families at OLV Human Services for many years to come.

Gerri ... Requiescat in Pace, good and faithful servant.

If you would like to discuss estate giving with our office, please contact us at (716) 828-9610.

CENTENNIAL *happenings*



— 2021 —



November 5: Friends

of Father Baker Reception

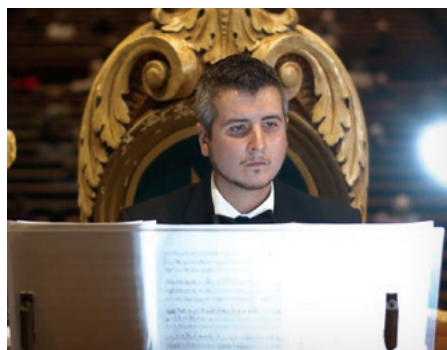
Our annual Friends of Father Baker Reception was back as an in-person event in 2021, honoring Sister Norma Pimentel, MJ, Mark Zirnheld, and student Hannah Ross for their contributions to their communities.



December 19: Festival

of Lessons & Carols

For the first time, the Festival of Lessons & Carols was held in the Basilica in 2021, helping attendees get into the Christmas spirit. A unique service of Scripture and song, the festival dates back to the 19th century.



Centennial Organ Recital Series

The Basilica played host to a pair of organ recitals in 2021. Renowned musician Roland Martin appeared in the series' initial performance on Oct. 3, while OLV's own principal organist, Peter Gonciarz, played on Nov. 14.

CENTENNIAL *happenings*



2022



February 16: "They Might Be Saints" Premiere

Last summer, a camera crew from EWTN came to OLV's campus to shoot an episode of "They Might Be Saints" focused on Father Baker. In February, the show premiered on a big screen for an audience of a few hundred within the Basilica. The event featured host Michael O'Neill.



March 3: Father Baker on Tap

On March 3, dozens of young professionals joined Father David in the Basilica for a social event that introduced them to Father Baker, his works, his ongoing Cause for Canonization, and his legacy—the OLV organizations. It was a great night to celebrate new friends!



Centennial Concert Series

In March, a pair of musical performances added delightful sounds to the wondrous sights within the Basilica. The duo Kindred provided Celtic touches to two Masses just in time for St. Patrick's Day, and the a capella group, Harmonia, amazed all in attendance.

upcoming EVENTS

In August of 2021, we celebrated 100 years since the Basilica's cornerstone was laid and blessed ... *but that was just the beginning!* Over the next five years, the Centennial Celebration will honor the Shrine's first century and blaze a vibrant path for the next 100 years.

April
24

Organ Recital Series: Timothy Smith Basilica | 6 p.m.

Our Centennial Organ Recital Series, a big hit in 2021, continues in 2022. Join us as renowned organist Timothy Smith brings his musical talents to the Basilica.

May
13

Victory Nite '22 Events @ The Foundry | 6:30 p.m.

The annual Victory Nite fundraiser is **back** as an in-person event in 2022! With the theme of "Spring Soirée," it is sure to be a wonderful evening of fun and fellowship. Check out VictoryNite.org for details.

May
10

Speaker Series: Catholics in the Public Square | 7 p.m.

The Centennial Speakers Series continues in 2022 with Rev. Matthew F. Malone, S.J., the president and editor in chief of America Media. This free event will take place within the Glynn Family Conference Center at 780 Ridge Road, Lackawanna. A reception will be held prior to the event at 6 p.m. RSVP to (716) 828-9607.

May
22

Organ Recital Series: Joel Kumro Basilica | 3 p.m.

Our Centennial Organ Recital Series continues as renowned organist Joel Kumro brings his talents to the Basilica. An alum of SUNY Buffalo State, Mr. Kumro is Choirmaster and Organist at Saint Benedict Church in Richmond, VA.

For information on these events, check out our website, OLVBasilica100.org, or call (716) 828-9444.