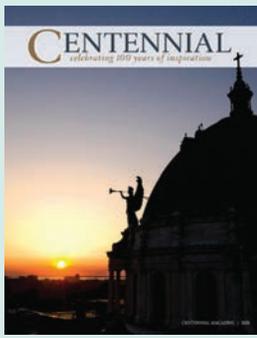


CENTENNIAL

celebrating 100 years of inspiration





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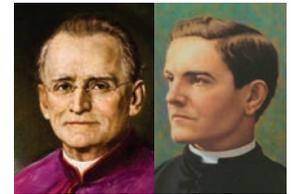
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A Father Baker Legacy

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About the Cover: The Basilica’s dome was the second largest in the U.S. at the time of its construction, second only to the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. On it, four angels sound their trumpets in each of the globe’s directions.

President's Message

I often find myself reminiscing about how my father would comment to me and my two older brothers that if we didn't behave, he was going to put us in the car and drop us off at "Father Baker's." While I wasn't brought to the OLV campus for any troublesome behavior, how fortuitous it was that my dad's "warning" would manifest itself many years later and have such a profound impact on my life.

Having been the Pastor and Rector of OLV National Shrine & Basilica for more than two years, I can, without hesitation, call this assignment in my priestly ministry one of the most gratifying times in my life. What a humble blessing it is to walk in the footsteps of one of the most loving, selfless, and giving individuals that has ever lived – Father Nelson Baker.

My appreciation and admiration for Father Baker's life and ministries were never more apparent than during the Centennial Mass/Reception and Father Baker Day festivities in August. The inherent beauty of the weekend was like something out of a Ralph Waldo Emerson poem.

With Father Baker looking down on his "City of Charity," thousands flocked to the Basilica to celebrate our Centennial Mass with our diocesan spiritual father, Most Rev. Michael W. Fisher, or "Bishop Mike." Attendees then proceeded to the cornerstone of the Shrine that was placed and blessed 100 years ago for a re-dedication ceremony. The following day, during our annual Father Baker Day Mass, I had the absolute privilege of giving a homily from the ornate pulpit that is original to the Basilica. It had not been used for several decades. I stated at the time that I felt completely unworthy to be occupying that hallowed space, however, I will always look fondly on that special moment.

While the kick-off has come and gone, the events of OLV's Centennial Celebration move forward. In the coming months, we will be welcoming lecturers as part of a speaker series. The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus will visit us in November for its annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*. And musicians and choirs will bless us with the gift of song with performances like *Lessons & Carols* in December.

As OLV continues our Centennial journey, which will last until 2026, I invite you to experience the breathtaking magnificence of our beloved Basilica and I wholeheartedly remind you that *All Are Welcome*.

I pray that Father Baker will continue to intercede for you and Our Lady of Victory protect you. Be assured of my grateful prayers and all best wishes.



Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma

Pastor and Rector, OLV National Shrine & Basilica
President, OLV Institutions

CEO's Message

Sacred places, perhaps like no other time in their histories, are pressed to re-imagine and reconnect to their communities in new and different ways.

We are called to go beyond sentimentality — “the way things were” — and see a different and wider value of these treasured spaces and the importance they hold for transitioning communities.

As stewards, we must lead, plan, and invest in innovative approaches that anchor and support our communities in impactful, meaningful ways.

This sort of vision has always driven OLV Organizations, shaped and modeled by our founder, Venerable Nelson Baker. From the very inception of our institutions in the 1800s, OLV has sought to extend hope, encouragement and healing.

We are extremely proud of our newest ministry commitment, the sponsorship of the nearly 100-year-old Camp Turner. Nestled in New York's Allegany State Park, its mission is to offer camping experiences in a stunning natural setting that wholistically supports young people and families and their spiritual journey. We are determined to make this wonderful experience available to everyone, regardless of economic, ethnic, or faith background. *All Are Welcome!*

OLV is the legacy of Father Baker and he often demonstrated an unwavering faith and steadfast commitment to lift people up, particularly the young. We are determined to be forward-looking, by growing and investing in ministries and programs as our saintly founder did throughout his lifetime.

We hope that this latest edition of *Centennial* gives you a sense of the dynamic, transformative work happening each day here at Father Baker's “City of Charity.”

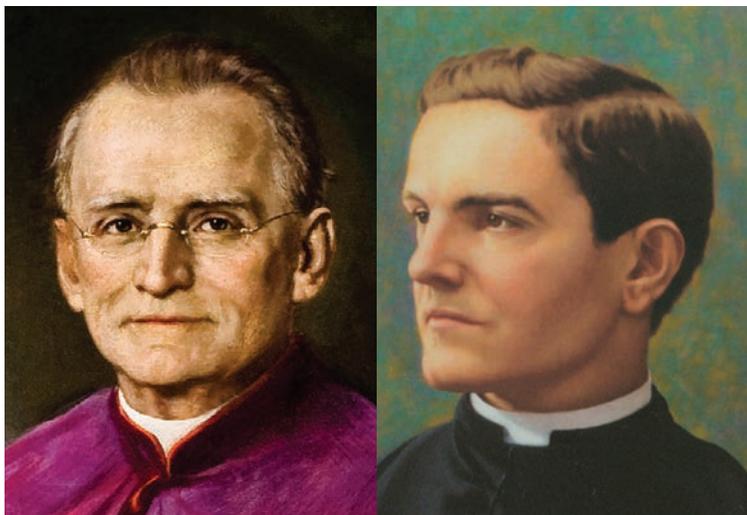


David J. Kersten

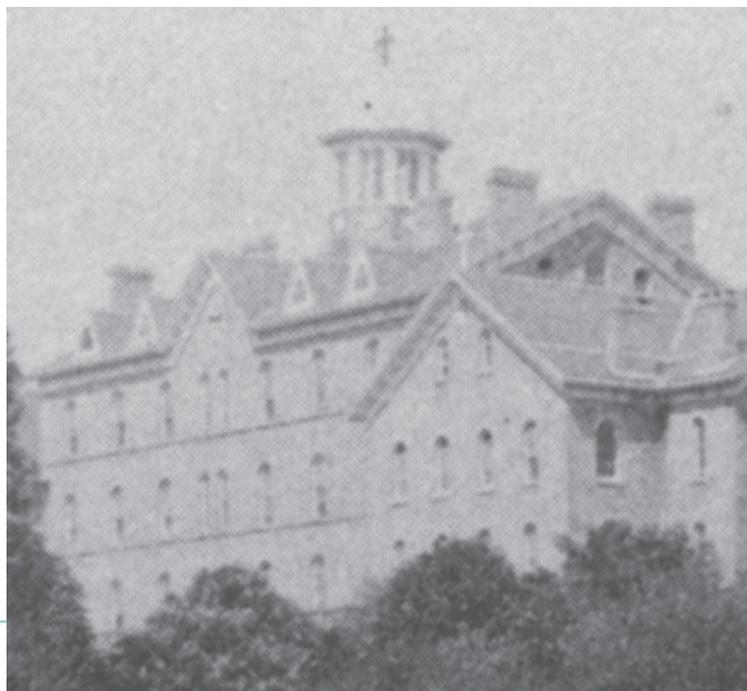
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Kersten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CEO, OLV Charities

TWO SAINTS,



ONE SCHOOL



Quick question: who is the only American-born priest to be canonized as a Saint?

It's a trick question. The answer is "none." While the United States celebrates St. John Neumann as one of our own (he was born in Bohemia, and served at parishes in both Niagara Falls and Buffalo), and we do have some home-grown women saints such as Katherine Drexel, Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, and Kateri Tekakwitha—as well as the naturalized St. Frances Mother Cabrini—no American-born male has yet been canonized.

However, that may be about to change: two "Niagara Men" — one an alum, the other a transfer — have been both declared "Venerable Servants of God", which puts them just one step away from being declared "Blessed" (beatified) and two steps away from the ultimate goal of any Catholic-Christian: Sainthood.

But perhaps the most mind-bending part of this story is that both men attended Our Lady of the Angels Seminary (now Niagara University) at the same time! Indeed, it is even possible, though unlikely, that they may have been classmates. They are Father Nelson Baker and Father Michael McGivney.



A young Father Baker at the time of his ordination

While they were different, the Spirit of St. Vincent de Paul – especially that saint’s love for the poor and suffering – is obvious in both men.

Father Baker spent his nearly 100 years (he lived well into the second administration of FDR, who phoned him on his 95th birthday!) serving orphans, abandoned babies, troubled youths, the steelworkers and African-American Catholics at a time when it was unpopular, even unheard of.

Father McGivney, whose life was cut short by pneumonia in only his 38th year, did one thing that has changed the face of American Catholicism: he founded a benevolent association that today boasts nearly two million members: The Knights of Columbus.

Interestingly, the closer we look at these two venerable servants of God, the more different they seem: Father Baker, the oldest member of his class and a life-long Western New York resident, was a member of the drama and singing clubs. Father McGivney, still a teenager when he arrived at the seminary,

excelled in baseball and seemed to have had a bit of a migratory existence. After being born and raised in Connecticut, he began college studies for the priesthood at St. Hyacinthe in Quebec, then moved to Niagara, and after only three semesters, moved again to Montreal to study at the Jesuit’s Sainte-Marie College. After the death of his father, Father McGivney’s bishop preferred to keep him closer to Connecticut (or at least out of Canada) sending him to Baltimore’s St. Mary’s Seminary before being ordained back in his native Connecticut.

So, what are the chances that two Niagara classmates could possibly be declared Venerable Servants of God? Slim.

There are only eight current Venerables from the U.S. (or naturalized citizens). Venerable Solanus Casey, O.F.M., a Franciscan Friar is American-born, but unlike Father Baker and McGivney, he is not a secular (diocesan) priest. Ironically, the only other American-born diocesan priest to be



Niagara University, Circa 1881. Photo courtesy of the university.

named Venerable Servant of God is Fulton J. Sheen, the bishop of Rochester, N.Y., from 1966-69 and holder of an honorary degree from ... Niagara University!

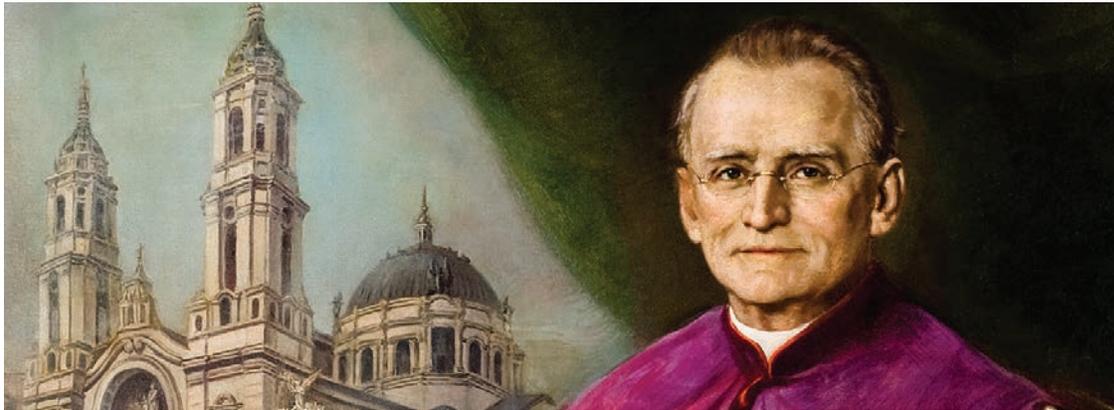
It would be an archivist's dream to come across a picture of Fathers Baker and McGivney, circa 1871, side-by-side, heads bent in prayer in the chapel. Alas, no such photo exists.

Indeed, due to the fact that Father McGivney was just entering the Seminary while Father Baker was well on his way to finishing, it is unlikely (though not impossible) that the two men spent much, if any, time together aside from group functions for seminarians in general.

No matter. The Vincentian spirit of Catholic Social Justice fired both Michael J. McGivney, the young, restless, wandering spirit, and Nelson H. Baker, the former businessman to take St. Vincent's example to heart and to help the poorest of the poor. In this, they were also echoing St. Francis's famous phrase: "Preach the Gospel at all times—use words if necessary." It's a tradition both Venerable Fr. Baker and Fr. McGivney can be proud of!

*By Kevin Di Camillo
Senior Lecturer, Niagara University*

Editor's Note: This republished article refers to Father McGivney having the title of Venerable. It was written prior to his beatification in 2020.



Pray for the Canonization of Father Baker

Lord, you gave us Your Servant Nelson Baker as an example of service to the poor, homeless and the young. By "Father Baker's" ardent concern for those in need, inflame our hearts and lives with compassion for the poor, justice for the oppressed, hope for the troubled and courage to those in doubt.

We pray through the intercession of Our Lady of Victory, if it be Your will, that Your Servant, Nelson Baker, may one day be canonized. Amen.



THROUGH HIS EYES

Renowned architect Duncan Stroik reflects on the grandeur of the OLV Basilica

Duncan G. Stroik, a practicing architect, author and Professor of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame, is a graduate of the University of Virginia and the Yale University School of Architecture. He is a frequent lecturer on sacred architecture and the classical tradition and a founding editor of *Sacred Architecture Journal*. Several years ago, Mr. Stroik appeared in a documentary on the OLV National Shrine & Basilica entitled *Building a Basilica*. Years later, he returned to Lackawanna to report on his admiration for the Shrine for EWTN's Father Baker documentary (*more on that can be found on page 17*). We were blessed to be able to walk through the Basilica with him to try to see it through his eyes...

Q. How did you first learn of Father Baker?

DS: As an architect, I like to visit famous churches. On one of those trips 14 years ago, I stopped in Lackawanna and came upon this magnificent Basilica dedicated to Our Lady of Victory. And, suddenly, I learned about Father Baker and a whole town he had created, a "City of Charity."

Q. How would you describe our Basilica?

DS: It's a very unique building, a creative and innovative structure that is also totally traditional and Catholic. Emile Uhlrich, the architect, was good at combining curved colonnades, domes and towers in a new way. The entry way is especially stunning. The

baroque concave form receives you into the welcoming arms of Our Lady. Through the colorful interior, one experiences a journey, the journey of Christ in his passion, the life of Our Lady in the paintings and stained-glass windows and then your eye is taken up into the heavens to a dome containing a painting of the Assumption. The Basilica has so many different experiences, it is a series of stories, sermons, and essays, with a lot of complex artwork. One could say it's an outline of salvation history.

Q. What symbolism stands out for you?

DS: The complexity of the iconography is amazing. There's the central theme of Our Lady of Victory – she's on the exterior welcoming us and on the interior drawing us in. The life-size Stations of the Cross, different from most, are powerful. And there is a theme of angels. Father Baker said, "there are a thousand angels here." I do believe that this building is angelic, more than most. Do these angels have different roles? Some angels are worshipping God, some are calling us to prayer, and others are protecting us in life. I'm struck by the four huge, bronze angels blowing their trumpets from the exterior dome. I wonder, was this angel theme Uhlrich's idea, Father Baker's, or both of them together?

Q. Why would you consider the Basilica a "crowning jewel" of this "City of Charity?"

DS: It is a concrete part of Father Baker's life and an expression of his great love and charity toward others. The Basilica is an exhibit of his saintliness and his strong conviction to give others the gift of a beautiful church and to give Mary a beautiful home where people could come and call upon her as Notre Dame des Victoires. And it is also Uhlrich's "crowning jewel." As a masterful architect, he brings everything he has learned into this one building – sculpture, mosaic, stained-glass windows, symbols, numerous crosses, and the Litany of Loreto (titles of Mary) in large, gold letters around the shrine.

Q. What message would you like to share with our readers about the Basilica?

DS: The Centennial Celebration is a very exciting time to reflect on this Basilica and on all that Father Baker accomplished. I encourage pilgrims to visit this Basilica for inspiration and to experience Mary's motherly care for us. And I'm grateful for all who support Our Lady of Victory and this Basilica – for what they helped build and maintain. But what can we do now to preserve what's here? What more can we do to glorify God and honor his mother?

*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance & Christian Charity*



HIDDEN BASILICA

{ *Secrets from the Shrine* }

When entering the Basilica's bronze doors, the senses of first-time visitors may be overwhelmed by all of the paintings, sculptures and feats of artistry! For those who make regular trips to the Shrine, though, it may be easy to think they've seen it all. *Well, let's test that!*

Here are a few of the wonders of the "hidden Basilica," things you may not have noticed or known about this wondrous place.

A SECRET UNDERFOOT!

The colorful marble floor slopes downward from the back of the Shrine to the front, allow nearly everyone a clear view of the main altar. This effect is reminiscent of theatre seating.

ONE-OF-A-KIND SEATS

The pews are made from an African mahogany that has since gone extinct.

16 MASTERPIECES

Each Station of the Cross was carved from a single piece of Carrara marble (that came from the same quarry as Michelangelo's *Pieta*) and features figures that are nearly life sized.

ANGELS, ANGELS EVERYWHERE!

There are well over 2,000 angels within the Basilica. Father Baker insisted that an angel be placed in every possible sight line.

FITTING TRIBUTE

A truly unique area, the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes (Father Baker's tomb) is hewn out of lava rock from Mt. Vesuvius in Italy. During construction, Father Baker insisted on finding a material that was untouched by human hands to pay tribute to the vision of Our Blessed Lady to St. Bernadette.



STEWARDING THE BASILICA



Restoration projects begin this Fall

Stewarding the Basilica begins by first securing its exterior. One of the major issues over recent years has been water infiltration during heavy rain events and the annual freeze-thaw cycle of Western New York. Over time, water has made its way inside the Basilica, causing damage to the priceless artwork and features within.

To address these problems, a new storm water drainage system will be installed, the southwest lower roof will be repaired, many of the windows on the main and lower levels will be refinished and masonry joints throughout the exterior marble wall elevations and granite foundation will be repointed.

Once completed, features inside the Shrine that have been damaged by water, including plaster and artwork, will be restored.

Additionally, a climate-control system is being planned. Humidity and drastically fluctuating temperatures cause interior finishes and artwork to crack, warp, and deteriorate, and a climate-control system will prevent this damage.

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

*By Thomas C. Lajewski
Director of Corporate and Foundation Giving*



Desperate for LOVE

460,000 children & teens are part of the foster care system in the U.S. Each day, OLV Human Services makes a difference

With the pandemic still raging and affecting us all in so many ways, societal scourges such as depression, substance abuse and domestic violence are on the rise, leaving thousands of children without a home or experiencing separation from their families through no fault of their own.

In fact, approximately 463,000 children and teens are currently part of the country's foster care system. A staggering number.

But the problem of broken-hearted little ones in desperate need of a loving, caring home is not a new one.

In the late 1800s, Venerable Nelson Baker, our founder, recognized this as a growing issue. In fact, early on, he gained the nickname "Father of the Fatherless," as a tireless advocate for these children. It was his fervent belief that each had the right to be loved. Throughout his life, his institutions became a beacon of hope for troubled boys, orphans and abandoned infants.

As time passed and the services provided by orphanages evolved, OLV's traditional foster care program emerged.

"Our program identifies, recruits and trains foster families who can offer a loving home to children



until they can be reunited with their birth family or a relative, or they are adopted,” explains Mary Swygert, RN, MAOL, OLV Human Services’ Chief Officer of Clinical Services.

A relatively new initiative, the Emergency Foster Care Program, was created in 2017 to provide a safe environment for children in crisis when immediate removal from their home is necessary for their own protection and no other placement option is available. It is the only such program in Western New York.

One girl’s story...

The youngest of three children, Zhynai, was born to a mother who was homeless and addicted to drugs. At four months of age, a benign tumor caused Zhynai’s face, arms and neck to swell. After receiving chemotherapy, her condition improved and she was released from the hospital. But her mother was not faithful in giving her the medication she needed, and the little girl ended up in the ICU. Upon discharge, after months in the hospital, the decision was made not to return her to the birth mother.

Jann, a foster parent, welcomed Zhynai into her home. She followed through with Zhynai’s medications and treatments. Now, at the age of four, the swelling has disappeared and she no longer requires chemotherapy.

Once Zhynai’s birth mother’s maternal rights were terminated through the court system, Jann stepped in and adopted her forever changing both of their lives. “My heart melts every time Zhynai says, ‘I love you,’” says Jann. “Zhynai now has a home and I have a purpose.”

Jann’s story is a common one among OLV’s many foster parents whose generous spirit



and passion for making difference means so much to these special young people who are desperate for love.

Says OLV Human Services’ foster care program lead Virginia Goodremote: “Father Baker’s legacy of compassionate care continues through them.”

For information on becoming a foster parent, check out www.olvhumanservices.org.

*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance & Christian Charity*

CAMP TURNER



OLV's sponsorship of Camp Turner spreads joy!

The fire begins to die. The youngest campers start to rub their eyes in exhaustion. Overhead, countless stars shine. And the darkness of the nearby tree line is broken only by the natural fireworks display put on by lightning bugs. Voices begin to sing as one:

*Tell me why, the stars do shine.
Tell me why, the grove of pine.
Tell me why, the sky so blue,
Tell me Camp Turner, why we all love you.
Because God made, the stars to shine.
Because God made, the grove of pine.
Because God made, the sky so blue,
That's why Camp Turner, we all love you.*



So ends another day at Camp Turner. Situated within 65,000 acres of Allegany State Park in the south west corner of New York State, Camp Turner strives to provide enriching experiences to young people that help them discover God, nature, and the beauty of the human spirit. Its programming



the magic continues.



encourages the development of community living skills, self-care skills, interpersonal skills and spirituality.

“I love Camp Turner because there are so many things to do! There’s archery, horseback riding, and the OWLS (Outdoor Wilderness Living Skills) program that brings you closer to nature and to God,” says camper Emma. “That’s my favorite because you go out into nature and become one with creation. When you walk through the woods, the outside world stops. You put away your electronics and prepare for an adventure!”

OLV Charities acquired the 98-year-old Camp Turner earlier this year when financial difficulties faced by the previous sponsor left the future of the camp in jeopardy.

“Combining the ministries of Father Baker and the traditions of Camp Turner made for a natural fit,” says David Kersten, CEO of OLV Charities. “Through our Camp Turner ministry, children and families will continue to have a beautiful retreat, a sanctuary to

welcome them and enrich their souls.”

This past summer session – the first since 2019 due to the pandemic – saw 365 young people participate, the maximum allowable due to health regulations. It is hoped that next year’s campers will not have to bother with masks and social distancing and can fully enjoy “the magic of Camp Turner.”

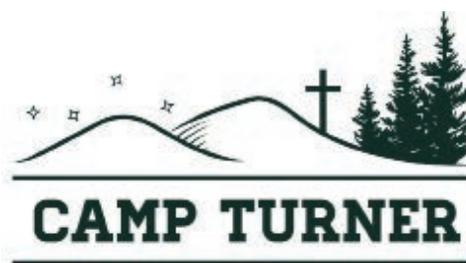
“The camp is an indescribable place. Until you’ve been here, you can’t really understand what makes it so special,” says Annabella,

Camp Turner’s program director. “It’s such a magical place and the kids grow so much here. It’s so gratifying to watch.”

In addition to the summer camp program, Camp Turner is also available for

families and group rentals throughout the year. Check out www.campturnerolv.org or call (716) 354.4555.

*By Tom Lucia,
Chief Creative Officer*



“National Ambassador” Profile

*For Texas resident Nicholas Sawicki,
a love of OLV is in his blood*



“Father Baker is a beacon of hope, inspiring me every day,” says Nicholas (Nick) Sawicki, a native of Lackawanna, N.Y, who now lives in Texas after recently completing coursework toward a law degree from Fordham University and a position as special assistant to the president and editor-in-chief of the popular *America* magazine in New York City.

Nick’s connection to OLV dates all the way back to the building of the Basilica! His great-grandfather helped build the pews while his grandparents were married in the Shrine.

While attending OLV Elementary School, Nick was an altar server and, later, became a lector and Eucharistic Minister for parish liturgies. While earning his undergraduate degree from Fordham, he assisted in OLV’s Archives, solidifying his life-long passion for Father Baker, his accomplishments, mission and institutions.

And what does Nick find so special about this place? “It’s not only the grandeur of the Basilica,” says Nick, “but also Father Baker’s

amazing vision to build a community in which the value of life and faith were central points around which all else evolved. His example continually motivates others to live the Gospel and to do good by responding to the needs of society. That’s the beauty of OLV!”

Nick recently returned to Western New York to celebrate with hundreds of friends and benefactors at the Centennial Celebration kick-off events that paid tribute to the 100th anniversary of the laying of the Basilica’s cornerstone in August.

He is also a member of the Centennial Celebration planning committee and will be taking a lead role in planning events over the next five years. We are thrilled to have Nick support our work, even from so far away!

“I invite everyone to visit the Basilica, for, like me, I know they will be overwhelmed with the joy, hope, and faith that is present here.”

*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance & Christian Charity*





LIGHTS, CAMERA, FATHER BAKER!



A film crew with EWTN, Global Catholic Television Network, recently visited OLV campus to film an episode of *They Might be Saints*, a series that examines the lives of men and women of faith on the path to sainthood. During the three-day shoot focused on Venerable Nelson Baker's Cause for Canonization, interviews with Father David LiPuma (*top left*), Bishop Michael Fisher and Father Richard Gribble, author of Father Baker's biography, *Father of the Fatherless*, took place.



In addition, several re-creations of scenes from Father Baker's life were filmed, including his ordination and first Mass at the Basilica (*bottom left*).

The finished episode is expected to air on EWTN worldwide in early 2022. *Stay tuned!*

CENTENNIAL *happenings*



August 14: Centennial Mass

The Centennial Mass took place 100 years since the day on which the Basilica's cornerstone was originally blessed. A packed house of friends, parishioners, and benefactors gathered as Most Rev. Michael Fisher, Bishop of Buffalo, led the festivities. Immediately following, the bishop and Rev. Msgr. David LiPuma blessed the cornerstone and a time capsule that was filled by young people to mark the occasion.



August 15: Father Baker Day Mass

The next day, the annual Father Baker Day Mass paid tribute to the "Father of the Fatherless" and his legacy of caring, the OLV organizations. A highlight of the morning was Father David's use of the Basilica's original pulpit that has not been used in many years. Mass concluded with the traditional placing of a wreath at Father Baker's tomb.



*August 14:
Centennial Reception*

Following Mass, a special celebration got underway just outside of the Shrine. The Centennial Kick-Off Reception brought together a gathering of friends of the Basilica for a night of honoring its first 100 years and launching its next century. There was even a special birthday cake for the Shrine!



upcoming EVENTS

In August, 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.

november

5

Friends of Father Baker | 6:30 p.m.

This year's event will take place at the Powerhouse at Buffalo Color Park and honor three individuals, including "the Pope's favorite nun," **Sister Norma Pimentel, MJ.** For tickets, call (716) 828-9289.

november

14

Adoption Mass | Noon

All are welcome for this annual Mass at the Basilica that honors and remembers those whose lives have been touched by adoption.

november

14

Organ Concert | 3 p.m.

OLV's own **Peter Gonciarz**, director of music and principal organist, will perform the works of Jean Langlais, Flor Peeters and more at this free concert.

november

28

Handel's Messiah | 7:30 p.m.

This beloved tradition returns as the **Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus & Orchestra** will perform Handel's *Messiah* in the Basilica. For ticket info, call (716) 980-5701.

december

19

Lessons & Carols | 7 p.m.

For the first time, we will be celebrating a festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, a joyous evening of Advent and Christmas scripture and hymns, in the Basilica.

All events are open to the public and, except for the Friends of Father Baker Reception, will be held at the OLV National Shrine & Basilica. For information, call (716) 828-9444.