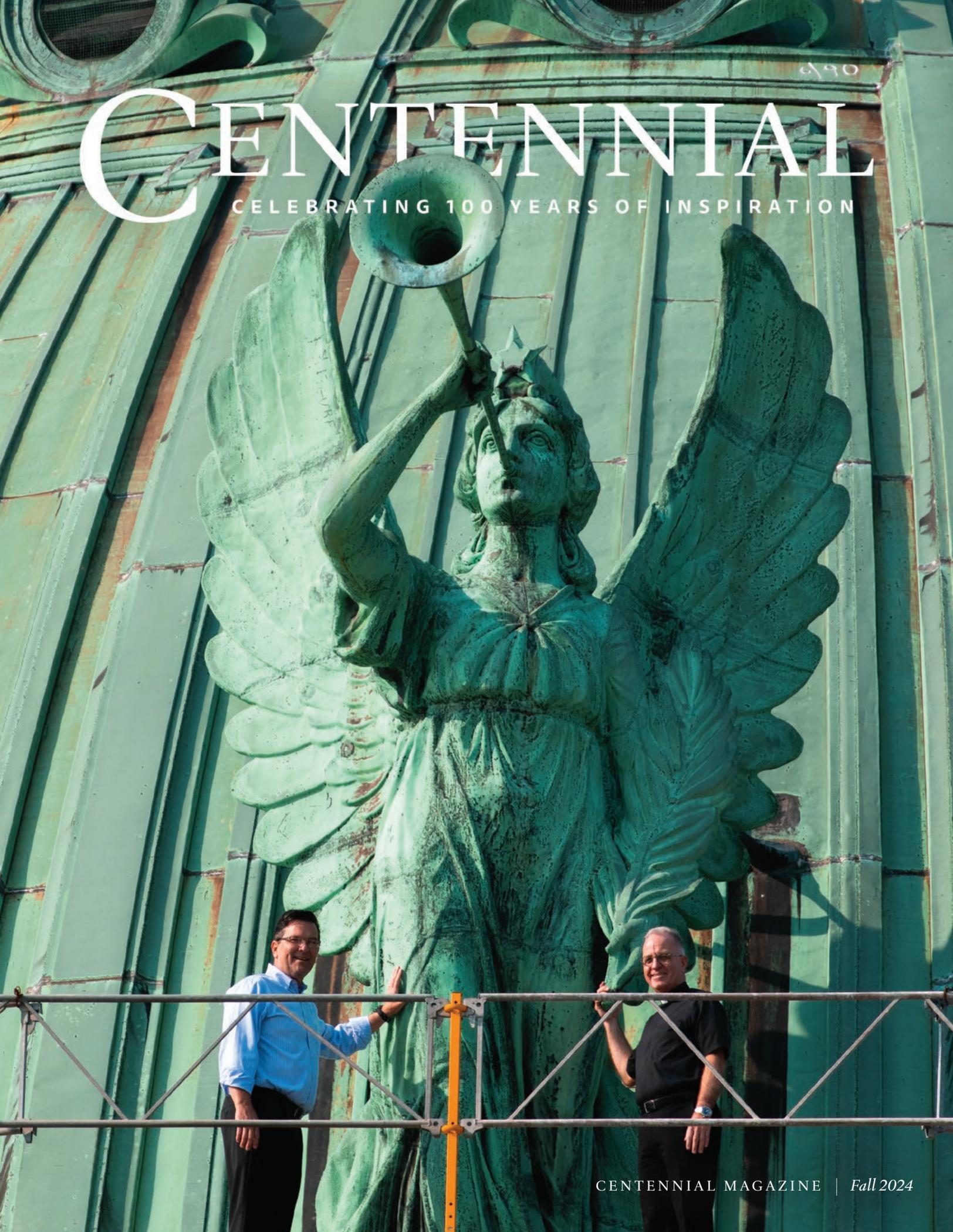
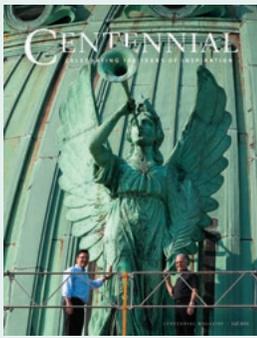


# CENTENNIAL

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF INSPIRATION





# CONTENTS

## IN THIS ISSUE

### EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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

### CREATIVE TEAM

Juliana Conidi  
Tom Lucia

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tom Lajewski  
Cindy Lee  
Sister Dorothy Mueller, *osf*  
John Pitts  
Jane Rose

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patrick T. Boyle, *Chair*  
James Walleshauser, *Vice Chair*  
Thomas Baker, *Treasurer*  
Beth Ieraci, *Secretary*  
James M. Biddle, Jr.  
Marcia C. Brogan  
Melinda Buckley  
Alan R. Elia, Jr.,  
Nicholas Fiume  
J. Patrick Greenwald  
Jeanne Magavern  
Bob Moffett  
Alex Montante  
Steven Timmel  
Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma, *Ex-Officio*

*Centennial* magazine is published two times a year by OLV Charities and printed in Western New York. If you would like to submit articles or photos, or if you have ideas for future topics, please call us at (716) 828-9631 or email [tlucia@olvcharities.org](mailto:tlucia@olvcharities.org).



780 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY 14218  
(716) 828-9648 | [OLVCharities.org](http://OLVCharities.org)



### 6 Off & Running!

The Save the Dome, Adopt an Angel Community Campaign was recently unveiled. Its critical mission: replace OLV National Shrine & Basilica's iconic dome.



### 10 New Beginnings

This year will see the retirement of Maureen Brown and Sonia Polak, OLVHS team members with a combined 82 years of experience!  
*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf*



### 14 A Dream Come True

Life-long Buffalo sports fan and OLVHS client Dennis Martin was able to live out a dream in the face of dire health news.  
*By Jane Rose*



### 20 The Collection

Father Roy Herberger's amazing collection of Nativity sets from across the world has brought joy to thousands of WNYers. Now it's found a permanent home: OLV.  
*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf*



### 26 The Father Baker Story | Part Two

He may be one of our region's most famous historical figures, but how well do you know the story of Venerable Nelson Baker?



## DEPARTMENTS

### 3 President's Message

#### *About the Cover:*

*Msgr. David G. LiPuma, pastor/rector of OLV National Shrine & Basilica, and David Kersten, CEO of OLV Charities, get an up-close look at one of the four 18-foot angels surrounding the Basilica's dome.*

### 4 CEO's Message

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Every day, I begin my day in the Basilica at Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto. There, I visit Father Nelson Baker's tomb and pray for his inspiration and guidance as I attempt to walk in his footsteps.

Now, I want to share with you an unforgettable spiritual journey on which I truly followed in his footsteps. You may recall that, in 1874, Father Baker made a pilgrimage to France and Italy that changed his life forever. In May of 2024, I, along with 32 pilgrims from all over the country, retraced and relived his spiritual journey. It was truly a powerful, spiritual, and enlightening experience for each of us.

We began our journey in Lourdes, France, where we participated in a Eucharistic liturgy and procession, recited the rosary and drank from the healing waters of the Grotto at Lourdes. What a joy to honor Mary, the Mother of God! It was truly inspiring to experience the healing grace of God and the powerful intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

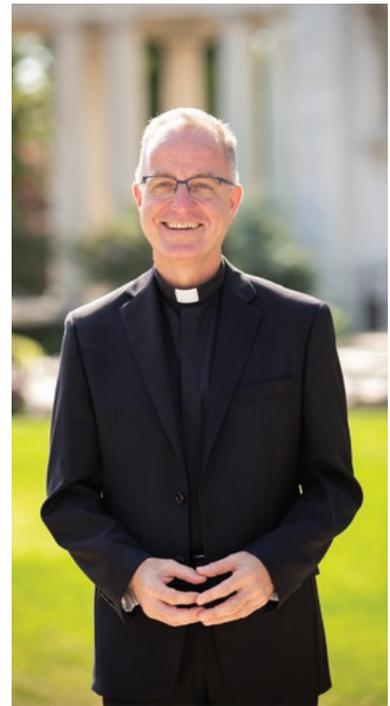
A highlight of the pilgrimage was visiting the Basilica of Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris where Father Baker was inspired as a seminarian to dedicate his life to the patronage of Our Lady of Victory. It was a powerful and graced-filled experience to kneel at the communion rail where Father Baker knelt and to recommit myself to honoring Our Lady of Victory as he did. It's a memory I will never forget!

While in Rome we had the privilege of participating in a General Audience with Pope Francis. I had the unexpected joy and honor of meeting Pope Francis and receiving his blessing, at which time I presented His Holiness with our OLV Centennial Rosary. I also spoke briefly to Pope Francis about Venerable Nelson Baker's Cause for Canonization.

At every Mass I celebrated at the sacred shrines and churches throughout our pilgrimage, I remembered you and your intentions—you, our beloved parishioners, benefactors, and friends.

Cherished memories of that journey remain with me, as I'm sure they do with all of our other pilgrims.

And with renewed vigor, I pray that Father Baker will continue to intercede for you and that Our Lady of Victory will guide and protect you!



Gratefully yours in Christ,

Handwritten signature of Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma in blue ink.

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

# CEO'S MESSAGE

Evelyn and James Whitehead, pastoral theologians and coauthors of their 1991 book, *The Promise of Partnership—A Model for Collaborative Ministry*, speak to the current challenges in our Church. In the chapter entitled, *Worlds of Scarcity, Promise of Abundance*, they wrote:

*“We live these days in a religious world of scarcity. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life, once in abundant supply, have decreased dramatically. Lacking priests, parishes consolidate or risk being closed. Diocesan budgets shrink ... Catholic hospitals and schools shut their doors ... Throughout the Church a mood of diminishment spreads as parts of our cherished past passes away ...”*

They continue ... *“In this season of loss the Gospel alerts us to a paradox. Think of the story of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. Jesus turns fragmented resources and privately held sustenance into bountiful nourishment. By sharing their meager food, the people seem to multiply it. Apparent scarcity is transformed into abundance.”*

The authors suggest that scarcity is not always real ... sometimes invented by others, or even, our selves. The challenge then becomes—**How can we shift our perspective and acknowledge grace and abundance in our own lives, our families, our faith communities?**

As part of the leadership team here at OLV, I'm reminded daily of such grace and abundance by witnessing the incredible dedication, selflessness, and mission commitment across our organization by our associates, our volunteers, our benefactors. I hear frequently from the community here in Western New York and across the country that “there is something very special happening at Our Lady of Victory.” Perhaps we could describe it as our own, daily “multiplication of loaves and fishes.”

Those familiar with the amazing Father Baker story know that this **abundance out of scarcity** dynamic is attributable to his heroic witness of faith, the inspiration he drew from his Patroness, Our Lady of Victory, and his deep love for God's people, especially those in need.

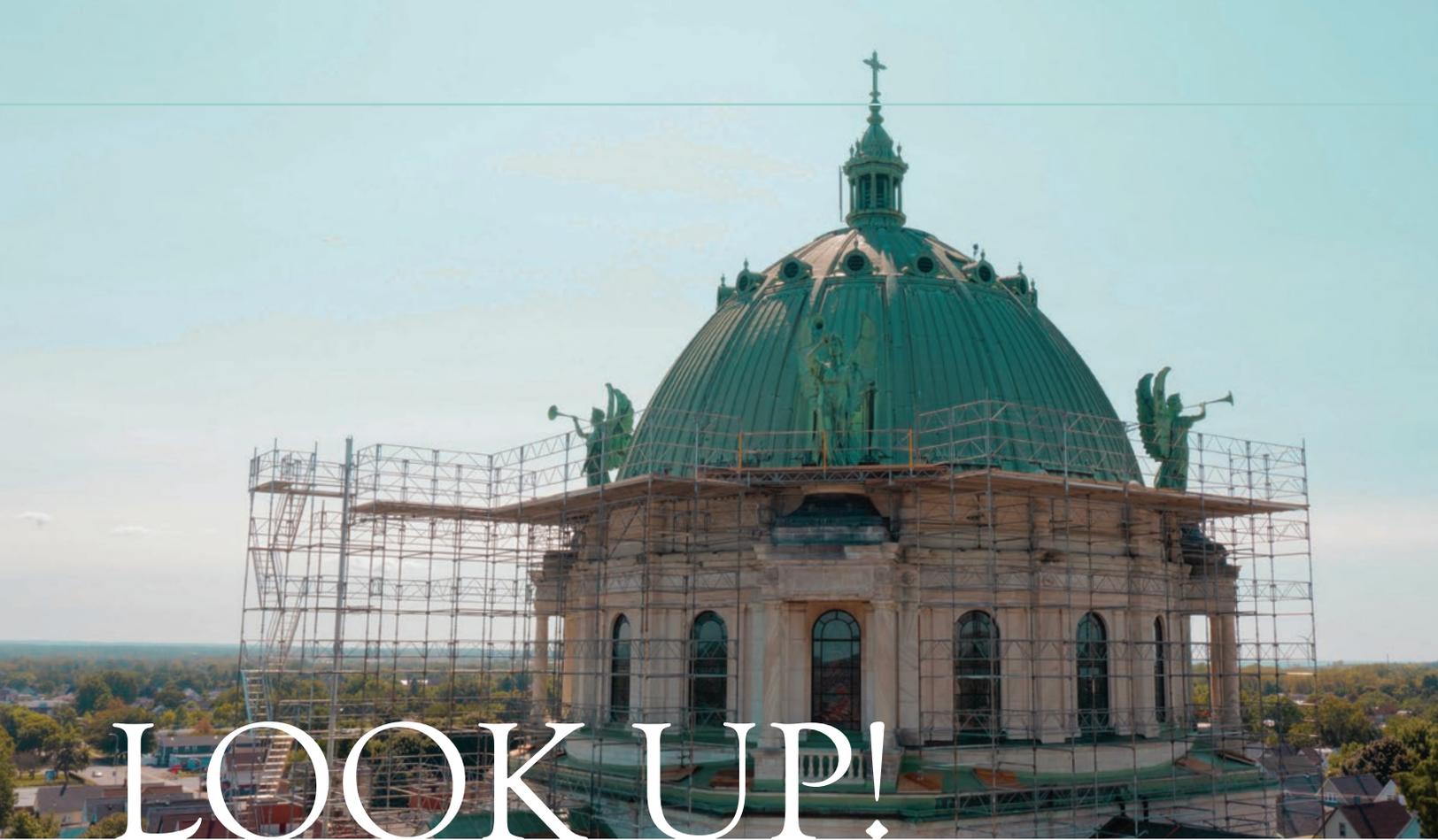
Often referred to as the “Apostle of Charity” Father Baker modeled for us very powerfully, the way to heaven, by living a life dedicated to charity and thereby bringing God into our midst. **Where there is charity and love, there God is.**

We hope the following stories of this latest *Centennial* issue reminds you of grace and abundance and God's presence in your own life.



With deepest gratitude,

**David J. Kersten**  
Chief Executive Officer, OLV Charities



## *{ The Basilica's Dome Replacement Project is Underway }*

Anyone who has been to or driven by OLV National Shrine & Basilica in recent months knows that the dome restoration and replacement project is already underway. Here's an update on what needs to get done and what is happening these days ...

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

According to Hank Balling III of Guard Construction and Contracting Corp., "We will be cleaning and/or replacing all of the copper dome's roofing elements and the cupola that can be found at the very top of the dome."

The reason for all of this work is that 100 years of Western New York weather has taken a toll on the dome. Existing patches and copper-to-copper joints are failing and water is infiltrating the interior of the dome, leading to the damage of plaster, windows, and artwork. Sadly, the copper of the iconic dome has seen more than its full life and needs to be replaced.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

Access to the dome (and cupola) is the most challenging aspect of the job. To the top of the cross, the Basilica is about 167 feet tall! Scaffolding and construction elevators are currently being installed. While that is going on, work

continues on exterior roofs and stained-glass windows. Plans for a new lift elevator—for those who have a difficult time with steps—within the Shrine are also being drawn up with work scheduled to begin in early 2025.

### WHAT LIES AHEAD

Once scaffolding is in place, a unique "library ladder" will be created so that work can begin removing the dome's copper elements. This special solution will allow workers to access all sides of the Shrine more easily. In addition to the dome, the Basilica's four signature 18-foot angels will be left in place and given a thorough cleaning.

Work is expected to continue through 2026, the 100th anniversary of the consecration of the Shrine in 1926.



If you'd like to learn more or contribute to the restoration of one of the most identifiable part of the WNY skyline, call us at (716) 828-9648, text DOME to 53555, scan this code with your smartphone, or go to [SaveOLVDome.org](https://www.saveolvdome.org).



# Off and RUNNING!

The Save the Dome/Adopt an Angel community campaign recently got off to a rousing start with a pair of events designed to bring awareness to the need for support.

## AUGUST 14—COMMUNITY KICK-OFF

Hundreds of OLV benefactors, staff members and friends enjoyed a picture-perfect evening on the front lawn of the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens on August 14. With the Basilica as the backdrop, the kick-off event featured refreshments, live music, and outdoor plein-air painters who worked to capture the majesty of the Shrine.

At the event, OLV leadership, including Msgr. David LiPuma and OLV Charities' CEO David Kersten, toasted the renovations that had taken place since the 2021 Centennial Celebration began—including pew and floor restoration and stained-glass window replacement—and set a course for the ambitious dome project.

“We discovered, after intense study, that the dome needed to be replaced,” said Father David. “The infiltration of water is affecting inside, our windows, murals, and paintings. You can look around and see where plaster is falling. We have whole sections covered as we try to protect our restored pews.”

Offering his words of support for the project was Community Campaign Chair Jim Dettinger, president of NOCO Development.

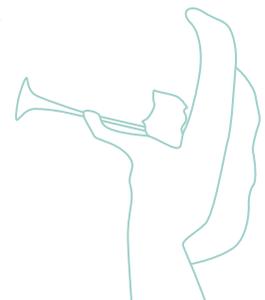
## AUGUST 15—MEDIA EVENT

The next day featured a different feel with similar excitement and anticipation. Media members from local and regional outlets descended on the Shrine to listen to OLV's great need and bold plan. Speaking in front of the tomb of Father Baker was Father David, architect Jake Schneider, whose firm is overseeing the replacement/restoration project, and Jim Dettinger.

The result was media coverage that helped spread the word throughout the area and shine a light on the need to ensure the Basilica's dome continues to be a source of pride throughout the community.



To watch a short video that explains the project and includes ways you can get involved, scan this code with your smartphone.





# FROM FEAR & WIDE

So many times we plan our travels based on sights we want to see—whether it’s the Colosseum in Rome or the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. So, it should come as no surprise, that as travel restrictions have eased over the last few years, more and more groups are traveling to Western New York to see the wondrous OLV National Shrine & Basilica.

The Basilica has always been a sought-after place for field trips from local Catholic schools and that hasn’t changed. This year, it has played host to St. Mary’s High School seniors, St. John Paul II religious classes, homeschooled children from Lewiston, and many more. But local students aren’t the only ones visiting. The members of the administrative team at OLV’s rectory receive calls almost daily for tours of all sizes. Groups range from churches of all denominations to assisted-living homes to family reunions.

So far this year, visitors have come from

throughout Canada, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and even California! In fact, this past July, a group of pilgrims from Santa Ana, CA, visited during their Neocatechumenate pilgrimage. They took

busses across the country to visit more than 50 shrines, including OLV Basilica. While in Lackawanna, they delighted visitors with a musical performance that included drums and guitars.



No matter where they come from, though, the reaction to the Shrine is always one of awe. “Initially, from the outside I thought ‘well, this is nice,’ but then I came in and it’s pure grandeur,” says Andrew Wuebblot, a seminarian who visited with a group of over 50 people from Toronto, Canada. “Entering the Basilica was just ... wow!”



**Tours are free of charge and available between 1 and 5 p.m. throughout the week, except on Fridays. To schedule a visit, call our team at (716) 828-9444.**

*By Jane Rose*

# Paint Out

## OLV BASILICA



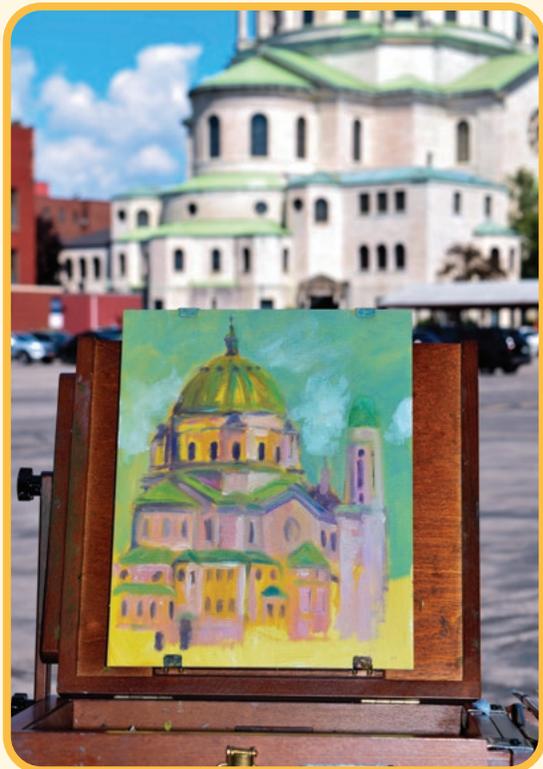
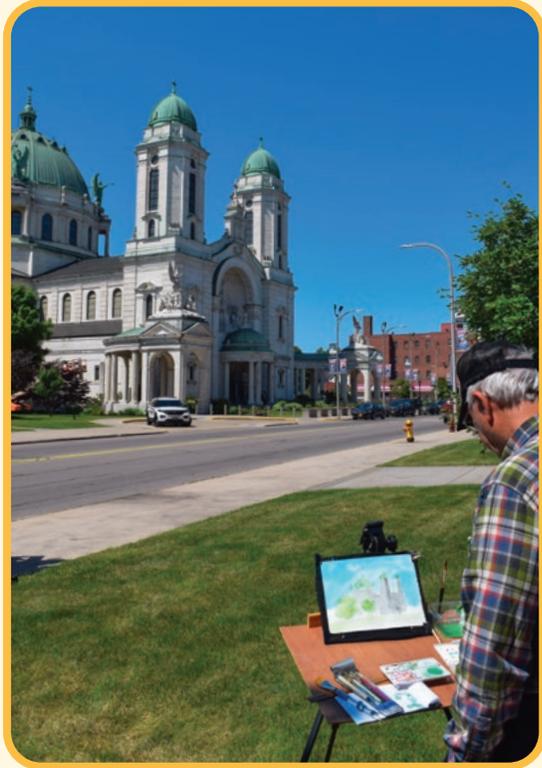
This past May 18 and June 15, artists were invited to participate in our outdoor painting competition at OLV National Shrine & Basilica.

Artists were welcome to come out, set up space anywhere on OLV property, and create their own unique vision of the Shrine, Father Baker's "crown jewel." The result was various paintings in many styles, portraying both classic and unexpected perspectives of our glorious Basilica.

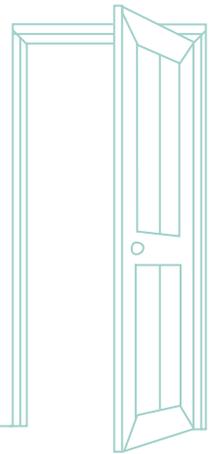
Completed, framed artworks were submitted for judging and displayed in the Father Baker Museum in the lower level of the Shrine.

If you would like to participate in a future event, keep an eye on OLV's socials or **contact Eileen Hudson at (716) 828-7585 or [ehudson@olvcharities.org](mailto:ehudson@olvcharities.org) for future dates.**





# NEW BEGINNINGS



*{ “Often, when you think you’re at the end of something, you’re at the beginning of something else.”  
– Fred Rogers }*

As the leaves fall and the days turn colder, OLV Human Services (OLVHS) prepares to do something the agency has not had to do in nearly five decades: prepare for life without long-time employee, Maureen Brown. She, along with her colleague, Sonia Polak (who has been with OLVHS for 37 years), will be retiring in 2024.

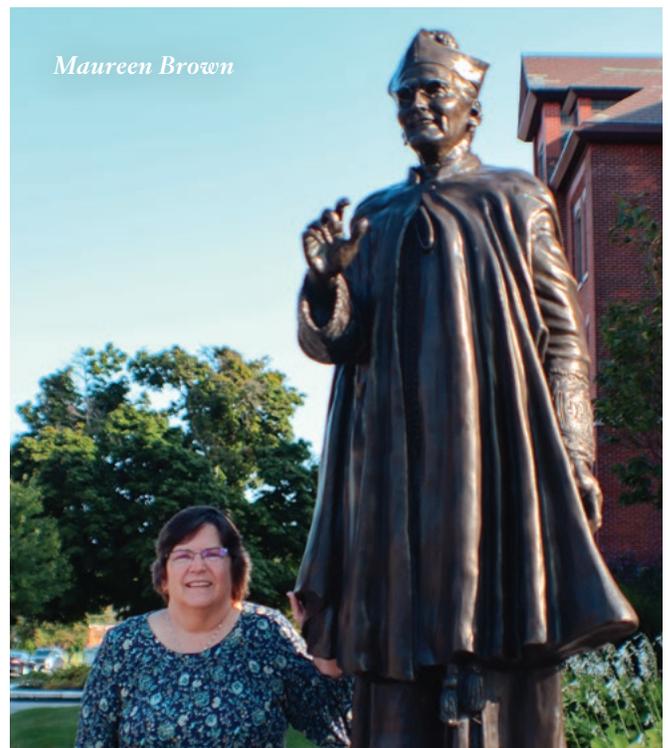
With a combined 82 years of service, we bid farewell to Maureen and Sonia, who have forever left their mark on the organization and those in its care.

## SERVICE & MISSION

Maureen’s memories go back to her high-school days when she started working at what was then known as OLV Infant Home as a counselor/technician 45 years ago. These days, she serves as OLVHS’s director of purchasing.

Service and mission define Maureen’s life and time with OLV. “Helping others is what it’s all about. And that’s what I have enjoyed doing every day.”

Thank you, Maureen, for your long and distinguished career making a difference. Your example and selfless giving are deeply appreciated.



## FUN!

“Fun” is how Sonia describes her years spent as a member of the agency’s recreation program. She currently fills the role of activity coordinator.

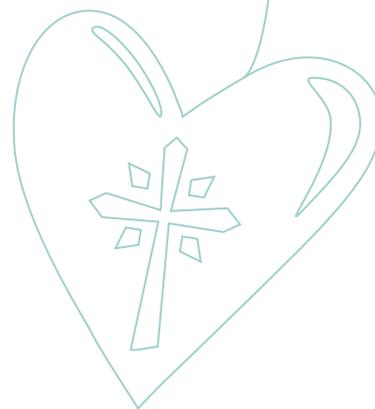
Over the years, Sonia has observed young people improving their self-esteem, self-worth, social skills, and large motor skills by participating in various recreation programs. “Seeing the joy in their eyes and the changes in their lives gives me great satisfaction.”



Thank you, Sonia, for being such a great mentor to children and teens. It is hoped you continue to experience fun in whatever you do.

Congratulations to Maureen and Sonia, two of our dedicated and compassionate team members here at OLV, on their well-earned retirement. We pray they continue to experience abundant blessings and much joy in whatever they do next!

*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf*



# ANSWERING THE CALL:

## *The Responsibility of Legacy*



Father Baker's Legacy ... to know it is to feel inspired. To be responsible for continuing to see it grow and evolve is a privilege. At OLV Human Services, we do not take that responsibility lightly and are eternally grateful for the opportunity.

To me, the prayer for Father Baker's canonization says it all:

*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.*

Each day, through the efforts of the individuals who work alongside one another in the spirit of Father



Baker, a difference is made in the life of someone in need. Our work is focused on one central principle—helping others to overcome the barriers and hurdles in their lives to move forward as independently as possible.



Those whom we are blessed to support have one thing in common: the need for compassionate care and unqualified acceptance. We don't just focus on the individual who is struggling. As Father Baker taught us, there is strength in building networks among and between people to enable them to find success, however that success is defined for their lives. If we only focused on service provision to an individual and neglected the importance of other important people in their lives, we would miss the opportunity to build community. Father Baker was a

leader in doing so, in building communities of support, outreach, and hope. And we are proud to carry on that legacy.

The services we provide are varied because the issues that arise are varied. Whether it's a temporary or permanent challenge someone is facing, OLV Human Services has the resources to assist. From the very youngest to the very oldest members of our community, we strive to tailor our supports to help individuals and their families find comfort, stability, and belonging.

Father Baker serves as a constant example of the good that results from acknowledging the worth of every human being and helping them to find it in themselves.



To learn more about the important services provided by OLV Human Services, scan the QR code here with your smartphone or go to [OLVHS.org](http://OLVHS.org).

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 between 10,000 and 12,000 children, teens, and adults last year through a variety of outpatient, residential, and educational programs. To learn more, visit [OLVHS.org](http://OLVHS.org).*



*The individuals we serve today in the spirit of Father Baker.*





# A DREAM COME TRUE

When 79-year-old Dennis Martin was diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma as well as cancer in his lungs and lymph nodes, and he was placed in Hospice care, he and his caretakers knew exactly what would bring him the most amount of joy.

A life-long Buffalonian and local sports fan, Dennis, a resident at OLV Human Services' Amber Lynne residence since 2021, began a special never-to-be-forgotten tour.

The fun kicked off with the Buffalo Bills' 2023 home opener against the Las Vegas Raiders. It was Dennis' first game at Highmark Stadium. He and his caretaker, OLV's Kim Davis, enjoyed popcorn, hot dogs and especially a Bills win courtesy of his favorite player, Josh Allen.

In February of 2024, Dennis braved the cold to appear in a suite for his first-ever Buffalo Sabres game. There, he was joined by his caretakers and his late wife's family. As an avid hockey fan, he was

thrilled to meet Sabres' commentators Marty Biron and Brian Duff before their broadcast.



And it just wouldn't have been complete without a baseball game. With the help of Lawley Insurance, Dennis and his family were treated to a suite at a Buffalo Bisons game in June. There, he threw out the first pitch and got to stay on the field during the national anthem.

"The whole experience was a joy for Dennis. He has framed pictures in his room from all of the events," says Kim. "He is a proud Buffalo sports fan and he still talks about each game fondly. He loved being able to share the moments with his family."



*By Jane Rose*

# Meet RILEY EMER

{ *Director, Catholic Parenting Initiative* }

OLV Charities recently received a \$1.25 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to develop its Catholic Parenting Initiative, a program designed to help parents and caregivers pass their faith onto their children.

To take on this project, Riley Emer joined the OLV team. She has worked for a few Catholic organizations before coming to Lackawanna. She earned a Bachelor's degree at Boston College and a Master's degree at the University of Notre Dame.

**Q: HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR BACKGROUND PREPARED YOU FOR THIS ROLE?**

RE: I have been a Catholic all my life and my faith has always been important to me, ever since I can remember. I have memories of my parents teaching me prayers, being excited to receive a rosary from my grandparents, and looking forward to the change in liturgical seasons. As a newly married woman, with dreams of starting my own family, the question of how to raise children who will grow up to love the Faith is something I often think about.

**Q: CAN YOU EXPLAIN YOUR ROLE?**

RE: As the director of the Catholic Parenting Initiative, I oversee all operations, planning, and implementation of resources. I have a wonderful team of ministerial professionals who assist me with the design work, as well as a program

consultant and a research and evaluation consultant. The grant period is five years and that gives us ample time to learn and grow. We will be partnering with between 30 and 40 local parishes to strengthen and support the good work they do in mentoring parents as they raise their children in the Faith.



**Q: WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE PROGRAM?**

RE: The goal is to create opportunities for parents to encounter God, to grow in their relationship with Him, to empower them to pass on the Catholic faith to their children, and to help them to create a Catholic culture in their homes. It's our hope to build long-lasting relationships and create thriving parishes where all people feel like they belong. It is these relationships (first with Jesus, then with others who seek Him) that transform us, as opposed to simply acquiring knowledge, taking classes, or seeing the sacraments as something to check off on a list.

**HOW DO YOU PLAN ON REACHING THAT GOAL?**

RE: Lots of conversation and listening! I feel strongly that this process will look different for each parish and family because each is unique, beautiful, and possesses different strengths and weaknesses. It is important to me that we listen to the needs and desires of our parents and caregivers so the resources we are offering serve them well and meet them wherever they are on their journey.



# FOREVER MEMORIES



At the heart of everything that goes on at Camp Turner—and there is a LOT—is the idea that lives are being changed. When a child rides a horse for the first time, a life is being changed. When a teenager hits a bullseye on the archery range, a life is being changed. And when a camper rides down the bike path and experiences nature in a new way, a life is being changed.

*experience for me,” he says. “Oftentimes, you don’t have an opportunity to get out and see the beauty of nature. It gives you a different perspective, and I’d like as many kids as possible to have the experience I had.”*

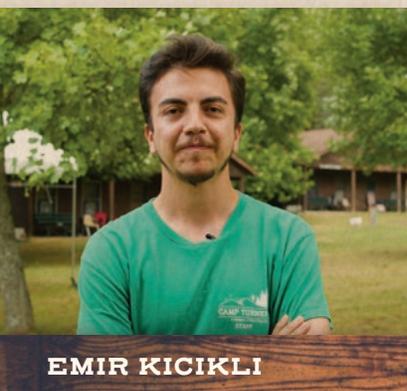
## **The World Comes to Allegany State Park**

The Ogoreks’ generosity led to three international students, who were all looking for summer jobs in the U.S., coming to Camp Turner as counselors.



Many of these “forever memories” are made possible due to the generosity of OLV’s faithful donors. Two such individuals, Tony and Janice Ogorek, made 2024 a particularly memorable year. The couple provided funding so that three international students could serve as counselors at Camp Turner and young people from the inner city could enjoy the outdoors like never before.

“I was asked if I would be interested in supporting some international students, which was a wonderful thing, because if you can’t send your child to another country, the next best thing is to have those students counsel our campers to really give them an international perspective,” says Tony.



Doing so seemed to be second nature to Tony who, himself, was the beneficiary of a kind gesture many years ago. *“When I was young, a seminarian sponsored me for a week at camp. It came during a difficult time in my life and ended up being a good*

For more than six weeks, Allegany State Park was home to Peter Morvai from Hungary, Mareen Freegerici from Germany, and Emir Kicikli from Turkey. Each noted how impactful the summer was.

“There are many experiences I take from here because our culture is so different,” noted Emir. “Yes, we are the counselors, we are the adults, but at some point, we are just like the children. We were having fun. We were dancing. We were competing with the campers. We were playing the same games. This felt very special.”

Maureen agreed with Emir’s assessment. “I’m really thankful because I loved having this experience here,” she said. “I’ve learned a lot and I’ve grown as a person, so I’m really thankful.”

### **Expanding World Views**

As if changing the lives of three international students wasn’t enough, Tony and Janice were approached with a second worthwhile opportunity.

In early 2024, the Police Athletic League of Buffalo (PAL) lost the funding that would allow some of its young people to attend Camp Turner. Having enjoyed a relationship with the camp for more than 10 years, this development was a blow. But it was Tony to the rescue!

“90% of the young people we bring to Camp Turner have never experienced camping before,” explains Chardenay Hunter, Communications and Data Manager for PAL. “This experience gives them the opportunity to explore human interaction without the distraction of electronic devices. Over the years, technology has impacted the social, emotional, mental, and physical health of our youth. Experiencing Camp

Turner allows them to expand on their relationship-building skills.”

As a result of Tony’s generosity, the group enjoyed being out in nature and trying new things like horseback riding, archery, nature walks, team-building activities and arts and crafts.

“The changes we’ve seen in our young people because of the partnership with Camp Turner are tremendous,” says Chardenay. “In a short time, they have improved skills related to teamwork, communication, problem-solving and critical thinking. By the end of their stay, they’ve developed a stronger sense of community.”

Like many of OLV’s dedicated donors, Tony’s hope is that when the international counselors and PAL campers look back on their 2024 summer experiences, they reflect fondly on their time at Camp Turner. “The wonderful thing is, wherever they end up in life, they’re never going to forget the experience they had out here. That’s one of the best ways to use your resources. Because when you invest in kids, you invest in our future.”

**Would you like to support Camp Turner’s mission and help change lives like Tony and Janice? If so, contact Kevin McLaughlin at (716) 828-9530 or [kmclaughlin@olvcharities.org](mailto:kmclaughlin@olvcharities.org) for information.**

*By John Pitts*





# OLV's SAINTLY DAY

It's not every day that you get to interact with the daughter of a saint. In fact, for most people, it will never happen. And that's what made a recent visit to OLV's campus by Gianna Emanuela, the daughter of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla, so special.

St. Gianna Molla, canonized in 2004, is the patron saint of physicians, mothers, and unborn children. She is known for urging doctors to make saving the life of her unborn baby their top priority during a complicated pregnancy. One week after her baby girl, Gianna, was born, she died of an infection.

Here at OLV, Gianna Emanuela attended a midday Mass and luncheon with workers from a local pregnancy outreach center named after her mother.



Her visit concluded with a special program for children and families entitled "Adventures in Sainthood." As a part of the fun, young people had the chance to learn about the canonization process

in which both St. Gianna and our own Father Baker have been involved. They worked on designing and coloring cards for local nursing homes and took part in a scavenger hunt throughout the Basilica. The program also included speeches from mothers who named their daughters Gianna and one teenager who chose it as her confirmation name.

It was a special day of togetherness that won't soon be forgotten!



To learn more about the local St. Gianna Molla Pregnancy Outreach Centers, head to [BuffaloDiocese.org/st-gianna](https://BuffaloDiocese.org/st-gianna) or scan the QR code.

## A WEEKEND OF CELEBRATIONS

Father Baker Weekend 2024 proved to be a big hit with OLV family members. From festive celebrations to solemn memories, from shiny pennies to delicious chicken BBQ, there was something for everyone this year.

### JULY 27 | JAZZ MASS

For the third-straight year, our Jazz Mass packed folks into the Shrine for a delightful, toe-tapping celebration of scripture and song. Mass was preceded by a short concert for the hundreds of folks who arrived early.

### JULY 28 | PENNY DROP

The delightful tradition of filling the entranceway to the Basilica up with loose change continued this summer. Children, teens, and adults alike emptied their pockets, cars, and couches to contribute to the Shrine's renovation efforts.

### JULY 28 | FATHER BAKER DAY MASS

The 88th Annual Father Baker Day Mass paid tribute to the "Padre of the Poor," Venerable Nelson Baker. Mass concluded with the traditional placing of a wreath at his tomb by members of the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

### JULY 28 | PENNIES TO HEAVEN FAMILY CARNIVAL

This year's carnival had it all—a chicken BBQ, basket raffles, a scavenger hunt, a dunk tank (featuring Msgr. David LiPuma himself!), hair-braiding and balloon-animal stations, and live music featuring Cami Clune of *The Voice* and John Reisen from *America's Got Talent*.

**Miss out? Mark your calendar for next year's Father Baker Weekend, scheduled for July 26 and 27, 2025.**





# THE COLLECTION

*{ Father Roy Herberger's amazing collection of 700+ Nativity sets from around the world has a permanent home ... OLV }*

For more than 30 years, Father Roy Herberger has had a very specific, and fascinating, interest. He has assembled a unique collection that doesn't include baseball cards or rare coins. It is one that countless thousands of children and adults enjoyed over the years. And it's coming to OLV National Shrine & Basilica this Advent.

It all started when Father Roy was attending a conference in Baltimore, MD. While viewing religious items on display, he came across a nativity set from Africa that was about 10 inches tall and made from ebony. It caught his eye, so he purchased it and took it home. It was there that a thought popped into his head that set him on his amazing path: how do people from other parts of the world—other cultures and countries—see the birth of Christ? If Christ came for all people, Father Roy wondered, how would those living in Africa, India, or Japan relate to someone who looks so different from them? And with that, a new passion was born.

**Since that time, the collection that began with one set from Africa has grown to 700 sets from 80 different countries!**

Numerous pieces within the collection reflect a vision of how Jesus and the Holy Family might look like if the scene occurred during a different period of time or in a different part of the world. Many of them are quite unique. Some are made from porcelain or paper, bottle caps or auto parts, a grain of rice, a nutshell, and even iron nails.



When viewed by people of all ages, reactions to these different depictions of such a well-known scene may be varied. But the singular purpose of the exhibit remains the same. "I believe

the collection opens up the minds of the viewers and shows them how we're all connected," Father Roy says. "Regardless of the language we speak, the color of our skin, or even our religious differences, the variety of creches helps us realize the important message: that Christ came for all."

### IN SEARCH OF A NEW HOME

For the last several years, pieces from Father Roy's collection have traveled from church to church throughout Western New York. In fact, OLV hosted the exhibit in 2022. But what Father Roy had always dreamed of was a year-round home for the displays. Why? For one thing, it gets tricky packing and moving the fragile sets year after year.

After discussions and careful consideration, however, Father Roy, who is now retired, recently decided that the Basilica would serve as the permanent home for his treasured creches. Each Advent and Christmas season, a portion of the collection will be displayed in the lower level of the Shrine.



The return to OLV also signaled a homecoming for Father Roy personally, as he served here in the 1970s.

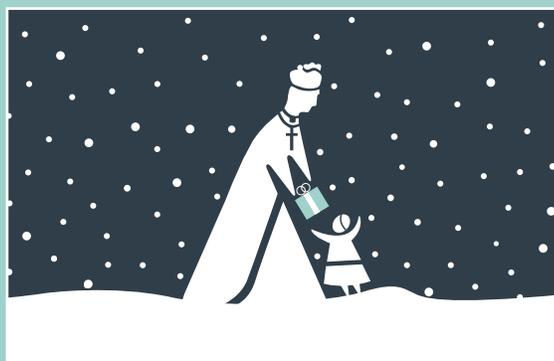
“My hope is that people will come to the Basilica, this year and in years to come, to not only see the creches,” he says, “but to experience the basic message that ‘Jesus loves all people.’”

This Advent, stop by the Basilica with family and friends and view the many beautiful nativity scenes and fill your hearts with Christmas love and joy!

*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, ofc*



# OLV *Holiday Gift Drive*



Please help us provide a special Christmas for those in our care. Consider donating a gift (or two!) and make this holiday season a special one for a child or family in need.

Gifts can be shipped directly to OLV through our Amazon registry which can be found at <https://tab.so/OLV24> or by scanning the QR code below.



Please be sure to click “SHARE my shipping info” when you purchase from the registry, as Amazon only shares your account name with OLV, which often does not match YOUR name! Thank you!

# Partnership with The Children's Guild Foundation Brings HOPE TO FAMILIES



Cathie Gura has been president of The Children's Guild Foundation (TCGF) for the past 28 years. The group is dedicated to effecting change and bringing opportunities to Western New York for children and young adults with special needs. In 2023, TCGF provided a seed grant of \$225,000 that was the catalyst to OLV establishing its much-needed Evaluation and Treatment Center, which opened in April 2024.

this as much more than just making a grant. We saw this as an investment in transformational change within WNY for children and young adults with special needs, as well as their families.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EFFORTS IN RALLYING OTHER FOUNDATIONS TO SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE.

CG: The wonderful concept about foundation philanthropy is that we are not competitors with other funders—we are partners. In this way, The Children's Guild Board of Directors work as visionaries as well as leaders by bringing others along with them to engage in these types of systemic change programs.



We sat down with Cathie to talk about The Children's Guild Foundation and her experience partnering with OLV.

WHY DID THE CHILDREN'S GUILD FOUNDATION CHOOSE TO SUPPORT OLV?

CG: When OLV connected with us regarding their idea to create a program to provide diagnostic and support services in the area of autism and neurological disorders, we saw



*Cathie and Directors of The Children's Guild Foundation at the Evaluation and Treatment Center grand opening, from left to right: Daniel K. Comerford, Cathie, Darci B. Cramer, Ph.D., Susan G. Koessler*

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THE CHILDREN'S GUILD FOUNDATION PROVIDED A GRANT TO OLV. TALK ABOUT PREVIOUS PROGRAMS YOU WERE INVOLVED IN.

CG: Our funding with OLV goes back even further by supporting innovative elementary educational training for their staff as well as life skill and work development projects. OLV's reach is wide in the community, and it enables our Foundation to work with an organization that touches all our areas of funding and advocacy that speaks to our mission.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT OLV THROUGH YOUR PARTNERSHIP?

CG: We were impressed with OLV's dedication to providing services that do not exist in the community to serve the needs of families. So when they said they were going to establish a center designed to diagnose and treat autism and other neurological disorders, we knew they could deliver. Working along with them, we saw what the word "changemaker" really means. [The members of the OLV team] are deeply engaged in the community and bringing meaningful support to families with children and adults with special needs.

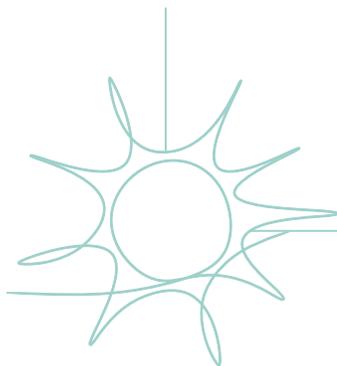
OLV is most grateful to The Children's Guild Foundation and numerous other foundations for their support of the Evaluation and Treatment Center.



*Cathie Gura at OLV's annual Victory Nite event.*



*Some of the children OLV serves.*





# The Future Starts TODAY

## *{ Events geared toward young professionals have brought new energy to OLV's ministries }*

OLV's ongoing Centennial Celebration has introduced hundreds of new people to Father Baker's "City of Charity." Some have come for the various concerts the Shrine has hosted, others came to enjoy The Saint John's Bible exhibit last winter, while others have participated in the outdoor painting events. The Centennial's theme, "All Are Welcome," continues to resonate with visitors from throughout the U.S. and Canada.

One group, in particular, has taken to OLV ministries in an exciting way. The engagement of its members gives hope for the future. Hope for not only our campus, but our faith.

Through a series of events affectionately known as "Father Baker on Tap (FBoT)," young leaders have discovered a passion for OLV, one that continues to urge them to get more involved. FBoT offers young professionals an evening of mixing and mingling within the Father Baker Museum. Remarks are offered by Msgr. David LiPuma, David Kersten of OLV Charities, and Cindy Lee of OLV Human Services. Closing the event is a guided tour of the Basilica. The theme is all the good that was done in the past and the good work that continues to this day.

"Being able to bring our friends, family, and networks together to learn more about OLV and Father Baker, and how to get involved moving forward, was so rewarding," says Carl (C.J.)

Montante III who chaired one of the events with his wife, Kelly, in 2023. Since doing so, the couple took a lead role with the 2024 Victory Nite gala event, serving as vice-chairs.

Since 2021, five FBoT events have been held, drawing more than 300 young professionals, with each session being chaired by one such rising star. The result has been more and more young people getting involved through OLV's various events and programs.

"Last year, I was invited to attend the Montante's Father Baker on Tap event," remembers Patrick Collins, who, himself, chaired a FBoT event this past April. "With family ties to OLV, I couldn't help but want to get more involved. I've been fortunate to work with a few different charitable groups in the area, but none have inspired me quite like OLV. The organization's mission of supporting at-risk children and families physically, emotionally, and spiritually resonates with me."

For more information on the Father Baker on Tap series or the many volunteer opportunities that are available throughout the OLV organizations, contact Cronan Long at (716) 828-9572 or [clong@olvcharities.org](mailto:clong@olvcharities.org).

*By John Pitts*



# Remembering EDWARD C. COSGROVE

On July 4, 2024, God called home his faithful servant, Edward C. Cosgrove, welcoming him with open arms.

Ed had many connections to OLV. He attended the OLV Elementary School, served as an altar boy, was a supporter of Father Baker's mission, was a generous donor to OLV Charities, and was a member of OLV Charities' Capital Campaign Cabinet.

Professionally, Ed was a lawyer, an FBI Special Agent, Erie County District Attorney, and a founder of the Cosgrove Law Firm. As an advocate for justice, he reached out to help others, especially the poor. He was a man of deep faith who faithfully served his church and community.

In a eulogy for his dad, his son, Edward Jr., said: "My father was a man of deep faith which grounded him. He believed that if you have love and live your faith, your life will be a journey of fulfillment."

We celebrate the life and qualities of this remarkable man while deeply mourning his loss. We are profoundly grateful for his goodness, leadership, his generosity, and for the difference he made in so many lives.

We continue to offer our prayers of sympathy and comfort to his wife, Dottie, to his children, grandchildren, and to his brothers and sisters. May God's peace and love surround them and give them comfort!

*Requiescat in Pace, dear friend!*



*Edward C. Cosgrove, photo by Jim Courtney*

# THE FATHER BAKER STORY

## { Part 2 }

We continue Nelson Baker's story as he began a new chapter of his life as a seminarian. In 1869, he entered the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels in Lewiston—located where Niagara University sits today—with much vigor and dedication.

Baker, while immersed in his academic studies, assumed leadership roles in various societies that fostered his spiritual and social development.

Late in 1871, however, a significant health challenge interrupted his journey. He contracted erysipelas, a serious skin infection and was expected to die. Battling through a lengthy and often painful recovery, the young seminarian remained



*Notre Dame des Victoires*



steadfast in his desire to finish his studies.

In 1874, Nelson read about a pilgrimage to some of the great Catholic shrines in Europe and was immediately interested. He sought permission to take part in this venture from the bishop and seminary, and, on May 13, he hopped on a train to New York City for a journey that would change his life!

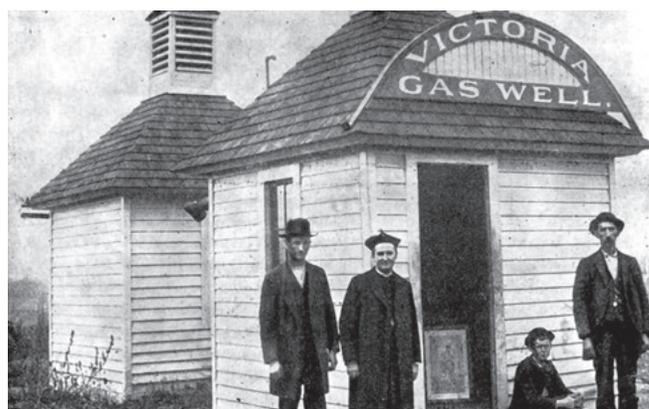
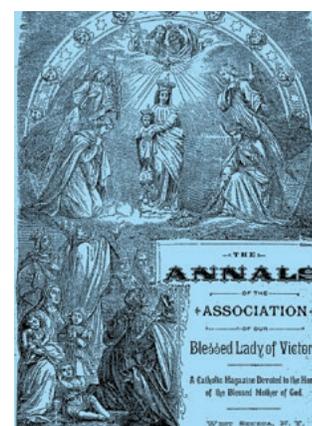
One of the special sites for Nelson was the Basilica of Notre Dame des Victoires. It was there that he felt a tug on his heart that would result in him devoting his life's work to the Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Victory. Becoming the central focus of his priesthood and ministry, she was not only his patroness, but a friend, an advocate, and a source of inspiration for all he did.

Upon his return to the seminary, Nelson continued his studies with renewed energy and passion. In early March 1876, he was ordained to the diaconate. Days later, on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, Nelson Baker was ordained a priest at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Buffalo. He was 34 years old.

Father Baker's first assignment was to assist Father John Hines at St. Patrick's Parish and the Institutions of Limestone Hill, which, at the time consisted of an orphanage and a protectory for "willful" boys. This seemed a suitable appointment due to Father Baker's business savvy, as Limestone Hill had accrued a debt of more than \$60,000 (an amount equivalent to \$1.8 million today). Considering the situation hopeless, Father Baker asked for a transfer and was sent to Corning, NY for one year. Bishop Ryan then reassigned him back to Limestone Hill, this time as Father Hines' replacement.

One of his first acts, when confronted by creditors, was to drive to the bank and withdraw every penny in his name to pay off the bills. Realizing the economic situation was beyond him, he got the idea to form the Association of Our Lady of Victory, a fundraising initiative that would transform his organization forever. He wrote letters to postmasters all over the country asking them to send him names of Catholic women in their towns. He then wrote to those ladies, appealing to their sense of charity. He asked for 25 cents a year. The Association was a huge success! Within a few years, not only was Father Baker able to pay off the debt, but he began several much-needed expansion projects.

When paying off the enormous heating bills for his growing institutions, his thoughts for additional resources turned to the possibility of drilling for natural gas. Father Baker took this inspiration in prayer to Our Lady. After receiving approval from the bishop, a team of drillers was contacted. Upon their arrival, the foreman asked Father Baker where they were to begin drilling. The humble priest led a procession into an open field. At one spot, he stopped, sprinkled the ground with holy water, buried a small statue of Our Lady, and told the workers: "Drill here." Weeks passed and the project had yet to bear any fruit. Then, during the novena in honor of the Assumption of Our Lady, gas was struck! Incredibly, the well still produces gas to this day, although on a small scale.



 *Part Three of this series, which will appear in the Spring 2025 issue of Centennial, will explore Father Baker's growing campus, his death and ongoing Cause for Canonization. If you just can't wait to learn more, visit [FatherBaker.org](http://FatherBaker.org) or download the *Father Baker: Retold* podcast wherever you can find your podcasts. You can also scan the QR code to learn more.*

# IN HIS *Footsteps*



This past May, 32 friends of OLV enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Father Baker's pilgrimage to Europe by embarking on their own journey, mirroring the humble priest's voyage.

Nelson Baker, then age 32, joined with 101 other American on a pilgrimage to worship at the magnificent shrines of Europe between May and July of 1874. It was during this trip that he discovered what would end up being a life-long dedication to the Blessed Mother, under the title of Our Lady of Victory, while in France.

The 2024 OLV Pilgrimage stopped in Paris, Lourdes and Rome, and featured a special day at Notre Dame des Victoires—the actual site of Nelson's epiphany 150 years earlier—and a papal audience at the Vatican.

It was a journey, one rooted in spirituality and historical significance, and one that will not soon be forgotten.







# Father Baker's LONG JOURNEY HOME

Prior to the renovation work that has taken place recently, the last time there was a major change to the interior of OLV National Shrine & Basilica was in March of 1999. It was at that time that Father Baker “came home” and his earthly remains were exhumed from nearby Holy Cross Cemetery and reinterred within the Shrine. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of this historic event in 2024, we look back at this incredible day.

By the late 1990s, several steps in Father Baker’s Cause for Canonization had been taken. It was opened in 1987 and officials in Rome had examined his works and writing and found them all in proper order. What was missing, though, were claims of miracles.

Eager to move the process forward, Msgr. Robert Wurtz, who was, as the time, vice-postulator of the Cause, asked officials at the Vatican for advice. Knowing that an important component of miraculous claims requires prayers for special favors, it was suggested that steps be taken to make Father Baker more accessible. The recommendation was rooted in the fact that his burial site saw far fewer visitors than the marvelous Shrine. Following strict instructions, plans were made to transfer his earthly remains.

#### “A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE”

On March 10, 1999, the casket was lifted out of the grave and taken to the morgue in the former OLV Hospital to prepare it for the transfer. The next day, the coffin was taken to the Basilica and placed in the crypt at the Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine Grotto. Men known as “Baker Boys,” those who had

grown up in the institutions while Father Baker was there, served as pallbearers and carried the coffin down the side aisle, tears streaming down their faces.

“I don’t know how many more people could possibly have fit in the Basilica that morning,” remembers former OLV public relations director Beth Donovan. “You could feel history in the air. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience!”

The day didn’t end when the prayer service concluded, however. For hours after, WNYers of all ages streamed through the Shrine, standing in line to pay their respects to the humble priest. It is estimated that more than 6,000 people passed in front of the coffin that day, with the line often wrapping around the Basilica and out the door.

“It was unforgettable to see people so moved by this man, his holiness, and his incredible faith in Our Lady, that they just had to come down and be a part of history,” says Donovan.

Many hours later, the line dwindled and the Basilica’s lights were turned off. Any items that were left by well-wishers on top of the coffin were carefully removed and its lid was put in place and sealed. The emotional day had ended and Father Baker was where he should be.



*Scan this code with your smartphone to watch a video that includes more memories of this special occasion.*

*By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf*



# WNY's Real Superhero ... FATHER BAKER

Thousands of WNY students were introduced to a real hero this summer as a new comic book featuring the life of Venerable Nelson Baker made its debut.

The project came to life thanks to a generous grant from the Tripi Foundation and a partnership with national publisher Voyage Comics, an organization that has created graphic novels for other sainthood candidates such as Carlo Acutis, Patrick Peyton, and Rose Hawthorne.

“Bringing Father Baker’s story to life was easy. He was a humble man of such compassion, spirituality and vision. And he accomplished so much for so many needy people. The more we learned, the more moved our team was by him,” says Voyage owner/publisher, Philip Koslowski. “To put the story out there for young people to discover was a joy for us.”

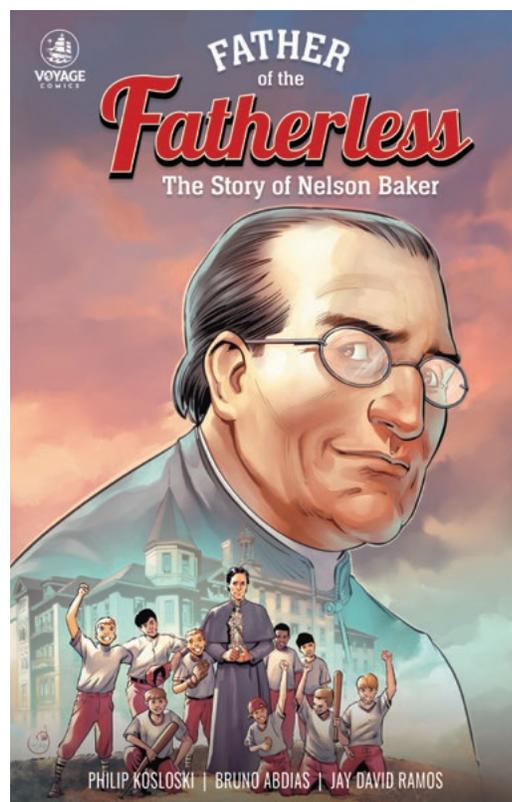
The 32-page comic book—packed full of energy and gorgeous artwork—is entitled “Father of the Fatherless” and includes a few of the many highlights from Father Baker’s life of 94 years. Among them: his service in the Civil War, the pilgrimage to Europe that changed his life, his appointment as superintendent of the Limestone Hill Institutions, the founding of the Infant Home, and the building of OLV Basilica.

“Having this incredible story told in such a relevant way, through a comic book, allows young people to not only learn about Father Baker, but to engage with him and, possibly, even relate to him,” says Msgr. David LiPuma, pastor/rector of OLV National Shrine & Basilica and president of OLV Institutions. “We’ve taken him out of black-and-white photos and put him in front of kids in a colorful, action-packed way. It’s exciting!”

More than 3,300 books have already been distributed to Catholic students throughout the Diocese of Buffalo at no cost to their schools.



*If you'd like to order a copy of "Father of the Fatherless" yourself, head over to [voyagecomics.com](http://voyagecomics.com) or scan this code with your smartphone. If you'd like 10+ copies for a church youth group or parish, contact us at (716) 828-9622.*



# 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.

## Advent and Christmas Seasons 2024-25

### Nativity Set Exhibit

Dozens of Nativity sets from around the world, part of Father Roy Herberger's unique collection, will be on display in the lower level of the Basilica.

### Stained-Glass Exhibit

Ever want to see some of the Basilica's 200+ stained-glass windows up close? Replicas of some of these works of art will be on exhibit in the Father Baker Museum and in the Shrine's lower level throughout Advent.

December

1

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

The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus returns to the Basilica for its annual presentation of Handel's *Messiah*. Ticket details will be forthcoming.

December

15

### Festival of Lessons & Carols | 7 p.m.

Join us for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, a joyous marriage of scripture and song, in the Basilica.

January

4

### Kids Night Under the Dome | 5:30 p.m.

Calling all kids and families ... join us for a FREE family-friendly evening of carols, activities and snacks "under the dome."

For information on these events, visit our website, [OLVBasilica100.org](http://OLVBasilica100.org), or call (716) 828-9444.