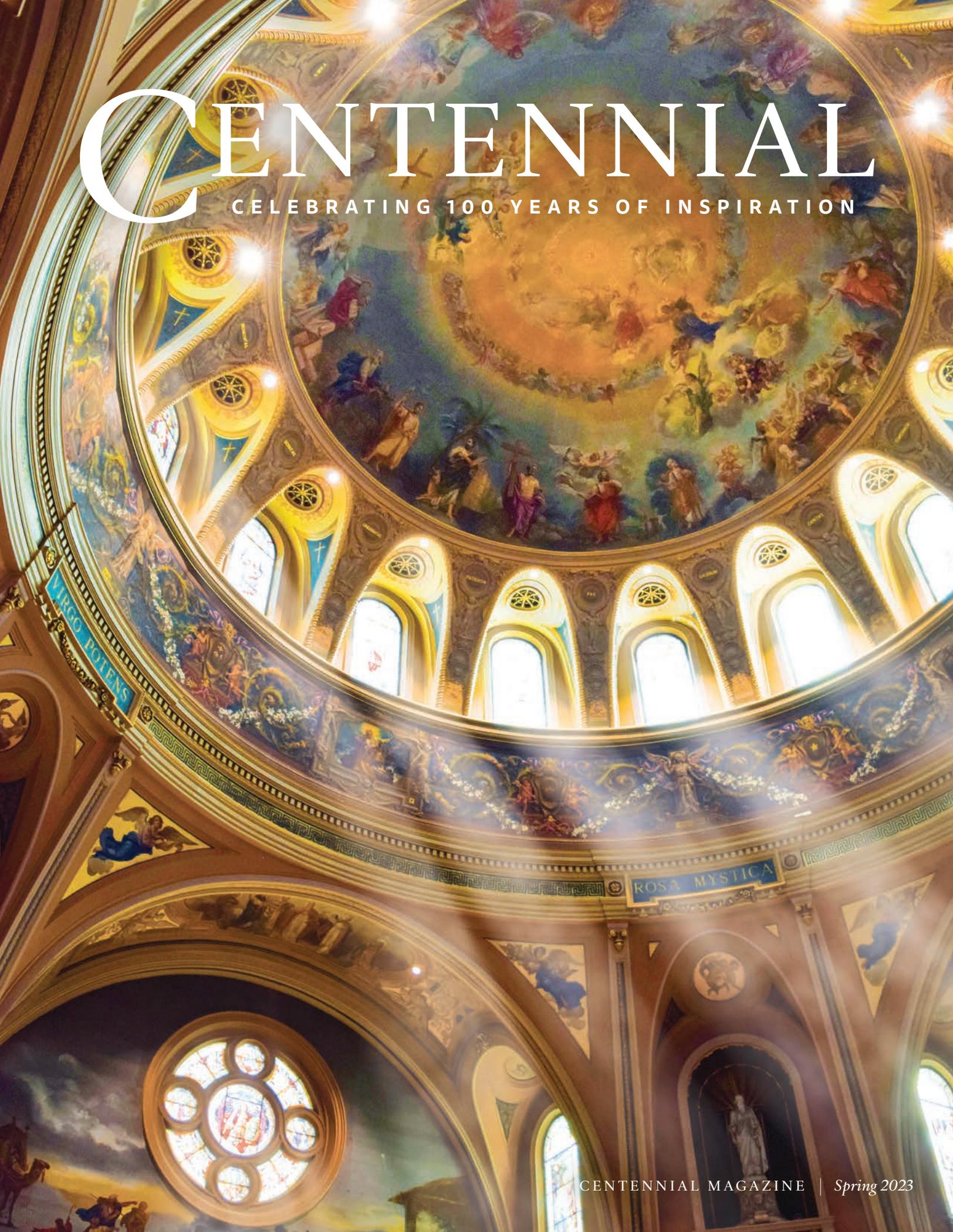
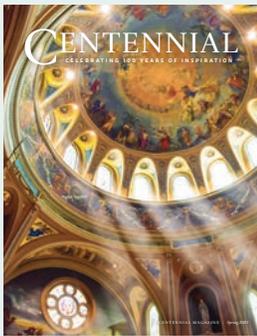


CENTENNIAL

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF INSPIRATION





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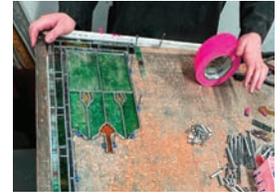


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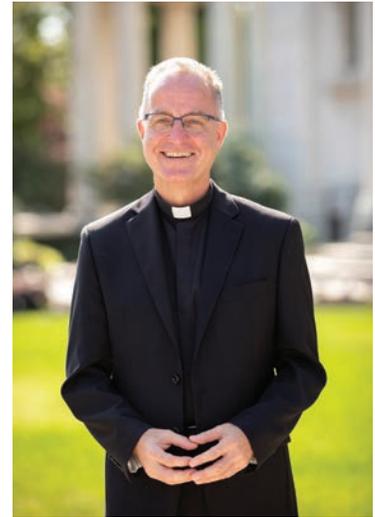
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About the Cover: Portrayed here is an interior view of light streaming through the windows surrounding the dome of the Basilica (which are currently undergoing a thorough restoration). It illustrates the feeling of rebirth we have during the spring season as we reflect on Jesus' resurrection.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Often, I find myself reading the foreword of Father Baker's authoritative biography, "Father of the Fatherless," and I'm routinely drawn to the second paragraph that was written by the Most Rev. Edward U. Kmiec, DD, the 13th Bishop of Buffalo.

Father Baker was truly a modern-day saint, one whose life shows us that, with faith, one can accomplish tremendous things. It is my sincere hope, as word spreads about Father Baker, that he will inspire others to do great things for God's kingdom and for the poor and needy around them.



I'm singularly blessed in my life as Pastor and Rector of OLV National Shrine & Basilica—and President of the OLV Institutions—to see Bishop Kmiec's words come to life each and every day. I get a front row seat to experience how Father Baker's faith and virtuous life—one devoted to the Blessed Mother—continues to inspire and make an indelible impact on the Western New York community and the world.

I see Father Baker's influence in those whose lives are being changed through the programs at OLV Human Services. Whether it is clients receiving vocational and job-readiness training at Mazurek's Bakery or the WAY Coffee Café, or individuals learning life-changing coping skills through OLV's Intensive Treatment Program, I see lives that are nurtured and transformed for the better.

I experience the profound impact of Father Baker's "crown jewel"—OLV National Shrine & Basilica—during my daily interactions with parishioners, guests, and pilgrims. Whether it is talking with someone sitting quietly in the pews, or seeing hope in the eyes of people of all ages as we celebrate Mass as a faith community, I see Father Baker's influence in the most precious ways.

Of all the things I see during visits with kids at one of our schools, or the experiences I share with donors across the country through the fundraising efforts of OLV Charities, I feel Father Baker's presence and am changed because I know we are carrying on our saintly founder's ministries.

Thank you for your trust. Thank you for enabling us to do what we do. And thank you for believing that one man's faith continues to make a difference. May Father Baker intercede for you, may Our Lady of Victory protect you, and may Almighty God bless you and your loved ones.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

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

CEO'S MESSAGE

This past March 13th, the Catholic Church marked the 10th anniversary of the election of Argentine Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio to the papacy.

He was the first of 266 successors to St. Peter to choose the name Francis, after St. Francis of Assisi. We're told that during the conclave, just before his apparent election, a fellow cardinal leaned over and whispered, "Don't forget the poor."

Other themes would soon emerge, signaling the priorities of the new Pope. He would speak of the Church as a "field hospital"—a Church that must go out to the peripheries to bring God's mercy and healing wherever needed.

I'm reminded of other papal themes. One of Pope St. John Paul's earliest exhortations was, "Be not afraid." Pope Benedict XVI selected as his motto, "Cooperators of the truth." When asked why he chose this motto he replied,



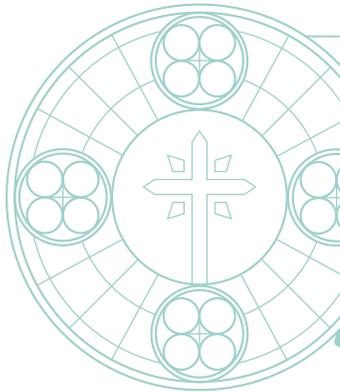
... because in today's world the theme of truth is often omitted ... and yet everything collapses if truth is missing.

Be not afraid. Truth. Field hospital. The connection of these themes to Father Baker, for me at least, is unmistakable. Faced with the enormous challenges in his own time, he decided not to be afraid, but to act. He was guided by truth, conviction, and an unshakeable confidence in his Blessed Mother. And his obvious vision for the Church and ministry was clearly as a field hospital, his "City of Charity."

The concerns and strains of our current age seem no less daunting than those confronted by Father Baker during his era more than a century ago. Today, we who are blessed to be a part of the OLV community and ministry remain inspired by our founder, the Venerable Nelson Baker. We reach out to today's peripheries—today's poor, lonely, marginalized, suffering, traumatized, the spiritually curious—and offer care for God's people with mercy, in love and in truth. All are welcome!

Sincerely,

David J. Kersten
Chief Executive Officer, OLV Charities



Dream JOB

For Brett Swiatek, owner of Swiatek Studios, handling the process of restoring the stained-glass windows at OLV National Shrine & Basilica is a dream come true. “Our family company is three generations old. And, since my grandfather’s time, it has been a goal of ours to work at the Basilica,” says Swiatek. “[The Shrine] has always been an inspiration to our community, an inspiration to our faith, and because of this, our work is of the utmost importance.”

For more than a year, he and his team have been diligently working to restore the windows that are nearly 100 years old. In the fall of 1923, the Buffalo-based artisan who was responsible for bringing Father Baker’s stained-glass vision to life, Otto F. Andrlle, wrote the following to the humble priest when asked to lend his talents to the project: “I would be pleased to work out any scheme for the windows you may desire.”

And, a century later, another local craftsman (Swiatek) draws on his admiration for Andrlle’s work. “To be a young artisan growing up in Buffalo and to hear that another local artist, Andrlle, achieved so much has always been an inspiration to me. I always looked up to him and admired his work.”

With all of the Basilica’s 120+ stained-glass windows showing varying levels of deterioration, the restoration process is well underway. The current phase includes work on all the windows in the basement level and those in the side chapels, the nave above the Stations of the Cross, and the vestibule. The restoration work is not limited to the glass itself, though, as many of the original steel frames are either worn down or have fallen apart completely.

Once those areas are taken care of, Swiatek will then proceed to the windows above eye level—the Shrine’s clerestory, transept, and bell tower. Stay tuned to the Basilica website or the next issue of *Centennial* magazine for updates.

*By John Pitts
Director of Communications*



Polishing the Crown JEWEL

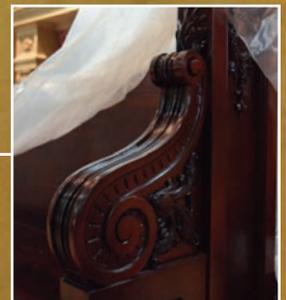
Renovation efforts are underway to get the Basilica's floor and pews back to the condition they were in when Father Baker first walked through the church 100 years ago.



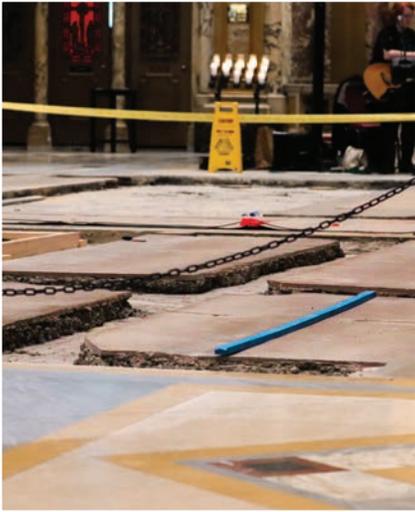
The Basilica pews are stripped of varnish and prepped for extensive sanding and refinishing at Kittinger's facility.



Associates from the renowned Kittinger Furniture Company, a local firm that has produced pieces for the White House, carefully remove the Basilica's pews.



The pews before and after being restored to their stunning, original finish.



Damaged sections of the floor are carved out and removed, paving the way for replacement marble tile to be installed.



New sections of shiny marble tile are carefully cut to size and installed.



The multi-colored marble flooring is grinded and buffed back to its original finish to create a beautiful shine for visitors.



The final refurbished floor looks brand new. You can actually see the lights and windows reflected in the glossy finish.



Eye of the STORM

An old adage goes like this: “smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.” A similar thought comes from Walt Disney who once said, “the flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest of all.”

Buffalo’s Blizzard of 2022, a “once-in-a-generation” winter storm and the city’s most catastrophic in recent memory with its 107 inches of snow, 80 mph wind gusts and negative 30-degree wind chills, tested every Western New Yorker. But few rose to the challenge as well as OLV Human Services’ (OLVHS) own Temere Burks. Like many Buffalonians used to harsh winter conditions, Temere went to work just as she had many times before on Friday morning, December 23. Little did she know that she would not leave until four days later!

Temere is a manager at what is known as the OLVHS Intensive Treatment Program (ITP). The young people (ages 12-18) in the residence are identified with a dual diagnosis, meaning they have autism along with another disorder. Due to their conditions, any change in routine can set the teens off, triggering aggressive behaviors.

Imagine, now, ALL routines being adjusted by the storm. The same staff members—stressed about their own families—every day, new activities, different meals. Seemingly, it was a recipe for disaster. To Temere the situation was just a test for herself and her team.

“For the kids, I was understanding and sympathetic that they were frustrated. They weren’t seeing the staff they usually see, they couldn’t go outside, couldn’t go on field trips, so I understood. I felt their frustration,” she remembers. “We tried to explain what was happening, but there’s only so much they could understand. They had never experienced a blizzard—I never witnessed a blizzard—so we all learned new things throughout the time!”

There were a few surprises along the way. In the early hours of the storm’s second day on December 24, a fire alarm went

off. For young people with sensory issues, it was a crisis event. Making matters worse, the storm had made streets impassable, meaning that Temere, her colleagues, and the residents had to stand outside in the bitter cold waiting for a fire truck to arrive. Eventually, after receiving the “all clear,” everyone settled down and went back to sleep.

As we all know, Christmas is a magical time for young people.

It was no different on day three of the storm, Christmas morning. Because of generous donors to OLV Charities, many gifts were under the tree for the residents. Temere describes the scene best: “the smiles on their faces were priceless. Excitement filled the air, and it became an amazing day!” For at least a little while, the blizzard was just a memory.

While the winds and snow died down over the next few days, the clean-up was slow and travel bans remained in place. Many neighborhoods were without power and plow drivers from across the region descended on the city to help free people from their homes. Throughout,

the teens at the ITP residence were engaged in a wide range of activities. As can be expected, the staff had to get creative. Playing board games, running through hand-made obstacle courses, and listening to calming music were added to the schedule to pass the time.

Reflecting on the adversity today, like any good leader, Temere is quick to highlight the efforts of her team. “They were just amazing! Now, when we talk about the storm, we kind of laugh about it. We built a spirit of community, and I would not have wanted to have anyone else with me during that experience.”

For more information on ITP—or any of the other life-saving programs at OLV Human Services—go to OLVHS.org.

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf





Celebrating and Supporting MOTHERS

“You’re going to be a mother.” I will never forget hearing those words for the very first time. Immediately, I experienced a mixture of excitement, optimism, and worry. The anxiety came from the unknown. I’d never been a mother before, how do I know I’d be good at it? What if I’m not? So many thoughts ran through my head during those nine months, but one thing was for certain: I had a strong support network that would provide me with all the help, guidance, and support I could possibly need. Sadly, not everyone is that fortunate.

Can you imagine learning that you’re pregnant and, instead of joy and excitement, fear overwhelms your thoughts? Such feelings could come from a variety of circumstances such as:

- Lack of meaningful and consistent support
- Concerns about juggling a career and being a mother
- Worries about the financial implications

Bringing a new life into this world should be one of the most beautiful experiences a woman has in her lifetime. Acknowledging that this is not the case for every woman allows us to think about how we can assist those who are struggling to feel happy and hopeful. At OLV Human Services, we encounter young women who desperately want to bring life into the world but need significant help to do so. I am proud to say we meet those challenges head on and work to create the best possible outcome for all involved.

By connecting future mothers with prenatal care, we ensure they, and their babies, are nurtured in ways that are critical to their future. We provide counseling to assist with the

physical and emotional changes that accompany pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing. By identifying and connecting them to services needed for meeting the basic needs of growing families (financial, medical, educational, etc.), we help set the stage for continued health and wellness. And access to spiritual counseling is offered and frequently embraced.

As Mother’s Day approaches, let us celebrate those women in our lives who served in that role, directly or indirectly. Let us also honor those who made the choice to become a mother despite the challenges they faced, and commend them on their courage, commitment, and dedication to nurturing a new life to become all they can be!

*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.

A New DAY

“We will strive to give these children every advantage so they will be able to earn their own living and be a credit to our holy faith.”



One of Father Baker’s most famous quotes, this refers to his steadfast commitment to ensuring the boys in his care became well-rounded, contributing members of society. At the “City of Charity,” youth were not only provided with an education, but were offered the chance to participate in sports, play in bands and orchestras, and learn a trade.

In that spirit, today, OLV Human Services (OLVHS) follows in these footsteps, offering the at-risk young people who receive care the highest quality clinical, recreational, educational, and vocational programming.

Very soon, our new Recreational, Educational and Vocational Unification Project Center (REV UP), will be operational and packed with busy children and teens! This special place will provide dedicated areas for activities including a dance/yoga studio, computer/writing workshop, a kitchen, arts and crafts maker space, and a gymnasium with attached weight and exercise rooms. It is expected that the center will be used daily, providing more than 25,000 activity touch points!

“The time period kids typically spend with us at OLVHS are really developmental years. During their teens, they get to learn a lot about themselves, what their interests are, and really discover what type of person they are going to be. Opportunities like those provided by the REV UP Center will help them grow and heal,” says Marga McMahon, Director of Transition Services.

As of the writing of this piece, construction had been completed and staff members were moving into the office space. In addition, equipment was being unpacked and teens were already using the gymnasium.

Funding for the project was provided through the generosity of the OLV community, including a seed gift from the Moore for Kids Foundation, a cornerstone grant of \$500,000 from the John R. Oishei Foundation, and grants from Foundation 214 and the James H. Cummings Foundation.



CAMP TURNER

A Ministry of OLV Charities



100 YEARS OF MEMORIES

This year will be a special one for campers, staff members and alumni as Camp Turner celebrates its Centennial on July 13 through 16.



countless young people have made life-long friends and summer memories within its friendly confines.

Camp Turner offers boys and girls (ages 7-16) a safe, inclusive environment and a fun, faith-filled summer of discovery. Activities include horseback riding, archery, hiking, arts and crafts, campfires, beach trips, and more.

And while “fun” is an important part of the summer camp experience for most youngsters, personal growth is a much-appreciated byproduct. The camp’s caring counselors and staff members are committed to building an atmosphere that encourages the

development of personal skills such as: cooperation, teamwork, and respect of self, others, and nature.

Calling All Alums!

In anticipation of the upcoming Centennial, activities are being planned for current and former staff members, campers, and their families.

- On Thursday, July 13, adult (21+) alums will meet up at 5 p.m. to share memories and stories at Mr. Goodbar on Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo.
- Things really get going on Saturday, July 15, with camp activities beginning at 1 p.m., a special Mass featuring the Diocese of Buffalo’s Bishop Michael Fisher at 4 p.m., dinner, and a campfire.
- Want to enjoy the whole weekend with friends or family? Cabin rentals are available for up to 10 people between Friday, July 14 and Sunday, July 16.

For all the latest information, be sure to follow Camp Turner on social media. For more details or to sign up to attend, go to CampTurner.com/events or scan the code with your smartphone. Have a question? Contact Scott Weigley at (716) 828-9657 or sweigley@olvcharities.org.



Scan the QR code or visit CampTurner.com/events for more info.

CENTENNIAL *happenings*



Winter 2022



November 3: Friends of Father Baker Reception

The 42nd Annual Friends of Father Baker Reception was a huge hit, featuring a new venue (Hotel @ Lafayette in Buffalo), a lively crowd of 300+ guests and a notable purpose—honoring the founders of the BISON fund, student Ryan Harrington, and Gerard Place CEO David Zapfel for their contributions to our community.



November 13: Centennial Organ Recital Series

On November 13, the Basilica played host to talented organist Garrett Martin who appeared in the recital series' final performance of the year.



November 26 - January 6: Nativity Set Exhibit

More than 150 Nativity sets from around the world—part of the St. Francis Nativity Museum's extensive collection—were on display within the Basilica throughout Advent. Hundreds of visitors delighted in viewing the collection that featured hand-crafted sets made of all sorts of materials.

CENTENNIAL *happenings*



Winter 2022 - 2023



December 4: Handel's Messiah
The incredible Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus returned to OLV Basilica for its annual, not-to-be-missed presentation of Handel's *Messiah*. A standing-room-only crowd of 1,000+ attendees were treated to a wondrous evening of Classical music.



December 11: Festival of Lessons & Carols
A delightful tradition returned in December as a large crowd came to the Basilica to celebrate the Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols. This unique service—a marriage of seasonal Scripture readings and song—dates back to the 19th century.



March 12: Kindred
We were fortunate to once again host Kindred in March, just in time for St. Patrick's Day! The duo provided Celtic music touches for the masses in honor of the Irish Saint, whose altar pays tribute to St. Patrick's Church, which was located where the Basilica stands now.



FULL CIRCLE

An annual tradition, the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus' performance of Handel's "Messiah" at OLV National Shrine & Basilica is one of the year's highlights. Those who attended the most recent concert on December 4, 2022 would know how special it is. What they may not know, however, is that one of the soloists that night was an opera singer from a nearby suburb, Cheektowaga, NY.

He is Valerian Ruminski, a bass baritone, who has performed with opera companies both nationally and internationally. He is also the founder and general director of Nickel City Opera in Buffalo.

His recent performance at OLV Basilica allowed him to go back to his roots. Valerian was born at the Our Lady of Victory Infant Home and adopted from there. His adopted parents saw the promise in him at a young age and worked to nurture his musical career. He learned how to play the keyboard early in life and then joined the men and boys' choir of St. Paul's Cathedral in Buffalo. He recalls of the experience: "that was the foundation of my classical training."

While Valerian knew he had been adopted, he didn't know the identities of his biological parents. His adopted father

died when he was 10 and his adopted mother died in 2012. It was after her death that he started to search for his biological parents. He sought answers in a DNA test with no results. Then, one day, he received a phone call from an uncle who had been contacted by a descendant of his adopted grandmother. The uncle connected Valerian with that particular man.

"He was helping to write a family tree for a friend and felt there could be a connection, so he requested photos. When I told him I was looking for my biological parents, he said he would help," recalls Valerian. "It was through DNA connections and the pictures that my biological parents were found. The man thought to be my father had been searching for his son for 20 years and had uploaded his DNA on a website. The results confirmed he was my father, and he identified a woman in the picture as my mother!"

The very next day, he reached out to his father and the pair talked for about three hours. "It was an emotional experience," Valerian says. "He told me that he and my mother had dated while in high school and gone to the prom together and continued dating each other after graduating. I was a happy accident. My mother gave birth to me at OLV Infant Home. Because of their youth and

circumstances, they decided the best thing for me was to give me up for adoption. Hearing the story, I felt they did the best they could for me.”

What followed was a string of attempts to reach out to his mother. Valerian sent her pictures, articles, and interviews about him throughout his career, and even one of his CDs. Eventually, she sent him a text message. It wasn't too long after that he met her and her family. Valerian is happy to report that, these days, the two text with each other nearly every day.

His mother attended the December concert at OLV, a moment that Valerian describes as bittersweet. “I was very happy she was there to hear me sing, but I wish she could have heard my debuts at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Carnegie Hall. Perhaps that will still happen,” he says. “Being back at OLV took me full circle, but finding my parents is my crown jewel!”

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf



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

Maryland resident Katie Forbrich reflects on acceptance and love

On a recent milestone birthday, Katie Forbrich found herself thinking about her earliest days. Like so many, she and her older brother had been adopted out of OLV Infant Home. And, like so many, her thoughts never seemed to have left the “City of Charity” completely, no matter where life took her.

“It is with gratitude that I think of my birth mom finding her way to ‘Father Baker’s’ where she found acceptance, care, and love. My (adopted) mom and dad also found their way there and, by God’s grace, I was given my own home filled with acceptance, care, and love,” she says.

After getting married in 1972, Katie and her husband, Dick, moved away from Western New York and started a family of their own. They didn’t make the trip back to OLV until about 10 years ago, joining her brother for what was a moving experience.

“I recall my brother and I just standing outside the Infant Home building, sharing stories of what we imagined might have happened inside,” she recalls with a smile. “We discovered the Father Baker Museum in the Basilica and it took our breath away for so many reasons. I was struck most by the image

of Father Baker surrounded by babies and toddlers, all dressed in white, bows in the girls’ hair. We were struck by the idea that this was not an institution, rather it was a home, one led by a caring and loving father.”



Now, Katie, a resident of Germantown, MD, always makes a point of returning to OLV whenever she’s in town. “My homecomings always include a visit. Here, I am welcomed by dear friends who are eager to share their joy of continuing Father Baker’s legacy, a legacy of offering a helping hand to those in need. And for that, I am ever so grateful!”



Committed to Our Mission ... AND EACH OTHER

A loving couple leaves a lasting legacy

For most of her life, Christine Balkheimer was a devoted benefactor to Our Lady of Victory. A Lancaster, NY native, her deep Catholic faith and belief in the work at “Father Baker’s” inspired Christine and her husband, Peter, to provide annual gifts to the organization. As time passed, their giving increased and eventually took the form of stock transfers and a charitable trust.

As a young woman, Christine became a Carmelite novice and learned of Father Baker’s involvement with that order and his work with vulnerable children and orphans. On regular visits to their home, OLV team members learned of her desire to help the children and families in the care of OLV Human Services and to ensure the upkeep of OLV National Shrine & Basilica.

Peter and Christine met in New York City. They married later in life and had no children. Eventually, they settled in Hampton Bays, NY, and enjoyed their retirement looking out over the bay from their hillside home. Behind their residence, they owned a 13-acre parcel of undeveloped land that was kept for deer and other wildlife.

After a few years of declining health, Christine passed away in 2017 at the age of 84. Peter continued to honor her devotion to OLV’s mission with continued annual gifts. Not long after, in 2019, Peter passed away. Their devotion to Father Baker’s “City of Charity” did not end there, though.



The town of South Hampton has since purchased the woods behind the Balkheimers’ residence and it not only continues to offer a sanctuary for wildlife, but now provides an extension of the community’s hiking trails. The funds from the purchase of the property continue to help OLV provide programs and services for more than 12,000 children and families each year; and support restoration efforts at OLV Basilica. In gratitude, their names have been engraved in side-by-side pavers located at the candle shrine garden, across the street from the Basilica.

We are forever grateful for this dedicated couple and their lasting legacy. God bless you, Christine and Peter!

*By Eileen Hudson, CFRE
Chief Advancement Officer, OLV Charities*

If you are intending to leave a lasting legacy on the OLV Organizations, please provide your estate attorney and/or your financial institution with our official name and tax information:

***Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity;
dba OLV Charities
780 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY 14218***

***Scan the QR code or visit
OLVLegacyGifts.org for
more information.***





Podcasts

BAKER



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topics, OLV has a podcast for you!

 **OLV Charities**
A Father Baker Legacy



Scan the QR code or go to
[OLVCharities.org/podcasts](https://www.olvcharities.org/podcasts)
to listen!



FEAST DAYS

{ The bridge between us and the saints in heaven }

For centuries, Catholics have followed feast days and even honored these occasions with rituals, both personal and public. Yet many aren't aware of what feast days are and why they are recognized.

Pope Pius V first set the universal calendar in 1568. It was developed around Easter and included seasons that begin with Advent. Over the centuries, the Church has added feast days, occasions to celebrate important events in the life of Christ and the lives of saints.

Feast days serve a purpose not only to bring order and structure to the liturgical year, but to align with said seasons. Celebrating special feast days can help Catholics bring liturgical themes and values to life for all, making them more understandable and accessible. In this way, these traditions build and, thus, strengthen the church.

Depending on the saint, Catholics mark feast days with a celebration, dinner, or a pilgrimage to a significant holy place for prayer. Observing a family member's feast day can also be an important way to celebrate. Recognizing a feast day is a way for active members of the church to ask saints to pray,

and set examples of virtue and love, so that believers may follow in their footsteps.

JULY 25: ST. CHRISTOPHER

Saint Christopher is known as the patron saint of travelers (depicted in the statue above). His feast day is celebrated on July 25 in the West and May 9 in the East. His story is an interesting one. A large man, Reprobus, as he was named, served others by helping them cross a nearby river. One day, a child approached and asked for safe passage. As Reprobus carried him through the waters, the boy grew heavier and heavier. When the man asked why he was so heavy, the child revealed that he was Jesus Christ and that he was heavy with the weight of the world's sins. When the pair reached safety, Christ baptized Reprobus and gave him his Christian name, Christopher, which means "Christ-bearer."

He spent the remainder of his life in service to the early church and was, eventually, martyred for doing so. While there is not a well-known celebratory tradition surrounding St. Christopher's feast day, he became known as the patron saint of motorists in the 20th century.

The number of canonized saints is far greater than the number of days in a calendar year, so two or more saints often share the same feast day. Because of overlap, or in cases where there is no agreement on a date of death, other days are sometimes chosen, such as the day the saint was canonized. And some saints' feasts are only celebrated in his or her particular town or country, or only by one religious order.

FEB 22: ST. ISABELLE OF FRANCE

A saint honored by the Franciscans is St. Isabelle of France, a princess and sister to French King St. Louis IX. Royal, wealthy, and intelligent, she founded the nunnery of Longchamp, located west of Paris. As a child, she became devout under the guidance of the Franciscans. Never wanting to be married, Isabelle consecrated her entire life to God. She refused to become a nun or to lead the abbey, and, in doing so, was allowed to retain her wealth and resources to support the church and give to the poor. She died on February 23, 1270. After nine days, her body was exhumed, and, according to the reports, it showed no signs of decay. Many miracles are said to have been reported in her name.

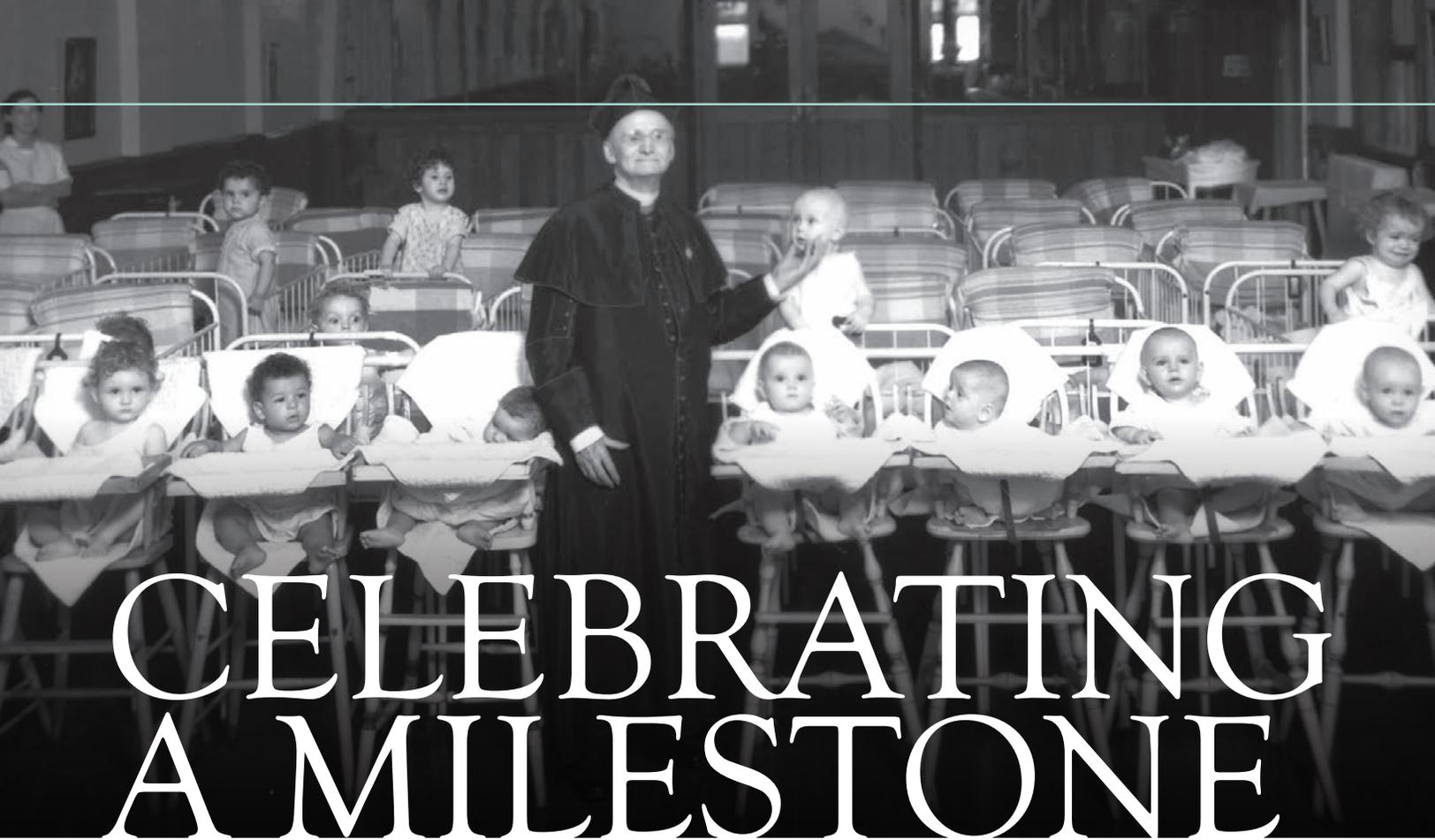
Other notable feast days include the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Presentation, and the Ascension. The Apostles, the Evangelists, St. Mary Magdalene, and the Archangels also have their own feasts.

Do you observe feast days in your family? Do you gather for a St. Joseph's dinner or, perhaps, have your own special St. Patrick's Day traditions? If you do, you are doing that which has always been the intention. You are bringing saints, holy examples for us all, to life!

By Michelle Blackley Glynn



Statue of St. Isabelle at the Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois church in Paris, France



CELEBRATING A MILESTONE

{ *OLV Infant Home turns 115 this year.* }

In the early 1900s, unmarried, pregnant women were shunned by society. As a result, these desperate women often did the unthinkable, and took tragic steps to cover pregnancies out of wedlock.

Reading an account in the local newspaper at this time, Father Nelson Baker became aware that the remains of hundreds of little ones were found in different stages of decay in the Erie Canal. He was horrified by not only the callous destruction of innocent lives but “by the fact that he lived in a world in which women would be driven to such extremes.” Heartbroken, Baker knew that God’s precious little ones needed saving and their distraught, socially stigmatized, unwed mothers needed protection.

Always a man of action, he got to work. Instead of hardening his heart, he quickly initiated plans for a facility to be built adjacent to the Orphanage and the Protectors buildings in his “City of Charity.” He reached out to benefactors throughout the country in search of funding and they did not fail him. Construction of a facility for unwed mothers and their babies

began in 1906 and was formally dedicated as OLV Infant Home two years later.

One of the first things Father Baker did was to establish the Home’s open-door policy. Boniface Hanley, a local writer, described it as one of its most memorable features:

“There was a small bassinet, complete with pillow and blankets, that stood in the hall way just inside the unlocked outside door. Anyone could quietly open the door and leave a baby in the bassinet without judgement. No questions were asked, and no forms to complete.”

Father Baker did not act just to save infants’ lives, he also worked to save the lives and reputations of the mothers as well. He wrote with passion: “Our motive has been, regardless of experience, to protect the unfortunate young mother and her family, and to save the life of her child.”

The Sisters of St. Joseph were a huge part of life at the Home. They were the backbone of the day-to-day operations, and, along with dedicated lay personnel (including nurses), provided not only physical and emotional care but much love to the babies and their mothers. Carrie Fuhrmann, one of the nurses who worked at the Infant Home for 32 years, said of the young women seeking sanctuary there: “they were like family to us. By offering them compassionate care, I think we made a difference in their lives—and fulfilled the legacy of Father Baker.”

The humble priest’s personal love for the Home was evident by what became known as one of his most cherished nightly rituals. Each day, after he finished his administrative work, it is said that he would go to the nursery and visit with the babies. As he completed his rounds, he would bless the little ones and nurses for the night.

If a mother decided it was best to give her baby up for adoption, extraordinary efforts were made to have the little one placed in a stable and caring family. Lasting for years, this program touched the lives of countless thousands of individuals, making OLV Infant Home a nationwide hub for loving families throughout the U.S.

For that reason, it is believed by many—in a life full of so many accomplishments—that the establishment of the OLV Infant Home was his most impactful work. In the official biography, *Father of the Fatherless*, Rev. Richard Gribble, CSC, wrote: “Father Baker’s ministry to infants and their mothers, while of great significance and joy to him personally, has been seen historically as his greatest contribution.”

Like many of the remnants of Father Baker’s “City of Charity,” the mission of the Infant Home and its life-saving programs for children and families continues. Headquartered in the same building at 790 Ridge Road, OLV Human Services has grown to become one of the region’s largest non-profit organizations and a recognized leader in behavioral health services.

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf





FATHER BAKER NEEDS YOU!

Father Baker's Cause for Canonization has been an ongoing effort since 1987, when then-Bishop Edward Head formally submitted him as a candidate for sainthood. That year, on October 7—the Feast Day of Our Lady of Victory—the Vatican bestowed upon the humble priest the title “Servant of God,” starting him off on the road to sainthood.

Years later, Father Baker's Cause would hit another milestone. A collection of writings summarizing his life and virtues called the *Positio* was submitted to the Vatican. On January 14, 2011—with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI—Father Baker was granted the title “Venerable.” A Mass was held in OLV National Shrine & Basilica that March to celebrate the momentous occasion.

The next step, at which he would earn the title of “Blessed,” hinges on evidence of the intercessory power of the Venerable Servant of God. More plainly put, a miracle. And, while miracles come in all shapes and sizes, these days most miracles considered by the authorities in Rome are medical in nature.

That's tricky—and getting trickier every day as technology advances.

Don't be discouraged by the daunting requirements and the lengthy timeline. Why? Because **you** have the power to make a difference. We ask that you incorporate Father Baker into your daily prayers. Say his prayer for canonization or share your hope with God that he be canonized one day. If you have a need, pray for his intercession. And, of course, if you have a story or first-hand knowledge of a potential miracle in his name, please let us know.



Together, we can help Father Baker complete this long journey that began back in 1987. To report a miraculous claim, call (716) 828-9444. For more information on the Cause and resources to help you pray, visit FatherBaker.org or scan the qr code with your smartphone.

By Jane Rose, Social & New Media Coordinator

Happy RETIREMENT

In late April, the OLV family will say goodbye to one of its most familiar faces when Melinda Buckley, Chief Financial Officer at OLV Charities (OLVC), will retire after a 40+ year career. An innovative and compassionate leader, Melinda arrived at the OLV campus in October 2011, after stops at various non-profit organizations in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Olean, NY, and Rochester, NY.

During her time at OLVC, Melinda spearheaded several key initiatives:

- She overhauled the budget process, adding—among other changes—monthly and quarterly financial review meetings with senior leaders, the CEO, and board members.
- She restructured the organization's financial statements to provide greater transparency.
- She updated OLV's investment strategies to reflect modern best practices.
- She raised the expectations and requirements of all the members of the finance team.

The first one to arrive in the parking lot in the morning (at 6:30 a.m. or earlier), Melinda leads by example, routinely working 11 or 12-hour days.

And, when she is not buried in spreadsheets and financial reports, she can be found in the gardens surrounding OLV National Shrine & Basilica. A master gardener, Melinda generously donates her time and talents to make the grounds look beautiful.



“Melinda Buckley is a force of nature. Since joining OLV more than 10 years ago, she has led the way in transforming our organization,” says David Kersten, OLVC CEO. “She represents a rare blend of professionalism, thorough competency in her field and passion for OLV’s mission. We have truly been blessed to be the beneficiary of such an outstanding leader, associate, and human being.”

Please join us in celebrating the accomplishments of our own Melinda Buckley! She will be missed.



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.

May
20

Paint Out! | Starting at 8:30 a.m.

Join us for a day of outdoor painting at OLV National Shrine & Basilica. Works of art will be exhibited and judged. If needed, the rain date will be June 21. For details, contact Bernice Smith at bms0916@aol.com.

May
21

St. John Paul II Schola Cantorum | 3 p.m.

This well-known local a cappella choir group brings its traditional sound to OLV Basilica on May 21 for a concert at 3 p.m.

June
27

Polish Cantabile Children's Choir | 7 p.m.

One of the top ensembles of its kind in the world, the Polish Cantabile Children's Choir will be in Buffalo and perform at OLV Basilica on June 27 at 7 p.m.

July
15

Camp Turner Centennial Celebration | 1 p.m.

A day 100 years in the making, as Camp Turner celebrates its own centennial. The day will feature camp activities for the whole family. For details, check out CampTurner.com/events.

July
30

World Youth Day: Buffalo | 2 p.m.

The Diocese of Buffalo's own World Youth Day celebration will be hosted by OLV and bring together young Catholics for an afternoon of keynote speakers, live music, Mass, food trucks, and yard games.

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