

THE
VOICE
OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY

FALL 2018



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Baker Boys



The cherished gift of brotherhood was known to those called “Baker Boys,” a term used to describe men who grew up on the OLV campus during Father Nelson Baker’s tenure at the Homes (1882-1936).

Father Baker’s institutions — including an orphanage, a protectory (for teens “inclined to truancy and willfulness”) and a Working Boys’ Home — became a destination for countless youth-in-need from just about everywhere. In 1925, for example, residents came from 37 different states and three Canadian provinces. In many cases, youngsters were placed on a train alone with a tag pinned to their coats reading: “To Father Baker’s, Lackawanna, N.Y.”

A Spirit of Brotherhood

Regardless of age, no one was turned away. Robert Ward, a “Baker Boy” himself said, “I grew up with lots of love at Father Baker’s. I had the best up-bringing a boy could have!”

Father Baker believed in the innate goodness of all of the boys in his care. His rapport with them has been described by many as a true “father-son relationship.” And for many of those in his care, he was the only father they knew.





Described as a “joyful gathering of long-lost brothers,” this photograph was taken at the “Baker Boy” Reunion held in 1986.

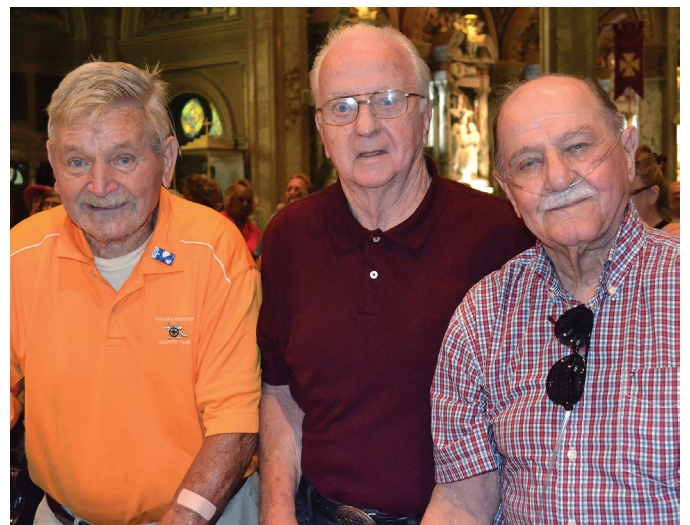
Besides providing the boys with a good education and training in various trades, Father Baker took time to interact with them. “Daddy Baker,” as he was known, formed sports teams, organized clubs and an orchestra, planned outings and numerous camping trips. And, through those experiences, the boys forged a brotherhood.

“Father Baker just seemed to know what it would take to make a boy happy,” said “Baker Boy” Frank Phelps.

Despite their differences, the boys who grew up at OLV remained close throughout their long lives. In fact, “Baker Boy” reunions took place regularly, with the last occurring in 2005 on the occasion of the organization’s 150th anniversary. These festive gatherings always included much laughter, many stories, and, of course, warm recollections of the man who changed their lives forever, Father Baker.

“This place, ‘Father Baker’s,’ was the only home I ever knew. I love it with my whole heart,” said John Phillips, one of the last Western New York-based “Baker Boys,” who died on May 13, 2018, at the age of 95.

Like many of his “brothers,” John often spoke of the loving care he received and the closeness of the “Baker Boys.” And now, reunited with Father Baker and many of these special men, John is celebrating!



Each year, “Baker Boys” would gather to assist with the Father Baker Day Mass in July. Pictured here, from the 2012 event, is John Phillips, Joe Kelley and Gerald Schenk.



Tapestry of Love

For generations, the Vukelic Family has weaved threads of gold into a tapestry of love for the fragile, vulnerable, neglected, and rejected children here at “Father Baker’s.” The family has been, and continues to be, loyal friends and supporters of the Homes of Charity. In fact, their relationship goes back to the time when our saintly founder, Father Baker, was overseeing the organization.

You see, Eugene Vukelic’s parents, Stephen and Katherine, ran a restaurant called the Phoenix Café on Simon Avenue near the OLV campus. Father Baker frequented the restaurant a couple times a month for its good Croatian cooking. While enjoying those tasty homemade meals, he often conversed with family members. It was during those conversations, that “the Padre of the Poor” received advice and a sense of warm fellowship from the Vukelics.

Gene and his siblings grew up in the shadow of Our Lady of Victory Basilica. At the age of six, he remembers coming home from school to hear the sad news that Father Baker had died. Gene remembers: “I’ll never forget the sadness in my father’s face, for he and Father Baker were quite close.”

So it’s no wonder that, as an adult, Gene continues the family tradition of supporting the OLV organizations’ work and mission. For more than 25 years, Gene and his wife, Carole, have been a

The Vukelic Family’s Friendship Spans Generations



part of Father Baker’s legacy of caring. He was an important sounding board to Msgr. Robert Wurtz, the third successor to Father Baker and a man who led the organization for many years. Both he and his wife served on the Baker Victory Services board of directors. In addition, Gene chaired and sponsored some of our fundraising events such as the Friends of Father Baker Reception. He is a strong supporter of Father Baker’s Cause for Canonization and generously



The Vukelics' connection with OLV goes back to the early days of the family's businesses & to warm chats with Father Baker!

gave to Our Lady of Victory's capital campaign program. And now, their children are also involved and committed to the tradition of giving!

When asked why he is so involved with "Father Baker's," Gene says: "There's something spiritual about the relationship. The mission is so compelling and real. Once you get involved, you experience the feeling, the sensitivities of reaching people and making them feel better physically, helping them think better, giving them confidence again, and helping them to grow to their potential."

Gene is Chairman of Try-It Distributing Co., Inc., a family owned and operated business in Lancaster, N.Y. The company is built on family values and the belief that community service is fundamental.

"I believe that the more you give, the more successful you are," he says. "When one looks at the Homes of Charity — the history, the business model, the value system — it is obvious that the money goes to helping people, advancing much-needed services, and maintaining the Basilica, a gem in the Lackawanna area."

"As a donor, I feel my family has an impact on the Homes of Charity through our financial support, our advice and assistance, and our networking by getting others involved in this great mission," says Gene. "In doing so, we've become part of the team!"

The cherished relationship with the Vukelic Family is a rich treasure for our organization...for which we are extremely grateful! For through their unwavering generosity and loving support, they make a profound difference in the lives of disabled children and adults, troubled youth and their families by helping them heal, rebuild their lives and giving them a hope-filled future.



Gene Vukelic (right) pictured with Msgr. Robert Wurtz, P.A., the third successor to Father Nelson Baker.



Welcome

Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity proudly welcomes David J. Kersten as Chief Executive Officer. David takes over for Rick Heist, who functioned as Executive Director of the Homes and served the Our Lady of Victory organizations for more than 44 years.

In his new role, David will be the public face of the organization and responsible for its fundraising efforts. He will also oversee a full range of strategic and operational activities for the Homes, which include, but are not limited to, support service growth and retention, financial oversight, and policy implementation.

Previously, David served as vice president of development for Catholic Health System. He also functioned as president of ParishPay, Inc., and as executive director of the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo.

“The Homes of Charity is thrilled to add such an esteemed member of the community to lead our ministry’s efforts,” said Tony Kubera, chair of the Homes of Charity Board of Directors. “David’s mission-driven

David Kersten named OLV Homes of Charity’s New CEO

focus will be instrumental in guiding the strategic direction of the organization for years to come. If Father Baker were still with us today, I’m confident he would be pleased with David’s appointment.”

David received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Niagara University, a Bachelor of Sacred Theology from Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas and Master of Ecumenical Studies from Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, and an MBA in Church Business

Administration from the Graduate Theological Foundation in South Bend, Indiana.

David is a member of the Association for Fundraising Professionals of WNY, the National Catholic Development Conference, the National Planned Giving Council, and the WNY Planned Giving Consortium. ***Welcome to the OLV Family!***

“ If Father Baker were still with us today, I’m confident he would be pleased with David’s appointment. ”

What's New?

Innovative Program Arrives on Campus

The human-services arm of the OLV organizations, Baker Victory Services (BVS), recently announced the opening of WNY's first Neurobehavioral Unit for dual-diagnosed adolescents. This highly intensive program serves children (12-17 years) with dual-diagnosed challenges such as autism and intellectual disabilities as well as behavioral health issues.

BVS will be collaborating with several local agencies. Says Dr. Michael Cummings, head of one of those groups: "We look forward to our new partnership to serve developmentally disabled children and their families. The intensive treatment program at BVS is the first step in the development of a true continuum of care for this vulnerable population."

BVN was AOK!

This year's Baker Victory Nite, held in May, featured a few new twists — a sit-down dinner format, electronic bidding, and a live auctioneer!

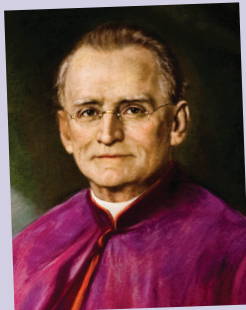
Thanks to friends like you, more than \$144,000 (gross) was raised to help advance the missions of OLV National Shrine and Basilica, the Homes of Charity, and Baker Victory Services. **THANK YOU!**

Be a "Friend"

You're invited to attend the 38th Annual Friends of Father Baker Reception on Friday, November 2nd, 2018, at 6:30 pm. at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo. The program will include a presentation of awards to:

Ronald Thaler (Service to Youth Award)
Douglas Coleman (Youth Service Award)

Get your tickets online at www.friendsoffatherbaker.org
or by calling (716) 828-9289.



Thank YOU!

Jake and Katie Schneider (*pictured below*), loyal friends of Our Lady of Victory, were two of a number of attendees at our annual Benefactors Mass. Held each May, the event pays tribute to the steadfast support of our donors from across the country. **Please join us in 2019!**



Father Baker Day Mass Honors Our Past

We commemorated the 82nd anniversary of the passing of Venerable Nelson Baker with the Father Baker Day Mass on Sunday, July 29th.

Prior to Mass, Msgr. Paul Burkard was joined by local elected officials and honored guests in processing into the Basilica. The festivities concluded with Tony Kubera, chair of the Homes of Charity's board of directors and Patrick O'Leary, chair of the BVS board of directors, placing a wreath at Father Baker's tomb.



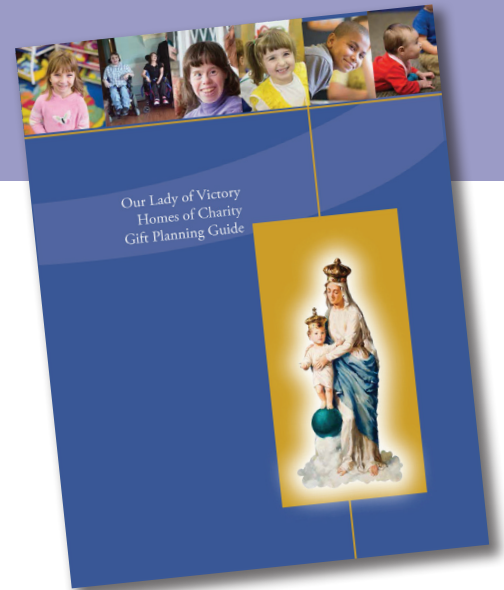
Gifting Ideas for Every Donor

"I really wish I could do something more!"

These words are often shared by our loyal donors who feel a great connection to our mission. You, yourself, may have the same feeling and desire to do "something more" for the Homes of Charity but don't have a full awareness of the types of gifts that can best assist our mission.

Our new *Gift Planning Guide* provides gift ideas for every donor. From stock donations, IRA fund transfers, property donations and more, this booklet is a helpful tool for those who would like to do more. Also included is a handy checklist of items to keep in mind when you begin your estate planning!

To secure your copy of the *Gift Planning Guide*, call our office today at (716) 828-9610. We'd also be happy to sit down with you to learn about your goals and help make your charitable wishes a reality.



Acting **Today** Will Make an Impact **Tomorrow**

When you fund a charitable gift annuity with the Homes of Charity, you establish a lifetime income for yourself or a loved one, while also providing for the thousands of children and families who come to us each year in search of healing. Gift annuities are available to anyone 60 years of age or older and may be initiated with a gift of \$5,000 or more of cash or appreciated securities*.



Contact Tom Lajewski in our Gift Planning Office at (716) 828-9610 for more information or a no-obligation, personalized proposal and illustration.

Age	75	80	85	90+
Rate	6.8%	7.8%	8.8%	10%

**Gift annuities with Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity are available to U.S. residents only and are not available in all states.*



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