

THE CATHOLIC ISLANDER

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A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF ST. THOMAS IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

BISHOP MURRY DEDICATES A NEW CHURCH ON ST. JOHN



After more than three years under construction, the new Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John was dedicated by Most Rev. George V. Murry, SJ, Bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, on December 11. During the ceremony, Bishop Murry anointed the altar, and then the concelebrating priests, Mgsr. Michael Kosak, Very Rev. Neil Scantlebury and Fr. Charles Crespo, anointed the walls of the church.

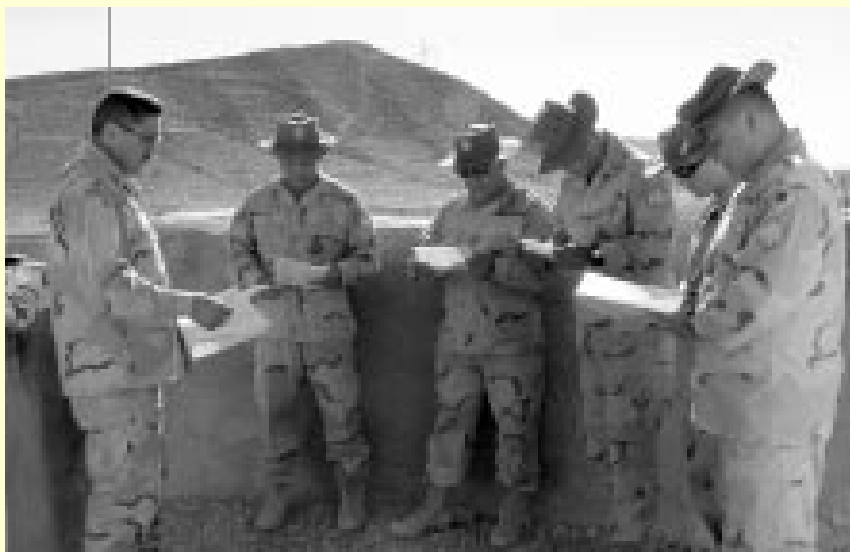
The construction and furnishing of the church continues, however, as the church awaits lighting fixtures, an emergency staircase for the balcony, a confessional, a baptismal font, pews, candle stands and other furnishings.

VIRGIN ISLANDS PRIEST SPENDS CHRISTMAS IN THE SINAI

On Christmas Day, Fr. Jose Herrera, former pastor of St. Joseph Church on St. Croix, led prayers with the soldiers from the California National Guard in the Sinai Peninsula.

Fr. Herrera is Force Chaplain for a multinational contingent that is stationed along the border between Israel and Egypt as part of a peace agreement between those two nations.

Most Rev. George V. Murry, SJ, Bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, through an invitation from the commanding general of the American forces, will visit Fr. Herrera and the troops in February.



In Sinai, Fr. Jose Herrera led troops in prayer on Christmas day. He is pictured to the left of the guardsmen.



Notes from the Bishop's Desk

*The Most Reverend George V. Murry, SJ
Bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands*

BISHOP MURRY'S PUBLIC SCHEDULE

Sunday, January 1, 7:30 and 10:00 a.m., Patronal Feast and Confirmation Mass, Holy Family Church, St. Thomas.

January 10-12, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Communications Committee and Education Committee meetings, Washington, DC.

Sunday, January 15, 8:00 a.m., Mass, St. Anne Chapel, St. Thomas.

Monday, January 16, 10:00 a.m., Ecumenical memorial for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Emancipation Garden, St. Thomas

January 17-19, Priests' Retreat, Casa Cristo Redentor, Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico.

Saturday, January 21, 6:00 p.m., Mass, Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral, St. Thomas.

Thursday, January 26, 10:00 a.m., Diocesan Property Committee meeting, Catholic Chancery, St. Thomas.

Saturday, January 28, 6:00 p.m., Mass, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, St. John.

Sunday, January 29, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m., Catholic Schools Week Mass, Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral, St. Thomas.

Sunday, January 29, 1:00 p.m., Luncheon honoring Bishop Elliott Thomas and Archbishop Sean O'Malley, OFM, Cap., Frenchman's Reef Hotel, St. Thomas.

Monday, January 30, 8:00 a.m., Visit, Ss. Peter and Paul School, St. Thomas.

Tuesday, January 31, Visit, three Catholic Schools, St. Croix.

NEW PRIEST ON ST. CROIX

Bishop George Murry, SJ, has assigned Fr. Slawek Romanowski, CSsR, as Parochial Vicar at Holy Cross Church on St. Croix, effective January 9. Fr. Romanowski is from Poland, and has spent the past year in New York learning English. He replaces Fr. Franklyn Cuffy, CSsR, who returned to Dominica on Christmas Day.

PRIESTS' RETREAT

Bishop George Murry, SJ, and all the priests serving the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands will take their annual retreat at Casa Cristo Redentor in Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico, on January 16-19. Msgr. Mark Caron, Chancellor of the Diocese of Portland in Maine, will be the retreat director.

PASTORAL PLAN FORTHCOMING

Bishop George Murry, SJ, will publish a pastoral letter in January that will present a five-year pastoral plan for the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. The pastoral plan will detail how the suggestions made at the Diocesan Convocation in 2004 will be implemented. The brochure will be available in all the parishes, schools and diocesan agencies.

CONFIRMATIONS

Bishop George Murry, SJ, will confirm six adults at Holy Family Church on St. Thomas on Sunday, January 1, at 10:00 a.m. The confirmations will be part of the parish's patronal celebration.

SCHOOL CHRISTMAS MASS



Bishop George Murry, SJ, received the offertory at Ss. Peter and Paul School's Christmas liturgy on December 13.

EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS POSTPONED

The first-ever Eucharistic Congress in the United States Virgin Islands, originally planned for May 25-27, has been postponed indefinitely.

“Crucial expenses in other areas, especially child protection services, have demanded priority in the present diocesan budget. Consequently, it would be best to postpone the Eucharistic Congress to a later date when we could do it well,” Bishop George Murry, SJ, told *The Catholic Islander*.

SEMINARIANS RECOVERING FROM ILLNESSES

The two seminarians for the diocese are recovering from serious infections, according to Fr. John Mark, Vocations Director.

Fr. Mark said that Anthony Abraham, who studies at the St. John Vianney and the Ugandan Martyrs Regional Seminary in Trinidad, and Ernesto Rodriguez, awaiting entry into St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, were both under medical care in November and December.

Fr. Mark asked that Catholics in the Virgin Islands pray for their seminarians.

REVISED POLICY ON COMMUNION PREPARATION

The priests of the diocese amended a policy established in 2005 that required Catholic School students to prepare for all the sacraments at their local parishes. According to the amended policy, drafted at a Presbyteral Council meeting at the bishop’s residence on St. Thomas on December 22, Catholic School students preparing for confirmation still must take classes at their parishes, but those preparing for first communion now may take classes at their school and receive the sacrament at their parish.

CHILD PROTECTION

An independent auditing agency hired by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to audit every diocese in the United States found the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands to be “in full compliance” with *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Investigators from the Boston-based Gavin Group found that the diocese has been properly screening all those who have regular contact with children and has provided adequate educational programs for adults and children in order to help them recognize and prevent child abuse.

V.I. BISHOPS TO BE HONORED

Holy Family Church will hold a luncheon honoring two former Virgin Islands bishops, Bishop Elliott Thomas and Archbishop Sean O’Malley, OFM, Cap., at the Marriott Frenchman’s Reef Hotel on St. Thomas on Sunday, January 26, at 1:00 p.m. Tickets are available for \$75.

The luncheon will help raise funds for continued improvements to the parish’s Columban Hall.

BOMB HOAX

A bomb threat called into St. Joseph High School on St. Croix was reported to the police department and forced the evacuation of the premises on December 9. After searching the premises, the police found no bomb and declared the call was a hoax. The students returned to class.

Bishop George Murry, SJ, said, “I am happy that the administration handled the matter quickly and effectively. Bomb threats, however, are very serious matters and I hope that no one will consider this a joke”

PARISH COOK PASSES AWAY

Prayers are requested for the soul of Constance Peter, housekeeper and cook at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, who passed away on December 28. Ms. Peter had served the parish for close to four years.

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SCHOOL RE-ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDED

The Commission on Secondary Schools' Validation Team of the Middle States Association (MSA) of Colleges and Schools visited St. Joseph High School on St. Croix on November 14-17. In December, a draft copy of the final report contained the following statement: "The Validation Team will be pleased to recommend continued accreditation for St. Joseph High School." The final, formal conclusion will be announced during the spring of 2006, after a series of readings and review by the MSA Board in Philadelphia.

Br. James Petrait, OSFS, science teacher at the school, was the Internal Coordinator for the Affective Growth Planning Process. He led the planning team, consisting of Stane Brajovic, Barbara Hill Troutman, Jocelyn Hodgson, Marla Matthew, Mary McIntosh, Edward Modeste, Camille Paul, Mary Jane Provost and Janis Valmond.

The school will celebrate the success of the planning process during Catholic Schools Week at the end of January.

BISHOP'S APPEAL 2006 RECRUITS COORDINATORS

As the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands prepares to launch the Bishop's Appeal 2006 on March 1, priests and lay leaders are lining up to lead the campaign to success. Bishop George Murry, SJ, has named Msgr. Michael Kosak as Senior Priest Consultant to Charles Shain, Diocesan Director of Development and Marketing. Carroll Rourke of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church on St. Thomas will serve as Senior Lay Consultant.

Rev. Dr. George Franklin will supervise the parish volunteers on St. Thomas, Fr. Charles Crespo on St. John and Fr. John McLoughlin on St. Croix.

Lay coordinators will distribute the Bishop's Appeal brochures and promote the campaign at their parishes. The lay coordinators on St. Thomas are Faye Boschulte and Marina Salem at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Viola Smith at Holy Family Church, Louis Hughes at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and Anthony Olive at St. Anne Chapel. Ina Lee will coordinate the Bishop's Appeal at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John. On St. Croix, Deacon Denis Griffith will coordinate at St. Ann Church, Kathie King and Vicki Soto at St. Joseph Church and Alphonso Franklin at St. Patrick Church; the coordinators are not yet announced at Holy Cross Church.

The Bishop's Appeal 2006 will run through the six weeks of Lent. The goal is to raise \$425,000 for Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands and the four Catholic schools in the diocese.

MLK AWARDS

Ruth Elmes of Ss. Peter and Paul School will be among the students honored at a Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., memorial by the Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas on Friday, January 13. The annual ceremony, done in the synagogue within the context of the Reform Jewish worship service, honors one student from each of the seven St. Thomas high schools. Principals or guidance counselors nominated students whose lives exemplified Dr. King's teachings. In addition to the recognition, the students will receive a \$500 U.S. Savings Bond and a book, *Shared Dreams: Martin Luther King and the Jewish Community*.

The Erev Shabbat service begins at 6:30 p.m., with a reception afterwards across the street in the congregation's Lilienfeld House.

MLK MEMORIALS

Bishop George Murry will participate in an ecumenical memorial to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at Emancipation Garden on St. Thomas on Monday, January 16, at 10:00 a.m.

Fr. Charles Crespo, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John, will pray the invocation at the St. John Interfaith Coalition's memorial for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks in Franklin A. Powell, Sr. Park on Monday, January 16, at 11:00 a.m. Fr. Crespo is a member of the coalition.

MLK PARISH FUN DAY

St. Ann Church on St. Croix will celebrate Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with its annual Fun Day. Food, games and karaoke will be provided on Monday, January 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

A team led by Very Rev. Neil Scantlebury and Fr. John Mark begin teaching marriage preparation classes on January 21. This is the first of three Saturday classes. Engaged couples on St. Thomas and St. John must be referred by their pastors.

OUR LADY OF ALTAGRACIA

The Hispanic community in the Virgin Islands will celebrate the feast day of *Nuestra Señora de Altagracia* (Our Lady of High Graces), patroness of the Dominican Republic, with Spanish Masses and receptions featuring Dominican cuisine.

On St. Croix, St. Joseph Church will honor *Nuestra Señora de Altagracia* on Friday, January 20, at 7:00 p.m. On St. Thomas, Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral will celebrate the Mass on Sunday, January 22, at 12:30 p.m. On St. John, the Mass will be celebrated at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Sunday, January 22, at 5:00 p.m.

¡BUENAS NOTICIAS!

MISAS DE AGUINALDO



Desayuno seguía las Misas de aguinaldo en la Iglesia Holy Cross en Sta. Cruz.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE ALTAGRACIA

Dominicanos celebrarán su fiesta patronal de Nuestra Señora de Altagracia con Misas y recepciones con comidas típicas en tres parroquias.

En Sta. Cruz, se celebrará la fiesta con Misa en la Iglesia San José el viernes, 20 de enero, a las 7:00 p.m.

En Sto. Tomás, se celebrará la Misa en la Catedral de San Pedro y San Pablo el domingo, 22 de enero, a las 12:30 p.m.

En St. John, se celebrará la Misa en la Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Carmen el domingo, 22 de enero, a las 5:00 p.m.

LOS TRES REYES MAGOS

Los Tres Reyes Magos celebrarán el domingo de la epifanía en varias iglesias en las Islas Vírgenes el 8 de enero.

La Catedral San Pedro y San Pablo en Sto. Tomás ajustará su horario de Misas dominicales, con Misa en inglés a las 6.30 a.m. solamente y una Misa bilingüe a las 9.30 a.m. Después habrá juguetes y dulces para niños en la yarda de la Escuela San Pedro y San Pablo.

Los Reyes también visitarán la Misa en español en la Iglesia San José en Sta. Cruz a las 10.00 a.m.

MISAS DE SANACIÓN

Un sacerdote impone las manos por la sanación en la Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Carmen en St. John cada viernes en la Misa de las 8.30 a.m., menos el primer viernes de cada mes, cuando se hace en las Misas de 7.00 a.m. y 7.00 p.m.

DESAYUNO CON EL PÁRROCO

Se comparte un desayuno con el párroco en la Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Carmen en St. John el 6 de enero y el primer viernes de cada mes después de la Misa de las 7.00 a.m.

HORA SANTA

Hay Hora Santa bilingüe con Exposición y Bendición del Santísimo Sacramento en la Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Carmen en St. John el 6 de enero y el primer viernes de cada mes, comenzando con Misa bilingüe a las 7.00 p.m.

MISA HISPANA EN TELEVISIÓN

Misas en español desde la Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Carmen en St. John se ven en Sto. Tomás y St. John en el canal 16 los sábados a las 2.00 p.m.

MISIONES DE ADVIENTO



Fernando Casanova de Puerto Rico facilitó el triduo de adviento en la Iglesia San José en Sta. Cruz el 19 al 21 de diciembre. Dio su testimonio de cómo convirtió de ser pastor pentecostal a predicador católico.



El P. Roberto Cortes Campos de Washington, DC, facilitó la misión de adviento en la Catedral San Pedro y San Pablo en Sto. Tomás el 6 al 8 de diciembre. Terminó la misión con una Misa para la Inmaculada Concepción.

Catholic Education

SISTER TAKES FINAL VOWS



Sr. Antonieta Melancio, OP, took her final vows as a Dominican Daughter of the Immaculate Mother at Holy Cross Church on St. Croix on December 3.

Sr. Ofelia Daet, OP, was the official delegate of the religious order.

Both sisters teach at St. Mary School.



STUDENTS VISIT OBSERVATORY

The physics class and JETS team of St. Joseph High School on St. Croix visited the Very Large Baseline Array (VLBA) Radio Telescope operated by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) with their teacher, Br. James Petrait, OSFS, on December 6.

The complete VLBA is a series of ten radio telescopes that stretch across the United States from St. Croix to Hawaii. Using it, astronomers can observe stars and galaxies in the daytime. The resolution can be compared to being able to read a newspaper in Los Angeles from New York!

Standing right to left are Camille Paul, Patrice Petersen, Nychak Joseph, the NRAO Tour Guide, Christina Clement, Zina Dore, Michaela Cooke, Amberky Lynch and Denis Lynch.

MR. AND MISS ST. JOSEPH NAMED

St. Joseph High School freshman Charles Moorehead was selected to be Mr. St. Joseph for the 2005-06 school year during the month of December. He was chosen by the faculty, which did an extensive survey of the qualities of the applicants.

Meanwhile, each class had competitions to determine the Miss St. Joseph of their grade. At the Caribbean Community Theater on November 27, judges rated the contestants on their fashion, talent and speeches and named Laurene McIntosh, a senior, Miss St. Joseph for the 2005-06 school year.



At St. Joseph High School on St. Croix, Charles Moorehead, pictured above, was named this academic year's Mr. St. Joseph, and Laurene McIntosh, pictured right, was named Miss St. Joseph.



Catholic Education



ELEMENTARY GIRLS SOFTBALL LEAGUE CHAMPS

St. Patrick School on St. Croix came in first place among six elementary schools in the Inter-scholastic Elementary Girls Softball League. The team finished the league with an unbeaten record (10-0), winning all regular league matches, the play-offs and two of the three championship games.

St. Patrick School also won the league in 2004. The team is coached by Pamela Murray assisted by Fern Green and Marilyn Santos.

BINGO FUNDRAISER

Grades 5 and 9 of Ss. Peter and Paul School on St. Thomas will host bingo on Friday, January 13, at 7:00 p.m.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

"Catholic Schools: Character, Compassion, Values" is the theme of the national Catholic Schools Week 2006. The week runs from January 29 to February 4. The National Appreciation Day for Catholic Schools will be February 1.

Catholic Schools Week is a joint project between the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

During Catholic Schools Week, each grade level at St. Joseph High School on St. Croix will have a retreat day. The students will raise funds through a Walk-a-thon for Catholic Schools on February 3 and host a Fun Day on their campus for elementary students of St. Mary and St. Patrick Schools.



STUDENTS GIVE TO SANTA

In a twist on Christmas tradition, Ss. Peter and Paul School students on St. Thomas brought gifts to Santa Claus at their annual Christmas party on December 20 so that he could deliver them to sick and needy children over the Christmas holidays.

The jolly old man had been bringing gifts to the children at the school's party over the years. This time, the students turned the tables on him. From the pre-kindergarten through fifth grades, the children brought him over seventy-five presents wrapped in bright Christmas colors.

Dilsa Capdeville, Executive Director of Kidscope, promised the students that the gifts would be delivered to needy children through the Schneider Regional Medical Center, the Women's Resource Center, Kidscope and other organizations and agencies that serve children in the Virgin Islands. Rev. Dr. George Franklin, Principal, praised the students for the generous spirit and told them that their actions were in keeping with the true meaning of Christmas.

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VOLUNTEERS EXPAND CATHOLIC CHARITIES WORK

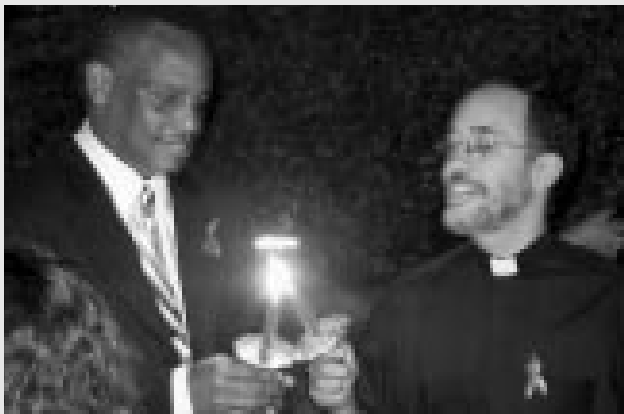


The five Rotary Clubs on St. Thomas have begun serving meals for the needy at Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands' Bethlehem House homeless shelter on Saturdays.

This project expands the outreach efforts of Catholic Charities' soup kitchen, which operates nearby on Mondays through Fridays. On Saturdays beginning December 17, Rotary members prepare, serve and clean up, while Catholic Charities' staff plans the menus and provides all the food.

The five rotaries will serve on a rotation basis. Pictured above, Rotary East volunteers served lunch at Bethlehem House on December 31.

PRAYER SERVICE FOR WORLD AIDS DAY



Lieutenant Governor Vargrave Richards and Fr. Charles Crespo, Pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John, lit a memorial candle for those who died of AIDS at the World AIDS Day Interdenominational Church Service at Nazareth Lutheran Church on December 1. Fr. Crespo led the invocation for the service. The program was organized by Hope, Inc., a St. John agency helping people with HIV/AIDS.

DIOCESE HONORED BY AN ANTI-POVERTY AGENCY

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) recognized the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands for its support of the agency's anti-poverty mission and for increasing the annual parish appeal by 58 percent. The award honored Bishop George Murry, SJ, CCHD diocesan director Deacon David Capriola and all the clergy and faithful of the diocese for their commitment to the mission of the CCHD and for fostering the growth of the 2004 parish appeal.

The national office of CCHD provided \$9 million in funding support to 315 local and national community and economic development projects throughout the United States in 2005. These grants were made possible through the annual parish collection to support and promote CCHD's mission. The Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands is a beneficiary of CCHD funds.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops founded the Campaign with an objective to build solidarity between the poor and the non-poor through education for justice rooted in Catholic social teaching. By active participation in such projects, low-income people are able to empower themselves and thus break the cycle of poverty in their own lives and in their local communities. Having provided over \$280 million to more than 7,000 community-based projects in its thirty-five-year history, CCHD remains the nation's largest private funder of domestic, community-based, self-help projects.

THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON



Parishioners prepared and served Thanksgiving lunch to over 100 guests at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John on November 24.

CHRISTMAS FOLKLORE



The Cursillo Movement held its annual Christmas party in the Hospitality Lounge of St. Joseph Church on St. Croix on December 11. The program included a demonstration of Hispanic folk dancing.

EVANGELICAL OUTREACH



"Joseph" and a pregnant "Mary" on top of a donkey brought the Christmas story alive outside of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John on Christmas Eve.

SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PAGEANTS

Ss. Peter and Paul School students staged a Christmas pageant entitled *The Twelve Voices of Christmas* at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral on St. Thomas on December 11.

Through song, musical instruments and dance, students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 provided the voices of twelve major Christmas personalities, including Joseph, Mary, the angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, Herod, Anna, the shepherds and the Magi. Some students played the violin and chimed bells, some sang carols in French, Spanish and Latin, while others gave recitations on the Christmas story. Seventh graders also staged a musical tribute to those serving their country in Iraq and Afghanistan, and distributed patriotic lapel ribbons while singing "I'll be Home for Christmas."

The Parents Teachers Students Association (PTSA) hosted a reception after the program, during which the school's steel orchestra, Angels of Steel, played Christmas music.

St. Patrick School students staged their Christmas pageant at St. Patrick Church on St. Croix on December 11. Under the direction of Elizabeth Jacob, Grade 3 teacher, and Tina Thompson, music teacher, the students presented a musical entitled *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and a Christmas play entitled *Jesus Is Coming Down To Earth*. The steel pan band also played a melody of songs.



Two Catholic schools staged Christmas pageants on December 11.

Pictured above, fifth graders at Ss. Peter and Paul School dressed as bishops and nuns for their pageant at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral on St. Thomas.

Pictured left, students at St. Patrick School enacted the Christmas story at St. Patrick Church on St. Croix.



LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

*St. Anne Chapel, St. Thomas, with
Very Rev. Neil Scantlebury watching.*



*Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church,
St. Thomas, with Fr. Troy Schuster,
Pastor, reading the blessing.*

*Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral, with
Deacon Wilfredo Acosta assisting.*



ADVENT: A TIME FOR PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS



Fr. Charles Crespo blessed two donated images of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John on her feast day, December 12.



Rev. Dr. George Franklin led an Advent Mission at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John on December 8-11.



The altar servers of Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral visited Sea View Nursing Home on St. Thomas on December 17, singing carols and reading a Christmas story.



Fr. James Cascione, CSsR, formerly of Holy Cross Church on St. Croix, returned to his old parish to lead English and Spanish Advent Missions December 7-14.



Members of the St. Joseph Church Children's Choir had an Advent Day of Reflection in the parish's Hospitality Lounge on St. Croix on December 21 as part of the choir's ten-year anniversary celebration.

PARISH COMPLETES PARKING LOT



Fr. Cecil Corneille, Pastor of St. Joseph Church on St. Croix, is shown at the edge of the parish's newly completed parking lot.

MASS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Msgr. Jerome Feudjio, Pastor of Holy Family Church on St. Thomas, had the Religious Education students attend Mass on a Saturday morning.



NEW BALCONY ACCOMMODATES CHOIR



The choir rehearsed for the dedication of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on St. John in the new church's balcony.

GETTING A TASTE OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT



Robert Reznizak and I had just returned to the Sarnelli House from summer break when, over dinner, our director, Fr. Kevin Murray, CSsR., said to us, "How would you like to go to St. Croix?" We said that we would be willing to go. "Good, how would you like to go down from October 29 to November 5?" We had no reason to think that it would be a bad time. "Well, good, because I have already booked your flights." Two months later, we found ourselves stepping off the American Eagle flight onto Cruzan soil and into an introduction to missionary work.

It took us both quite a while to adjust to the new geography. Our main host, Fr. John McLoughlin, CSsR, took us around the western end of the island to show some of the sights. We could not get over the crystal blue water, the palm trees, the natural beauty that fills St. Croix. There was a great deal of unreality during the first day or two of our stay. As I said to Robert, "I cannot believe I am actually looking at palm trees." It did seem as if we really were standing on a tiny chunk of paradise, but if paradise truly existed on earth, there would be no need for missionaries. It was time to get to work.

First, at St. Patrick School, we helped haul and repair some cafeteria tables which had been destroyed by termites. Then we went into the classrooms to give talks to all the grades. We talked to them about our ministry in the inner-city of Philadelphia and about the Church's social justice teachings. They were quite receptive. Robert began his talk by asking the question, "Does anyone here know someone who is homeless?" Many hands went up. "Does anyone know a homeless person by name?" Some hands, but not as many as the first time. "Has anyone here ever made fun of a homeless person?" At first, very few of the students in any of the classes admitted it, but with Robert's encouragement this question garnered the most hands of the three. I talked about Matthew's account of judgment day, the story of the sheep and the goats. Robert talked about his experiences with homeless



people on the streets of Philadelphia and at home in Germany. We felt, as did Fr. John, that we were able to challenge the students' views of the poor and homeless and get them to see the importance of loving the poor as the Church teaches.

Next, it was off to My Brother's Table to help with prep-work and serving lunch. Robert, who is a chef by training, and I both enjoyed our time there immensely. We learned about the local foods, but more importantly, about the local situation that makes a place like My Brother's Table necessary. We went there twice. On day one, we could tell that the guests were wondering "Who are these guys?" On day two, we felt a good connection with them, and they made known their appreciation of our presence.

Lastly, we helped with the First Friday visitations to the sick. This was by far the most taxing experience. With Fr. John and parishioner Gwenie Lucas over the course of four hours, we visited about fifteen people, nearly all of them in their eighties, but a few families had younger members. "Thank you for coming out, I wanted to get to church this Sunday but I had no one to take me," was the common phrase for many of those we visited. On the other hand, for some of the bed-ridden parishioners we visited, getting to Sunday Mass was out of the question, no matter the dedication level of their caretakers. For those who can not go to church, the church must go to them.

We can not thank Fr. John and the people of St. Patrick Church enough for their warm welcome and hospitality. We were moved by Fr. John's love for his people, especially the ones who are the most poor and abandoned. Thanks to his dedication to the Redemptorist mission, we received a good taste of the missionary spirit. For Robert and I, this was our first trip to St. Croix, and our first trip to the Caribbean. Neither of us thinks that it will be his last! There is simply no way we could not be attracted to the beauty of St. Croix; beauty we thought we saw as we stepped off the plane, beauty we truly encountered in its faithful.

by Jay J. Atherton

Our Blessed Mother's Message from Medjugorje
November 25, 2005

"Dear children! Also today I call you to pray, pray, pray until prayer becomes life for you. Little children, at this time, in a special way, I pray before God to give you the gift of faith. Only in faith will you discover the joy of the gift of life that God has given you. Your heart will be joyful thinking of eternity. I am with you and love you with a tender love. Thank you for having responded to my call."

Happy New Year from Claire & John Foster

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ST. CROIX CALENDAR

HOLY HOURS/EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Holy Cross Church has Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction on January 6 and all First Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

St. Joseph Church has a bilingual Holy Hour with Exposition and Benediction on January 6 and all First Fridays at 7:00 p.m.

St. Patrick Church has a Holy Hour with Exposition and Benediction on Fridays after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

St. Ann Church has a Holy Hour with Exposition and Benediction on Fridays at 5:30 p.m.

HEALING MASS

St. Patrick Church has a healing Mass on January 6 and all First Fridays at 7:00 p.m.

SANTO NIÑO DEVOTION/RECONCILIATION

St. Joseph Church hosts devotions to *El Santo Niño* on January 7 and the first Saturday of each month at 4:30 p.m. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered simultaneously.

FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

The Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity shares Franciscan spirituality at the Franciscan House on January 8 and the second Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m.

FUN DAY

St. Ann Church will celebrate Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with its annual Fun Day. Food, games and karaoke will be provided on Monday, January 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Jim and Centelia Matthews lead a cancer support group at St. Ann Church on January 18 and the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

EVENINGS OF CHARISMATIC PRAYER

St. Patrick Church has an evening of charismatic prayer on January 20 and the third Friday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

St. Ann Church holds charismatic prayer meetings on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.

St. Joseph Church has charismatic evenings on Fridays at 7:00 p.m.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE ALTAGRACIA

St. Joseph Church will honor *Nuestra Señora de Altagracia*, Patroness of the Dominican Republic, with Mass on Friday, January 20, at 7:00 p.m. A reception follows.

CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

Secular Order Discalced Carmelites share Carmelite spirituality at St. Ann Church on January 22 and the fourth Sunday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

LEGION OF MARY

Præsidium Our Lady of Grace meets at the Holy Cross Church rectory on Sundays at 4:00 p.m.

CURSILLO ULTREYA MEETINGS

Cursillo members meet at St. Joseph Church on Mondays after the 7:00 p.m. Mass. Meetings are in Spanish.

NEO-CATECHUMENAL WAY

The Neo-Catechumenal Way presents a catechesis at St. Joseph Church on Mondays and at Holy Cross Church on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.

BLUE ARMY OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima meets in the chapel at Holy Cross Church on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. Entry is by the gate to the rectory.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Holy Cross Council 6482 meets at the McAlpin Hall of Holy Cross Church on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 6:00 p.m.

The Pride of Our Parishes



Deacon Ulric and Ruth Benjamin celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary with a renewal of vows at Mass at Holy Cross Church on St. Croix on December 11.

ST. THOMAS CALENDAR

HOLY HOURS/EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

St. Anne Chapel has a Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction on January 6 and all First Fridays at 6:00 p.m.

Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral has a Holy Hour with Exposition and Benediction on Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m.

Holy Family Church has a Holy Hour with Exposition and Benediction on Fridays at 6:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church has a Holy Hour with Exposition and Benediction on Fridays at 6:30 p.m., followed by Mass at 7:30 p.m.

MAGNIFICAT

Magnificat, a ministry to Catholic women, meets January 7 and the first Saturday of each month at 8:30 a.m. in Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral's Hospitality Lounge.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA DEVOTION

The Children of Mary lead a devotion to Our Lady of Fatima at Holy Family Church on January 7 and the first Saturday of each month at 4:00 p.m.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

The Holy Family Chapter share Vincentian spirituality at Holy Family Church on January 10 and the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

The Lady Clare of Assisi Fraternity share Franciscan spirituality at Holy Family Church on January 14 and the second Saturday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF AMERICA

Court 2049 meets at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral's Hospitality Lounge on January 21 and the third Saturday of each month at 3:00 p.m.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE ALTAGRACIA

Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral will honor *Nuestra Señora de Altagracia*, Patroness of the Dominican Republic, with Mass on Sunday, January 22, at 12:30 p.m. A reception follows.

LUNCHEON

Holy Family Church will hold a luncheon honoring two former Virgin Islands bishops, Bishop Elliott Thomas and Archbishop Sean O'Malley, OFM, Cap., at the Marriott Frenchman's Reef Hotel on Sunday, January 26, at 1:00 p.m. Tickets are available for a donation of \$75.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Council 6187 meets at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral's Hospitality Lounge on the first and third Sunday of each month at 10:00 a.m.

LEGION OF MARY

Junior Praesidium Mary, Queen of Archangels meets at the St. Anne Chapel Hall on Sundays at 1:30 p.m.

Praesidium Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces meets at the St. Anne Chapel Hall on Sundays at 2:30 p.m.

Praesidium Mary, Mystical Rose meets at Holy Family Church on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.

EVENINGS OF CHARISMATIC PRAYER

Charismatic prayer meetings are held at Holy Family Church on Mondays at 7:30 p.m.

BLUE ARMY OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima meets at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m.

ST. JOHN CALENDAR

BREAKFAST WITH THE PASTOR

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church hosts a pot luck breakfast on January 6 and all First Fridays after the 7:00 a.m. Mass.

HOLY HOUR/EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

A bilingual Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction follows the 7:00 p.m. Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on January 6 and all First Fridays.

NUESTRA SEÑORA DE ALTAGRACIA

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church will honor *Nuestra Señora de Altagracia*, Patroness of the Dominican Republic, with Mass on Sunday, January 22, at 5:00 p.m.

EVENINGS OF CHARISMATIC PRAYER

Charismatic prayer meetings are held at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

HEALING MASSES

A priest lays on hands for physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological healing at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Fridays at the 8:30 a.m. Mass. On First Fridays, that Mass is at 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

LEGION OF MARY

Praesidium Mary, Queen of Angels, meets at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.