



CENTENNIAL

celebrating 100 years of inspiration



**EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**

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

CREATIVE TEAM

Juliana Conidi
Tom Lucia

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Debbie Antonetti
Thomas Lajewski
Cindy Lee
Rev. Matthew Malone, S.J.
Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf
John Pitts

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patrick T. Boyle, Chair
Alan R. Elia, Jr., Treasurer
Tom Baker, Secretary
James M. Biddle, Jr.
Marcia C. Brogan
Nicholas Fiume
J. Patrick Greenwald
Beth Ieraci
Mary C. Powell
James Radwan, AIA
Steven Timmel
James Walleshauser

Rev. Msgr. David G. LiPuma, Ex-Officio

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

OLV Charities
A Father Baker Legacy

780 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY 14218
(716) 828-9648 | OLVCharities.org



CONTENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

8 The Smile That Makes a Difference

If you've ever gotten a cup of coffee at the WAY Coffee Café at 790 Ridge Road in Lackawanna, odds are you've met Chris—the "Face of Father Baker" to those he meets.
By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf

**10 In the Spirit of Father Baker**

One of Venerable Nelson Baker's most popular nicknames years ago was "Padre of the Poor." Today, OLV Human Services addresses the causes of homelessness in his memory.
By Cindy Lee

**14 After the Violence**

The horrific shooting at a Buffalo-based grocery store in May rocked a community known as the "City of Good Neighbors." In such times, for what ... or for whom ... should we pray?
By Debbie Antonetti

**18 "A Joyful Noise"**

On September 18, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, led by acclaimed Music Director/Conductor JoAnn Falletta, put on an historic concert in honor of the Basilica's Centennial.
By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf

**20 An Unlikely Role Model**

In a piece that appeared in *America* magazine, Father Baker's founding of the OLV Infant Home is shown as a heroic act of mercy for babies ... and their mothers.
By Rev. Matt Malone, S.J.



DEPARTMENTS

3 President's Message**4 CEO's Message****16 Centennial Happenings****25 Mission Advancement**

About the Cover: The featured artwork on the cover is a plein air painting done by local artist Bernice Smith. The rich fall colors used to depict God's creation in the foreground are the perfect complement to the Basilica watching over all in the background.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I walk from the rectory to the Basilica, I'm struck by the four towering bronze angels atop it, blowing their trumpets from the exterior dome. I sense their call to me—and to all of Lackawanna—to praise and give glory to God. Truly, they are trumpeting “victory” to the four corners of the world!

Annually, thousands of pilgrims and parishioners respond to that call. They come to pray, seeking God's inspiration, healing, peace, and comfort. For 100 years, OLV National Shrine & Basilica has been a refuge and a beacon of hope to all.

And I'm sure all of us want this awe-inspiring sacred space to be here for future generations. But for that to happen, significant exterior structural problems need addressing.

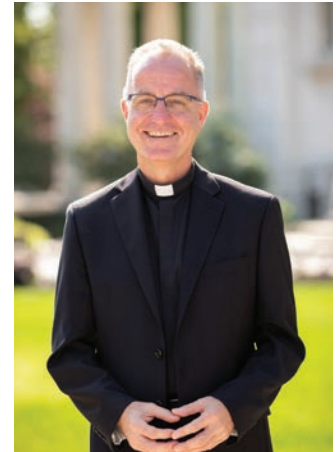
The age of the Basilica and Buffalo's harsh climate have taken a toll on the masonry, caused roof deterioration, and damaged internal drainpipes that are contained within the walls of the Shrine. Work on securing the Basilica is in process.

Once the outer envelope issues are addressed, we will restore features inside the Shrine that have been damaged by water, including plaster and artwork. When that's completed, necessary pew and floor restoration will follow.

As we continue to commemorate the Centennial journey of our magnificent Basilica—which lasts until 2026—we have so much to celebrate and much to do to preserve this sacred space for the next 100 years.

I'm most thankful to all who are supporting this needed work with their prayers and generous financial donations.

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



Gratefully yours in Christ,

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

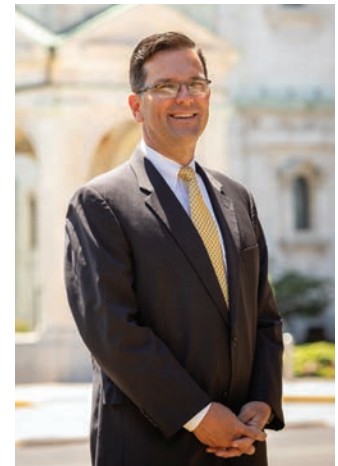
CEO'S MESSAGE

At the time of the writing of this issue of *Centennial*, the world was in the midst of remembering Queen Elizabeth II and her unmatched 70-year reign over Great Britain and the Commonwealth. People from every walk of life offered their impressions of the Queen and what made her so unique and special. A common thread of these remembrances was the view that Elizabeth reminded her people of the higher purpose of their lives—individually and collectively—as a nation and as a people.

For those of us blessed to work here at OLV, the Basilica is a holy place. It is a house of worship to be sure, but it is much more than a building that requires restoration. I would submit that it's an idea as well ... a landmark of hope, where "All are Welcome." It is a place that embraces the seeker, the curious, the sorrowful, the disheartened, the disenfranchised, and the needy.

When we came together as a team to envision our five-year Centennial Celebration, we wanted visitors to be inspired by art, architecture, music, conferences, social gatherings, services of healing and thanksgiving, and more. And, especially, we wanted to re-introduce this holy place to our young people who will soon inherit it—and be challenged to sustain and grow it—for their children and grandchildren.

As you peruse the following pages, you'll have a glimpse of life, vitality, and the results of countless hours of preparation and planning designed to bring families, young people, and the wider community together. It is our sincere desire to take advantage of this special place that reminds us all of our dignity and our higher purposes in life together—as a community and in our future with God in heaven.



David J. Kersten

Chief Executive Officer, OLV Charities



A Special JOURNEY

{ The peak of Father Baker's crown jewel }

On a warm July morning, special access to the relatively unseen, interior levels of OLV National Shrine & Basilica was granted to award-winning *Buffalo News* columnist Sean Kirst and photographer Derek Gee. After months of discussions, both men were prepared for the more than two-hour journey to the peak of Father Baker's crown jewel.

Starting on the main floor, Sean and Derek were accompanied by OLV's Director of Facilities, Yordan Kovatchki, through the intricate aerial walkways that connect all five levels of the Shrine. Being mindful of each step, the two men traveled a path walked by very few. From standing above the steel beams of the interior dome that covers the sanctuary, to being within reach of the 18-foot trumpeting angels, both individuals were overcome with joy to have experienced the Basilica in a new and incredibly unique way.

Beyond being there as a reporter, the trek was particularly meaningful for Sean, whose father and uncles were raised at OLV's orphanage in the 1930s.

To read Sean's emotional piece and view Derek's breath-taking photos that ran in the *Buffalo News*, scan the QR code below. Please note the online content may not be fully accessible, as it lies behind a paywall.



By John Pitts
Director of Communications



Poyer leaves practice with elbow injury
The All-Pro safety and ball hawk hurt while making tackle PAGE C1

THE BUFFALO NEWS

BUFFALONEWS.COM Buffalo, N.Y. News and Information Since 1826 WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2022

Elderwood to pay nearly \$1 million to settle fraud suit

Whistleblower alerted the feds
By BEN TULEJEMO
Elderwood, a Buffalo-based chain of senior care companies, has agreed to pay \$950,000 to settle a civil suit that accuses the chain of filing fraudulent claims for Medicare and Medicaid payments on a regular basis. U.S. Attorney Tami E. Ryan announced Tuesday.

Evolving monkeypox transmission concerns Erie County health officials

By BEN TULEJEMO
A new warning about the spread of monkeypox is leading to calls for more caution and preventive measures from local health officials.



Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein is urging vigilance of monkeypox.

Father Baker's legacy traced from peak to cornerstone



Look: CLIMB INSIDE FOR AN UNUSUAL VIEW OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY. SCAN THIS CODE ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE TO SEE MORE PHOTOS.

NAGARA FALLS' TURTLE SHELL

For more than half a four-decade life, the former Native American Center for the Living Arts has sat empty and unused.

How the CIA tracked the leader of al-Qaida to his Kabul safehouse

By JULIAN E. BARNES AND ERIC SCHMIDT
WASHINGTON - Intelligence officers made their crucial discovery this spring after tracking Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaida, to Kabul, Afghanistan. He had to read alone on the balcony of his safe house early in the morning.



Sean Kirst
Yordan Kovatchki made it at 64, he moved gratefully toward the high places of Our Lady of Victory National Shrine and Basilica in Lackawanna, whether by scaling ladders or climbing scaffolding as balancing on wooden beams that serve as aerial walkways in a dusty hollow, hidden above the ornate ceiling.



Engineer and facilities director Yordan Kovatchki climbs to the top of the historic dome at OLV.

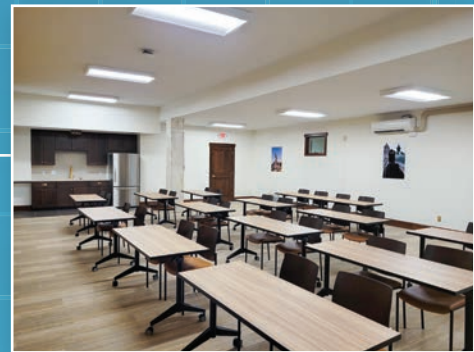
He started a sweeping restoration whose initial goal is stopping decades of creeping water damage, often in places unseen by visitors. I was there both for my job, and on behalf of a little kid who watched the shrine go up from the orphanage floor across the street. To Kovatchki, the basilica speaks reflections on the great European places of worship. He came here years ago as a refugee from Bulgaria "with my wife and two kids and two suitcases." As a young man, Kovatchki said, he was on the Bulgarian national cycling team, and his agility offers echoes of those days.

INDEX Buffalo News... WEATHER History, some clouds, High 66, Low 35. Details on Page D10 \$2.50

INSIDE A

This Summer saw much progress made on several important restoration efforts at OLV National Shrine & Basilica... inside and out.

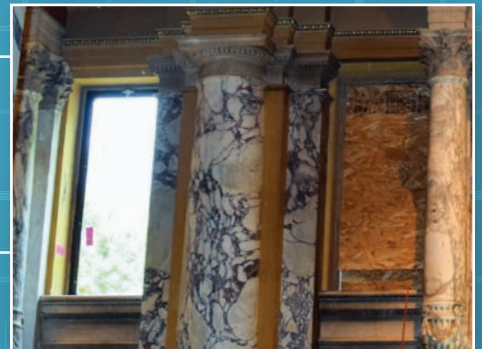
Community Rooms



Renovation of two community spaces within the Shrine's lower level was recently completed. The Marian Room and the newly christened Susan E. Brvenik Community Room are now able to better accommodate meetings, seminars, and functions.

Window Repairs

Restoration efforts focused on the windows of the Shrine's lower and main levels include the repair of corroded steel frames and perimeter caulking, as well as ensuring that they are all functional.



AND OUT



Exterior Masonry, Gutter, and Roof Repairs



There was no shortage of scaffolding surrounding the Basilica's exterior this Summer. As has been mentioned in previous issues of *Centennial* magazine, the Shrine's deteriorating storm drainage system has been at the root of much damage in recent years. Considerable work was done over the last several months on the masonry, gutters, and roofs.

Looking Ahead

To stay updated on the Basilica's restoration efforts, follow it on social media. To support this important work, call (716) 828-9610.

After the Basilica's exterior envelope is secured, the plan is to take some time to monitor the interior. If the repairs hold, work on the water-damaged areas inside of the Shrine will begin. If all stays according to plan, a new phase will begin in 2023 when the pews and marble floor are restored.



THE SMILE *that Makes the Difference*

When you enter OLV Human Services' (OLVHS) administration building at 790 Ridge Road, you'll no doubt receive a warm greeting from Chris who works the counter at the Statler Foundation WAY Coffee Café. And, if you are anything like the hundreds of other folks who stroll by, Chris' welcome is sure to help you cast aside your troubles and start your day in a positive way.



“Greeting and serving customers just makes my day.”

Chris has been an employee of the OLVHS WAY Program for six years. Designed to follow the example of Venerable Nelson Baker—a big believer in vocational instruction for those in his care—the WAY Program helps youth and young adults understand the value of education and work while they develop the skills to achieve both academic and personal success.

In many ways, Chris is a model of all WAY is trying to achieve.

His journey started in the kitchen. He then moved on to a coffee cart before he became a fixture at the café. There is no question he enjoys his daily activities and takes his responsibilities seriously. Supported by coworkers and staff members, he relishes learning new skills and approaches.

In many ways, this job has signaled a turning point for Chris, boosting his confidence and self-worth. And, because of his dedication to his job, he recently received an increase in salary, giving him much pride and cause to celebrate his accomplishments.

So, next time you swing by for a cup of coffee or a pastry, be sure to say hello to Chris—“the face of Father Baker”—and a living affirmation that a smile can make everything better. We promise that when you do, he'll remember your name and order the next time you stop by!

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf





Help for the Homeless ... In the Spirit of FATHER BAKER

Did you know that there are approximately a half-million homeless people in the United States today? Homelessness presents a significant health risk to those affected, and the lack of affordable housing—along with the limited scale of housing assistance programs—exacerbates the problem. In addition, the country's recent economic downturn has forced many homes into foreclosure, leaving families with limited options. The alarming truth about homelessness and who is affected includes the following:

- The average life expectancy of a homeless person in the U.S. is just 50 years ... 26 years lower than the average American.
- 20% of homeless persons are children.
- 16% of single adult homeless persons experience some form of severe and persistent mental illness.

Encouragingly, the issue of homelessness appears to be trending downward and permanent housing interventions have grown by 450% in five years. OLV Human Services (OLVHS) provides significant supports and services to Western New York's homeless population. Because poverty is a contributing factor to homelessness, OLVHS strives to help solve the root of the problem by providing:

- Employment training opportunities through support, job coaching, networking, and skill development. These offerings are designed to enable families and individuals to obtain employment with wages that are above the poverty line.
- Access to care coordination and preventive services that assist with obtaining medical care, food, and stable housing.

- Safe and consistent access to services for family members who are the victims of domestic violence so that they don't have to choose between living with the abuse or homelessness.
- Access to clinical mental health services to help people heal from trauma, recover from addictions that co-exist with mental health conditions, and provide social/emotional stability for future growth and productivity.

At OLVHS, our team remains committed to helping others find their voice, regain their confidence, and take pride in their contributions to society. By offering direct care and linking individuals and families to those who can help them, we are continuing the legacy of caring exemplified by Father Nelson Baker. We can think of no greater calling.

*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 in 2021 through a variety of outpatient, residential, and educational programs. To learn more, visit OLVHS.org.



Helping At-Risk Youth BLOSSOM

Father Baker knew that introducing the young people in his care to a wide variety of activities would help them grow into well-rounded, contributing members of society. And in that spirit, today OLV Human Services (OLVHS) follows in his footsteps, offering youth receiving care the highest quality clinical, recreational, educational, and vocational programming.

To enhance these important services, we are in the process of renovating an existing 6,000-square-foot facility on campus.

The goal of the project is to create state-of-the-art, out-of-school spaces wherein young people can engage in structured and unstructured activities that complement their clinical treatment. This provides them with opportunities to develop creativity as well as, social, emotional, and vocational skills on their journey to become confident and fulfilled adults.

The REV UP Center—short for Recreational, Educational, and Vocational Unification Project Center—will feature several dedicated areas for activities. These include a dance and yoga studio, a computer/writing workshop, a kitchen, an arts and crafts maker space, a gymnasium with attached weight and exercise rooms, and office space for therapists. It will be used daily, providing more than 25,000 activity touch points for at least 230 at-risk children and youth each year.

“The time period kids typically spend with us at OLVHS are really developmental years, when they get to learn a lot about themselves, what their interests are, and really discover what type of person they are going to be,” says Marga McMahon, Director of Transition Services.

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, grants from Foundation 214, the James H. Cummings Foundation, and donors like you.

*By Tom Lajewski
Director of Corporate and Foundation Giving*



YOUTH ENG

*"Let the children come to me ...
for the kingdom of heaven belongs
to such as these."* MATTHEW 19:14

If you are aware of the history of Venerable Nelson Baker's "City of Charity," you know that its founding principles have always been rooted in seeing to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of young people. That commitment continues today. This year, our mission has seen a surge of youthful energy and exuberance, inspiring us with hope for the future of our faith!

CAMP TURNER



This year, 424 children and teens enjoyed a faith-filled summer at Camp Turner, a figure that represented a return to pre-COVID registration levels and the highest number since 2014.



ENGAGEMENT

A newcomer to the ministries of OLV Charities, the Christian Leadership Institute (CLI) returned in 2022 after a two-year hiatus, unlocking the potential of high school students in leadership roles within their parishes.



CLI

WALK BY FAITH

This Spring, OLV Charities was proud to sponsor the "Walk by Faith" High School Eucharistic Youth Conference for a day of worship, retreat, and team-building activities.





After the Violence, PRAY FOR CONVERSION

Reading the stories of the victims of the Buffalo massacre on May 14, the word “shooting” seems too sanitary. As I looked at the picture of the small girl in a pink shirt and rainbow boots, flanked by her older sister and mother, staring in the direction of all that took place, I wanted to somehow shield them from that terrible reality that most of them already knew.

Every time there is a racially motivated shooting, that mother in the photograph must wonder, “What can I do—or my children, my parents or grandparents, my sisters or brothers—without having to worry that someone will kill them simply for being?”

So, I asked God, “For what should I pray, besides for the families and for the community that is suffering, reeling from this violent racist action by this very angry and rage-consumed soul?” I ask because my own soul felt angry and impotent against such reckless rage. Prayer felt, in that moment, like just words. “Conversion” was the simple answer.

Praying for the full conversion of the shooter’s soul, such that he spends the fullness of his life in prayer, service, and reparation for the evil he has done, seems like an insane

prayer. But is it? In that moment, I recognized how hard it is for us to accept either God’s justice or God’s mercy for someone else. We want neither when we are the ones wounded, or when we identify with the wounded. We want—I wanted—less than God’s full love for the man who did this, because I could see the wounds he left by his evil acts.

So, I sat there with that unhappy recognition: I didn’t want to pray for that person’s soul. It’s not an easy prayer. It’s not a platitude. Christ tells us to “pray for your enemies.” Praying that this soul recognizes his own sinfulness and how much he’s hurt the community of Buffalo, how much he’s done to injure people of color everywhere, is a start.

When we can pray for others who need this prayer without struggle, we aren’t actually praying for enemies. We’re praying for hypothetical people who hate us, and even people who might hate us, but who have not hurt us. It costs us nothing to toss an “Our Father” or “Hail Mary” their way. However, here, because it is raw, because it is new, and because we can see the consequences of this person’s evil acts in the dead and the wounded, it costs to pray.

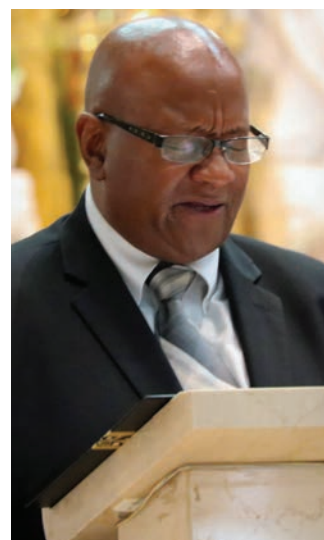
At that point, I realized the weight of the phrase, “the life you save may be your own.” The Venerable Father Nelson Baker is of Buffalo. He was known for his deep charity for the community and for his efficacious intercessory prayer. My own family has a Father Baker story concerning my grandmother, and I have family in Buffalo who live quite near to where this act of violence took place. So, I asked him to intercede for me and for those families affected by this shooting—but also for the shooter and all who know him.

Pray for all of the victims, and for all of us, because the only way this sort of deep scarring will stop is when every one of us sees everyone else we encounter as a person of innate dignity who is deeply loved by God and, thus, owed our prayers for their deeper conversion—and owed our service as part of our own conversion.

Sherry Antonetti contributed this piece to Our Sunday Visitor in June of 2022



In June, OLV National Shrine & Basilica hosted an interfaith prayer service in the wake of the horrific mass shooting that took place in Buffalo weeks before. Friends, staff members, and community leaders attended, sharing reflections and aspirational thoughts. Thank you to Rev. Mark Blue (pictured below, right) of the Second Baptist Church for his remarks.



CENTENNIAL *happenings*



2022



May 10: Centennial Speaker Series

In May, Rev. Matthew Malone, S.J., the president and editor-in-chief of America Media, came to OLV and presented on the topic of “Catholics in the Public Square.” Serving as interlocutor was Hon. Lawrence J. Vilaro of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York.



May 13: Victory Nite

Thanks to our friends, Victory Nite 2022 was a tremendous success. The sold-out event drew 313 attendees to a new venue, Events @ The Foundry in Buffalo. \$100,000 was raised to support the REV UP center at OLV Human Services. *For more on REV UP, see page 11.*



August 6-7: Paint the Basilica

As part of this year’s Father Baker Weekend festivities, “Paint the Basilica” gathered local artists together, asking them to create their unique vision of OLV National Shrine & Basilica. The works of art that were completed and submitted were displayed in the Shrine between September 8-20.

CENTENNIAL *happenings*



—2022—



August 6: Jazz Mass

Local legend Bobby Militello's quartet had the Basilica swinging with a unique Jazz Mass on August 6. Mass was preceded by a special free concert for those who arrived early.



August 7: Father Baker Day Mass

The annual Father Baker Day Mass paid tribute to Venerable Nelson Baker and his legacy of caring—the OLV organizations. Mass concluded with the traditional placing of a wreath at Father Baker's tomb by members of the Sisters of St. Joseph.



September 18: OLV Centennial Concert Featuring the BPO

It was a special afternoon on September 18 as the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, featuring Music Director/Conductor JoAnn Falletta, performed before an enthusiastic crowd at OLV National Shrine & Basilica. *For more on the concert, see the next page!*



A JOYFUL NOISE

OLV National Shrine & Basilica opened its doors to a standing-room-only crowd on September 18th for a special concert in honor of its Centennial Celebration. That day, JoAnn Falletta led the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) in an outstanding performance, and—from the very first note—listeners were treated to an assortment of heavenly sounds.

“We were so honored and excited to be asked to bring our music to OLV Basilica,” says Ms. Falletta. “It is an extraordinary house of worship and such a recognizable landmark in our community.”

The concert’s program was specially curated by Ms. Falletta, who wanted each musical selection to reflect the occasion of the Basilica’s anniversary in a unique way.

The afternoon began with a piece by Giovanni Gabrieli, a famous composer from Venice, who is known for experimenting with the sound of instruments playing from within different sections of a church. The talented musicians that make up the BPO’s brass section succeeded in producing that same enchanting “antiphonal” effect.

A pair of talented soloists highlighted the performance. Violinist Nikki Chooi dazzled the crowd with “LaFolia” by Geminiani. Emily Helenbrook, a soprano from Buffalo, brought the house down singing “Ave Maria,” chosen in honor of Our Lady.

When the concert’s very last note stopped ringing, all the nearly 1,000 attendees erupted in applause. This awe-inspiring performance, an experience to cherish, truly enriched their souls.

{ *One of the Best Ever* }

Ms. Falletta is well-known throughout the nation. In addition to serving as conductor and music director of the BPO, she is the Music Director Laureate of the Virginia Symphony, Principal Guest Conductor of the Brevard Music Center in North Carolina, and Artistic Advisor for both the Hawaii Symphony and the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra. Recently named one of the 50 greatest conductors of all time by *Gramophone* magazine, she is hailed for her work as a recording artist, audience builder, and ambassador for music.

“I’ve been with the BPO for more than 20 years, and I’m so pleased to be a part of the Buffalo Community. I’m so happy to be a part of this region and this wonderful ‘City of Good Neighbors,’” says Ms. Falletta. “It’s been the most satisfying time of my musical life.”

When asked what she enjoys most about her work with the BPO, she responded, “There are two things in particular. The first is the music, which is a gift and inspiration from God. The second is being able to work with our talented musicians.”

The entire OLV community is so grateful to have her and the BPO in our midst!

By Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf





An unlikely ROLE MODEL

In the summer of 1869, a 27-year-old Buffalo businessman and veteran of the Battle of Gettysburg boarded a steamship and set out on a weeks-long tour of the shoreline of Lake Erie. Like many others his age before and since, Nelson Henry Baker was in search of that someone or something that would give meaning and direction to his life. By summer's end he knew what it was: He wanted to be a priest.

So, the following autumn Nelson Baker entered the seminary in Buffalo. During a pilgrimage to Europe with his fellow seminarians, he had a profound spiritual experience at the shrine of Our Lady of Victories in Paris and at once resolved to return to his hometown and spend his life in her service. What followed was a breathtaking, trailblazing, six-decades-long apostolic career that rivals the earthly accomplishments of our greatest saints. In Lackawanna, N.Y., just south of Buffalo, Father Baker built what amounted to a small “city of charity”—a network of hospitals, schools, orphanages, and other social services that in his time would serve tens of thousands of people and serves thousands more even today.

I visited this “Baker-ville” and its one-of-a-kind French Rococo minor basilica the week after we learned that the U.S.

Supreme Court was likely to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the case that established a constitutional right to abortion. One might think that this news, as well as the fiercely contested debate that it has sparked, are light years away from Father Baker’s America, that his time has little to say to ours. And yet an important part of his story suggests otherwise.

In the spring of 1906, Father Baker started to read newspaper accounts of babies who had been abandoned, including “the remains of over two hundred little ones ... found in different stages of decay” in the Buffalo area. His biographer describes his response: “Mortified at such a wanton destruction of life, Baker, always a man of action, knew something needed to be done.” He quickly established a home where mothers could leave their babies anonymously, no questions asked. But Father Baker did not act just to save the infants’ lives; he worked to save the lives and reputations of the mothers as well. “Our motive has been, regardless of experience,” he wrote, “to protect the unfortunate young mother and her family, and to save the life of the child.

Nelson Baker then was quick to recognize two realities, one of which is usually disregarded in conversations about

abortion, then and now. Father Baker was rightly horrified by the intentional killing of these vulnerable human beings. And he was also rightly horrified by the fact that he lived in a world in which women could be driven to such extremes. In his revulsion, Father Baker could have hardened his heart and turned in self-righteous rage against these mothers. Instead, he extended the same compassion to them that had caused his heart to break when reading reports about their babies, reasoning that any woman who could summon the will to override her primordial maternal instinct and take her child's life had to be someone in desperate straits, someone as worthy of our mercy as her children were.

Debates about abortion today are too often polemical, impersonal, unfeeling. Too many on both sides resort to name-calling, to uncharitable hyperbole, or cruel caricatures. People who are pro-choice are called "baby killers." People who are pro-life are said to be "waging a war against women." Neither charge is fair, helpful, or human.



“Father Baker did not act just to save the infants’ lives; he worked to save the lives and reputations of the mothers as well.”



We need fewer polemics and much more compassion, especially of the kind Venerable Father Baker put into action. What he started as a home for infants who had been abandoned by their mothers rapidly grew to become a maternity hospital as well, where unwed or troubled pregnant women could be cared for in safety and anonymity. In time, that became Our Lady of Victory Hospital, which served the people of Lackawanna—men, women, and children—for more than 80 years.

All that happened because Father Baker opened his heart and mind to the people around him, a choice that also set him on his path to sainthood. In writing to the benefactors of his home for infants and mothers, Father Baker would often include this sentence: “The spirit of charity will surely save innumerable souls.”

He might have added: “Starting with your own.”

By Matt Malone, S.J., president & editor in chief of America Media. This column appeared in the June 2022 issue of America magazine. Read more at americamag.org.



“We need fewer polemics and much more compassion, especially of the kind Venerable Father Baker put into action.”



Remembering CHARLES “CHIP” JONES, JR.



Charles G. “Chip” Jones, Jr., an OLV Charities board member since 2018—who served as vice-chair for the last two years and a very generous supporter of Father Baker’s mission—passed away after a sudden illness on July 26, 2022.

The mention of his name calls to mind his warm smile, deep faith, service to others, and philanthropic endeavors to numerous charitable organizations.

An expert electrician, Chip was co-founder—and then sole owner—of Wittburn Enterprises, an electrical construction company in Western New York. He generously offered his electrical expertise to numerous projects at OLV National Shrine & Basilica and was instrumental in lighting its dome. He’ll be remembered every time someone drives by the Shrine at night and sees the radiant light shining over Father Baker’s “City of Charity.”

We celebrate the life and qualities of this remarkable man while deeply mourning his loss. We are profoundly grateful for his goodness, leadership, service to those in need, and his generosity, all of which will live on in the hearts of many. Chip made a difference so many lives. There is no doubt that God greeted him with the words, “Welcome home, good and faithful servant!”

We continue to offer our prayers of sympathy and comfort to his wife, Marylou, to his children, Micaela and Michael, grandchild, Chip, and to his brothers and sisters. May God’s peace and love surround them and give them comfort!

Requiescat in Pace, dear friend!



“National Ambassador” PROFILE

Ohio Family Prays for Victory and Finds OLV



Amid a very competitive business industry, Bobby Kovey sought God’s guidance to ensure his ethics and morals were always the top priorities of his work within the family business he and his wife, Haley, had built.

He was praying for a victory. It occurred to him that one of Mary’s titles is Our Lady of Victory, so he committed to a year-long novena praying for her intercession. After a Google search, he found OLV National Shrine & Basilica and its sister organizations, OLV Charities and OLV Human Services.

And so began Bobby and Haley’s support of Venerable Nelson Baker’s legacy.

“I always wanted to do more than just run a business. I wanted to have a purpose and devote myself to God’s mission and constantly

give back,” says Bobby. “Once I learned Father Nelson Baker’s story, I immediately wanted to emulate this holy man.”

Bobby and Haley’s passion and commitment to our mission of caring for the needs of thousands of children, teens, and families have grown each year during their annual summer pilgrimage to visit the

Basilica and tour OLV’s campus. They continue to have a greater appreciation for the work of OLV Human Services, assisting youth and families through its foster care programs and vocational initiatives for those with special needs.

Thank you to Bobby and Haley and all those who share Father Baker’s story and the important mission of OLV!



As National Ambassadors who recently relocated from Columbus, Ohio, to the Greater Cleveland area, Bobby and Haley welcome the opportunity to connect with other friends of OLV. If you are interested, please contact the Mission Advancement Office at missionadvancement@olvcharities.org or call (716) 828-9610.



Mission ADVANCEMENT

Help us Continue Father Baker's Legacy



BE A "FRIEND OF FATHER BAKER"

This year's Friends of Father Baker Reception will take place on Thursday, November 3 at 6 p.m. and pay tribute to a number of individuals who, like the event's namesake, have given their lives in support of others. The honorees include:

- Paul Bauer, Thomas Beecher, Jr. & Chris Jacobs, co-founders of the BISON Fund
- David Zapfel, President & Chief Executive Officer of Gerard Place
- Ryan Harrington, OLV Service Club

The fun will take place at a new venue this year, The Hotel @ The Lafayette in Buffalo. For ticket or sponsorship information, go to FriendsOfFatherBaker.org or contact Shannon Donovan at (716) 828-9610.



BRING CHRISTMAS WISHES TO LIFE

One of the most magical times of year—Christmas—is almost upon us. It's special because so many of us take time to reflect

on the needs of others. With that in mind, we are excited to announce details for our Annual Christmas Gift Gathering Drive.



If you'd like to purchase a gift for one of the children in our care, simply scan the QR code to the left with your smartphone. From there, you'll be able to choose an item from an Amazon registry list. Just choose one (or more) and we will distribute the gift(s) to the

appropriate young person. It's that simple. Contact Shannon Donovan at (716) 828-9610 if you have a question. Make a Christmas wish come true today!



HEADING TO FLORIDA?

Each year, OLV Charities hosts several donor receptions throughout the state of Florida. If you are a "snowbird" or are interested in attending a reception to learn more about the impact your support has on our mission and meeting Msgr. David LiPuma, please let us know.



To share your seasonal address or your interest in attending one of the events near you, please scan the QR code to the left or email us at events@olvcharities.org.



FOUND TREASURE

We are in a race against time. Our saintly founder, Venerable Nelson Baker, passed away decades ago. And with each day, those who knew him, shook his hand, or spoke with him, are passing away. Their memories are disappearing quickly.

As the OLV National Shrine & Basilica celebrates its centennial, there is no better time to ensure the organization's oral history is secure. This past August, OLV held its first two events, called "History Harvests," designed to collect memories, stories, memorabilia, and/or photos that relate to Father Baker and his "City of Charity."

"We have an archive with historical photos, articles, and letters, but are constantly asking ourselves 'what are we missing?'" says David Kersten, OLV Charities' CEO. "Having printed materials is fine, but we want history to come alive. We want to hear stories in the words of those who lived them."

To do this, OLV is partnering with Mike Frisch, a University at Buffalo professor and expert on oral history, whose firms have helped organizations and museums throughout the United States reclaim their histories.

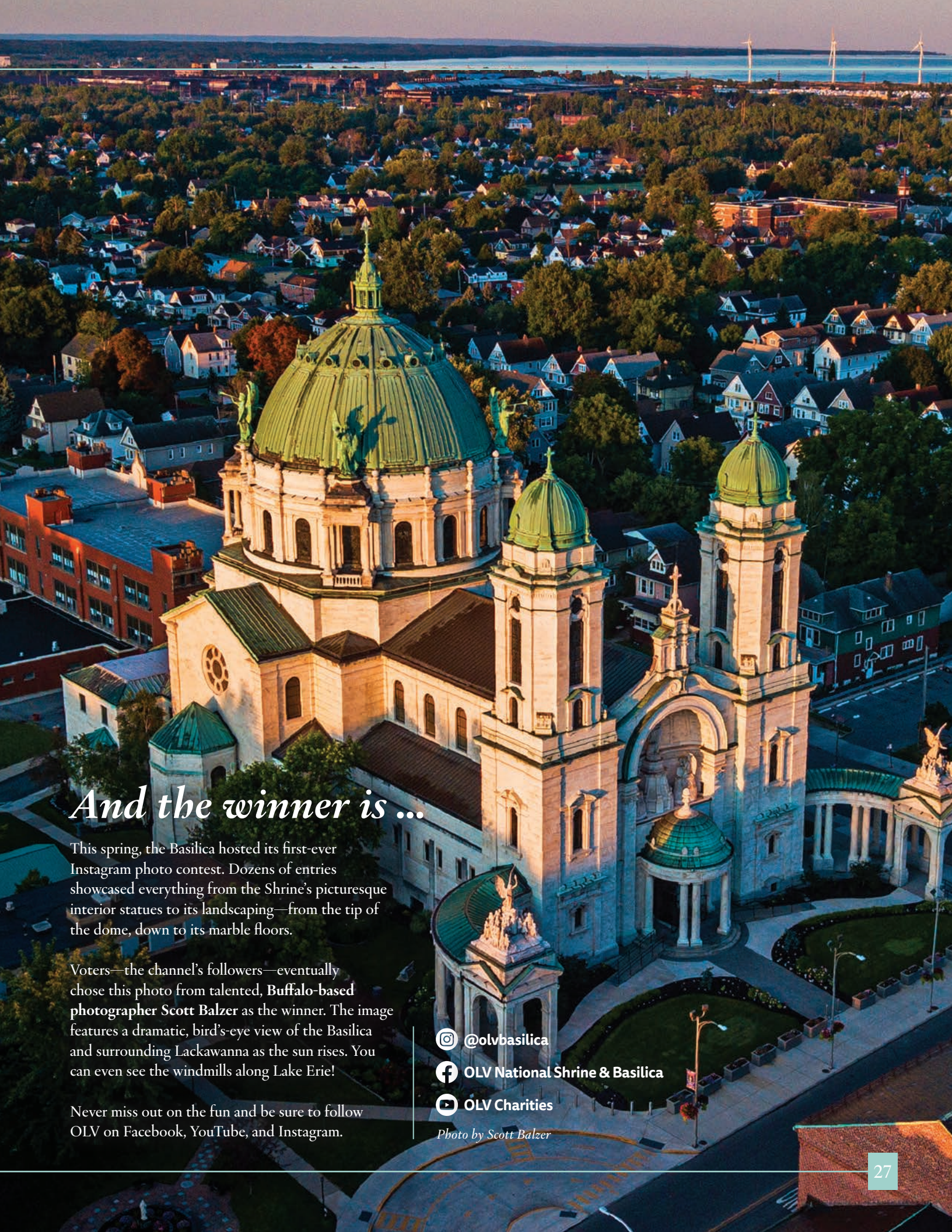
"Oral history is important because it preserves a portrait

of who we are in the present and what we remember about the past for future generations," he says. "It enables people to share their stories using their individual understanding of what happened and why. Its importance cannot be understated."

How will this be done? Pixstori is a tool that is accessed via smartphone. It allows for the recording of short stories with an accompanying image. When done, both the memory and the photo are uploaded and accessible to others so they can listen, enjoy, and even record their own thoughts.



If you or a loved one has a memory, photo, or a piece of OLV/Father Baker history and would like to take part in this critical initiative, **contact Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf, at (716) 828-9622 or dmueller@olvcharities.org**. Want to take a shot at recording an OLV story yourself? All you need is a smartphone and an email address. To begin, scan the QR code or go to myolvstory.org.



And the winner is ...

This spring, the Basilica hosted its first-ever Instagram photo contest. Dozens of entries showcased everything from the Shrine's picturesque interior statues to its landscaping—from the tip of the dome, down to its marble floors.

Voters—the channel's followers—eventually chose this photo from talented, **Buffalo-based** photographer **Scott Balzer** as the winner. The image features a dramatic, bird's-eye view of the Basilica and surrounding Lackawanna as the sun rises. You can even see the windmills along Lake Erie!

Never miss out on the fun and be sure to follow OLV on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.



@olvbasilica



OLV National Shrine & Basilica



OLV Charities

Photo by Scott Balzer

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.

November
3

Friends of Father Baker Reception | 6 p.m.

This annual event honors individuals who have served our community in the mold of Father Nelson Baker. For details, go to FriendsOfFatherBaker.org.

November
26 to
January
6

Nativity Set Exhibition

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

November
13

Adoption Celebration Mass | Noon

All are welcome for this annual Mass that honors those whose lives have been touched by adoption.

December
4

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

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

November
13

Organ Recital | 3 p.m.

Talented organist Garrett Martin will delight attendees of this free recital.

December
11

Festival of Lessons & Carols | 7 p.m.

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

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