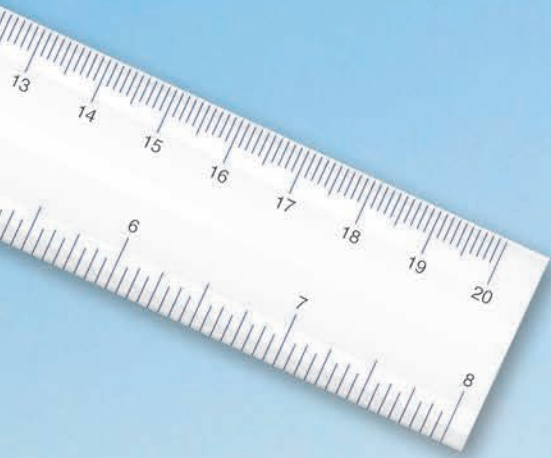
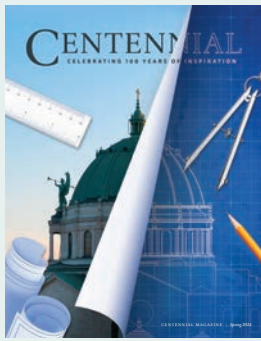


CENTENNIAL

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF INSPIRATION





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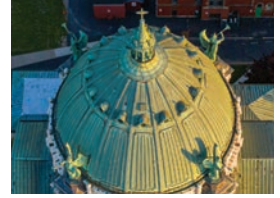


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About the Cover: Featured here is a photo of OLV Basilica's iconic dome on the left, with a blueprint of the replacement dome on the right. See pages 6-8 for more information on our renovation plans.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For 100 years, OLV National Shrine & Basilica has dominated the skyline of the City of Lackawanna. To this day, it stands as one of Western New York's most revered landmarks. The dome's four trumpeting angels pointing to the four corners of the world, welcoming all to come and worship.

Father Baker's faith and ministry were inspired and guided by his unwavering devotion to Mary, under her title of Our Lady of Victory. The seeds of Father Baker's devotion to Our Lady of Victory were planted on his pilgrimage 150 years ago, when he visited the Notre-Dame des Victoires Sanctuary in Paris, France. This pilgrimage transformed his life, centering his focus on honoring Our Lady of Victory, and it became the catalyst for his most significant project—the building of this massive shrine.

As I enter the Basilica each day, I marvel at the fact that 100 years ago, Father Nelson Baker, at the age of 79, placed the cornerstone and commenced a five-year journey that would result in one of the most splendid architectural wonders ever created. And upon its completion, it was debt-free—truly a miraculous accomplishment!

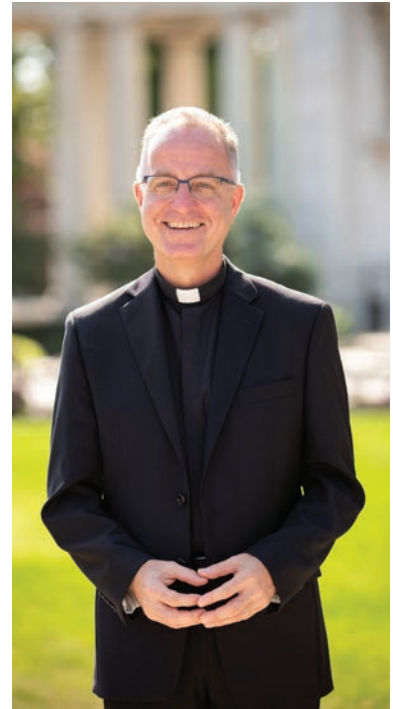
It should come as no surprise that the magnificent painting decorating the interior of the dome is devoted to the Assumption of Our Blessed Mother into heaven. Beautiful ornamental work with symbolic figures on a gold background completes the decoration of the dome. Viewing this exquisite work of art, one can't help but exclaim: *"Hail, O Mary, Queen of Heaven!"*

To this day, the dome continues to stand as a beacon of compassion, justice, hope, and courage to those in need of spiritual and physical healing. Parishioners and pilgrims alike share with me that the Basilica is a sanctuary that elevates their spirit, gives joy to their heart, and inspires their mind.

The Basilica, sitting in the center of a very large work of piety and charity, radiates love and hope. Under the shadow of this great dome, and through the steadfast guidance of Our Lady of Victory, a network of human services is provided to children and families in need. Lives are nurtured and changed for the better—continuing the mission of Father Nelson Baker.

And just as Father Baker enlisted prayers and support of his benefactors, I ask you to help me sustain this magnificent edifice, giving honor to Our Lady and praise to her Son for the next 100 years, ensuring future generations the opportunity to experience this sacred space.

May Father Baker continue to intercede for you, may Our Lady of Victory protect you, and may Almighty God bless you abundantly.



Gratefully yours in Christ,

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

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

CEO'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that we are nearing the halfway point of our five-year journey celebrating the centennial of the building of our beloved OLV National Shrine & Basilica. What an extraordinary journey it has been thus far!

When the members of our Centennial Planning Committees first gathered several years ago, undertaking major restoration projects became a clear objective from the earliest discussions. We knew that extensive repairs, restoration, and upgrades would need to be tackled (see pages 6-8) if we were to steward Father Baker's "crown jewel" confidently into a second century of service as a beacon of hope and healing.

But a restored building of marble and stone is only that ... unless it is animated with hearts, hopes, dreams, and faith.

So, our complimentary planning goal had to include ways to engage people of all ages and faiths to draw them closer to Father Baker's continuing legacy of caring, "*illuminating everything in the shadow of the Dome.*" We hoped to provide spiritual, cultural, and community programming to be sure. We had some ideas about what that might mean—concerts, sacred events, socials, etc. But, candidly speaking, the road map hasn't been entirely clear to those on our committees. In many instances, we have been making it up as we go! And, as a card-carrying planner myself, this has not always been a comfortable experience!

Fortunately, when blessed with talented, creative, and passionate people, good things usually happen. On January 6, holding our first-ever "Under the Dome" event for young children and families (see pages 14-15), we simply had no way of knowing how many might show up on what ended up being a dark, chilly, and snowy winter evening. Well, it was simply miraculous! More than 350 children and parents converged inside the Basilica to be introduced to its wonder. *That night, they heard stories they may forget. They saw many beautiful murals and images from the bible they may remember. But I'm confident the experience of the evening will last a lifetime and play some part in their understanding of God and beauty.*

We hope you will enjoy the following articles that offer but a glimpse of our centennial journey, of hearts, hopes, dreams, and faith.

With deepest gratitude,



David J. Kersten
Chief Executive Officer, OLV Charities



It started with A BLOCK OF MARBLE



Like any big idea, this one took some time.

Around the turn of the 20th century, Father Baker, who was neck-deep in another big idea—the building of OLV Infant Home—was hinting to his benefactors that something special was coming. “It is known that he (Father Baker) is ambitious of giving his parish here one of the greatest churches in the world before his earthly career has ended,” read a 1906 issue of the *Annals*, one of his donor publications.

“His parish” refers to Saint Patrick’s, the community he inherited when he arrived after his time in the seminary. St. Patrick’s was a small church that was only getting more crowded as Father Baker’s renown grew. In 1916, fire ripped through the church, destroying its spire and damaging the assembly area. Shortly after, Father Baker, then in his 70s, announced plans for the construction of a new church, one that would rival any in Europe and would be a fitting tribute to his patroness, the Blessed Mother.

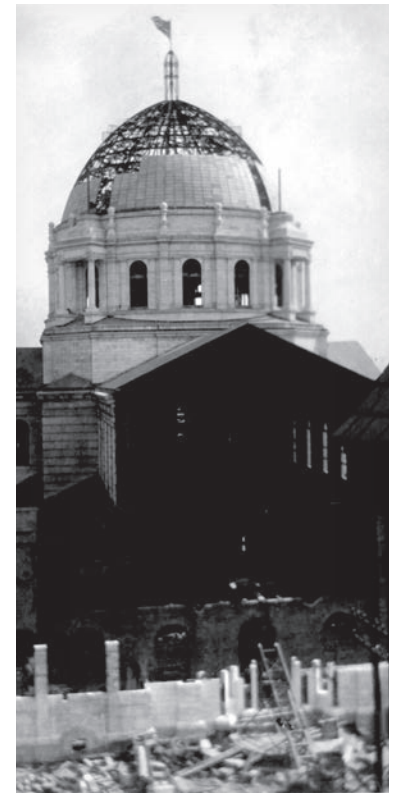
While work wouldn’t begin until 1921, much had to be done ... including financing this ambitious project. As in the past, Father Baker went to the members of his loyal donor club, the Association of Our Blessed Lady of Victory, who had supported his mission over the years.

“We have only to request our dear Lord to inspire our many devoted friends who are sincere friends to His dear Mother, to erect this Shrine as a loving testimony of their deepest gratitude for the countless blessings that have been bestowed upon them.”

The next year, a new column, entitled “A Block of Marble,” appeared in the newsletter asking for a \$10 contribution “to furnish a block of marble for the National Shrine of Our Blessed Lady of Victory.”

His confidence that his financial needs would be met allowed him to boldly go forward. And that approach paid off. Just four years later, construction would be completed in time for Christmas Mass in 1925. A condition of the Basilica’s consecration was that it needed to be fully paid off. **Miraculously, it was.**

Father Baker was humbled by the outpouring of support that made his grandest vision a reality. *“It is fitting that so many of the faithful were part of its construction because the Shrine of Our Lady of Victory is emblematic of unity among Catholics. As it will show forth the work of many nations and call those of every tongue to worship within its walls, the devotee will appreciate more fully how universal is the Church.”*



Pictured above is the building of the Basilica in the 1920s. You can see all the blocks of marble beginning to stack up, a testament to the generous support that aided the construction of this magnificent Shrine.



POLISHING THE “CROWN JEWEL”

Constructed between 1921 and 1925, the OLV National Shrine & Basilica is considered the crown jewel of Venerable Nelson Baker’s “City of Charity,” and one of the most beautiful and architecturally significant churches in the U.S.

Fitting with Father Baker’s vision of a shrine “that will in beauty, loveliness and grandeur, be worthy to be consecrated to the august Mother

of God,” the Basilica was designed in the late French Renaissance (or Rococo) architectural style that seeks to instill a sense of awe in the faithful. Throughout its interior, more than 40 different types, colors, and designs of Italian marble can be found, along with newly refinished pews of African mahogany.

Adding beauty throughout, there are 215 stained-glass windows designed by the Otto F. Andrlé Stained Glass and Art Institute. These are in addition to the hundreds of statues, mosaics, and paintings throughout, each a masterwork of its own.

The Basilica is part of what is known as the “OLV Church Complex District” that has recently been listed on both the national and New York State registers of historic places (see page 26 for more).

Simply put, it is a marvel.



“THE TIME HAS COME”

The Shrine’s main dome is comprised of approximately 8,000 square feet of the original, 100-year-old copper. At the time of its completion in 1925, it was second in size only to the U.S. Capitol Building at 165 feet high!

Unfortunately, the annual freeze-thaw cycle of the harsh Western New York climate has taken its toll over the past century. There are multiple areas where the copper dome has deteriorated to a point that it is allowing substantial water infiltration, which, in turn, has caused plaster damage to interior areas of the sanctuary, as well as damage to painted artwork and frescoes.

Falling pieces of plaster from the interior of the dome has necessitated the recent installation of a series of nets (pictured below) around the



perimeter. They are designed to catch material before it damages the pews below.

“Given all of the wonderful work that has been done on restoring the Shrine over the last few years, we simply cannot ignore the damage to the dome,” says Msgr. David LiPuma, Pastor-Rector of OLV National Shrine & Basilica. *“The time has come.”*

OLV intends to completely replace the dome with copper materials, with all work meeting the high standards that are required by the Shrine’s



inclusion on the state and national historic registers. It is anticipated that the work will begin in the spring of 2024, with construction taking approximately two years. It is hoped it will be completed in time for the re-consecration of the Basilica in May 2026. The total cost of replacing the main copper dome, including the labor and materials necessary to remove the old roof and install a new one, exceeds \$3.5 million.

For information on how you can support this project, including the opportunity to adopt one of the Basilica’s 2,000 angels, call us at (716) 828-9610, scan the code at left, or go to OLVCharities.org/dome.

BEHIND THE JOB

There are few construction jobs with more pressure than those related to OLV National Shrine & Basilica. Three of the individuals who are up to the challenges involved with the upcoming dome project are *Hank Balling III of Guard Construction and Contracting Corp., and Jake Schneider, AIA, and Thomas R. Kujawa, AIA, of Schneider Architectural Services, PC. Here's what they had to say about the job...*



Q: WHY IS WORK ON THE DOME NECESSARY?

HB: The dome has suffered unabated lake-effect winds, rain, snow, and ice for 100 years. As such, critical copper-to-copper joints have failed, and the pre-existing copper is so worn that it can no longer be patched as new patches can no longer be soldered together with pre-existing copper.

TK&JS: The members of our restoration committee, in conjunction with our team of designers and roofing consultants, have determined that the most appropriate way ahead is to replace the copper dome with a new copper roof to match.

Q: WHY NOW?

HB: Failed joints allow water infiltration to deteriorate the underlying decking and, from there, put at risk the underlying structural steel framing. By addressing these issues now, we eliminate the possibility of frame degradation and potential structural instability.

Q: CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE PROJECT IN 25 WORDS OR LESS?

HB: We are charged with the removal and replacement of all the copper dome roofing elements and the top-of-dome ornate cupola copper cladding. *Look ... I did it in 24!*

TK&JS: First, we will erect scaffolding on all sides of the Basilica to access the dome roof. The existing copper roofing and wood-batten framing will be removed down to the existing concrete tile deck. Modern copper roofing will be installed to match the existing roofing and details. New copper vent portals and a new copper cupola will be installed. Finally, the existing cross will be cleaned and reinstalled on top of the cupola.

Q: IS THIS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT?

TK&JS: The project's biggest challenge is access. To the top of the cross, the Basilica is about 167 feet tall. It's going to be a challenge to get men and materials up to the work areas. We'll need scaffolding and construction elevators and then the time to erect all these temporary structures and then remove them at the completion of the work.



Q: WHY ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT THE PROJECT?

HB: In and of itself, the privilege to simply touch this iconic structure is reason to get up and smile every morning. Then, to passionately accept our role as caretaker. It's not only exciting, but a once-in-a-lifetime event!

TK: I am excited about two things: for the Basilica to have a gleaming copper roof that will keep it water tight for the next 100 years and I can't wait to climb to the top to view the work!



ADOPT AN ANGEL!

THERE ARE 2,000 ANGELS IN THE BASILICA

It was Father Nelson Baker's goal to ensure that at least one angel was found in every sight line within the Basilica. And that is certainly the case! Over the years, numerous attempts to count all of them have produced the agreed-upon figure of 2,000 angels.

Father Baker chose angels specifically for their role in reminding us all that angels are heralds of good news and comfort in difficult times. Through our "Adopt-an-Angel" program, you can be the same

To ensure the structural integrity and beauty of the OLV National Shrine & Basilica for decades to come, it is essential that the 100-year-old copper on the Main Dome be replaced. You can support this effort by making a gift of any size. *We ask you to consider adopting one of the 2,000 angels within the Basilica.*

**CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION AT
(716) 828-9610**



THE ARTIST

{ Nancy Hall's life has been marked by tragedy and triumph alike. Her artwork resonates with her talent, her passion, and her faith }

When entering the art studio of Nancy Hall, you are captivated by the intricate paintings scattered throughout the room. Upon reflection, one would just assume they were created by the hands of a skilled artist.



And while, yes, they have been made with incredible skill and vision, these beautiful works of art did not spring out of Nancy's hands, but, rather, her mouth.

Her story, one that includes heartbreak, tragedy, faith, and, of course, Father Baker's legacy of caring, is one that defines Nancy.

Born in Cheektowaga, N.Y., she moved around quite a bit during her childhood. At 15, Nancy became pregnant and acutely aware that she needed to acquire more skills to successfully raise a child. Like so many before her, she turned to Father Baker's "City of Charity" for help.

"When I went to OLV, they treated me with so much respect," she recalls. "They gave me and my entire family parenting classes. I had social workers that helped me get supplies. I even ended up teaching classes there, so I could give back to young mothers like me."

Fast forward to 2000 and Nancy and her (then) husband have five beautiful children. One night, when coming home from a motorcycle blessing at her church, tragedy struck. A foggy evening and an object in the road caused her to be thrown off her bike and more than 100 yards through the air.

Originally thought to have died at the accident, paramedics found Nancy's pulse and airlifted her to the Erie County Medical Center. Tests discovered she broke her neck at C-3 and sustained damage to her fourth and fifth vertebrae.

From the moment she awoke from a coma, she used prayer to lift herself up. Her faith was tested having been declared paralyzed by the medical staff. She poured all her efforts into getting off her ventilator and back to caring for her children.

Nancy received an outpouring of support from her family and friends. Having gone through a divorce, she purchased a house and worked hard to make a home for herself and her loved ones.

As her kids were doing their nightly homework, she started to get serious about a hobby she had been tinkering with: mouth painting.



In the beginning, Nancy had minimal movement in her left arm. She would grab a paint brush and put it to her mouth to create watercolor paintings. Eventually, though, she lost the use of her left arm. Not one to shy away from a challenge, she adapted to this new situation, finding solutions and a setting that would allow her to continue to paint.

Nancy moved into a studio space in her house that was constructed by her two sons, and she honed her skills there and, in 2011, became a student of the International Mouth & Foot Painting Artists' Association.

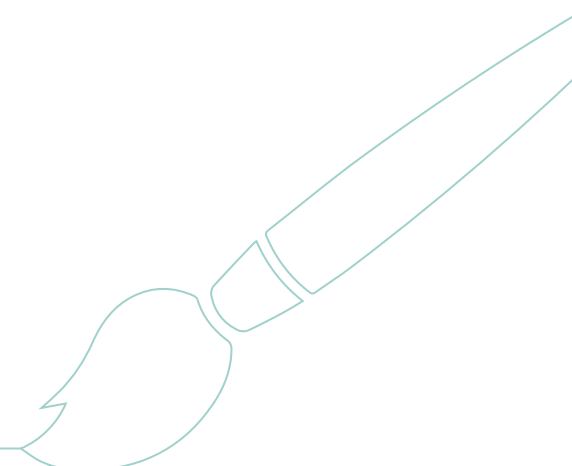
Throughout her years of mouth painting, Nancy has become keenly aware of the need to care for her teeth. And, as fate would have it, Nancy came to rely on OLV's Baker Victory Dental Center for her dental needs. What's more astounding is the center's office is located in the same spot, on the very same floor, as the clinic she visited in the 1980s.



"My hygienist, Ashley, is wonderful and has been so kind to me. She has never made me feel like a disabled person," Nancy says. "She and the team there have shown me nothing but dignity and respect, and I appreciate that."

Always one to look on the bright side, Nancy thanks God for her blessings. She keeps on smiling and painting. She is a living example of a sentiment that has been painted onto a sign that hangs in her studio: **faith makes all things possible.**

By John Pitts





STRONGER FAMILIES

The legacy of Father Nelson Baker goes back decades. His influence on communities and people in need truly paved the way for the provision of human services we have come to know and rely on today. Today, we at OLV Human Services continue to honor his legacy as we address current and emerging community needs.

While OLV supports thousands of individuals annually, we also support the families who love and live with those individuals. We pride ourselves on recognizing that family members need as much support as the person who is receiving services. Why? Because no one lives in a bubble. If the focus of efforts to improve outcomes are solely focused on the person who is in need, only half of the equation is being addressed. Families provide the lifeline for us to thrive and, when they are included as part of the solution, it accelerates positive and healthy change.

You may be wondering what happens with those individuals who have no family or other avenue of support. That, sadly, is a reality that we contend with. In those situations, we provide linkages to our or other community support resources that can assist those who are in need.

Helping those with no external supports realize that they are just as worthy for help, guidance, and compassion is a critical step in healing for them. OLV Human Services often stands in the gap for these individuals and ensures

that they do not live in the proverbial bubble that could prevent them from getting needed support.

Father Nelson Baker intuitively understood the importance of addressing societal needs as they emerged. He didn't wait for someone else to step up – he simply did it and didn't think twice about it. We are honored to continue in his footsteps and feel privileged to have the opportunity to help others in their path toward stability, happiness, and good health. **Stronger individuals and families make for stronger communities.** We are proud to be a part of that endeavor.

*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 care for between 10,000 and 12,000 children, teens and adults each year through a variety of outpatient, residential and educational programs. To learn more, go to OLVHS.org.




ADVENTURE AWAITS IN ALLEGANY STATE PARK



WHY CHOOSE CAMP TURNER?

The members of the Camp Turner team make it their mission to honor God in the children confided to their care. Offering one- and two-week sessions, campers can experience horseback riding, archery, hiking, creek-walks, and *so much more*.

 For more info on attending Camp Turner, visit CampTurner.org or scan the QR code to the left.


Financial assistance is available on request! For more info, visit FriendsOfCampTurner.org or scan the QR code to the right.



WHY WORK AT CAMP TURNER?

Camp Turner is the perfect place to develop skills such as leadership, collaboration, conflict resolution, responsibility, and empathy. Working at camp gives you the opportunity for competitive wages as well as training in First Aid, CPR, and more.

With employment that starts at the end of June and goes through mid August (with most weekends off), you get the perfect opportunity to impact the lives of young people, as well as gain life-long friendships.

 Visit CampTurner.com/employment to apply today or scan the QR code!

KIDS NIGHT UNDER THE DOME RECAP

MORE THAN 350 CHILDREN, PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS FILED INTO OLV NATIONAL SHRINE & BASILICA ON JANUARY 6 FOR A SPECIAL EVENING OF PRAYER, SONG, SIGHT-SEEING AND, OF COURSE, FAMILY FUN!

For many of the attendees, “Kids Night Under the Dome” was the first time they had been to the wondrous Basilica. Each family was encouraged to bring sleeping bags and blankets so that children could lay on their backs and gaze up at the Shrine’s dome and many works of art. Volunteers led the group in the singing of Christmas carols and several young people took part in a short play focused on the Epiphany.

After some time spent in the Basilica proper, families adjourned to the lower level where they enjoyed refreshments, coloring, and a close-up look at the visiting *Saint John’s Bible*. It was a special evening for all who attended!



“As this was the first time we had planned an event like this, we weren’t sure how many families would come—especially with the wintry weather. So, my heart was so happy when I looked out and saw over 300 happy faces smiling back at me,” says Msgr. David LiPuma, Pastor-Rector of OLV National Shrine & Basilica. “It was an important, vibrant, and energetic night for not only the kids, but the Basilica. What an evening. Like the kids, we will remember it for a long time!”





SUPPORTING PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

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



This five-year effort, funded through Lilly Endowment's Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, will work collaboratively with the Diocese of Buffalo and engage directly with families of parishes throughout the Diocese's Road to Renewal Parish Family Model. The Catholic Parenting Initiative will provide resources, programs, and formational activities and experiences that will strengthen ministries and supports, and give parish faith communities

confidence to walk alongside parents and caregivers as they share their faith and values with their children.

"This generous grant comes at an inflection point within the Diocese of Buffalo," said David J. Kersten, CEO of OLV Charities. "It gives us an opportunity to prioritize meaningful and continuous engagement with our parishes and families in the development of faith-formation ministries. We hope to implement a program that will provide support and guidance to interested parents and caregivers as they navigate their faith and the challenges of raising children today."

OLV Charities is one of 125 congregations and organizations across the nation that received grants through the Christian Parenting initiative. Reflecting the diversity of Christianity in the United States, the organizations are affiliated with mainline Protestant, evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and Pentecostal faith communities. Many of the organizations are rooted in Black church, Hispanic, and Asian Christian traditions.

“We’ve heard from many parents who are seeking to nurture the spiritual lives of their children, especially in their daily activities, and looking to churches and other faith-based organizations for support,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These thoughtful, creative and collaborative organizations embrace the important role that families have in shaping the religious development of children and are launching programs to assist parents and caregivers with this task.”

Lilly Endowment launched the Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative in 2022 because of its interest in supporting efforts to help individuals and families from diverse Christian communities draw more fully on the wisdom of Christian practices to live out their faith fully and well passing on a vibrant faith to a new generation.

ABOUT LILLY ENDOWMENT INC.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. A principal aim of the Endowment’s religion grantmaking is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christians in the United States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment also seeks to improve public understanding of diverse religious traditions by supporting fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the United States and across the globe.

Check our social media channels and websites for more information on this exciting—and important—endeavor in the months to come!



Lilly Endowment Inc.

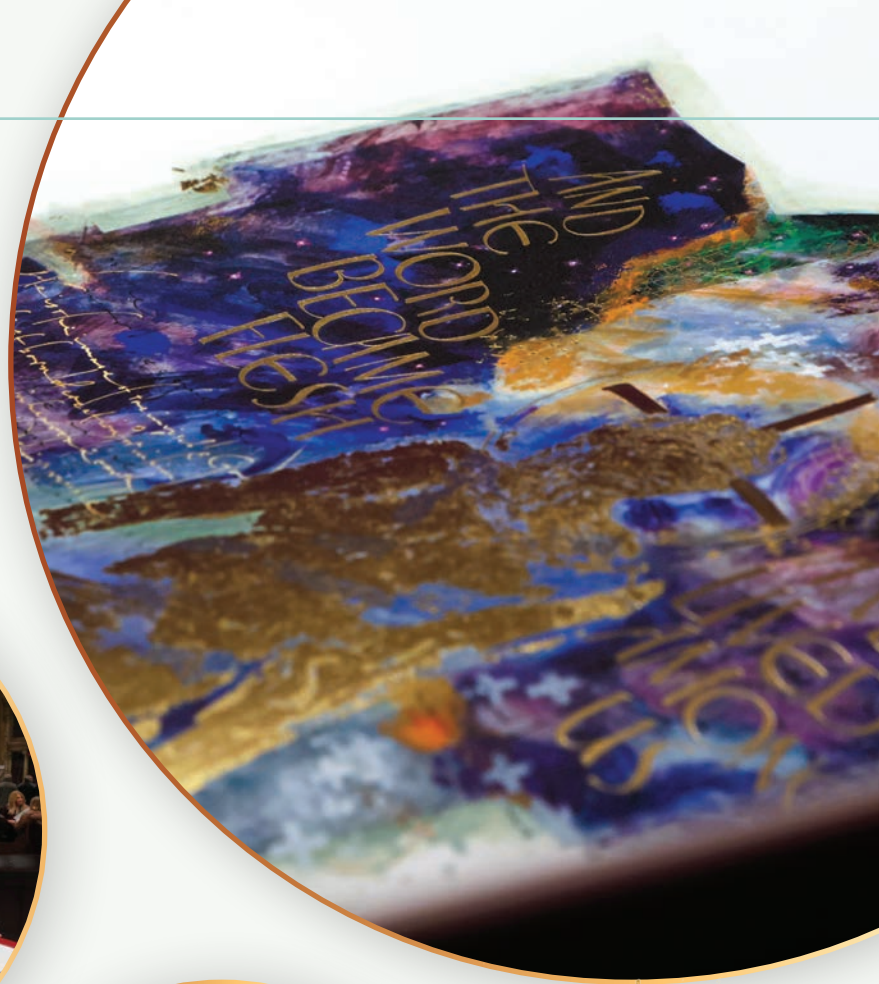
A private foundation since 1937

THE WORD ILLUMINATED



Throughout Advent, the OLV community played host to a modern masterpiece, *The Saint John's Bible*. The first bible to be hand-written, hand-illuminated, and hand-bound in more than 500 years, it is a wonder to behold. It is estimated that more than 2,000 children, adults, and seniors gazed at its artistry while the piece was here at the Basilica through various special events, Masses, and other celebrations. Thanks to all who came to see *The Saint John's Bible* at OLV!





LISTEN TO HIM





An Accomplished Life, **A FITTING LEGACY**

Andrew Dodges was a humble man who, according to his fiancé, Linda, was “always looking to pay it forward.” At her urging, he left a significant legacy that will help OLV Charities support the care and stewardship of OLV National Shrine & Basilica.

“This is a world-renowned Shrine with people coming to it from all over the world,” Linda remembers sharing with Andy. She brought him out for a visit and explained that, if the Shrine was going to be here for a long time, its upkeep was important. Andy could appreciate the need. A widower, the two met on a pilgrimage to Rome where they quickly became friends while touring the great churches in Italy.

Andy was no stranger to helping Catholic organizations. He supported his Catholic hospital, purchased a pipe organ, and provided significant annual support for his parish, and helped other organizations that had a deep meaning to him and his late wife, Mary Ann. In fact, Andy and Mary Ann, who had no children themselves, used to purchase cribs for the babies at OLV’s Infant Home.



A MAN OF MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS ...

Andy grew up in Buffalo's First Ward and often referred to himself as being part of the "Dead-End Kids," a group of youngsters that became well known to local policemen.

But World War II provided an opportunity for Andy and he served his country with great pride. His military medals honoring his service included a Bronze Star. At the encouragement of an Army officer, he pursued an education that changed his life. Andy graduated from the University of Alabama College of Engineering and embarked on a life-long career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



In the early 1960s, he was the resident engineer who was part of the team that built the replacement break wall on Buffalo's waterfront. He also oversaw the building of the Mount Morris Dam near Letchworth State Park, located just south of Rochester, NY. But his most remarkable achievement came in 1969 with the "turning off" of the American Falls in Niagara Falls, NY, by diverting the water from the Niagara River to the Canadian Horseshoe Falls.

... WHOSE LEGACY CONTINUES ON

Throughout his life, Andy compiled wealth by investing his



income and purchasing real estate. And, because of those investments, he was able to make a lasting impact on many charities here in Western New York, including OLV.

It is because of generous benefactors like Andy Dodges, and the recommendations of those who believe in our work, like Linda Snyder, that we are able to continue Father Nelson Baker's legacy and keep the crown jewel of his "City of Charity," OLV National Shrine & Basilica open for many years to come.

Thank you, Andy! May you rest in peace.

If you would like to learn more about how you can leave a legacy at OLV, please contact our office at (716) 828-9610.

By Eileen Hudson

GREETINGS FROM *Florida*

OLV Charities' leadership made a visit to Florida this past February to connect with some of our wonderful friends & benefactors



Share with us YOUR STORY

Father Nelson Baker knew he was going to need a hand if his “City of Charity” was going to help his wards develop, flourish and be able to realize their full potential. And so, he partnered with the Sisters of St. Joseph, already caring for the boys at St. Joseph’s Orphanage, and the Brothers of the Holy Infancy and Youth of Jesus to teach trades at St. John’s Protectorsy.

The dedicated presence and service of the Sisters of St. Joseph were integral to the success of the Institutions and are well known to all at Our Lady of Victory. On the other hand, the Brothers’ work, while lesser known, was essential to the trade program offered at St. John’s Protectorsy.

Although the origin of the order is unclear, we know they were founded around 1856 by Buffalo’s Bishop Timon. This congregation was unique to the diocese and was established for the care, teaching, and training of wayward and orphan boys. Father Baker guided the formal organization and growth of this young congregation, assisting in writing the rules and constitutions that would be approved in 1905.

The Brothers’ ministry was exclusively associated with the works of Father Baker. Specialized training in technical trades was critical to the education program offered at St. John’s Protectorsy. As quoted in Richard Gribble’s, CSC, book, *Father of the Fatherless*, “... the trade school’s success and value were recognized in 1897, when inspectors from Albany accredited the program as the best in the State of New York, making special mention of the work of the Brothers in that report.” But, more importantly, they were seen as positive role models for boys with troubled pasts.

In a recent issue of *Centennial* magazine, readers were asked if they had stories about relatives connected with Father Baker and his mission. One such donor, Pamela Denz, reached out. Her great uncle, Leo Hamm (Brother Paul Hamm, *pictured top right*), was a Brother of the Holy Infancy and Youth of Jesus who worked with Father Baker at the Protectorsy for 11 years. There, he won the respect and esteem of his superiors and charges alike. His work of caring for and educating the young

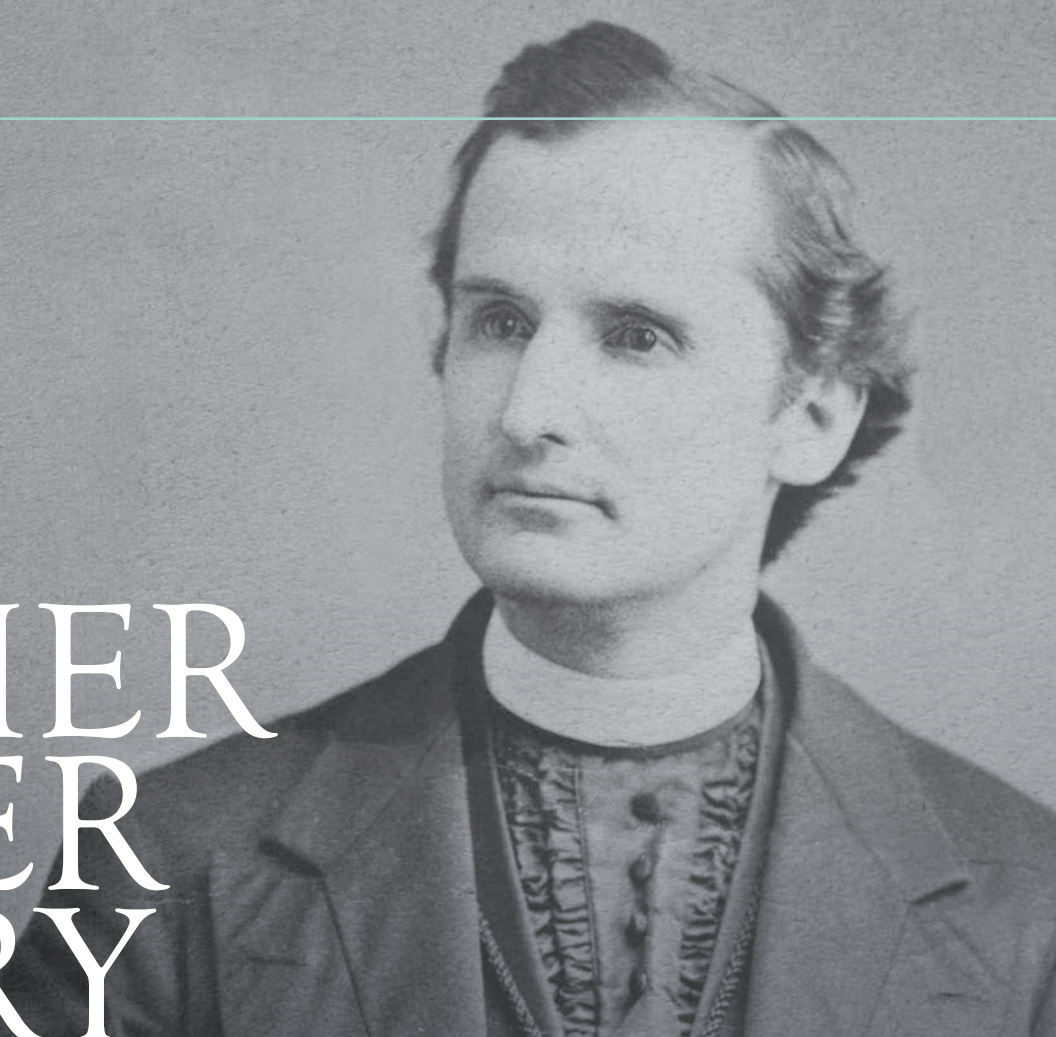
boys was seen as a labor of love and charity. Unfortunately, Brother Paul died of pneumonia at the age of 30 on October 25, 1918. His death notice stated that “he was mourned by none more than all of the young boys in his charge.”



Pamela’s story about Brother Paul has proved invaluable! It has broadened our history of the order’s work here at OLV and enhanced the collection in our Archives. We are most grateful for the information and photos she shared with us.

Do you have such a story, memory or memorabilia? If so, please contact Sister Dorothy Mueller, osf, at (716) 828-9622 or dmueller@olvcharities.org.

THE FATHER BAKER STORY



{ Part One }

As the visionary behind the growth of our organization throughout its formative years, we use the name Venerable Nelson Baker quite a bit in our mailings, brochures, and videos. In fact, he was mentioned 31 times alone in the last issue of *Centennial* magazine. But how well do you know his remarkable life story? In this, the first part of what will be a series dedicated to the humble priest, we explore his early years ...

Nelson was born to Lewis and Caroline Baker in Buffalo on February 16, 1842, the second of four boys (*in the photo to the right, he is the one in the upper right*). At the time, the city was booming! Its location on the Erie Canal made it the perfect place for goods and materials to flow to and from the cities of the northeastern U.S. Watching this happen before



his eyes, Nelson's father established a successful grocery store located downtown (on Batavia Street, what would become Broadway).

After graduating from Central High School, Nelson worked full-time at the store. At that point in his life, his path seemed straight forward: the young lad's charm and ability with numbers meant he was destined to either take over the family business when his father retired or use these gifts to start a company of his own.

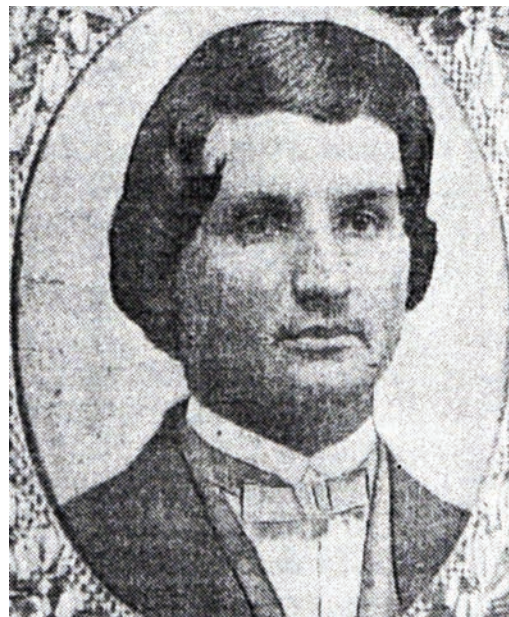
But then, history intervened. Nelson was 21 years old in June of 1863 when news broke that the Confederate army had moved into Pennsylvania. Answering a call to duty, he enlisted with the 74th New York State Militia. After serving at the Battle of Gettysburg and being sent to keep the peace during draft riots in New York City, Nelson and his fellow troops returned home.

Shortly after, he approached a friend, Joseph Meyer, with an idea to start a feed-and-grain business of his own. In no time, Meyer & Baker opened and began to turn a profit. During these years, Nelson was generous with his time and money. He felt that God had blessed his entire family and that he was obliged to give back to the less fortunate.

He volunteered as a Sunday School teacher and donated food to an orphanage located south of the city, in Limestone Hill (later, it would be renamed Lackawanna). He also joined the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. But, like many people in their mid-20s, Nelson was restless and unsure of his life's path.

Struggling internally with the question of his future, he shared his feelings with friends and family members. One of those individuals was Father Joseph Hines who ran the orphanage at which Nelson volunteered. In these talks, the seeds of a life in the priesthood were planted in Nelson's mind.

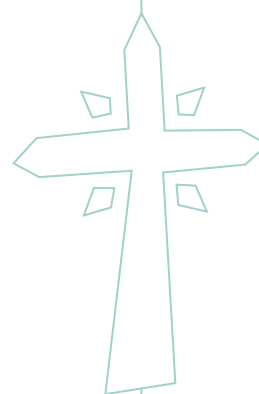
After an 18-day boat trip around the Great Lakes to clear his head, Nelson decided to give his life to God. The first person to hear the news was his mother, who was overjoyed. Others, including his father and business partner, were less pleased. Later, he wrote: "Father does not like that I am here [in the seminary]. Nor my business partner (Joe), nor my brothers, but my mother and God and Mary do."



And that was good enough for Nelson! On September 2, 1869, at the "advanced age" of 27, he entered the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels (located where the campus of Niagara University stands today) and his life would never be the same.



*Part Two of this series will run in the fall issue. If you just can't wait, visit FatherBaker.org or download the *Father Baker: Retold* podcast wherever you find your podcasts. You can also scan the QR code to learn more.*





A Christmas that glowed WITH LOVE...

The Christmas season was filled with surprise, joy, and a lot of LOVE for the children and families served by OLV Human Services (OLVHS). Donors and employees from a few local companies made it a very special holiday for those in need.

The process began in the fall with social workers compiling a gift list from OLVHS’ young clients that included toys, clothes, and other needs. The items were then added to a registry on Amazon.com. Donors had the ability to go to the registry to select gifts that were then shipped to OLV Charities. Once the items arrived, social workers collected the gifts and delivered them to the appropriate families.

In 2023, 1,000 gifts were distributed, the highest number ever. In addition to gifts purchased from the registry, a 90-year-old donor from Florida sent 10 hand-made sweaters. Deep appreciation was shared by both recipients and donors alike. One generous benefactor sent the following note: *“Thanks for letting my wife and I do something nice for children in need this Christmas.”*



This year, two local companies—Amazon Warehouse in Hamburg and Wayland Brewing in Orchard Park—participated in adopt-a-family programs. Each company provided gifts for two families. Their contribution didn’t end there, though, when it came time for sorting and packing gifts, six Amazon employees came to campus to help, while several Wayland Brewing team members held a wrapping party at the brewery. Both companies found this program very rewarding and plan on participating in 2024.

If this way of getting into the Christmas spirit appeals to you, be on the lookout for emails or social media posts about the 2024 gift-giving drive, or call Shannon Donovan at (716) 828-9610. You can make Christmas special for a child or family in need!

An Historic ACCOMPLISHMENT

After a two-year process, the Basilica, and a surrounding district encompassing Father Baker legacy buildings, has been **officially listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places.**

The State and National Registers are lists of properties significant in history, architecture, engineering, landscape design, archaeology, and culture. Kerry Traynor of KTA Preservation Specialists, whose firm assisted OLV throughout the process notes, *“The OLV National Shrine & Basilica, the second minor basilica in the United States, is the most architecturally spectacular Roman Catholic church building in WNY.*



The OLV district includes the former Orphanage (now OLV Charities’ administration building), former Infant Home (now home to a number of OLV Human Services’ programs), former Maternity Hospital (now Catholic Health’s OLV Senior Neighborhood), as well as Baker Hall School, the OLV Rectory and OLV Elementary School. *“As stewards of the incredible buildings, history, and legacy left to us by Father Nelson Baker, it was so important to us to have the Basilica and OLV district listed on the State and National Historic Registers,”* says David Kersten, CEO of OLV Charities. *“Listing not only raises awareness of the significance of the properties, but will help ensure their long-term viability, protection, and preservation for years to come.”*



Broadcasts BAKER

**LISTEN TO ONE OF OLV'S
NEW PODCASTS!**

Whether you're looking for prayerful
inspiration, more information about the
life of Father Baker, or current Catholic
topics, OLV has a podcast for you!

 **OLVCharities**
A Father Baker Legacy



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

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.

April
28

Incipio Choral Ensemble | 7 p.m.

Join us as the Incipio Choral Ensemble presents "GLORIA," a celebration of triumphant choral sound at OLV National Shrine & Basilica. That night, the group will perform the world premiere of Roland Martin's full choral and organ song cycle, *Such Glorious Gifts*, alongside shorter works for large choir and organ. Ticket information will be forthcoming.

May
18 and
June
15

Paint Out! | Starting at 9 a.m.

Join us on either of two days (May 18 and/or June 15) for outdoor painting and sketching at OLV National Shrine & Basilica. Works of art created at these events will later be exhibited and judged. For details, contact Bernice Smith at bms0916@aol.com.

July
27-28

Father Baker Weekend

Mark your calendars for Father Baker Weekend at the end of July. This year's events will include a Jazz Mass, Father Baker Day festivities and our annual Pennies to Heaven fundraiser and chicken barbecue. Details will be coming soon, so stay tuned to olvbasilica.org or our social media channels.

September
29

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Concert

Save the date for a special performance, dedicated to Our Lady of Victory, by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra at OLV National Shrine & Basilica. If you were at the 2022 concert, you know why we are excited about this one. Details, including ticket information, will be coming soon, so stay tuned to our social media channels.

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