

Local craftsmen design and fabricate unique ray burst monstrance

Story by Janet Marcel



LAWRENCE CHATAGNIER/BAYOU CATHOLIC

After Father Antonio Maria Speedy was ordained a priest in December 2014, Bishop Shelton J. Fabre assigned him to the ministry of chaplain for the Office of New Evangelization. He and Paul Maclean, lay coordinator for that office, immediately began praying about new ways of evangelizing the people of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux.

"When our community of the Little Friars and Little Nuns first came to the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux with the dual charism of a contemplative prayer life and evangelization along the streets, we realized we had to stretch our creativity beyond the 'typical European street' that usually thrives with people walking from one place to another. Inspired by our 'out on the streets charism,' while at the same time recognizing the demographics of this diocese, we were regularly reminded of the local Catholic history that is so closely linked to the bayous. Priests such as Peré Charles Menard and Father Andrew Souby traveled tirelessly up and down these waterways in the establishment of the first parishes in this area," says Father Speedy.

Maclean knew that Father Dean Danos had organized small eucharistic processions for years along the bayous of the diocese traveling by boat. Father Speedy says the idea of bringing the eucharistic Jesus out onto the waterways sounded inspiring and appropriate. In 2017, they began planning the First Annual Bayou Lafourche Eucharistic Procession. They discovered that Father Michael Champagne, C.J.C., from the Diocese of Lafayette, had organized such a eucharistic procession along Bayou Teche.

"Father Champagne agreed to lend us the monstrance he uses for their procession, where we noted that he used a six inch host in a monstrance made by local craftsmen. When our 2017 plans had to be cancelled because of Hurricane Nate, we were given another year to pray and prepare for 2018 and began considering the possibility of making our own monstrance with local talent," says Father Speedy. "Little did we expect to find *so much* talent, and little did we expect the final result to end up so very beautiful."

Having studied Father Champagne's monstrance, Father Speedy says it was clear that they also needed one of a similar size: large enough to be seen from either side of the bayou as the boat passed. Knowing that Mervyn LeBlanc, of LeBlanc & Associates, had the steel cutting equipment and technology to cut something similar, Father Speedy approached him for advice. LeBlanc suggested that they visit Bobby Corte Jr., and soon, they were all enthusiastically brainstorming ideas about how and what →

to do to make the best monstrance possible given their limitations.

Corte, founder and CEO of CORTEC, LLC, in Houma, says he and LeBlanc know from experience that successful results are best achieved by pulling the right people into the project.

"When I was approached about participating in the project by Father Speedy and Mervyn LeBlanc, I knew immediately to ask Courtney Foret to work on the design. Foret is a mechanical designer employed by CORTEC who is also very artistically talented. The final design was definitely a collaborative effort with everyone participating and providing input. Father Speedy provided oversight and ultimately approved the final design rendering before production," says Corte.

There are multiple components in the monstrance assembly including a Luna, the housing, a decorative ray burst and the pole. Corte's wife Ginny did research on the requirements for construction materials and finishes prior to starting the project. Once these were known they elected to purchase the Luna and housing from a specialty store, the F.C. Ziegler Company. Corte says it was important to Father Speedy to keep local content and utilize local resources, so rather than purchasing a completely finished monstrance, the ray burst and pole were manufactured at CORTEC, LLC. Multiple people employed by CORTEC, LLC were involved in the machining and fabrication process. The rays and pole were designed using Auto CAD 3D modeling software, allowing them to produce three-dimensional models with various design features for Father Speedy to consider.

After having an approved design, the intricate features of the monstrance rays were cut from a brass plate using a water jet which produces a high-pressure jet of water mixed with abrasives to cut various grades of steel and alloys, explains Corte.

"The monstrance pole, made from a combination of solid brass round bar and brass tubing, was machined using computer controlled (CNC) lathes and mills. It's entirely original design work, designed and produced locally. After



Courtney Foret, a mechanical designer with CORTEC, LLC, worked on the design of the monstrance.

the cutting and machine work were done, I enjoyed the hours of hand deburring and sanding needed to prepare the monstrance for the desired surface finishes. I truly enjoyed the time spent on the finish work. Working on such a meaningful piece for the church was very fulfilling," adds Corte.

The entire project took about 11 weeks from start to finish including design and planning. The monstrance housing and the Luna are gold plated. The ray burst and pole are brass construction; after the deburring and sanding, the finish polishing and lacquer sealing was done by Zito's Plating and Polishing of New Orleans.

"I was pleased and excited to be part of a project that allowed all of us to express our skill, our faith, and our dedication to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And in the end, we were all pleased at our 'first effort' for such an unusual task and are happy to share it all with our diocese.

I love the entire final design, but the one feature most symbolic to me is the repeated wheat grain image arrayed around the ray burst; fortunately for me this was also a favorite of Father Speedy," says Corte.

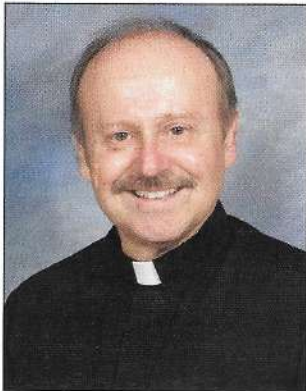
"I was blessed to be able to share my God given talent on this project," says Foret. "I'm elated that I was chosen for the design of the monstrance project. You never know when or where you will be called to do God's work!"

Father Speedy says they have not officially decided where the monstrance will be stored. However, as it was made primarily for the Annual Bayou Lafourche Eucharistic Procession and secondarily for any other diocesan event, it is most likely that it will be housed at St. Joseph Co-Cathedral in Thibodaux where the eucharistic procession ends. **BC**



Bobby Corte Jr., Friar Volantino Verde, Courtney Foret and Mervyn LeBlanc discuss the plating options for the monstrance.

Bishop Fabre announces pastoral appointments



Rev. Michael Bergeron



Rev. Antonio Maria Speedy

In order to provide pastoral care for the people of God of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Bishop Shelton J. Fabre has announced the following pastoral appointments, effective immediately.

The **Rev. Michael Bergeron**, who has been serving as spiritual administrator of Holy Family Church parish in Grand Caillou since July 2018, has been granted permission to take a leave of absence to care for family. Father Bergeron, a native of Houma, LA, was ordained to the priesthood June 8, 1996.

The **Rev. Antonio Maria Speedy**, who has been serving in specialized ministry since December 2014, has been appointed administrator of Holy Family Church parish in Grand Caillou. Father Speedy, a native of Adelaide, South Australia, was ordained to the priesthood Dec. 6, 2014. **BC**



Judge David M. Richard

Judge David M. Richard inducted into E.D. White 2018 Hall of Fame

law since September 1970.

Richard served as city attorney for the City of Thibodaux from January 1974 to November 1976, and was elected Thibodaux city judge where he served from November 1976 until his retirement Dec. 31, 2008. He is a member of the Louisiana Retired Judges Association, Louisiana State Bar Association and Lafourche Parish Bar Association. He was president of the Lafourche Parish Bar Association, vice president of the St. Genevieve school board, and vice president of the E.D. White school board.

Richard received Thibodaux's Outstanding Young Man Award in 1976; NSU College of Business Administration Outstanding Alumnus Award in 1977; James Lynn Powell Outstanding Alumnus of NSU Award in 1978; was named an E.D. White

Cardinal Great in 2001; was recognized as a Knight in the Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great in 2002; was named E.D. White Alumnus of the Year in 2003; and received the Frank Kennedy Citizen of the Year Award in 2012. He also served as stadium announcer for all E.D. White varsity football games for 37 years from 1973 to 2010.

He and his wife Connie Percle Richard reside in Thibodaux. They have three children who are all graduates of E.D. White: Lisa R. Richard '85; Michelle R. Chiasson '86; and Celeste R. Fontz '93, and seven grandchildren.

The Hall of Fame recognizes and honors those who have exhibited outstanding Christian values in their contribution to their profession and in their religious, civic, business or educational involvement. **BC**

E.D. White Catholic High School in Thibodaux recently inducted Judge David M. Richard into its 2018 Hall of Fame.

Richard is a 1963 graduate of Thibodaux College. He earned a bachelor of science degree in accounting in 1967 from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux and a juris doctorate degree from Louisiana State University Law School in Baton Rouge in 1970. He has engaged in the general practice of