



THE SHRINE OF OUR
LADY OF LA LECHE
AT MISSION NOMBRE DE DIOS
Saint Augustine, Florida

Sharing
CHRIST
through
MARY

A CAMPAIGN FOR
OUR LADY OF
LA LECHE SHRINE



A Message from BISHOP ESTÉVEZ

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Located at the center of the tranquil grounds of Mission Nombre de Dios, the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche is the first shrine dedicated to Our Blessed Mother in the United States.

Thousands of visitors and pilgrims from around the world make their way to the Shrine every year. As our present-day visitors walk through the historic grounds at the Mission, they retrace the steps of St. Augustine's founding fathers who were greeted by the Timucuan more than 450 years ago.

Today, the Shrine continues to serve as a comforting place of prayer for mothers-to-be, families, special intentions, and those seeking to strengthen their faith.



Building on our 400+ year legacy, we are embarking on an ambitious and transformative campaign focused on providing the necessary infrastructure to accommodate our increasing number of visitors and pilgrims, addressing the damage done by hurricanes, and building national recognition for devotion to Our Lady of La Leche.

This is the time for us to re-consecrate our sacred acre to God and prepare to serve the next generation of pilgrims and visitors. With your generosity and loving hospitality we can embrace those who journey to experience moments of spiritual renewal and His holy grace at the Shrine.

May Our Lady of La Leche, whose presence has accompanied us for more than four centuries, intercede for us in our prayers and may her loving gaze assure us that nothing will separate us from the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

+ v . . Estévez

The Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez, S.T.D.
Bishop of St. Augustine



A New Vision FOR A CENTURIES OLD SHRINE

The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche was founded 450 years ago to evangelize and serves to lead the pilgrim, visitor, and all faithful closer to Jesus Christ through the love and intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary.

The Diocese of St. Augustine seeks to grow a devotion to Our Lady of La Leche, who leads all to the heart of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. By opening the doors to all, the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche will offer spaces to which both the faithful and lost go to find peace, hope, love, and healing in Christ.

“Sanctuarium in Ecclesia” Apostolic Letter of the Holy Father Francis in the form of a Motu Proprio transferring competence for Shrines to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization – January 4, 2017.

“... Here they experience deeply God's closeness, the tenderness of the Virgin Mary and the company of the Saints: an experience of true spirituality that cannot be underestimated...”

“The great influx of pilgrims, the humble and simple prayer of God's people alternating with liturgical celebrations, the fulfilment of so many graces that many believers affirm they have received and the natural beauty of these places enable us to see how the Shrines, in their various forms, express an indispensable opportunity for evangelization in our time.”





The Mission & SHRINE'S HOLY HISTORY

1565

On September 8, 1565 Pedro Menéndez de Aviles comes ashore to proclaim the land for God and for Spain. The first ever parish mass in the United States is celebrated.



1577

The first Spanish settlers and soldiers establish the first Shrine to the Holy Virgin in the United States.



1677

The first stone church in the United States is erected on the Sacred Acre.



1875

Augustin Verot, first Bishop of the diocese, rebuilds a Chapel on the Mission Grounds.



1877 or 1878

A hurricane destroys the chapel.

1915

The Historic Chapel is reconstructed on the Mission's sacred acre.



1965

In honor of the Mission & Shrine's 400th anniversary and thanksgiving for peace and aversion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Prince of Peace Votive Church is erected to serve as a place of prayers for peace.



1966

The Great Cross is raised to memorialize the Mission & Shrine as the place where the seeds of Christianity were first planted in the US. A gift of the Church with the support of the city of St. Augustine.



2015

The Prince of Peace Votive Church expands by 2,500 square feet, adding two confessionals, two clergy offices, and seating for 225 people. A diocesan Feast Day is granted by the Holy See to be added in the diocesan liturgical calendar. The Church becomes the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche.



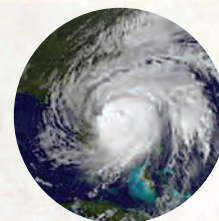
2016

A vision and mission of evangelization is shared for the next generation of pilgrims and visitors..



2016-2017

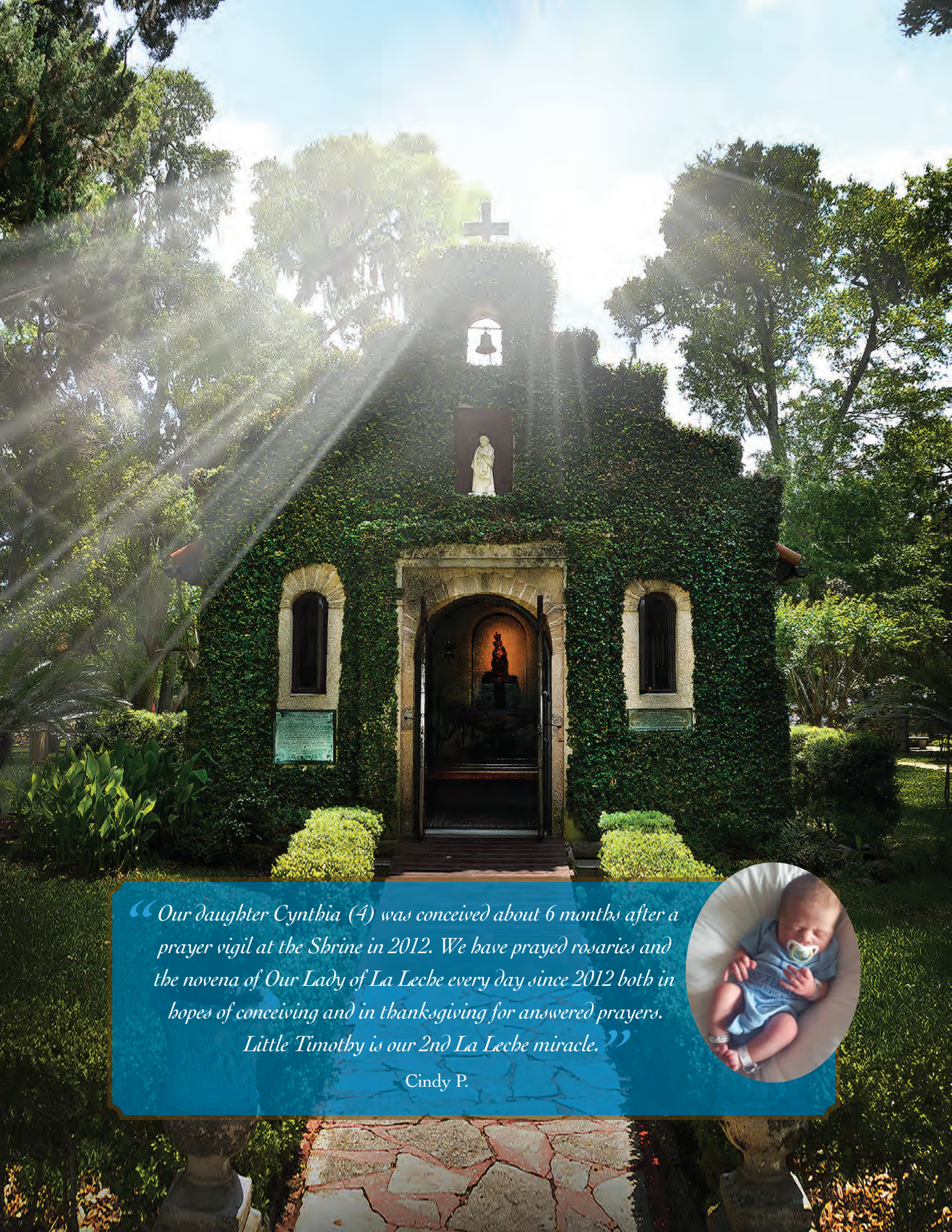
Hurricanes Matthew and Irma devastate the sacred acre resulting in a loss of trees, damage to the historic chapel, both bridges, landscape, pathways, and resulting in complete demolition of the offices and existing gift shop.



2018

Called to move forward, The Campaign for the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche is launched.





“Our daughter Cynthia (4) was conceived about 6 months after a prayer vigil at the Shrine in 2012. We have prayed rosaries and the novena of Our Lady of La Leche every day since 2012 both in hopes of conceiving and in thanksgiving for answered prayers. Little Timothy is our 2nd La Leche miracle.”

Cindy P.



“It’s a blessing that our group had the chance to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche at Mission Nombre de Dios. We learned a lot of rich and amazing history of the Shrine and the Mission. Our group had a great time and we could feel the Holy Spirit accompanying us throughout our pilgrimage. It is a beautiful place and the tour guide was very knowledgeable. It’s really worth spending a day at the Mission!”

Chinese Apostolate, Archdiocese of Miami
Bernadette Chik



“We had the privilege of bringing our 6th and 7th grade girls on retreat at the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche this spring for our end of the year retreat. Not only were we warmly welcomed by the staff, but we were able to utilize the new Shrine church for Mass and adoration as well. The grounds were a beautiful backdrop for reflection and prayer; and provided plenty of room for activities, games, and small group discussions. The retreat was a wonderful success and we look forward to the opportunity to enjoy the mission grounds again.”

Cathedral Parish School, St. Augustine, Florida
Melody Ott





Connections ACROSS GENERATIONS

The Shrine serves as the heart of our diocese, and it's mission to share the love and hope of Christ through Mary, reaches out to all ages. Families come often to pray for fertility, healthy pregnancies, and the spiritual health of their loved ones. Lighted candles in the Historic Chapel bear witness to the prayers, hopes and faith of our pilgrims. Through Mary's intercession many find comfort and solace, and another generation of faithful are born!

The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche is a favorite field trip destination for all students, regardless of their religious or educational background. The Shrine is a living and breathing place of history and faith. Teachers are provided with a fourth-grade curriculum and lesson plan that includes the Spanish history of the site to include a century of successful Franciscan missionary efforts that originated at the Shrine.

Middle school religious teachers and catechists bring students on retreat to share the beauty of Mary and the saints with those preparing for Confirmation. Students have a chance to walk a holy path that leads them into the arms of Mary. High schools come together with the senior classes to celebrate mass as one before graduation, and to contemplate consecration to Mary.

The faithful and pilgrim looking to reconcile and find Christ in the celebration of Eucharist are drawn daily to the sacraments of confession and mass. The Rosary, healing services, and other devotional prayer opportunities are growing and bring various ministry groups for spiritual renewal and pilgrimage.

A committee is now in place to focus on developing new and deeper conversion, and pilgrimage opportunities for families, youth and young adults to include family rosary times.



THE SHRINE'S *impact*

Annual number of school field trips: 40

Annual number of Masses celebrated: 400+

Annual Mass attendance: 47,000+

Annual Pilgrimage groups: 36+

March for Life Visitors: 3,000

Annual Visitors: 30,000+

The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche is a national treasure that serves and evangelizes across generations. We must protect it. Accordingly, we are building and planning to secure the Shrine's future.

Your investment is key in supporting the continuity and growth of the oldest Marian Shrine and the site of the first parish mass celebrated in the United States of America.

Advancing Our FAITH

We have created a plan to address the current and future needs of the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche based on the results of a recent feasibility study. As we seek National Shrine Status and the opportunity to reach even more pilgrims, enhancements need to be made to ensure the Mission of Shrine offers a comprehensive pilgrim experience and place of respite that will enrich the spiritual journey of all who journey to us.

Every element of the plan is necessary. We're confident in our ability to raise \$7 million and have established as a challenge goal \$8 million to complete our full vision. To reach this challenge goal, we need transformational gifts through the extraordinary generosity of our community to meet this challenge.

PHASE I - COMPLETE

Phase I of the Shrine's renovation and expansion began in 2015 with the conversion of Prince of Peace Church to the Shrine of our Lady of La Leche. With generous donations to the Bishop's Vision Campaign, an addition to the Prince of Peace Votive Church added 2,500 square feet, two confessionals, two offices for clergy, and seating for 225 people. An older house on property was converted to serve as a rectory and two priests were brought in from the ICC Community to provide pastoral care for the pilgrims and staff as well as to support and facilitate pilgrimage activities.



Improving & Rebuilding FOR THE FAITHFUL



Improving & Rebuilding FOR THE FAITHFUL

PHASE II (2018 - 2020)



Accessibility & Safety » \$1,800,000

An unprecedented storm surge not only flooded the Mission grounds, but also rendered the bridges and many of the walking paths unsafe to traverse. All new walking paths, handrails, and lights will be installed. Bulkheads will be put in place to stop soil erosion from future storms and protect this holy site.



Landscape & Design » \$930,000

Extensive hurricane damage has resulted in a large loss of mature trees and landscaping at the Shrine. A master landscape plan will restore the natural wonder of the sacred acre and mission grounds. A new Rosary garden will provide a beautiful setting for group or individual devotion and memorial opportunities. A perimeter fence will both protect, and create a sense of reverence for this historic and sacred site.



Pilgrimage Center & Pavilion » \$2,100,000

Pilgrimages to the Shrine vary in size, numbering from as small as 25 to as great as 2,000. The majority of visiting groups average 50 to 80 individuals. Pilgrim, parish, and ministry groups will now have the space to convene in prayer, renewal, and study. The outdoor pavilion will accommodate picnicking school groups and families, providing shade and seating. The meeting room will have capacity to host groups as large as 90, and provides a pre-meeting space for hospitality, accessible restrooms, and outdoor kiosk for purchase of candles and beverages.



Gift Shop Recovery » \$315,000

One of the most beloved experiences in the diocese is the Shrine's gift shop. Damage from flooding necessitated the demolition of the original gift shop building. After spending a year temporarily housed in a trailer, the gift shop has been completely relocated to its permanent home in the museum and a manager's office is attached. This new location will naturally draw visitors and pilgrims in as they step off the trolley or park and begin their visit at the Shrine.



Improving & Rebuilding FOR THE FAITHFUL

PHASE III



Outdoor Amphitheater » (Cost Pending)

The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche attracts gatherings of several hundred to thousands of people for larger events each year; including the Right to Life March, World Youth Day Pilgrimage, Founder's Day Celebration, the Feast Day of Our Lady of La Leche, and the Cathedral Parish Carnival. A beautifully landscaped outdoor amphitheater will be integrated into the grounds to accommodate 700 people. Designed to support and host multiple functions, the amphitheater will be a place to gather for Mass, lectures, processions, youth praise and worship, conventions, and concerts.



Archeological Excavation & Preservation » (Cost Pending)

The Mission and Shrine grounds are home to the oldest stone church in the United States. In September 2018, archaeologists began an excavation of the church which many believe dates back to 1677. This excavation site that includes parts of the foundation and floor, will be preserved and made accessible to visitors through careful restructuring of irrigation systems as well as a permanent display area so all can experience the history and wonder of the site.



Educational & Instructional Signage » (Cost Pending)

The grounds will be immersive for pilgrims, complete with engaging signage and thoughtful demarcations of educational signage. Visitors will be able to guide themselves through the sacred acre with displays throughout the property that share the national history and spiritual importance of the site.



Stewardship FOR A LEGACY OF FAITH

The Shrine is a blessed place that must be kept open to all who seek to find solace, love, and mercy. A strategy for sustainability has been created to ensure that this remarkable vision can continue to grow under a plan for financial responsibility.

St. Augustine welcomes over four million tourists annually and this number continues to grow. Parking has become increasingly sparse in the city and the issue of creating more spaces has been a priority for city government.

Today, a team of committed members of the Diocese are developing plans for a three-story parking garage to be built on the existing parking space. This parking garage will allow pilgrims to find parking more easily, and it will generate a steady and substantial revenue stream to ensure the operations and maintenance needs of the entire property on an annual basis.



Stewardship FOR A LEGACY OF FAITH

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We are the stewards of a Catholic treasure. Now is the time to repair and prepare our sacred space to enrich the Catholic experience for our children and grandchildren and the countless pilgrims who seek comfort from Our Lady.

When the Shrine of Our Lady of La Lache was founded,
Catholicism was new to our country.

History has shown us that martyrs made the ultimate sacrifice on the
Mission Nombre de Dios grounds to protect the Eucharist.

It is now our turn to invest in and commit to the future of
the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche, so that our community
and the pilgrims we welcome in the coming years will be
refreshed and inspired for centuries to come.

THIS CAMPAIGN SEEKS THE PARTICIPATION OF OUR ENTIRE DIOCESE AND BEYOND

In order to be successful, we need the support of many, not just a few. We seek to begin work on these important projects by raising a minimum of \$7 million and work towards a challenge goal of \$8 million. The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche campaign marks an exciting time in our diocesan history. In 2020 we will celebrate 150 years as a diocese and in honor of the Feast day of Our Lady of La Leche, there will be a crowning of Mary.

As we grow in spirit and mission, help us offer a continuing invitation to share Christ through Mary with all who journey to the Shrine. Through your prayers, participation, stewardship and generosity we can all serve in discipleship to ensure the growing mission of evangelization and the continuing conversion of hearts and minds.

Our heartfelt thanks to those noted below who have graciously shared their leadership and time to ensure the success and future of the Shrine.

SHRINE CAMPAIGN CABINET MEMBERS

DEBBIE ENGLISH, Campaign Co-Chair
MARY PAT KULIK, Campaign Co-chair
CATHERINE TURNER, Campaign Co-Chair
BROOKE ACOSTA-RUA
LEIGH BARBOUR
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DIOCESE OF
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