

# SUPPORTING THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY

By Jennifer Younger, Executive Director (Retired), CRRA

CRRA Corner first appeared in June 2016 when Rose Fortier, Marquette University, and Pat Lawton, Digital Projects Librarian, formally introduced CRRA and its mission of enhancing access to Catholic resources to readers of *Catholic Library World*. Since then, we have been inspired by many readers who told us how their use of CRRA resources—the *Catholic Portal*, *CRRA Subject Guides*, and the *Catholic News Archive*—supported their research.

Users say it best in telling the value of these resources.

A journalist wrote “compelling reading...on the revolutionary changes that took place in the Church in the 1960s; all the Catholic News Archive needs is more content.”

Professors mention that their students love “clicking through to source materials” and exploring how Catholicism engages with the broader world in which it exists.

A library director reported that students liked the user-friendly interface as well as the browsability of entire newspaper issues with professors giving high marks to the quality of student research. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and I’m delighted to share it here.

We regularly hear from archivists and librarians who tell us how they do a better job of helping their users.

One librarian was delighted to find the full text of the Philadelphia Catholics response in 1844 to Anti-Nativists in the *Catholic Telegraph* because it wasn’t in the Philadelphia newspaper.

An archivist said she can answer three times as many questions using the digitized newspapers, while another archivist zeroed in on finding the history of a local parish via the Portal.

Sharon Kabel, an independent researcher who recently completed *The Periti of Vatican II* wrote, “the Catholic News Archive was crucial in confirming the ‘real’ first names of the periti, and the Portal was the perfect complement to find archival collections of periti papers.”

Similarly, Karen Lesiak, a retired library director and CRRA digitizing partner, mentioned that the thousands of newspaper articles in the Catholic News Archive and documents in archival collections found via the Portal were invaluable in putting a multi-faceted perspective on the impact of the Second Vatican Council as a turning point in Church history (Lesiak, 2020).

Let me continue by telling you a few more stories.

From Manhattan College, Associate Professor Kevin Ahern wrote: “The Catholic News Archive is invaluable for me in my role as a theologian, professor, and leader in international lay movements.” He continued: “I’m now using the archives to explore the collapse of the National Federation of Catholic College Students in the 1950s and 1960s. Access to the news articles has been very helpful, particularly since COVID has made travel to university archives at Notre Dame, CUA, and in Europe difficult.”

Audra Dugandzic, a graduate student in sociology at the University of Notre Dame, is exploring how the liturgical changes made after Vatican II might be implicated in religious and political polarization among American Catholics. Diocesan newspapers tell what was happening beyond the walls of the chancery and round out

what is learned from diocesan liturgy commissions and other documents.

Perhaps my favorite story comes from two parishioners in the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, who were researching parish history for anniversary celebrations. Their open web searches led them to news articles in the Archive and their delight in finding information about their respective parish churches motivated them to donate money. Donations like this enable even more content to be discovered.

Unexpected discoveries can show up in searches.

Kevin Ahern’s experience says it all: “As a pleasant surprise, I also discovered a whole series (from the *Catholic World in Pictures*) of images of leaf etchings by a De La Salle brother at my own college from the 1940s. I later found out he was called Leafy Louie—his craft was impressive, and I put a series of twitter posts about it online last year. So, the archive also helps to reveal things that might be in the building next door!”

Usage statistics tell another part of the story. In the first half of 2021, users consulted more than 24,500 pages in the Portal on topics ranging from Catholic education and local church history to Catholic pamphlets and labor relations. During the same period, users consulted 2,557 pages in the *Subject Guides*, of which *Religious Orders for Women* was the most frequently consulted. They also viewed over half a million pages in the Catholic News Archive. While most usage comes from the United States, about ten to fifteen percent of users were located in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Italy, India, Australia, and the Philippines.

Many users find these resources through open web searches yet direct referrals from libraries and other websites show that they play an important role in apprising users of these resources. The American Catholic Historical Association (ACHA) invites its members to explore the rare and unique materials held in the Portal through its #HiddenCatholicCollections project at achahistory.org/hidden. Similarly, the Catholic Worker Movement provides a link to its newspaper, which is in the Catholic News Archive, at catholicworker.org/about-the-catholic-worker-movement/catholic-worker-archives.

Dozens of libraries and archives provide links from their sites as well.

The Most Reverend Gregory Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans, said a few years ago, "The Catholic Church needs to have its history easily accessible to researchers and interested readers."

Together with our members and digitizing partners, we are enhancing access to rare, unique, and valuable Catholic resources. Why not add links to your websites and invite your users into the joys of discovery via the Portal, the CRRA Subject Guides, and the Catholic News Archive?

**Catholic News Archive.** Accessible at [thecatholicnewsarchive.org](http://thecatholicnewsarchive.org).

**Catholic Portal.** Accessible at [vufind.catholicresearch.org/vufind](http://vufind.catholicresearch.org/vufind).

**CRRA Subject Guides.** Accessible at [guides.catholicresearch.org](http://guides.catholicresearch.org).

Kabel, Sharon. *The Periti of Vatican II*. 2022. [sharonkabel.com/periti-of-vatican-ii](http://sharonkabel.com/periti-of-vatican-ii).

Lesiak, Karen. "Vatican II: Catholic reform and revitalization in a modern world." *Catholic Library World*, v. 91, n. 1, September 2020, pp. 10-11. Accessible at [catholicresearch.org/about-the-catholic-news-archive](http://catholicresearch.org/about-the-catholic-news-archive). ■

## CLARION HERALD

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ARCHBISHOP Alfred C. Hughes examines the collapsed roof of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Slidell that was caved in by the 145 mph winds of Hurricane Katrina Aug. 29. Archbishop Hughes toured many of the damaged churches and schools in St. Tammany Parish on Sept. 17 and celebrated Vigil Mass in the Our Lady of Lourdes cafeteria. The archdiocese is conducting a structural and environmental assessment of its churches, schools and other properties in the most affected areas. St. Bernard and lower Plaquemines civil parishes and parts of Orleans Parish. An inconclusive archeological analysis indicates flood damage to archeological facilities - not including wind damage - could amount to \$84 million. About 70 of the archdiocese's 143 parishes are up and running. (Photos by Patrick J. Neenan)

# Devastation

By PETER FINNEY JR.

**BATON ROUGE** - Nothing this ferocious, terrifying or ruthless could be called "perfect" but Hurricane Katrina undoubtedly proved to be the perfect storm.

For years meteorologists with esoteric computer programs had been crying in the wilderness, predicting catastrophe for the greater New Orleans area if Category 4 or 5 hurricanes ever delivered a hail of eye hit. On Aug. 29, Katrina validated the prophecies, inundating 80 percent of the city of New Orleans, washing away entire swaths of land in St. Bernard and lower Plaquemines civil parishes, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless and killing hundreds.

Among those presumed dead is Father Arthur "Red" Gimart, pastor of St. Nicholas of Myra in Lake Catherine east of the city. Father Gimart stayed at his parish during the storm and his body reportedly was seen by firefighters, but it has not been recovered. Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes will celebrate a Memorial Mass Oct. 5 at 1:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge.

The effect of Katrina on the Archdiocese of New Orleans is a slowly evolving story. The archdiocese has hired the Baton Rouge-based Shaw Group to conduct a structural and environmental assessment of the worst-hit areas. That analysis began Sept. 27.

Initial estimates indicate flood-related damage (exclusive of wind damage) could amount to \$84 million. Because of the massive destruction the archdiocese has established temporary headquarters in Baton Rouge. The mailing address is Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1800 S. Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

Schools in St. John, St. Charles and St. Tammany civil parishes have reopened, and schools in Jefferson are expected to reopen as early as Oct. 9. Many Jefferson Parish schools are expanding enrollment.

The Office of Catholic Schools will open a satellite office at Archbishop Ruffini High School on Oct. 3. The phone number is (504) 834-5592. Working with the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the archdiocese opened an evening school at St. Michael the Archangel High School.

### Clarion Herald resumes printing

With this eight-page issue, the Clarion Herald has resumed publishing. The Clarion Herald will be delivered to church parishes that are up and running in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and to selected parishes in the Dioceses of Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Houma. The Clarion Herald Home delivery will resume when sufficient numbers of subscribers have returned to their homes.

For more information, contact (225) 242-1051 or 0162.

Important archeological employment information, see page 4



"Pere Marquette and the Indians" by Wilhelm Lamprecht. Raynor Library, Pere Marquette Collection, Marquette University.



Elizabeth Ann Seton Presented in the *Mother Seton Guild Bulletin*, Number 11, May 1944 Daughters of Charity Provincial Archives, Emmitsburg, MD