

MEDIA ALERT



For Immediate Release

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The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana Celebrates Ordinations, New Life in Restored Church and Commemoration of The Life of Frances Joseph Gaudet (1861-1934)



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WHAT: The Right Reverend Charles Jenkins, Episcopal Bishop of Louisiana will ordain three outstanding candidates to the transitional diaconate, a step which precedes ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church.

Bishop Jenkins will also commemorate the life of Frances Joseph Gaudet (1861-1934). Gaudet was a woman of African American and Native American heritage whose faith and charity in the face of racism and indifference had an extraordinary impact on education and juvenile justice in the city of New Orleans.

WHEN: Saturday, December 29th, 10:00 a.m.

WHERE: St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 1222 N. Dorgenois St., New Orleans 70119, a traditionally African-American congregation in the Episcopal Church. The Church sustained severe flooding during Hurricane Katrina and is now restored. Since the storm, the church has served as a community center for the Tremé neighborhood to assist returning residents. The ordinations are an important sign of hope and life.

WHO: The three ordinands are: Phoebe Roaf, a Harvard graduate and former attorney at Stone Pigman and sister of former New Orleans Saint Willie Roaf; Giulianna Cappelletti, who earned her MSW from Tulane and is a member of Trinity Church New Orleans; and Edward Gleason also an attorney and member of Trinity New Orleans. All three candidates are expected to graduate from seminary in Spring 2008 and return to serve in the Diocese of Louisiana.

Frances Gaudet is the daughter of a slave that dedicated her life to education and juvenile justice in New Orleans was added to the Episcopal Church calendar at its church-wide convention in June 2006.

History of Frances Joseph Gaudet (1861-1934)

Mrs. Gaudet was born in a log cabin in Mississippi in 1861 and was the daughter of a former slave. She was raised by her grandparents and lived with her brother in New Orleans where she attended both public and private schools and later studied at Straight College. She was a seamstress by trade but later dedicated much of her time to prayer and social reform.

After the death of her second husband, she pursued these aims full time, working with the Prison Reform Association, both on behalf of those unjustly accused and also writing letters and providing clothing for prisoners. Initially her efforts were on behalf of black prisoners, but expanded to include white inmates as well. The mayor and the governor recognized her for these truly heroic efforts.

Following her return from a Women's Christian Temperance Union convention in Scotland in 1900, Mrs. Gaudet began to work to reform the juvenile justice system in Louisiana. She took in many young non-violent offenders and dedicated herself to helping them turn their lives around.

She purchased a farm in Gentilly and founded the Colored Industrial Home and School, later the Gaudet Normal and Industrial School, an innovative boarding school for the children of working mothers. Until 1922 she served as the principal and gave the facility to the Episcopal diocese on the condition that they continue it or use the proceeds from its sale to promote the education of African American children.

When the home closed in the 1950's, monies were invested and the endowment continues to provide scholarships to African American children and youth through Episcopal Community Services. Portions benefit Gaudet Hall, the community center at St. Luke's, which is the first traditionally African American Episcopal congregation in New Orleans.

Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana encompasses 54 congregations in Southeast Louisiana. A member of The Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Louisiana reaches out to all citizens through service and proclamation. Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, with an unprecedented domestic grant from Episcopal Relief and Development and donations from Episcopalians across the United States and Anglicans around the world, the Diocese of Louisiana established its Office of Disaster Response and the Episcopal Urban Ministry Center (EUMC), the new headquarters of the comprehensive humanitarian services of the Episcopalian Church's recovery and rebuilding efforts in New Orleans post-Katrina. The grants and donations have been put to work in both direct relief efforts and the ongoing ministries of recovery and transformation. Among the ongoing programs being administered by the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana's Office of Disaster Response are House Gutting and Rebuilding; The Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative; Trinity Episcopal Church Mobile Loaves and Fishes Program; The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana Mobile Respite Care Unit; St. Anna's Episcopal Church Mobile Medical Unit; St. Paul's Homecoming Center; Case Management Services; and The Church of All Souls and Community Center.