



Former Parishioner Is "Catholic Cruise Lady"

by Evelyn Beck

You may have seen the travel ads from "The Catholic Cruise Lady" in *The Miscellany*. The woman behind those ads, Janet LeBlanc, was a parishioner at St. Joseph's back when Father Robert Millard was the pastor, and her son attended St. Joseph Catholic School.

Now a resident of Greenville and a member of St. Mary's parish, LeBlanc is about to retire from Clemson University, where she has been a professor of art history since 1974. A few years ago, with an eye toward a second career, she started ALBE Travel International. ALBE is an acronym formed by the first letter of each of the art symbols used to represent the four Gospel evangelists. The Angel is the traditional symbol for Matthew, the Lion represents Mark, the Bull symbolizes Luke, and the Eagle is the traditional symbol for John. These artistic symbols were derived from Scripture. Revelation 4: 6-8 describes the four living creatures that surround the throne of God in heaven exclaiming His glory: the Angel (with a face like a human being), a Lion, a Bull (calf), and an Eagle in flight.

The Biblical references are one sign of the purpose behind LeBlanc's new career. The inspiration dates back to 2004, when LeBlanc and her family went on their first cruise. "I loved it, but two things were a flag," she said. "One was that cruise ships in general didn't have priests on board, and we were always trying to work around going to Mass before we got on the ship. I wanted to work with the cruise industry to be more user friendly for Catholics. The other thing was that, with five kids, we wanted to connect with other Catholic couples and families."

While she enjoys the great variety of



Father Christopher Smith, the parochial vicar at St. Francis by the Sea Church in Hilton Head (bottom right), sailed on a New Year's cruise with a group tour arranged by former St. Joseph's parishioner Janet LeBlanc.

new friends she has made on trips, LeBlanc and her husband have long enjoyed connecting with Catholic friends through their children's classmates, via the Knights of Columbus, and as RCIA teachers. But, she says, "it would have been great fun to have found people to get together with on a vacation basis, to spend a week or two together with the kids hanging out. You could talk about things meaningful to you: Catholic issues or shared values for raising a family. You can meet on a more casual basis and not where someone has to do a lot of work, like supper parties. Plus, you get to see interesting things and go interesting places."

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LeBlanc Seeks To Place Priests On Cruise Ships

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So she embarked on what she views as a ministry, advertising in Catholic media to potential customers on one hand and working with the cruise industry on the other. In particular, she wants ships to staff their cruises with priests. "It's been an uphill battle, especially with the economy in a slump," she said. "Most are reticent to pay the fare of someone like a priest who's not bringing in revenue." Still, she continues to nag the cruise companies, and in the meantime, she pays for a priest to travel with some of her groups. On a New Year's cruise this year, she recruited Father Christopher Smith, the parochial vicar at St. Francis by the Sea Church in



Janet LeBlanc



Knights of Columbus Presentation

On April 23, 2011, Gloria Renaldo (left) and Cicilia Maynez (right) of the St. Mary's Rosary Guild were pleased to accept a check in the amount of \$185.00 from Chancellor John Napiorkowski of the The Knights of Columbus Council #8295. The Rosary Guild hand assembles Rosaries for distribution to the Parishes of St. Joseph's, St. Mary's, and others. This funding provided by the Knights of Columbus will be used to purchase additional supplies to make the different Rosaries they assemble. The Knights of Columbus Council #8295 also supports the Rosary Guild by providing wallet-sized "How to Pray the Rosary" cards which are handed out along with every Rosary they distribute.

Hilton Head. "He celebrated Mass on board and heard confessions," said LeBlanc. "The kids loved him. He did karaoke and went to the disco with them. It was a very healthy kind of arrangement. Young people meeting new people would say, 'We're traveling with our priest.' My own kids love impressing their new friends on board by stopping by the pool or a hot tub to chat with the priest (you *know* him?), and we have all enjoyed having our priests share dinners with one family tonight, and another family tomorrow."

For more information about traveling with fellow Catholics--or to arrange any kind of travel--contact Janet LeBlanc at 800-590-ALBE (2523).

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