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Inside this issue



Christus Vivit:

Bishop Robert Brennan discusses the new apostolic exhortation released last week, Page 2



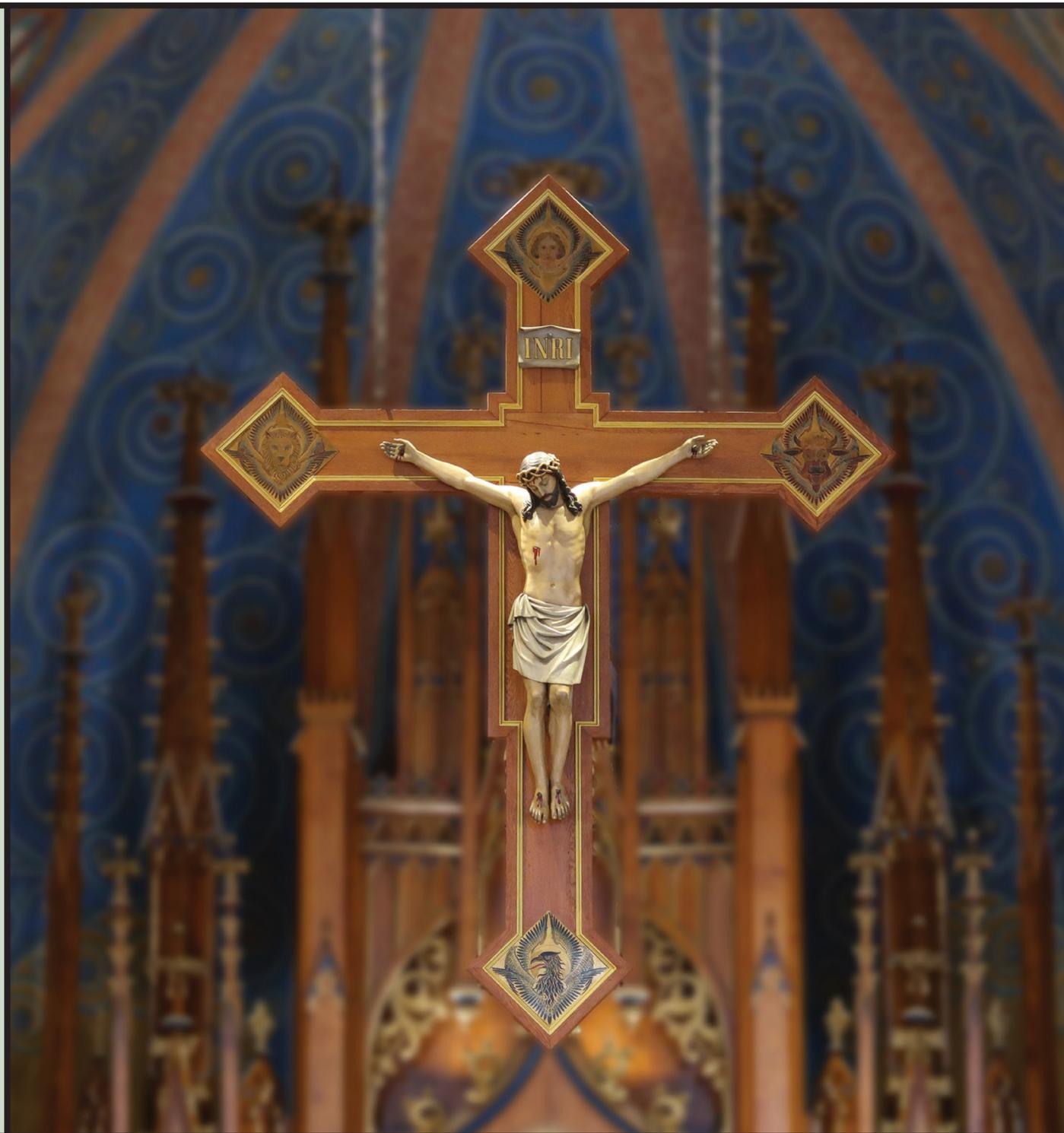
Nuncio at Josephinum:

Archbishop Christophe Pierre (left), the pope's U.S. envoy, visited the Pontifical College Josephinum, Page 3



Holy Week events:

A list of special events at parishes throughout the diocese during Holy Week, Page 13



GERMAN VILLAGE ST. MARY REOPENS AS HOLY WEEK BEGINS

Pages 10-12

Catholic Travel

TRIPPIN' THROUGH THE CAROLINAS

Exploring a unique American vacation destination

By Aaron Leventhal

For the past decade I have escaped Ohio's cold, bleak winter days for an enjoyable vacation in the Carolinas. I love the region's sunny days, extraordinary natural beauty, majestic mountains, ocean blue skies, world-class golf courses and genuine Southern hospitality. And being able to reach any destination in the Carolinas in a day's drive is a major perk. So many Midwesterners and Northeasterners vacation in the Carolinas that being a Yankee is no longer a liability. In fact, we are welcomed as a dynamic force for economic development.

Listed below are some of my favorite Carolina destinations. They combine outstanding outdoor activities and attractions, arts and entertainment, diverse dining options and comfortable lodgings at moderate prices during the low season, October-April. To assure a relaxed and engaging adventure, put aside at least 10 days for your Carolinas adventure.

Asheville, NC

"Best U.S. Destination in 2017," *Lonely Planet*

Asheville is a great place to begin any tour through the Carolinas. Take Route 23 South for a leisurely drive along Appalachian country mountain roads. (7-hour drive from Columbus) Asheville, a progressive community in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, was cited by *National Geographic* as a city among the "Top Globally for Authenticity, Stewardship, Integrity of Place."

What to do: Tour the Biltmore Estate, the 19th-century, 250-room, French-inspired chateau built by George W. Vanderbilt and the largest private home in the country. The Basilica of St. Lawrence, built by Spanish architect Rafael Gaustavino in 1867, is regarded as a masterpiece for its elliptical dome. The River Arts District, with more than 100 galleries and studios, is a vibrant neighborhood once filled with dormant factories and warehouses. Malaprop's Bookstore and Cafe is a joyful community gath-

ering place celebrated for its frequent readings by gifted writers. The Omni's historic Grove Park Inn features spectacular mountain views, a Donald Ross-designed golf course, luxurious spa and fine dining.

Dining: 12 Bones and Luella's for BBQ, Mayfel's for Louisiana dishes, Strada for Italian fare, Laughing Seed for vegetarian/vegan specialties and the Lobster Trap for seafood and its Oyster Bar.

Lodging: I always stay at the Crowne Plaza Tennis and Golf Resort's vacation villas, 30 cozy cabins tucked away in the woods, fully furnished with access to all of the resort amenities. (crownplaza.com/Asheville/CrownePlaza)

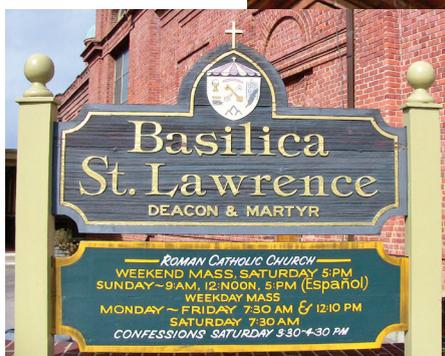
For more information: exploreasheville.com, 828-258-6129.

Charleston, SC

"No. 1 City in the U.S.A.," voted by readers of *Travel + Leisure* (2017-2018)

Revered for its Southern charm, historic architecture, rich cultural heritage and famed Lowcountry cuisine, Charleston successfully mixes its antebellum past with world-class attractions and activities. Located along the Atlantic Ocean seaboard, it is the South's oldest and best colonial town, known as the "Holy City" with 187 churches at last count.

What to do: Take a ferry boat ride from Charleston Harbor to tour Fort Sumter National Monument, where the first shots of the Civil War rang out in April 1861. Tour Magnolia Plantation and Drayton Hall, both with exquisite mansions and gardens. The South Carolina Aquarium houses more than 5,000 living specimens and a renowned Sea Turtle Care Center. Hundreds of quality



The Basilica of St. Lawrence dates back to 1867.

Photos by Beth Ervin Leventhal



Downtown carriage tours meander past historic Colonial landmarks.

carriage, walking and water tours are available, focusing on Charleston history, African American Gullah cul-

ture, ghosts, nature and culinary experiences.

For shopping, take to the bustling King Avenue, with more than 2 dozen blocks of boutiques, galleries, restaurants and pubs. The historic City Market has hundreds of vendors hawking their wares, from handcrafted sweetgrass baskets and jewelry to locally produced jams, jellies and spices. Performing arts venues include the Charleston Gaillard Center for major concerts and special events, South Broadway Theatre Company, Pure Theatre, the Commodore for jazz and blues and dozens of other clubs featuring live music scattered throughout the city.

Lowcountry cuisine—with influences from Africa, the Caribbean, France and England—is unique to the Carolinas. Primary ingredients are long-grain rice, okra, seafood, sausage and local produce. Specialties include she-crab soup, fried green tomatoes, seafood gumbo, shrimp and grits, fresh and fried oysters, fried chicken, Frogmore Stew and pecan pie. My fa-

See TRAVEL, Page 18

TRAVEL, continued
from P. 17

favorite restaurants for Lowcountry cuisine and much more are the Oyster House, featuring Chef Tony Palmisano's seafood specialties; Fleet Landing, with beautiful waterfront views; Magnolia's for classic Southern dishes; Sticky Fingers for BBQ; and Justine's Kitchen for po' boys.

Lodging: Frances Marion Hotel on King Street is in the middle of all the buzz, near dozens of shops and restaurants and across the street from a delightful city park that hosts many of the city's top events. (francismarionhotel.com) Historic downtown inns with fabulous period decor, but a bit pricey, are the Pinckney, the King Charles and Governor's House.

For more information: explore-charleston.com, 800-774-0006.

Folly Beach, SC

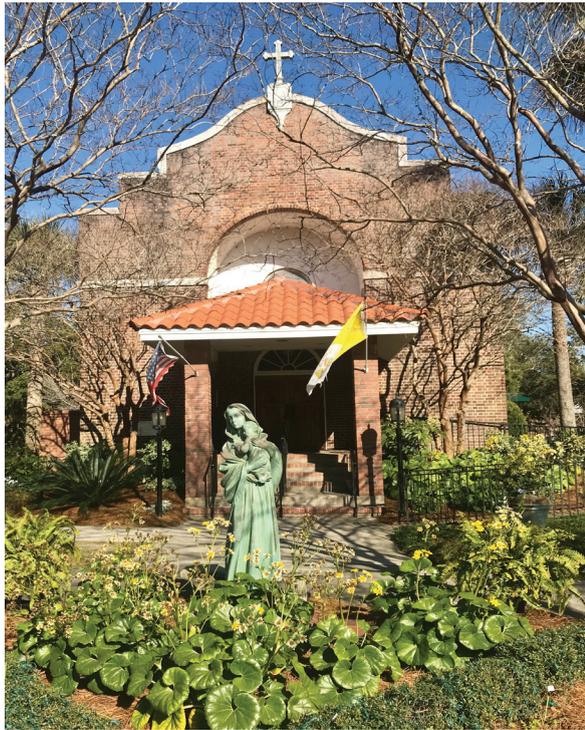
"The Perfect Beach Town,"

Southern Living

Folly Beach is a 12-square-mile barrier island and a laid-back, small city of 2,500 residents, a 30-minute drive to downtown Charleston. Though it's affectionately known as "Charleston's Beach Town," residents will let you know it's much more than that. For example, Dave Miller, originally from Charlotte,

North Carolina, says, "We definitely are not Charleston's bedroom community. We are a welcoming, year-round town with the highest standards for quality of life. We are much more than a summer getaway."

This past January, my wife Beth, our Lab Lily and Nelson, our mellow, orange cat, shared a two-bedroom apartment just a few blocks from the Atlantic Ocean and a 6-mile sandy beachfront and within walking distance to Center Street with its cozy watering holes, restaurants and shops.



Folly Beach's Our Lady of Good Counsel is a small parish church with traditional Latin masses on Sunday.

During our stay I experienced vibes reminiscent of my teenage years in Cleveland when I hung out with my buddies at funky beach towns like Geneva-on-the-Lake. It has the same



The Folly Beach pier is noted for its fishing, sunset views and patio bar and restaurant.

relaxed, carefree joie de vivre so appealing to beach lovers, fishermen, fun-loving families and active retirees.

What to do: Charleston Outdoor Adventures specializes in guided boat tours, fishing charters, kayaking and paddle board tours and rentals. Steps away is Bowen's Island Restaurant, a Lowcountry landmark serving local oysters, shrimp, fish and crab dishes. Charleston Tea Plantation, the only tea plantation in North America, has guided tours, tea bar tastings and a well-stocked gift shop. Bert's Mar-

ket, the only grocery on Folly Beach, is open daily 24/7. (Their motto is, "We may doze, but we never close.") It's a popular gathering place with free coffee and a hodgepodge of food and merchandise. McLeod Plantation Historic Site has guided tours along a trail that tells a fascinating story of the conflicted relationships between blacks and whites before, during and after the Civil War. Nearby Johns Island features the Angel Oak, a magnificent 65-foot, 400-year-old live oak tree, and a farmers market on Saturdays. The City of Charleston Municipal Golf Course is challenging and

of Cups Saloon, noted for global pub grub; Folly Beach Crab Shack; Snapper Jack's; Rita's Seaside Grille; and the Wash Out, a popular hang-out for burgers, roasted oysters and rockin' bands. Nearby, Ellis Creek Fish Camp has excellent fish and seafood with a large, inviting outdoor dining area—dogs welcome. Crosby's Seafood, a legendary market and Jimmy Buffet favorite, sells local fish and seafood, much of it caught aboard the company's boats docked in the back.

Where to Stay: We rented our apartment from Kevin Edenborough, owner and manager of Seaside Property Management.

(seasidefolly@gmail.com) The Purdue University engineering graduate and retired U.S. Air Force jet pilot has lived on Folly Island for the past decades and was an excellent tourism resource and friend during our stay. He manages 5 rental homes and helped me put together a "Carolinas Winter Golf Escape" package for the first week in March 2020. We'll stay in his three-bedroom,

fully-furnished homes near the beach. Open to the first 12 registered golfers. Check it out at leventhaltravel.com and call if interested at 614-506-9666.

For information: visitfolly.com.

See TRAVEL, Page 19



Travel writer Aaron Leventhal and Lily chat with Kevin Edenborough at one of his vacation rental homes.

inexpensive to play.

Dining: Folly Beach is filled with small, independent restaurants and pubs serving Lowcountry dishes and have dog-friendly, outdoor patio dining when weather permits. Local favorites on Center Street include Jack

FOLLY BEACH VACATION PROPERTIES FOR RENT

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Contact Kevin for more information, links to photos and a 10% discount

TRAVEL, continued from P. 18

Mount Pleasant, sc

“One of the 25 Best Places to live in the United States,” *Money Magazine*

Settled in 1779, Mount Pleasant, just northeast of Charleston and across the iconic Ravenel Bridge, is a thriving community and one of the country’s fastest-growing areas.

What to do: The Historic Old Village is a hidden gem off busy Coleman Avenue and a National Register District with dozens of classic colonial homes, churches, riverfront parks, distinctive landscaping and one-of-a-kind shops. Its Post House Inn, a gracious B&B, has a lively tavern and restaurant. Patriot’s



Shem Creek Marina offers several choices for dining and entertainment, including Vickery’s with outdoor seating.

Museum includes the WWII USS Yorktown aircraft carrier, the USS Laffey destroyer and Medal of Honor Museum. Waterfront Park has a Visitor Center, fishing pier, war memorial and the Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Pavilion. Dozens of fishing and shrimp boats are docked at Shem Creek Marina, a popular entertainment and dining mecca with a lovely park extending along a 2,200-foot boardwalk into the surrounding marshlands.

Nearby is Boone Hall Plantation, established in 1681, with its famous live oaks corridor and daily tours of the mansion, gardens and original slave quarters. Sullivan Island—a barrier island known for its long, sandy beaches, historic homes, wooded marshlands, restaurants and taverns—is home to Ft. Moultrie, a log fort famed for the first naval victory over the British Navy in 1776.

Golf courses here are Lowcountry links-designed with extensive waterways, Palmetto trees and tall grasses. Bermuda grass helps to set up the ball for fairway shots. Green fees are reduced and tee times are no problem in the low season. Courses open to the public include: Patriot’s Point Links, with a panoramic view of the harbor; National Country Club, designed by Reese Jones; Dunes West Golf Club, an Arthur Hill design with 200-year-old live oaks; and the Arnold Palmer Rivertowne Country Club, with marshlands and stunning vistas. Watch out for alligators sunning on

the banks of the ponds!

Dining: Lowcountry favorites of both locals and vacationers include: Mustard Seed, Pages Okra Grill, the Shelter Kitchen + Bar, Boulevard Diner, Five Loaves and Vickery’s, with a delightful outdoor patio overlooking the marina.

For more information: experience-mountpleasant.com

Beaufort, sc

One of “52 Places to Go in the World” - *New York Times*, 2016

Beaufort, founded in 1711, is the quintessential, small Southern town, only recently emerged out of the shadow of Charleston 70 miles to its north. The original frontier settlement along the Atlantic Seaboard prospered, producing and shipping its prized Sea Island cotton, rice, indigo and produce across the country and the world. However, the Civil War, devastating hurricanes and the boll weevil led to a complete economic collapse. Fortunately, a group of local, civic leaders banded together in the 1970s to develop a tourism industry, while steadfastly maintaining the highest preservation standards to protect its classic, historic architecture.

Beaufort’s downtown is recognized as a National Historic Landmark, and its small businesses and independently owned and managed shops, galleries and eateries thrive year-round. Major Hollywood movies have been filmed here, including “Forrest Gump” and two others based on books by native son Pat Conroy, “The Great Santini” and “Prince of Tides.”

During our February stay, we constantly were told by the locals that Ohioans are retiring and vacationing here in record numbers, attracted by its friendliness, subtropical climate, natural beauty, dining options and affordable housing and vacation rentals.

What to do: Carriage, walking or small van tours explore the cobblestone streets, Antebellum and Victorian mansions and historic landmarks, including the Points, the town’s most historic residential enclave. Harbor and riverboat tours meander through the salt marshes and along the ocean shoreline. In town, Santa Helena History Center tells of the Spanish settlement in the 16th century before Jamestown and Plymouth Rock; Parish Church of St. Helena, was established in 1712 on Church Street by Thomas Hayward, Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence; the John Moore Vendier House is a Federalist mansion used by Union soldiers as its headquarters after an early capture of Beaufort in 1861; and more than 14,000 soldiers are laid to rest in Beaufort National Cemetery, built by Union troops in 1863.

On the Sea Islands east of Beaufort, I recommend a Gullah tour of St. Helena Island to hear stories of the freed



Bill Reynolds of Beaufort Tours visits the grave of native son, writer Pat Conroy.

West African slaves who settled here and the rural life of their descendants. The major attraction here is Penn Central Center, the country’s first school for freed slaves, central to the Civil Rights Movement. Today, its historic wooden cabins are used for educational and cultural programs. Nearby Hunting Island State Park is popular for its 5 miles of sandy beach, 8 miles of trails, fishing pier, campsites and rental cabins.

Golf courses include: Legends Golf Course, on Parris Island’s Marine base, ranked as one of the world’s 10 best military courses; and Lady’s Island Country Club, with its popular Tavern for lunch and dinner. Fripp Island’s Ocean Creek and Ocean Point golf courses, open to guests of the resort, are recognized among the finest in the Southeast.

Dining: Favorites include Sea Eagle Market; Saltus River Grill, Q on Bay, Plum’s, and Panini’s, all along Bay Street, the town’s major avenue, and all with back patios facing the waterfront park and marina; and Breakwater Restaurant & Bar for fine dining. On Lady’s Island, it’s Dockside and the Fillin’ Station on Lady’s Island, and Boondocks and Foolish Frog on St. Helena Island.

Lodging: We stayed at Fripp Island, a private 3,000-acre island, wildlife sanctuary and cited by *Links* magazine as “One of 100 Best Golf Resorts in North America.” Vacationers renting properties or staying at the Fripp Island Golf and Beach Resort have access to its 3 miles of wide, sandy beaches; golf courses; tennis courts; swimming pools; daily nature center activities; restaurants; and bike, scooter, kayak and golf cart rentals. (www.frippislandresort.com)

For information: beaufort.com.

Beaufort Tours

- Pat Conroy’s Beaufort Van Tour
- Civil War/Reconstruction Walking Tour
- Plantation and Gullah Van Tour
- Reconstruction Era Van Tour
- History/Movie Van Tour (Forrest Gump/Prince of Tides)



beauforttoursllc.com
Beaufort, South Carolina

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