

FaithLife



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BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

January 21, 2018

DIOCESAN NEWS

Consultant hired for Oil City/Franklin schools

OIL CITY—At the request of parishes, the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Erie continues to implement its comprehensive plan, "Building in Truth and Love," by hiring a consultant to work closely with schools in the Oil City/Franklin area.

The schools included are Venango Catholic High School and St. Stephen Elementary School, both in Oil City, and St. Patrick Elementary School in Franklin. School administrators and pastors agreed that an outside consultant would help strengthen Catholic education in Venango County.

The consulting firm Meitler has been hired to assist Venango County Catholic schools in developing a strategic plan. A grant from the Religious Education Endowment Fund made the move possible.

Meitler will conduct a comprehensive study that captures socio/economic, geographic, cultural, attitudinal and historical information. It also will facilitate a dialogue among pastors, principals, board members, parish leaders, teachers and parents to reach consensus regarding future plans.

Information will be gathered through February, and recommendations that can be integrated into the local planning effort are expected to be made in March.

"I continue to be impressed with the hard work and commitment of the people in the Oil City/Franklin area, as well as the Catholic Schools Office, and am in agreement that investing in Meitler is an essential step that will be beneficial in securing the future of Catholic education in the Venango region," Bishop Lawrence Persico said.

Kennedy petitions PIAA

HERMITAGE—The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) has approved a petition by Kennedy Catholic High School in Hermitage to elevate its boys' basketball program from a 1A classification to a 6A classification beginning with the 2018-19 season.

6A is the highest and most competitive classification that the PIAA offers.

Kennedy's boys' basketball program has competed at higher class levels over the past three or four seasons. Last year, the team won the 1A championship for the second year in a row. It also has won eight state titles in its history.

Father Jason Glover, school president, said: "At Kennedy Catholic, we commit ourselves to strive to achieve the best in all of our programs—in academics, in faith, in service, in the arts and in athletics. Just as we challenge our students to academic excellence in our classrooms, we also strive to cultivate a culture that encourages athletic excellence."

Join Erie's March for Life

ERIE—The 2018 Erie March for Life, themed "Life: The Universal Language," will be held Jan. 27 beginning at 11 a.m. at the pavilion in west Perry Square in downtown Erie. Those who are participating are asked to arrive by 10:45 a.m. Signs will be available for everyone. Wear warm clothes and comfortable, non-slip footwear.

Please donate to the Catholic Communications Collection

Parishioners will be asked to give Jan. 27-28 to the 2018 Help Spread the Faith Collection for Catholic Communications.

The Communications Office of the Diocese of Erie helps spread the faith through *Faith* magazine, *FaithLife* newspaper, the diocesan website and social media. Please contribute in your parish to keep these efforts going strong in 2018.

CLERGY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Most Rev. Lawrence Persico, JCL, bishop of Erie, makes the following clergy appointments:

- **Father Jason Glover**, full-time president, Kennedy Catholic High School, Hermitage.
- **Father T. Shane Mathew**, faculty, Gannon University, Erie, with residence at Our Lady of Peace Parish, Erie, effective Jan. 2, 2018, for a term of five years.
- **Father Johnathan Schmol**, parochial administrator, St. Michael Parish, Emletton, effective Jan. 2, 2018.



'Holy Snow!'



Bishop Lawrence Persico took this photo outside St. Peter Cathedral and tweeted "Holy Snow!" during Erie's historic Christmas lake-effect storm that dumped about 5 feet of snow on the city. Several pastors reported lower-than-normal Mass attendance on Christmas Day. With more snow falling every day—along with frigid temperatures—the city's homeless shelters are needed more than ever. Here are some Catholic parishes hosting emergency shelters:

- St. Patrick and St. Jude the Apostle, Jan. 31 to Feb. 13, at Church of the Nativity, 247 East Front St.
- St. Joseph/Bread of Life, 147 W. 24th St., Feb. 14-27
- St. John the Baptist, 509 E. 26th St., Feb. 28 to March 13.

World peace requires right to life, disarmament

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Because everyone has a right to life, liberty and personal security, nations must find nonviolent solutions to conflict and difficulties, Pope Francis said Jan. 8.

A culture of peace "calls for unremitting efforts in favor of disarmament and the reduction of recourse to the use of armed force in the handling of international affairs," the pope told diplomats accredited to the Vatican.

The pope dedicated his speech to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which this year will celebrate the 70th anniversary of its adoption by the U.N. General Assembly.

The declaration was an attempt to help the world's nations base their relations on "truth, justice, willing cooperation and freedom" by upholding the fundamental rights of all human beings, he said.

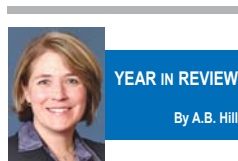
Pope Francis said "it is painful" to see fundamental rights continue to be violated today. War, violence and abortion all infringe on these rights, he said.

Ultimately, the right to life entails working for peace, he said, because "without peace, integral human development becomes unattainable."



Pope Francis

Abortion, opioid crisis top agenda items in 2017



YEAR IN REVIEW
By A.B. Hill

The Pennsylvania General Assembly is taking a mid-session break through the end of January, but it faces a busy 2018 with several high-priority bills on the legislative agenda of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference.

A number of bills made it through the legislative process in 2017. One bright spot in the difficult, prolonged budget debate was a \$10 million expansion of Educational Improvement Tax Credits (EITC), which will benefit more students in Catholic schools.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly took a strong pro-life stand to ban dismemberment abortions and abortions when the unborn baby is able to feel pain (20 weeks). Both the Senate and the House passed Senate Bill 3. Gov. Tom Wolf vetoed the measure and there was no vote to override.

Gov. Wolf did, however, sign House Bill 1139 into law. This law adds fire stations to the list of safe places where a newborn baby may be placed without penalty. Police stations and hospitals currently are safe havens. Incubators will be placed in participating locations to hopefully prevent babies from being abandoned in dumpsters or public restrooms.

The legislature reauthorized the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), but not without controversy. An amendment to correct regulations that allow coverage for sex reassignment surgeries for children was taken out of the final

bill that went to the governor's desk. The Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association and PCC will look for ways to address this again without compromising a valuable program that has given thousands of children access to health care.

Legislation to address the statewide opioid crisis was signed into law by Gov. Wolf. Senate Bill 446 establishes state-regulated minimum quality standards for the licensure of recovery houses that receive funding or referrals from government agencies.

This new law is welcomed by the recovery houses operated by many Catholic Charities agencies within Pennsylvania's Catholic dioceses.

The governor also signed the "Right to

unused dollars would return to the local school.

• Senate Resolution 174 and House Resolution 609 each condemn the practice of selectively aborting babies with Down syndrome. Although resolutions do not have the force of law, they are useful gestures for raising awareness. Another resolution, HR 519, condemns the free availability of pornography because of the public health hazard it causes to children and families across the commonwealth. It passed the House Health Committee in November and should be taken up on the House floor soon.

• The Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association is reviewing legislation that would govern the use of POLST, Physician's Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment. Senate Bill 623 and House Bill 1196 similarly outline how and when someone would use a POLST in an end-of-life situation. The concern lies in whether or not a qualifying condition must be present for a POLST order to be signed.

Beyond these moral issues, the PCC is tracking legislation that tackles social justice concerns. House Bill 1076 would create a land bank of blighted properties and transform them into safe housing for the homeless. With opioid addiction taking a toll on every community, more legislation will be considered including House Bill 825. This bill provides for a central registry of existing emergency drug and alcohol detoxification beds so health care facilities can better serve people with a substance abuse crisis.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of public policy issues that the Catholic Conference will review and advocate. Sexual orientation non-discrimination, access to health care, threats to religious liberty, and other proposals are all potential issues on the radar.

A.B. Hill is director of communications for the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, Harrisburg.

For a list of the PCC's positions on specific legislative proposals, go to www.pacatholic.org/legislative-review

Issues in 2018

• Legislation to create Education Savings Accounts (ESA) is being considered. Senate Bill 2 would give families that live in the boundaries of a chronically underperforming school a grant in the amount of the average state funding per pupil if they withdraw their students from public school. The money could only be used for tuition and expenses in a participating private school, for tutors, or other education expenses. The money would come out of the local school's state subsidy; any

NEW APP HELPS USERS DISCOVER VOCATIONS

MANCHESTER, England (CNS)—The Catholic Church in England and Wales has launched a cellphone app meant to help users deepen their faith and discover their vocations.

The "God Calls" app was commissioned by the National Office for Vocation of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The app includes daily prayers and meditations on the Gospel and the lives of the saints, as well as a news section and Twitter feed to connect users to the life of the church.

It also includes a journal so that users can monitor their spiritual growth and understand more clearly how God might be calling them.

The app is available for download free of charge onto iPhone and Android devices from the God Calls website at www.godcalls.co.uk.



Photo by CNS

Newsmakers



Snippets of Catholic headlines and stories from around the world from Catholic News Service

■ Catholic groups decry end of immigration protection



CNS photo

People hold signs during a news conference Jan. 8 at the New York Immigration Coalition in Manhattan.

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Catholic bishops and organizations have expressed concern that Salvadorans would be forced to return to a socially unstable country that is ravaged by gangs and has been designated by various organizations as one of the most dangerous places in the world and one not equipped to absorb such a large-scale repatriation.

More than 200,000 Salvadorans, living under a special immigration status in the U.S., now face the prospect of staying in the country illegally or returning to a nation designated as one of the most dangerous in the world not at war.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced Jan. 8 that it was ending a provision called Temporary Protected Status after Sept. 9, 2019.

In a statement, Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, said the administration's decision was "heart-breaking."

"We believe that God has called us to care for the foreigner and the marginalized. ... Our nation must not turn its back on TPS recipients and their families; they too are children of God," he said in a statement.

■ Chinese bishop released from detention after several months

HONG KONG (CNS)—Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou has been released by Chinese authorities after being detained for more than seven months, reported ucanews.com.

The bishop, who has not joined government-approved associations for church officials, was released Jan. 3 and was expected to return to Wenzhou in late January.

A source told ucanews.com that after Bishop Shao was taken away in May, officials from Wenzhou City Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs tried to force him to sign an agreement. The agreement requested the bishop to support the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the self-election and self-ordination of bishops.

Bishop Shao signed the agreement but added a remark that he did not agree with the terms, the source said.

■ Zambia bans church services as cholera epidemic hits nation

LUSAKA, Zambia (CNS)—As a cholera epidemic threatens the lives of more than 14 million Zambians, the country has banned church services and other gatherings in Lusaka's high-density residential areas.

The Zambian bishops' conference also has implemented measures, such as eliminating the handshake of peace in areas where Masses are still allowed.

Zambian government ministers said Jan. 7 that all gatherings of every nature, including church services, were banned in areas most affected by the epidemic.



CNS photo

Children roam a street in Lusaka, Zambia, in this updated photo.



Editor's Notes

Mary SOLBERG

To start off the New Year, let's take a look at some recent inspirational tweets by Pope Francis:

- "Joy, prayer and gratitude are three ways that help us live authentically." (Jan. 8)
- "A joyful soul is like healthy soil in which life can thrive and produce good fruit." (Jan. 9)
- "The more we are rooted in Christ, the more we rediscover interior peace, even in the midst of daily challenges." (Jan. 10)
- "The encounter with God and our brothers and sisters cannot wait just because we are slow or lazy. We are called to that encounter today!" (Jan. 12)

Is Venus or Aphrodite the Greek goddess of love?

Just ask **Moe MacDonald**, a sixth-grader at St. Leo School in Ridgway. He recently twisted open a bottle of Snapple and noticed



Moe MacDonald

right away that the trivia information printed on the inside of the cap was incorrect. It stated that Venus was the Greek goddess of love.

Moe learned from the classical curriculum at St. Leo that the Greek goddess of love is actually Aphrodite.

He called Snapple to bring the mistake to the company's attention, but a representative only thanked him for his call. By the next day, however, the incorrect trivia information was removed from the company's website.

Chris Barnes, director of Corporate Communications at Snapple,

told *FaithLife* that he was looking into the situation. Apparently, another boy from Texas also had contacted the company about the mistake.

Moe's dad, **Sam MacDonald**, president of Elk County Catholic High School and Middle School in St. Marys, is proud of his son's knowledge and determination.

"If something is written down, most kids just believe it as true," MacDonald says. "It's valuable that he noticed something and questioned it."

Congratulations to **Father Jason Glover**, who was recently named the full-time president of the Shenango Valley Catholic School System, which includes Kennedy Catholic High School, Kennedy Catholic Middle School and St. John Paul II Elementary, all in Hermitage.

It's a happy occasion since Father Glover is a 1994 Kennedy graduate, and has served as the schools' interim president since June 2016.

Sympathies to retired deacons **Tony Indelicato** and **Terry Schmaier**, whose wives died within days of each other this past month, and to **Father Ed Walk**, on the passing of his mother, **Vinnie Walk**.

Sandra Schmaier died Jan. 7 in Colorado, where the couple has lived for some time. Reba Indelicato died Jan. 5 in DuBois.

Deacon Schmaier and his wife were instrumental in forming and operating the St. Elizabeth food pantry in Oil City. Deacon Indelicato is the former director of the Good Samaritan Center in Clearfield.

Gannon University has earned lots of recognition recently.

Congratulations to **Berwyn Moore**, professor of English, who won the prestigious 2017 John Ciardi Prize for poetry for her collection of poetry, *Sweet Herbaceous Miracle*.

Gov. Tom Wolf has appointed **Anjali Sahay, Ph.D.**, associate professor of political science and international studies, to the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.

And Gannon's student-operated radio station, 90.5 WERG, is a recipient of a national award from College Broadcasters, Inc. (CBI). The station won in the category "Best Audio Public Service Announcement."

Mary Solberg is the editor of *FaithLife*.
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EVENTS

■ **'Judaism Today'**

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie will host Rabbi Emily Loeben-Ostrov of Erie's Temple Anshe Heses as the presenter of "Judaism Today: A Modern Look at an Ancient Faith," on Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie. The event is free and open to the public. For further information, contact Sister Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, at formation@mtsbenedict.org or at 814-899-0614, ext. 2511.

■ **Mercyhurst Sports Day**

Join Mercyhurst University as it celebrates the 2018 National Girls & Women in Sports Day on Jan. 27 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Mercyhurst Athletic Center, located on the Erie campus. Girls in kindergarten through eighth grade are invited to participate in activity stations with university female sports teams, receive giveaways, learn about nutrition for active bodies, enjoy a light lunch, and watch a women's basketball game. To register for this free event, go to <http://bit.ly/MJUGWS2018> by Jan. 26.

■ **Designer Bag Bingo**

St. Bernard Parish in Bradford will host its first Designer Bag Bingo on Feb. 11 at the St. Bernard School gymnasium, 450 W. Washington St., Bradford. Doors open at noon; first game starts at 1 p.m. Tickets are \$30 per person and include bingo boards and dauber. Tickets will not be sold the day of the event; advance purchases only. Tickets may be purchased with cash or check at St. Bernard School and St. Bernard Church.

■ **Cheerleading competition**

The ninth annual St. Michael Cheerleading Competition will be held Feb. 17 beginning at 2 p.m. at Kennedy Catholic High School gymnasium, 2120 Shenango Valley Freeway, Hermitage. The competition is among pep squads, elementary junior varsity, middle school varsity,

and high school junior varsity and varsity squads. Diocese of Erie cheerleading guidelines and criteria will be followed. The cost is \$10 per girl. The final deadline to enter is Feb. 3. For more details about the competition, contact Mary Lynne Reimold at 724-813-5934 or at cheerleading@saintmichael1.org.

■ **March 2018 women's retreat**

Register now for the March 9-11 women's retreat at the Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center in Pulaski, Pa. Retreat master will be Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education with the Diocese of Erie, and vice rector of St. Mark Seminary, Erie.

The conference will include daily Mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, confession, personal reflection and spiritual direction. The cost per person is \$145, which includes meals and a private room. A non-refundable deposit of \$45 is due with registration.

Send checks, payable to The Spiritual Family The Work, to: Julia House, c/o Sister Josephine Vuodi, FSO, 4415 Briggs Ave., Erie, PA 16504. For more information, email sr.josephine@thework-fso.org.

■ **Faith and Reason Program**

Saint Vincent College in Latrobe will host its eighth annual Faith and Reason Summer Program, an intensive, one-week introduction to the Catholic, liberal arts tradition. The program will be held June 10-15, and will be directed by Dr. Michael P. Krom, professor and chair of the Philosophy Department.

Housing in a college residence hall and three daily meals in the college dining hall are included in the cost (\$495). Limited scholarship funding is available.

Further information is available by contacting Dr. Krom at 724-805-2844 or emailing him at michael.krom@stvincent.edu. Registration is accepted at www.stvincent.edu/faithandreason.

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CATHOLIC SCHOOL OPEN HOUSES in 2018

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CLARION Immaculate Conception School 729 E. Main St. (814) 226-8433 Call for a private tour.	Mother Teresa Academy 160 W. 11th St. (814) 455-0580 Jan. 28, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	HERMITAGE St. John Paul II Elementary School 2335 Highland Road (724) 342-2205 Jan. 28, 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.	PUNXSUTAWNEY St. Cosmas & Damian School 205 N. Chestnut St. (814) 938-4224 Jan. 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
CLEARFIELD St. Francis School 230 S. Second St. (814) 765-2618 Jan. 28, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Our Lady of Peace School 2401 W. 38th St. (814) 838-3548 Jan. 28, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.	Kennedy Catholic Middle School 2120 Shenango Valley Freeway (724) 346-5531 Jan. 28, 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.	RIDGWAY St. Leo School 125 Depot St. (814) 772-9775 Call for a private tour.
DuBOIS DuBois Central Catholic Elementary School 210 Central Christian Road (814) 371-2570 Jan. 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	St. George School 1612 Bryant St. (814) 864-4821 Jan. 28, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.	Kennedy Catholic High School 2120 Shenango Valley Freeway (724) 346-5531 Jan. 28, 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.	ST. MARYS St. Marys Catholic Elementary School 114 Queens Road 1505 W. First St. (814) 834-4169 Call for a private tour.
DuBois Central Catholic Middle School 200 Central Christian Road (814) 371-3060 Jan. 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	St. James School 2602 Buffalo Road (814) 899-3429 Jan. 28, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.	KERSEY St. Boniface School 359 Main St. (814) 885-8093 Call for a private tour.	ST. MARYS Catholic Middle School 600 Maurus St. (814) 834-2665 Jan. 30, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
DuBois Central Catholic High School 200 Central Christian Road (814) 371-3060 Jan. 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	St. Jude School 606 Lowell Ave. (814) 838-7676 Jan. 28, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.	LUCINDA St. Joseph School 72 Rectory Lane (814) 226-8018 Jan. 31, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Elk County Catholic High School 600 Maurus St. (814) 834-7800 Jan. 30, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
ERIE Blessed Sacrament School 2510 Greengarden Road (814) 455-1387 Jan. 28, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.	St. Luke School 425 E. 38th St. (814) 825-7105 Jan. 28, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.	MEADVILLE Seton Catholic School 385 Pine St. (814) 336-2320 Call for a private tour.	WARREN St. Joseph School 608 Pennsylvania Ave., West (814) 723-2030 Jan. 28, 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
FRANKLIN St. Patrick School 352 Buffalo St. (814) 432-8689 Call for a private tour.	Villa Maria Academy 2403 W. Eighth St. (814) 838-2061 Jan. 21, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	NORTH EAST St. Gregory School 140 W. Main St. (814) 725-4571 Jan. 28, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.	SEE PAGE 4 FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
GREENVILLE St. Michael School 80 N. High St.	OIL CITY St. Stephen School 214 Reed St. (814) 677-3035 Call for a private tour.		

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But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" — Gen 3:9

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A Message from
Schools Superintendent
Jim Gallagher



Managing expectations can be tricky. There are times when they lead us to joyful anticipation, such as the celebration of a wedding or the birth of a child. Other times, expectations can lead to disappointment if they are not realistic.

I experience the latter every year watching the Cleveland Browns try to turn their team around.

Teachers, especially, wrestle with how to bal-

ance expectations in the classroom. If they set a goal for their students, will it lead to growth or frustration? The correct answer lies in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the young people in their charge.

January is a perfect time to make adjustments to our goals, both personally and professionally. The administrators and teachers in our Catholic schools are putting this awareness into action, especially as they incorporate all of the insights gained from planning during the past several months.

In August, the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) hosted the first Catholic Schools Leadership Conference in which we introduced the new diocesan school planning process aligned to the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools.

The first phase required school planning teams to evaluate the school against standards and benchmarks. Using data to support their findings, planning teams already have identified challenges and

are turning them into goals for improvement. Some of these changes include better alignment of curriculum, increasing programs and activities for students, and marketing to new families to increase enrollment.

The Catholic Schools Office believes that high expectations alone do not lead to growth. Administrators also must provide support and a healthy environment in which to grow.

As your superintendent, I am happy to report that every school has been assigned a CSO liaison to provide customized support with planning and problem-solving.

Second, we have created an Excellence in Catholic Education grant program that allows school leaders to request funds to pay for professional development needed to help administrators and teachers achieve their school planning goals.

Third, the CSO is using the information from the planning process to guide decisions about future projects, includ-

ing curriculum development and teacher training.

Our collective goal is to ensure strong Catholic schools that live up to the high expectations of our students and their families.

I'm confident that we can stretch ourselves and be realistic as we head into 2018. The beginning of this academic year brought many changes to some of our schools, especially in Erie with the creation of the Erie Catholic School System. But I continue to be impressed by the depth of devotion to Catholic education by our students, their families and staff across the diocese.

Let's continue to work together to increase our expectations for greater things.

God bless,

STUDENTS:

During this national celebration of Catholic schools, the Diocese of Erie looks at how students are encouraged to learn, serve, lead and succeed in the world.

LEARN



Third-graders Lilian Setta, Natasha Mauser, Alex Kocan and Lillian Blake of Seton School in Meadville work with the new Reflex math program.

When it comes to math, facts are facts. And the faster they're committed to memory, the better.

Such is the concept behind a new game-based math program called Reflex. Thanks to a \$1,225 grant, Seton Catholic School in Meadville incorporated Reflex into this year's second- and third-grade curriculum.

The hope was to develop in young students a greater fluency in simple math facts.

So far, teacher Diana Roche has been impressed with the results.

"I've seen a lot of the kids grow through the program, and it's fun," Roche says.

Principal Laura Blake's third-grade daughter, Lilly, improved her math fluency score from 16 percent to nearly 100 percent over 49 days.

"Second and third grades are crucial years when students need to master their math facts," Blake says. "This program ensures that their foundation is strong."

Reflex teaches basic math skills through various games played on a computer or iPad. Students set personal goals, i.e., earning enough coins to decorate a tree or create an avatar.

Staying on the cutting edge in education is important to Roche, who believes teachers need to respond to the increasing use of technology, even among their youngest students.

SERVE



Kindergarten students Owen Gnan, Avery Cenni and Torny Zuchowski helped collect new and gently used items donated by St. Boniface School in Kersey to the local Guardian Angel Center.

The five schools that make up the Elk County Catholic School System—Elk County Catholic High School, St. Marys Catholic Middle School and St. Marys Catholic Elementary, all in St. Marys; and St. Boniface in Kersey, and St. Leo in Ridgeway—are all about service to others.

For the past five years, service projects have fallen under the umbrella of ECHO, Elk Catholic Helps Others.

"Service is such an important part of what we're trying to instill in students," says John Schneider, principal of both the high school and middle school. "Catholic education teaches that it's important to reach out to the community."

ECHO includes a few key aspects: ongoing projects, which include monthly dress-down days to raise money for charities; annual class retreats for grades 4 through 12 during which students conduct a group service project; and individual service hours completed by high school students.

Service hours also are required at all high schools in the Diocese of Erie. According to the Catholic Schools Office, students at Cathedral Prep, Villa Maria Academy and Mercyhurst Prep (all in Erie), Kennedy Catholic in Hermitage, DuBois Central Catholic in DuBois, Venango Catholic in Oil City, and Elk Catholic logged a total of 76,695 service hours last year.

LEAD



Eighth-graders Molli Schultz and Anthony Marino lead a group of Our Lady of Peace fourth-graders in the rosary.

Future leaders are grounded in prayer at Our Lady of Peace School in Erie.

At the beginning of every year, middle-school teacher Maria Ehrman starts training eighth-graders how to lead younger students in saying the rosary. In October, a month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mother, the teenagers are ready to lead kindergarten through seventh-grade classrooms in the daily recitation of a decade of the rosary, along with providing an explanation of each day's mystery.

Seventh-graders also are trained in the rosary, this year by teacher Mary Beth Ek. In May, they also will lead a decade of the rosary in each classroom.

"This is a rite of passage for seventh- and eighth-graders here," Ehrman explains. "They're actually learning how to be leaders. If some of the younger kids aren't participating, then they have to get them involved. It's teaching them patience, too."

According to Ehrman, who has taught at Our Lady of Peace for 20 years, raising students to be responsible, faithful adults is an important aspect of Catholic education.

The school's buddy system is another way by which teenagers hone their leadership skills. They do a variety of different activities, including meeting young students for lunch or even helping them budget their money for Christmas gifts.

SUCCEED



Mercyhurst Prep junior Claire Johnson participates in the 2017 PIAA state girls' soccer championship in Hershey last fall.

In the Diocese of Erie, faith bolsters work in the classroom and on the playing field, according to Doug Chuzie, director of Diocesan Athletic Programs.

"We have a great culture in our schools where athletes do their best on and off the field," Chuzie says.

This past fall, Catholic high schools in Erie captured three separate state championships: Cathedral Prep in football, Mercyhurst Prep in girls' soccer, and Villa Maria in team tennis.

Villa's Sarah DeMarco and Tara Thomas won the state tennis doubles championship, while Elk County Catholic in St. Marys placed second in cross country.

Individual state performances: Mercyhurst's Sarah White took third in golf, and Elk County Catholic's Ben Hoffman took eighth in cross country.

Villa's cross country, golf and soccer teams each placed third in the state, Prep's golf and water polo teams placed third, and Villa's water polo team placed sixth.

According to Chuzie, strong athletic programs at Catholic elementary and middle schools contribute to successful performance in the high schools.

"Our success begins at the grade-school level with our wonderful volunteer coaches and dedicated parents, administrators and students," Chuzie says.

SNAPSHOT of SCHOOLS

SCHOOLS

- 33 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie
- Elementary schools: 23
- Middle schools: 3
- Secondary schools: 7

ENROLLMENT

- Total Catholic school enrollment in the Diocese of Erie (all schools): 7,102

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

- Catholic, non-Catholic and low-income student enrollment (in percent)
- Elementary level:
 - Low income: 29.91%
 - Catholic: 76%
 - Non-Catholic: 24%
- Secondary level:
 - Low income: 18.76%
 - Catholic: 77%
 - Non-Catholic: 23%

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- Professional employees in our Catholic schools: 634
- Teachers (full- and part-time): 605
- Student/teacher ratio is 12:1

SCHOLARSHIPS

- More than 1/3 of students attending Catholic schools receive scholarship assistance through diocesan funding.
- For the 2017-18 school year, more than \$2.5 million was available through

various scholarship programs offered through the diocese.

MISCELLANEOUS

- More than 71% of 8th-graders from Catholic elementary/middle schools attend Catholic high schools.
- Of all Catholic high school graduates, 93% go on to higher education, 2% employment, 1% military, 1% training, 3% undecided.