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# FaithLife

## Enrollment up

Gannon University enrollment at a 17-year high, page 3.



www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

October 4, 2009

## Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

### Feast days



St. Teresa of Jesus

St. Hedwig

- Oct. 4 Respect Life Sunday
- Oct. 6 St. Bruno, Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher
- Oct. 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- Oct. 9 St. Denis & companions, St. John Leonardi
- Oct. 14 Pope Callistus I
- Oct. 15 St. Teresa of Jesus
- Oct. 16 St. Hedwig, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
- Oct. 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch
- Oct. 18 World Mission Sunday

## Confirmations

St. Mark, Emporium – Saturday, Oct. 17 at 7 p.m.

## 15th annual rosary march – Oct. 11 at 2:30 p.m.

The 15th annual rosary march, sponsored by the Erie Diocese's World Apostolate of Fatima, will take place on Sunday, Oct. 11 beginning at 2:30 p.m. at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie.

The rosary procession will extend through the downtown area before returning to the cathedral. For those unable to participate in the march, the rosary will also be prayed in the cathedral.

The guest homilist is Father Bill Barron, parochial vicar of Our Lady of Peace Parish in Erie.



## Synod of bishops for Africa – Oct. 4-25

The Catholic Task Force on Africa has launched a new Web site, [www.yesafricamatters.org](http://www.yesafricamatters.org), to spread the word on conditions in Africa prior to the Oct. 4-25 Synod of Bishops for Africa at the Vatican. The theme of the synod is "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace."

The new Web site provides background on the connections between the Catholic Church in the United States and Africa. It lists many of the partnerships and twinning relationships as well as the missionary communities from the United States in Africa.

The site also contains a section specifically on the synod with resources and links to universities and other advocacy groups that can help readers better understand Africa's current challenges. The task force is a Washington-based group of advocates.



## Clergy appointments

The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL, Bishop of Erie, announces the following clergy appointments:



Deacon Martin Eisert, granted retirement as deacon assistant and temporal administrator of Holy Trinity Parish, Erie. Effective October 19, 2009.

Msgr. Thomas McSweeney, appointed pastor of Holy Trinity Parish, Erie. Effective October 19, 2009.

# A changing church

*Parish reconfigurations evolve with the times to accommodate demographics*

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

**Editor's note:** This is part two of a three-part special report on parish mergers and reconfigurations. Look for part three in the Nov. 4 issue of FaithLife.

No bishop wants to close a parish.

But the reality of changing demographics, declining parish revenues and fewer men in the priesthood are pressuring church leaders to realign church resources — parishes included — to best serve a Catholic community that is spreading across a much larger geographic area.

The downsizing trend largely affects churches in the Northeast and the Midwest. Disappearing are the days when parishes could be within walking distance of each other, each serving a different nationality.

On the other hand, in areas where the Catholic population is growing — primarily in the American West and in the Deep South — church officials are seeing burgeoning parishes. In some cases, new parish communities are being established.

In 2007 in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for example, more than 95,400 infants were baptized in 287 parishes, according to the Official Catholic Directory. That's an average of 332 children in each parish, or nearly one every day.

That contrasts with the pastoral life of some parishes being closed where less than 10 baptisms annually are the norm.

Overall, data compiled by the Official Catholic Directory show that the number of parishes peaked in 1992 at 19,971. In the 2009 edition of the directory, which reflects information gathered in 2008, there were 18,674 parishes, a decline of 1,297 (6.5 percent) in 15 years.

The directory lists information only on the number of



Photos by Jason Koshinski

parishes and does not indicate how many actually closed and how many parishes opened in a given year.

Since beginning his tenure as bishop of the Diocese of Erie in July 1990, Bishop Donald Trautman has overseen the closing—suppression in church parlance—of a number of parishes and mission churches. He said his effort has been to reconfigure or merge parishes slowly and gradually rather than making a dramatic move with a number of closings which he feels can disturb the pastoral peace in a diocese.

"We need to keep planning and adjusting to the realities of a changing population and declining numbers and do what is right for the church," said Bishop Donald Trautman.

Bishop Trautman's words echo the intentions of bishops in many areas of the country as they strive to build vibrant parishes in an effort to boost Mass attendance and keep

people engaged in parish life. "But nothing in a dramatic way," he said, "as long as I'm able to provide pastors for my people. And that's what I've been able to do. We have sufficient numbers at this point to cover the main population areas."

In most cases, the distance between parishes dictates which ones are logical to be brought together, the bishop said. "I don't ever want my pastors overworked in the sense of covering too many parishes," he said. "But we sometimes can merge two parishes that are close together, and certainly a pastor can handle three-, four hundred families. That's what I've done in these instances."

Looking at the geography of the Erie Diocese, the prospect of any sweeping changes to its parish structure seems highly improbable. The closure or merger of some parishes would lead to not only

the difficulty of parishioners traveling a longer distance to attend Mass but also not having a priest present to them for sick calls, counseling and instruction of children.

"I strongly believe that shepherding God's people means knowing your people," Bishop Trautman said. "And you can't know your people when indeed you are a good distance from them and not available for their concerns or meeting them on a regular basis. Given our geography, there's not a lot of restructuring that can be done."

But Bishop Trautman has long been a proponent of gradual change whenever it can be done.

"I think that as long as we are answering the needs of our people and providing priests in the proper way, I will continue in the same fashion," Bishop Trautman said.

Some parishes that are merging are doing so to help carry out the desires ex-

pressed by parishioners. That is the case with the diocese's newest merger, St. Stanislaus Kostka-Holy Trinity Parish in Sharon. With 100 registered families, parishioners of Holy Trinity Parish in Farrell realized their financial difficulties and realized they couldn't exist as an independent parish any longer. Looking at other area parishes as possible merger candidates, they focused on St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Sharon. The churches are less than a quarter of a mile apart.

"They thought they would be most comfortable here," said Father Stan Swacha, pastor of the newly merged parish. "They asked if we'd be interested in merging, and we said yes."

Bishop Trautman celebrated the final Mass at Holy Trinity Sept. 13. While the communities have merged into one, they are planning

See CHANGING CHURCH, page 3



On Sept. 12, parishioners gathered at Immaculate Conception in Erie for a final time before processing with a statue of St. Martin de Porres to St. Mary where the merging communities celebrated the first Mass as St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish. One of the criteria Bishop Donald Trautman said is looked at in potential mergers is proximity. The two churches were less than a mile apart.

## Influenza, the H1N1 virus and Mass

*Following standard hygienic practices for the liturgy*

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

Amid the threat of flu outbreaks, Massgoers, priests and liturgical ministers are urged to follow some simple guidelines along with large doses of common sense.

After receiving numerous requests for guidance concerning flu and the H1N1 virus—known as swine flu—Bishop Donald Trautman last week, along with the Office of Worship, sent general guidelines to parishes regarding the liturgy.

All persons should use the following basic guidelines:

- Stay home when sick
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water, particularly prior to and after Mass
- Avoid receiving from the cup if you do not feel well
- Cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available)
- Avoid touching the face, eyes, etc. with hands

Also, extraordinary ministers are to avoid physically touching those coming forward in the communion line, whether they are receiving on the hand, on the



tongue or asking for a blessing.

Parishes are encouraged to provide hand sanitizers, tissues and disposable wipes to clean frequently touched surfaces such as pews and doorknobs.

If someone is diagnosed as having the H1N1 virus, those who are ill should stay home until they are no longer contagious. This advice was announced during the summer by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Education.

View the complete guidelines at [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org).

## Respect Life

Respect Life Sunday, celebrated on the first Sunday in October, annually kicks off the year-long Respect Life Program sponsored by the U.S. bishops.

Although the Respect Life program itself has been a year-round initiative, U.S. Catholics across the country have used the month of October to focus on life and human dignity. Many parishes will hold a special Respect Life Mass Oct. 4, the first Sunday of Respect Life Month.

The following issues, articles and resources are contained in the 2009-10 Respect Life program, available on the Web at [www.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/2009/index.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/2009/index.shtml):

- "Where Do We Go from Here? The Challenge of Building a Culture of Life" by Cardinal Justin Rigali
- "Why You Matter: A Reflection on Human Dignity" by Father John Bartunek, LC
- "Addressing Infertility with Compassion and Clarity" by Father J. Daniel Mindling, OFM Cap.
- "Contraception: The Fine Print" by Susan E. Willis, Esq.
- "Assisted Suicide: Death by 'Choice'" by Rita L. Marker, Esq.

## IN THE U.S.

■ **Though Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., concedes there's no political will in Washington** to include undocumented immigrants in health care reform, he believes it's the country's moral obligation to ensure that everyone in the nation receives proper medical care. "I agree that there is a special problem with those who have entered here without the permission of the United States, and that has to be looked at," said Bishop Murphy, who chairs the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. "But that's a problem unto itself." Most U.S. bishops who have spoken publicly about health care reform have said that one of the richest countries in the world should find a way to guarantee that everyone within its borders has access to medical care. "How can we say that we're a country of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all who come to our shores if we say, 'except the unborn'?" Or, if we say, 'except the handicapped.' Or, if we say, 'except the new person,'" Bishop Murphy said. "Then ... we have introduced a sense of injustice into a plan that should be just for all."

■ **The need for emergency housing service as well as emergency shelter and permanent housing jumped 12.4 percent in 2008** as the economic recession gained momentum, reported Catholic Charities USA in its 2008 annual survey of services. Released Sept. 15 during a nationwide teleconference from the agency's Alexandria headquarters, the report shows that Catholic Charities agencies served nearly 600,000 people in need of some type of housing assistance in 2008. Overall, the 142 Catholic Charities agencies responding to the survey — about 85 percent of the nationwide Catholic Charities network — reported serving more than 8.5 million people in 2008, a 10 percent increase from 2007. Without being able to offer specifics, Father Larry Snyder, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, said the demand for housing and other social services continued to climb as the recession deepened during 2009.

■ **Project Rachel, the post-abortion reconciliation ministry of the Catholic Church**, has been healing hearts of those af-

ected by abortion since 1984. The 25th anniversary has been "an awesome experience of looking back and seeing how an idea that was really only Spirit-inspired changed the face of the abortion debate in the U.S., and, not only in the U.S., but also in other countries," said Vicki Thorn, Project Rachel founder and executive director of the National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing since 1990. Some of Thorn's favorite work beyond the one-on-one with women is the speaking and training she does with priests and caregivers.



## AROUND THE WORLD

■ **Pope Benedict XVI announced that he was convening a Synod of Bishops for the Middle East** to be held in October of 2010, to address the trials and tribulations of the Christian population in the region. The pope said the synod would look at the various problems faced by the minority Christian communities in Middle Eastern countries, from migration to interreligious dialogue. He announced the initiative at a meeting Sept. 19 with patriarchs and other church leaders from the region. The synod will be held Oct. 10-24, 2010, on the theme "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness: 'The community of believers was of one heart and mind.'" The quotation is a description of the unity of the early church from the Acts of the Apostles.

## PEOPLE OF FAITH

■ **Near the Crypt Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception**, in the Hall of American Saints, across from the papal tiara and the statue of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, stands a gleaming new white statue of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. With a smile on her face, Mother Teresa holds a baby in one arm and has her other hand placed lovingly on the head of a poor man crouched at her feet. The statue — the newest addition to the national shrine in Washington — was the gift of an anonymous donor. It was made in Italy and the planning for it has been in the works

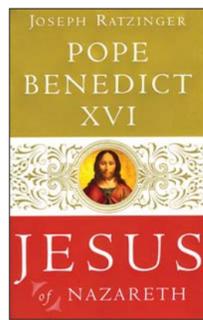
for more than a year, according to Msgr. Walter Rossi, basilica rector. A special dedication Mass was held Sept. 13 in the basilica's upper church, followed by the dedication of the statue downstairs.



CNS photo

Members of the Missionaries of Charity gather around a statue of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta during its dedication at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington Sept. 13.

■ **Pope Benedict XVI's second volume on the life of Jesus is likely to be completed sometime next spring**, said Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi. The book is expected to cover Christ's childhood, passion, death and resurrection. The first volume, the best-selling "Jesus of Nazareth," was published in 2007. Father Lombardi said that next spring was a "realistic" target date for completion. He added that re-reading the manuscript for publication and translating it into other languages could add to the timeline, however. The pope has been working on the volume over the last two years, especially during his summer vacations.



## By the Way...

On Nov. 30, the Diocese of Erie will formally celebrate the 50th anniversary of St. Mark Seminary with a 5 p.m. Mass in the seminary chapel. Priests throughout the diocese will be invited to concelebrate the Mass with Bishop Donald Trautman. Bishop Thomas Tobin, bishop of the Diocese of Providence and an alumnus of St. Mark's, will be the homilist. The Mass will be followed by a brief commemorative program.



The diocese operates St. Mark Seminary as a college formation program to prepare seminarians from various dioceses for major seminary. Currently there are 11 seminarians from the Diocese of Erie, as well as eight others from the dioceses of Buffalo and Greensburg. Every year on the weekend near Columbus Day, the Knights of Columbus conduct a nationwide membership blitz. The Knights provide information about the fraternal organization to parishioners and promote the registration of new members. They will be doing so here in the parishes of the diocese on the weekend of Oct. 11-12.

The Knights of Columbus form the world's largest lay Catholic organization, with more than 1.7 million members, including more than 60 councils in the Erie Diocese. In 2008, the Knights contributed \$150 million to charitable and benevolent causes and volunteered nearly 70 million hours in service to the church and community.

For the past six years, Msgr. Tom McSweeney, former national director for the Christophers, has juggled responsibilities as both director of Evangelization for Communications for the Erie Diocese and parochial administrator of Holy Trinity Parish in Erie. Last weekend he announced he would be leaving his post with the diocese and devoting himself exclusively to Holy Trinity as full-time pastor.

Parishioners at Holy Trinity, home of the popular Zabawa festival, welcomed the news with enthusiasm. The traditionally Polish parish has grown significantly under the leadership of Msgr. McSweeney, who collaborated closely with Deacon Marty Eisert and Deacon Tom Matusiak. Deacon Eisert, a former vice president with Erie Insurance, has served as temporal administrator of Holy Trinity, managing parish finances and day-to-day operations, since 2003. Deacon Eisert will now retire from his work with Holy Trinity to enjoy full-time retirement with his wife, Kathy.

Anne-Marie Welsh, founding editor of *Faith* magazine, will become director of Communications for the diocese. The changes will become effective Oct. 19.

Jason Koshinski is editor of *FaithLife*. Contact him at [JKoshinski@ErieRCD.org](mailto:JKoshinski@ErieRCD.org) or 814.824.1171.

# Revised classes make NFP easier for couples, instructors

By Jason Koshinski  
*FaithLife* editor

Couples taking Natural Family Planning classes in the Erie Diocese will find the program shorter and more contemporary and learn about the connection between its science and theology.

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the practice of achieving or postponing pregnancy by observing and recording a few observable fertility signs.

"What we did is refine our classes for couples," said Barb Burkett, director of the diocese's NFP program. "For the past year, we've been looking at improving the delivery of our information to make it easier for couples to understand."

Classes weave in the science of fertility awareness along with certain theology aspects, which reflect teachings from Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.

"We wanted to incorporate it subtly yet accurately in our classes," Burkett said. "It has to do with understanding the dignity of the human person. Really, that's the important thing. That and the sacredness of the marital relationship."

For teachers, gone are the cumbersome slides and projectors. In its place is a professional PowerPoint presentation. This will allow any changes to the class to be made more easily, Burkett said.

Also, the number of classes in the program has been reduced from four to three.

"We've rearranged some of what we've taught," Burkett said. "It might feel a little less overwhelming for people. You can teach the science of it rather quickly. It's not that complicated."

Dan and Nelsa Armour are parishioners at Beloved Disciple Parish in Grove City and have been practicing NFP since they were married 10 years ago. They have been teaching it to other couples for five years. They said the new twists on the program have made it



Nelsa and Dan Armour of Beloved Disciple Parish in Grove City have been teaching NFP classes for five years. The couple said the restructured classes are easier for instructors and the couples they teach.

easier both for them and for the couples they teach.

"I think having the PowerPoint is a lot easier, and it makes it more contemporary and professional," said Nelsa Armour. "Having three classes works pretty well. They have enough charting information, and the science and theology is all interwoven. It all flows very beautifully."

For couples that are interested, Armour said she does schedule personal follow-up visits.

"We want to be there for them during that learning phase so

## NFP classes

### DuBois

Thursdays: Oct. 8, Nov. 5, Dec. 3 from 7-9 p.m.  
Instructors & RSVP: Tom and Judy Tarcson at 814.371.5852

### Erie

Tuesdays: Nov. 3, Dec. 1, Jan. 5 at St. George Parish from 7-9 p.m.  
Instructors & RSVP: Paul and Gretchen Lorei at 814.866.3008

### Warren

Wednesdays: Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6 at St. Joseph Parish from 7-9 p.m.  
Instructors: Ed and Barbara Burkett  
RSVP: Martha at 814.726.0344

### Meadville

Saturdays: Nov. 7, Dec. 5, Jan. 9 at St. Brigid Parish from 9-11 a.m.  
Instructors: Ed and Barbara Burkett  
RSVP: Moira at 814.724.7872

For other classes or more information about NFP, visit [www.ErieRCD.org/nfp.asp](http://www.ErieRCD.org/nfp.asp).

there's a support system in place, but we also want to be respectful of their time," she said.

Couples attending classes also receive a binder with information directly from the PowerPoint presentation.

"We've tried to make the program as user-friendly as possible," Burkett said.

## FaithLife

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## 15th Annual

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## Briefly

### Gannon University enrollment at a 17-year high

ERIE – More freshmen. More transfer students. More total undergraduate students.

Growth in several key student demographics has helped Gannon University reach a total enrollment of 4,238, the university's highest number of students since 1992.

When Dr. Antoine Garibaldi began serving as president of Gannon in 2001, the university's overall enrollment stood at 3,407. The current figure represents an increase of more than 24 percent during Dr. Garibaldi's tenure.

The current overall enrollment was driven in part by the success of the Gannon Stimulus Initiative, which earlier this year made available for prospective students as well as returning Gannon students an additional \$2.6 million in financial aid.



### Cursillo weekends for men, women

The Erie Diocese's Cursillo movement will host two upcoming Cursillo weekends.

A men's Cursillo will be held Oct. 15-18; a women's Cursillo will be held Nov. 19-22.

Both weekends will be held at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Harborcreek.

Cursillo means "short course" in Christianity. The movement is a special apostolate that provides "an authentic experience of Christian community and a spiritual blueprint for living the Christian life," according to Cursillo's mission statement.

The Cursillo weekends are typically led by two priests who give a series of talks about the teachings of the faith. Lay people who have made Cursillo weekends present how those teachings are lived out. Different activities such as prayer, worship, music and fellowship help participants internalize the teachings.

For more information, call the Cursillo offices at 814.456.2948, e-mail [ericcursillo@neo.rr.com](mailto:ericcursillo@neo.rr.com) or visit [www.ericcursillo.org](http://www.ericcursillo.org).



### The Awakening for youth and young adults Nov. 1

ERIE – The Awakening, a free event and outreach program intended to transform local communities, will be held on Sunday, Nov. 1 from 2-5 p.m. at Gannon University's Hammermill Center.

A program from Hard As Nails Ministries, The Awakening is presented as a chance to awaken adults through the passion of young people.

Hard As Nails Ministries was founded in 2002 by Justin Fatica, a Cathedral Prep graduate and popular youth evangelist. Fatica now lives in Syracuse, N.Y., and has been profiled on ABC's "Good Morning America" and "Nightline" programs and was the subject of an HBO documentary in 2007 called "Hard as Nails."

He has teams of college and high school students developing skits and testimonies to touch the lives of young people throughout the country.

For more information, Mary Therese Craig at 814.833.9663 or 814.504.2429 or visit the Hard As Nails Ministry Web site at [www.hanm.org](http://www.hanm.org).



If you are planning to get away from the winter weather and would like to continue receiving *Faith* magazine, please give us your new address, date you plan to leave and when you plan to return and we'll keep your magazine coming to you.

**Please contact Brenda Williams at (800) 374-3723, ext. 168, 814-824-1168 or email [bwilliams@eriercd.org](mailto:bwilliams@eriercd.org)**

Sunday, October 18: Noon to 6 pm  
Parish cafeteria, 2401 W. 38th St.

*Our Lady of Peace Annual Spaghetti Dinner*

Adults \$7, Seniors \$6, Children \$4  
Includes: spaghetti w/ meatballs, bread, salad, drink and dessert—all served to you by our youth.

All proceeds benefit Parish Youth Ministries and Confirmation Programs

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# A changing church

CHANGING CHURCH  
from page 1

## Parish closings and openings since 1990

The following is a list of parish and missions that have closed and opened since Bishop Donald Trautman became bishop of the Diocese of Erie in July 1990.

According to Father Ed Lohse, chancellor of the diocese, canon law requires that when parishes are merged, they are technically closed—or suppressed—and a new parish is created.

Under the parishes opened category are the following distinctions: St. Stanislaus Kostka,

Sharon, and Holy Trinity, Farrell, became St. Stanislaus-Kostka-Holy Trinity; St. Mary and Immaculate Conception, Erie, became St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception; Holy Family, St. Ann and St. Casimir, Erie, became Our Mother of Sorrows; Our Lady of Fatima and St. Ann, Farrell, became Our Lady of Fatima-St. Ann; and St. Cyprian, Waterford, and St. Matthew-in-the-Woods, Erie, became All Saints.

### Parishes closed since July 1990

Holy Trinity, Farrell	2009
St. Stanislaus-Kostka, Sharon	2009
Immaculate Conception, Erie	2009
St. Mary, Erie	2009
Holy Family, Erie	2009
St. Ann, Erie	2009
St. Casimir, Erie	2009
Our Lady of Fatima, Farrell	2008
St. Ann, Farrell	2008
St. Cyprian, Waterford	2005
St. Matthew-in-the-Woods, Erie	2005
Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Winburne	2001
St. Benedict, Daguscahonda	1995

### Missions closed since July 1990

St. Mary, Roulette	2009
Holy Cross, Rasselas	2003
Ss. John and Paul, Karthaus	2003
St. John, Duke Center	2000
St. Ann, Corsica	2000
Our Lady of Victory, Spartansburg	1999
St. Paul, Wheatland	1998
St. Germain, Germania	1997
Ss. John and Stephen, James City	1997
St. Hermenegild, Pardoe	1997
Ss. Peter and Paul, Pettis	1993

### Parishes opened since July 1990

St. Stanislaus Kostka-Holy Trinity, Sharon	2009
St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Erie	2009
Our Mother of Sorrows, Erie	2009
Our Lady of Fatima-St. Ann, Farrell	2008
All Saints, Waterford	2005

Still, with any talk of mergers and reconfigurations, he said he focuses on the reason why he's a pastor: taking care of the spiritual needs of the people.

"That's what we're here for—the salvation of souls," he said. "It's an evangelization. We have good people here. Most of the people here know each other. They're just like relatives."

While proximity plays a major role in parish mergers, sometimes unique circumstances can factor into the equation. For years St. Cyprian Parish in Waterford and St. Matthew-in-the-Woods Parish in Erie dreamed of having new churches, but neither community could afford one on its own.

The two parishes officially consolidated in April 2005 to form All Saints Parish and worshiped together at St. Matthew while

community is still one of the parish's main goals. For the past year, the parish council's focus has been on one question: How can we be a more welcoming community?

"We're constantly trying to do things to build and foster community and welcome new members," Father Whitman said. "The first thing we usually do in group settings is ask if everyone knows one another. It's a simple thing—to get to know one another and to know who people are."

That has happened more through activities such as fund-

national organizations studying the changing structure of parishes.

The organizations include National Association for Lay Ministry, Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development, National Association for Church Personnel Administrators, National Association of Diaconate Directors, National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association and National Federation of Priests Councils.

Jewell called the current trend that is emerging—fewer parishes, fewer priests and greater involvement of lay leaders—"the most amazing paradigm shift" in the history of the U.S. Catholic Church. She said the shift is a natural evolution four decades after the Second Vatican Council.

"I think that what we're being asked to do is to redefine our understanding of what a parish is," she explained. "We know canonically what it is and I'm not talking about that. But what a parish does and who does it in a parish, I think we're going to have to re-look at that. I think the spirit is inviting us deeply to seeing the parish as a community of disciples whose task is to evangelize the mission in the world. We are where we are," Jewell said. "There is no going back."

Catholic News Service contributed to this report.

"We need to keep planning and adjusting to the realities of a changing population and declining numbers and do what is right for the church."

—Bishop Donald Trautman

both churches were being sold. The new church was dedicated in July 2006.

The building process helped unite the parish families, said Father Tom Whitman, pastor of All Saints who also served as pastor of the former communities.

"Ever since the beginning, it's been all about connecting them together as individuals and community," Father Whitman said. "The common goal of their faith and their church is kind of what drew them together as community."

Coming together as one com-

raising efforts or parish dinners and picnics.

"We've focused hard on fellowship," Father Whitman said. "The faith part kind of followed from all of that. That sense of belonging was the most important thing before we could even move to that faith dimension."

Even as the frequency of parish suppressions and mergers increases, the Catholic Church in America remains strong, said Marti Jewell, the outgoing director of Pastoral Leadership, a 6-year-old collaborative effort between six

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**St. Stanislaus Church**  
**Annual Parish Day**  
Sunday, October 4, Noon-6pm  
Parish Hall: 520 E. 13 St. (handicap accessible)

**"Polish Platter Dinner"**  
(includes kielbasa, gołąbki, pierogi, and more)

Adults: \$8, Children 6-12: \$4, 5 and under: FREE

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- Proceeds benefit St. Stanislaus Parish

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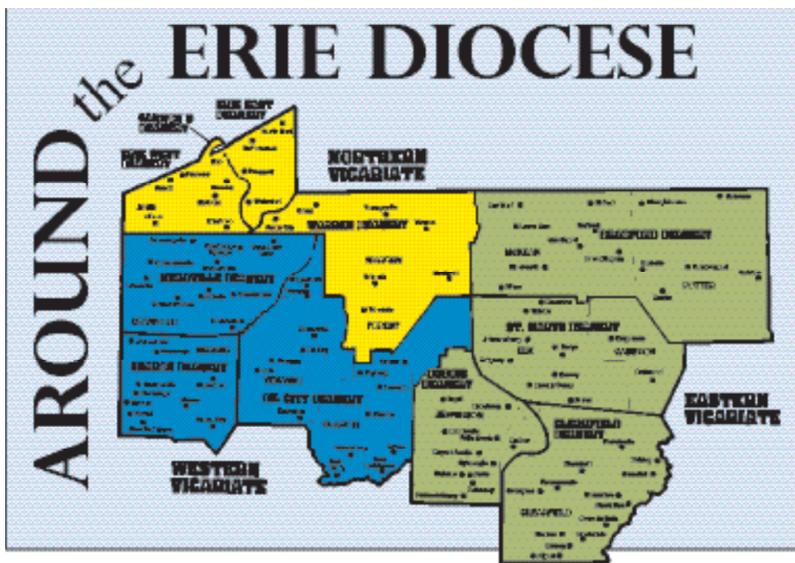
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**Blessed Sacrament Fall Fest 2009**  
Sunday, October 18 from 11 to 6 p.m.  
W. 26th St. and Greengarden Blvd., Erie / 454-0171

**Food & Fun:** Café BS will serve soup, salad, meatball subs, chili dogs, & pies. Enjoy child and adult games, a bake sale, theme basket raffle, bingo, hay rides, cow pie bingo & more.

Eleven cash prizes totaling \$10,000  
Grand prize: \$2,500; drawing at 6 p.m.



All parishes, missions, schools and groups are encouraged to choose a **correspondent** who can regularly e-mail news items to "Around the Erie Diocese" at [FaithLife@ErieRCD.org](mailto:FaithLife@ErieRCD.org)

Visit [ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp](http://ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp) to download quick and easy **photo tips** on a wallet-size card.



## St. Joseph, Lucinda, dedicates new pre-school and kindergarten

LUCINDA – St. Joseph Parish in Lucinda blessed and dedicated a new pre-school and kindergarten building Aug. 23. Groundbreaking for the building was done in June 2008. Funds were raised through the generosity of parishioners and many dedicated to Catholic education in the area with the assistance of a major challenger to the campaign.

The building houses the pre-school and kindergarten of St. Joseph School along with a library and assembly room on the lower level. Enrollment in the pre-school for the current school year is 29 with 18 in kindergarten. St. Joseph School has a current enrollment of 76 in kindergarten through 6th grade.

"This project began several years ago as the pre-school and kindergarten classes began to grow," said Father Bill Miller, pastor of St. Joseph. "Parents were asking for an all-day pre-school. We finally hit upon the idea of a new building."

Bishop Donald Trautman officiated at the blessing and dedication. Also present were: Msgr. John Swoger, vicar of the Western Vicariate; Father Miller; Father Gregory Passauer, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Crown; Sister Monica Steiner, OSB, principal; representatives of the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Erie; area principals and teachers; and representatives of the Benedictine Sisters of Elk County in St. Marys who have staffed the school since 1871. Another 120 guests also celebrated the dedication.



Pictured are members of the Lander family, the sons and daughters of Benedict and C. Rita Lander, along with Bishop Donald Trautman, who is holding the dedication plaque.

A time capsule was placed inside of the cornerstone that listed all of the contributors to the project. The building was dedicated to the memory of Benedict and C. Rita Lander who Father Miller said had a long-time support for Catholic education.

## St. Venantius parishioner celebrates 100th birthday

ROUSEVILLE – St. Venantius Parish in Rouseville marked the 100th birthday of parishioner Caroline Hart on Sept. 13. Hart, who attends Mass each Sunday, celebrated with three other generations of her family in attendance including daughter, Patricia Hart Hildebrand; granddaughter, Dr. Danielle Adamsky; and great-granddaughter, Sydney Hart Adamsky. Also attending the gathering were Msgr. William Karg, senior associate at St. Stephen in Oil City, and Father Matthew Ruyechan, parochial administrator of St. Venantius and pastor of St. Stephen.



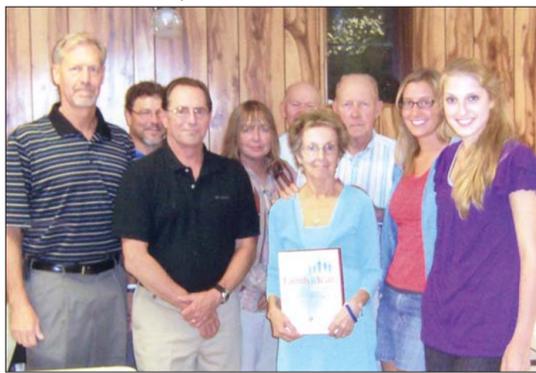
## Franklin Knights of Columbus name Hellers 'Family of the Year'

FRANKLIN – The Bob and Peggy Heller family was recently recognized by the Knights of Columbus Council 1020 of Franklin as its "Family of the Year" at a dinner at the council hall.

The honor, awarded annually by the council, acknowledges a local family for its involvement in both the church and community.

Bob came into the church through the RCIA program and shortly after joined the Knights of Columbus. He serves as an usher and has participated in the Knights of the Blessed Sacrament's eucharistic adoration during Forty Hours and the Mass for the unborn prior to benediction.

Bob, who served the Franklin Police Department for 20 years and is currently serving his second term as mayor of Franklin, recently served on the council's committee to raise funds for its Ten Commandments project—a 6,000-pound granite monument. He is a past board member of the Humane Society and presently



At the Knights of Columbus Council 1020 "Family of the Year" dinner are, from left to right: son, Michael Heller; Grand Knight Floyd O'Neil; son-in-law and daughter, Terry and Beth Brighthill, Knight of Columbus Family Director Mel Ruminiski; Peggy and Bob Heller; and granddaughters, Colleen and Samantha Heller.

volunteers with VARHA, which enables handicapped youth to go horseback riding.

Their son, Michael Heller, is CFO of Corry Hospital. All five of Michael's children attended Catholic schools and colleges. Granddaughter, Colleen,

is a high school teacher. After two tours of duty with Army Airborne in Iraq and receiving a Purple Heart, grandson, Daniel, is heading to Afghanistan. Granddaughter, Bridget, who is with the U.S. Army Special Forces, is being deployed to Iraq.

## Erie students learn while sailing aboard Great Lakes schooner

ERIE – Students from St. Luke School and St. Peter Cathedral School in Erie sailed aboard the Denis Sullivan, a re-creation of a 19th century Great Lakes schooner, Sept. 24. Owned and operated by Pier Wisconsin as an educational platform and scientific research vessel, students welcomed the opportunity to test water quality, use a benthic grab to learn about invader species such as zebra mussels, analyze plankton and learn to tie nautical knots (pictured).

The ship's historical officer regaled the students with tales of life aboard a ship in the 1880s and the history of sailing along the Great Lakes. Students also had the opportunity to assist in raising the ship's sails.



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For information, itinerary, and letter from Father Kriss call:

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## St. Mary of Grace Annual Columbus Day Spaghetti Dinner

Social Center, 1085 Water St., Meadville  
Sunday Oct. 11, 2009, 11:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Pasta dinner includes homemade Italian sauce, meatballs, salad, beverage and dessert.  
Cost: \$7 for adults and \$5 for children ages 5-10  
Dine in or take out. Cannoli will be available for purchase.  
Unique gift baskets, used book sale, bake sale and "A Taste of St. Mary's" cookbooks will be available.  
EXCITING RAFFLES! CASH DRAWING!  
Come enjoy a great day of Italian cuisine and hospitality!



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