

OSBs break declining vocation trend

Four women in their 50s join Benedictine Sisters of Erie.
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FaithLife

POPE QUOTE

INSPIRING WORDS FROM POPE FRANCIS:
"War does not begin in the battlefield. Wars begin in the heart."

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BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

November 23, 2014

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What do you know about the origins of today's modern Nativity set? For a chance to win the \$75 certificate, answer all three of these questions correctly:

- 1 In what year was a Nativity scene first staged publicly?
- 2 Which pope gave his permission to present this Nativity?
- 3 This Nativity scene was set up in a cave. In what village?

Email your correct answers to faithlife@ErieRCD.org no later than noon, Nov. 28, 2014.

Only one entry per person. If there are multiple winners, the names will be placed in a random drawing. The winner will be announced in the Dec. 7 edition of FaithLife. Employees of St. Mark Catholic Center are not eligible to participate.

Year in Review PA Catholics outspoken about legislation

By Joelle Shea
Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

HARRISBURG—Thousands of Catholics in Pennsylvania this year contacted their legislators through the Catholic Advocacy Network of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (www.pacatholic.org). The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) is the public affairs agency of the commonwealth's Catholic bishops and its Catholic dioceses.

Here is the status of important legislation:
Adoption: House Bill 162 would have required the Pennsylvania Department of Health to provide a summary of an adoptee's birth record without the consent of the adopter's parents. The law already allows an adoptee to obtain medical records, but HB 162 would have released the names of birth parents without their consent, even if there had been a promise of anonymity provided long ago. The PCC opposed HB 162, and it was not passed this session.

Human trafficking: Senate Bill 75, which strengthened Pennsylvania's laws against human trafficking, was passed in part because of the messages sent to legislators by many advocates. Thanks to this legislation, Pennsylvania is now recognized as one of the states that addressed head-on this scourge against the dignity of the person.

Equal education funding: In recent years, public school students received an increase to textbook funding even though non-public students did not. Non-public schools have received either a decrease or no increase for five straight years, while the cost of providing each textbook to the students has continued to increase. The PCC and its advocates lobbied for the legislature to allocate equal funding for non-public schools in this year's budget, but it was not included. The PCC will lobby for this equality next year as well.

Expectant parents: The Down Syndrome Prenatal and Postnatal Education Act ended up passing with broad support. It is estimated that more than 90 percent of babies diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted. This legislation will ensure that parents are offered resources so that they have more support.

Marriage: In May, a federal district court judge overturned Pennsylvania's Defense of Marriage Act. Gov. Tom Corbett did not appeal the ruling. Theresa Gaffney, clerk of the Orphan's Court in Schuylkill County, filed a request for stay (with counsel from PCC and the Pennsylvania Family Institute), but that was denied. Advocates sent messages of support to Clerk of Court Gaffney and also wrote to Gov. Corbett asking for him to uphold traditional marriage.

Joelle Shea is the director of outreach for the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference.

Nuns in their 80s active in social justice

BY MARY SOLBERG | FAITHLIFE

Benedictine Sister Marlene Berke, 82, suffers from arthritis.

Mercy Sister Rita Brocke, who turns 88 in December, is under treatment for cancer.

And Sister of St. Joseph Mary Claire Kennedy, 86 this week, has had hip and knee replacements.

But don't let these facts fool you. Neither advancing age nor health issues keep these sisters down. Each of them remains active—some might say even boisterous—when it comes to the pressing social justice issues of our time.

Whether it's working to stop human sex trafficking and the death penalty, or pushing for changes in U.S. immigration law, health care or the environment, they still stand at the forefront of local and national efforts at reform. In the City of Erie, Sisters Marlene, Rita and Mary Claire are fixtures at Take Back the Site vigils, reclaiming peace in neighborhoods where violence has occurred.

"I feel that even if things are not going to change immediately, it's not going to change me. I'm not going to stop. When I'm in my coffin I'll stop," Sister Marlene says.

That feisty nature is at the core of each of these women of faith.

Sister Marlene came to Erie in 1974, transferring her vows six years later from the Benedictine community in Covington, Ky., to the Benedictines of Erie. She helped found Benedictines for Peace in 1980, and continues to serve as its coordinator today, organizing Take Back the Site events and monthly vigils for immigration reform. Since 1997, she has taught English as a second language at the



These sisters don't let age or health issues get in their way of social justice activism. Pictured at a Take Back the Site event this summer, left to right, are: Sister Marlene Berke, OSB; Sister Rita Brocke, RSM; and Sister Mary Claire Kennedy, SSI.

St. Benedict Education Center. She traces her zeal for social justice to the Vietnam War, when she started to see that working for justice could lead to peace. Once in Erie, she worked for four years as the publicity coordinator and Latin America contact for Pax Christi USA. In 1980, she joined a weekly prayer protest against nuclear weapons at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Sister Rita Brocke returned to the Diocese of Erie 13 years ago, beginning a longtime ministry at the House of Mercy. A registered nurse, she had

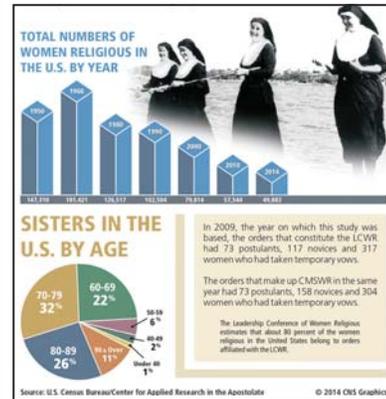
previously helped establish two nurse-managed primary care centers in the Detroit area, serving the inner-city poor, and from 1975-88 was a nurse practitioner and coordinator of health care at the Martin Luther King Center in Erie.

Although she now resides in assisted living at the Mercy Motherhouse in Erie, she attends Tai chi classes three times a week and assists with nursing care as needed. If possible, she still tries to attend Take Back the Site events and raise awareness of the needs of the poor, something that has motivated her since she was a freshman at Mercyhurst University in 1944.

"No matter what your main responsibilities are, you need to look and see what impact social justice would have on your life. The Christian life isn't just little minutiae; it's more than that. It's thinking through and analyzing the quality of life in our culture," Sister Rita says.

A Sister of St. Joseph for more than 60 years, Sister Mary Claire still serves as the full-time social justice coordinator for her community, a position she has held since 2000. Catholic social teaching first moved her spiritually as a student at the former Villa Maria College, Erie, where she read the social encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI. The pontiffs spoke of social ills and the duty of the Catholic Church to address them.

After earning bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry, and a doctorate in biochemistry, Sister Mary Claire taught both nationally and internationally. But her commitment to serve others grounds her. For the past



Erie, Shenango parishes reduce Masses

Parishes in east Erie and in the Shenango Valley of Mercer County are now offering fewer Masses.

Effective the weekend of Nov. 1-2, Mass times were changed for 12 parishes on Erie's east side, reducing the number of Masses in east Erie from 51 to 43.

"Many of the Masses are poorly attended because of declining population," Bishop Lawrence Persico wrote to parishioners of the churches affected. "Most of the churches on the east side have the same number of Masses they had when their population was larger."

There are 17 churches on Erie's east side, with 20,260 individual Catholics registered as parishioners. According to the bishop, not everyone attends Mass and it is increasingly difficult to provide an available pool of retired priests on weekends. As a former pastor, Bishop Persico believes that fuller churches provide a more life-giving experience.

In August, Bishop Persico met with the pastors of the affected parishes, asking them to reduce the number of Masses offered. He encouraged the priests to work with neighboring churches to meet the demands of parish life.

The 12 Erie churches with new Mass times are:

- Holy Rosary—Saturday at 4 p.m. (October to March), Sunday at 10:30 a.m.
- Mount Calvary—Saturday at 4 p.m. (October to March), Sunday at 9 a.m.



Holy Rosary Parish is among several east Erie churches that have reduced Mass times.

- Our Lady of Mount Carmel—Saturday at 5:30 p.m., Sunday at 8 and 11 a.m.
- Our Mother of Sorrows (St. Ann, St. Casimir and Holy Family)—St. Ann: Saturday at 5 p.m., Sunday at 9:30 a.m. (Latin Mass), and 11:30 a.m.; St. Casimir: Saturday at 4 p.m. (October to March), Sunday at 8 a.m.; and Holy Family: Sunday at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.
- St. Boniface—Saturday at 5 p.m., Sunday at 7:30 and 10:30 a.m.
- St. Hedwig—Saturday at 4 p.m.
- St. James—Saturday at 5 and 7 p.m., Sunday at 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- St. John the Baptist—Saturday at 4 p.m. (April to September), Sunday at 8 a.m.
- St. Luke—Saturday at 4:30 p.m., Sunday at 9 and 11:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- St. Stanislaus—Saturday at 5 p.m., Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

The east Erie churches whose Mass times remain unchanged are: Holy Trinity, Our Lady of Mercy, St. Mark the Evangelist, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and St. Patrick.

In the Shenango Valley, seven Mass times were eliminated from a total of 25, effective Aug. 3. The churches with new Mass times are:

- St. Bartholomew—Saturday at 4 p.m., Sunday at 9:30 a.m.
- Church of the Good Shepherd, West Middlesex—Saturday at 6 p.m., Sunday at 9:30 a.m.
- St. Stanislaus Kostka-Holy Trinity, Sharon—Saturday at 4 p.m.
- Sacred Heart, Sharon—Saturday at 4 p.m.
- Our Lady of Fatima-St. Ann, Farrell—Saturday at 4:30 p.m., Sunday at 7 and 10:30 a.m.
- St. Adalbert, Farrell—Saturday at 4 p.m.
- St. Anthony of Padua, Sharon—Sunday at 9:30 a.m.
- Notre Dame, Hermitage—Saturday at 5:30 p.m., Sunday at 8:15 and 11 a.m.
- St. Joseph, Lucinda—Saturday at 5:15 p.m., Sunday at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Msgr. Robert Malene, vicar of the Western Vicariate and pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd, said having fewer Masses has meant higher attendance at remaining services.

"So far, it's seemingly working out," Msgr. Malene said.

POPE FRANCIS' VISIT TO TURKEY, NOV. 28-30

76.1 million total population 120,000 Christians, including 53,000 Catholics 75.9 million Muslims

Source: Vatican Information Service, Vatican Press Office © 2014 OIG Graphics

Newsmakers



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

■ Pope confirms visit to U.S. in 2015



CNS photo

Pope Francis can expect throngs of people in Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families next year.

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has announced that he will attend the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in September, making it his first confirmed stop on what is expected to be a more extensive papal visit to North America.

"I would like to confirm that, God willing, in September 2015 I will go to Philadelphia for the eighth World Meeting of Families," the pope said in a speech Nov. 17 to open an interreligious conference on traditional marriage.

Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput told Catholic News Service the announcement was "a surprise in the sense that it was announced so early."

"He's been telling me that personally, but for him to announce it officially that he is coming so early is really quite

an unusual thing, so it's going to re-energize our efforts," the archbishop said.

Pope Francis is expected to arrive Sept. 25 for an afternoon public visit with civic officials, and then attend the Festival of Families Sept. 26, a cultural celebration for hundreds of thousands of people along Philadelphia's main cultural boulevard.

Organizers also expect the pontiff to celebrate a public Mass for an estimated 1 million people on Sept. 26 on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This will be Pope Francis' first trip to the United States.

■ Faith, Food & the Environment symposium addresses world's hungry

ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS)—With projections putting the planet's population at 9 billion by 2050, the question of how to feed them is taking on ever-greater importance.

But at the Faith, Food & the Environment symposium Nov. 5-7 in St. Paul, held at the University of St. Thomas and sponsored by more than a dozen Catholic and agricultural organizations, some speakers suggested the question may need to be asked differently.

"It's the wrong question," said Fred Kirschenmann, a distinguished fellow at the Leopold Center of Iowa State University, giving people "a moral justification to continue doing more of what they've been doing."

Kirschenmann said enough food is being grown today to feed 10 billion people, yet 1 billion people remain chronically hungry. "It's a problem of poverty, it's a problem of entitlement, it's a problem of inequality," he said. "It's also a problem of waste."

Estimates put the amount of waste at 40 percent of all food grown.



Editor's Notes

Mary SOLBERG

Sometime in my lifetime, Americans began to regularly use two words to mark the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. I cannot print this name because I have grown to dislike it so much. Let's just call it "BF."

When I was growing up, no one called the day after Thanksgiving anything but Friday. For me, the common use of "BF" represents the suffocating effects of consumerism. I admit that one year I did push my husband out the door at 3 a.m. to go buy a mechanical black and white robot whose price was slashed nearly in half.

As a parent, I understand the need to save money and score a fast-selling toy that your kid desperately wants. But as the years have gone by, I have come to feel manipulated by the advertising blitz that precedes this frenzied shopping season. So it is with great joy this year that I embrace the social media effort applauding stores that remain closed all Thanksgiving Day.

Pope Francis has often criticized the ill effects of this preoccupation with money and things. This month, he cautioned heads of state attending the annual G20 meeting in Australia about the effects of "unbridled consumerism." In a letter addressed to Australia Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who chaired the summit, Pope Francis asked participants to consider that "many lives are at stake."

Certainly, the pope is talking about much more than the shopping day after Thanksgiving, but the principle is the same. He refers to some things about the financial system that are "forms of aggression that are less evident but equally real and serious."

"BF" is a temptation on many fronts, and no less aggressive than other forms of bullying. Let's turn to our families and friends and make it a real Thanksgiving.

There are many events being held to capture the spirit of the Advent and Christmas seasons. One that seems especially worthwhile is the live performance of eight new choral pieces at Sacred Heart Parish in Erie.

Mike Malthaner, music director at the parish for the past nine years, has created a program titled "Answer the Call." It fea-

tures music composed by Malthaner, who is recognized nationally for his compositions and musicals. In fact, he wrote the musical "Christmas Wishes," which will be presented at the Riverside Inn in Cambridge Springs Dec. 2-20.

Sacred Heart's "Answer the Call" features the parish choir and includes eight songs that show different ways to answer God's call.

"When Mary was asked to be the mother of God, she said, 'yes.' St. Elizabeth said, 'yes,' and the magi said, 'yes,'" Malthaner explains. "We're all called to work toward the kingdom."

"Answer the Call" will be performed at Sacred Heart Dec. 21 at 1 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

Kim Kerchinski, business manager at St. Mary Parish in St. Marys, is excited to see patrons fill up the new Benedictine Gift Shop located at the parish annex on Church Street.

The business includes inventory from the former Trifles and Treasures gift shop run by the Benedictine Sisters of Elk County, who recently closed their monastery in St. Marys.



The interior of the new Benedictine Gift Shop in St. Marys.

after 160 years. Kerchinski says that employees at the church decided to continue the sisters' legacy of providing religious articles to the community.

The Benedictine Gift Shop offers a variety of other items, including maple syrup, chocolates, woodworking and CDs featuring local musicians. Hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The store is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

Plans are underway to create a museum at the same location to honor the Benedictines who were instrumental in building St. Marys.

Mary Solberg is the editor of FaithLife.
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Our Lady of Guadalupe 5K includes torches

CONNEAUT LAKE—Torches will light up the first Antorcha Guadalupana 5K run/walk hosted next month by Our Lady Queen of the Americas in Conneaut Lake.

Teams of runners and walkers will carry torches that are hand-made specifically for the event, scheduled Dec. 13 in honor of the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas.

The run/walk is a celebration of the deep roots that Our Lady Queen of the Americas Parish has with the Yucatan region of Mexico. The church has a sister-parish relationship with St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Tekit, Mexico.

The Antorcha Guadalupana is a traditional event celebrated across Mexico to commemorate Juan Diego's meeting with the Virgin Mary in 1531. To honor the Virgin, runners carry torches to the altar of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Participants in Our Lady Queen of the Americas' run/walk will gather Dec. 13 at 2:30 p.m. at Fireman's Beach, located at the intersection of Aldina Drive and North Second Street in Conneaut Lake. They will arrive at the altar of Our Lady, carrying gifts and donations,



Contributed photo

Pat Pinoe holds a torch that was designed and created by John Meyerhoff for the Antorcha Guadalupana 5K run/walk hosted by Our Lady Queen of the Americas Parish, Conneaut Lake.

and attend a special Mexican-themed Mass at 5 p.m. A Mexican feast will follow.

Three local charities will receive donations from the run/walk: The Samaritans, The Pregnancy Center, and the Center for Family Services.

Those interested in forming a team of about five runners/walkers are encouraged to register and get more information from Pat Pinoe at 814-720-5128, or email her at ppinoe@edinboro.edu.

The event is open to people of all ages, including families and student groups.

Middle school students rally



Photo by Kathleen Peterson

More than 300 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders from throughout the Diocese of Erie attended the retreat-style Middle School Youth Rally Oct. 26 at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Erie. Kids flocked to the stage as they sang "Let it Go," from the movie "Frozen." Below the stage is a prayer wall on which students wrote intentions. These prayers were offered during Mass and Eucharistic adoration. Participants broke into 30 small groups for discussion, and most of the young people took advantage of the sacrament of reconciliation with three priests and Bishop Lawrence Persico. High school students who are part of the new Totus Tuus program mentored the middle-schoolers throughout the day.

The bi-weekly newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Erie.
St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 East Grandview Blvd.
Erie, Pa. 16504
Publisher: The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico

FaithLife
Executive Editor: Annie-Marie Welsh
Editor: Mary Solberg
Graphic Designer: Rich Papalia
Advertising Manager: Brenda Williams
Advertising Designer: Elizabeth Butterfield
Email: FaithLife@ErieRCD.org
Editorial: 814-824-1171
Advertising: 814-824-1168
General Information: 814-824-1161

Website: www.ErieRCD.org
Volume 10, Issue 20
Member of the Catholic Press Association
Subscription: \$10/year
Periodical postage paid at Erie, PA
Postmaster: Send address changes to: FaithLife at St. Mark Catholic Center
The Office of Communications has been serving Catholics of the Diocese of Erie since 1874.

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Free Thanksgiving dinner served by SSJs

ERIE—The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwest Pennsylvania will serve their 26th annual Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 27 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Gannon University's Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. 7th St., Erie.

The free dinner is available to anyone who is alone, in need or would otherwise not celebrate the holiday. Reservations are not required. Individuals who are homebound can arrange to have a dinner delivered by calling 814-836-4100 on Nov. 25 between 9 and 11 a.m.

Organizers for the event say they do not need any more volunteers, however, monetary donations are being accepted to help cover the cost of the dinner and provide needed resources to local shelters, food banks and agencies throughout the year. Donations may be sent to: The Thanksgiving Dinner Fund, Sisters of St. Joseph, 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA 16506-1249. For more information, call 814-836-4198.

Last year, about 700 meals, including more than 400 home deliveries, were served.

Totus Tuus scheduled in Shenango Valley

WEST MIDDLESEX—The Shenango Valley Totus Tuus Academy will hold its next youth gathering Dec. 1 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Church of the Good Shepherd, 3613 Sharon Road, West Middlesex.

Totus Tuus (Totally Yours) is a Catholic youth movement for teenagers in grades 7 through 12. The gatherings, which are held the first Monday of every month, include music, a positive and accepting environment, fun, food, games, worship and inspiring speakers.

Totus Tuus Academy is sponsored by the Diocese of Erie, but is not affiliated with any particular parish. For more information, call Mark Jaskowak at 724-748-6700, ext. 113.

Harborcreek Youth Services hosts dinner

ERIE—All are welcome to attend the annual Harborcreek Youth Services' Friends' Christmas Dinner Dec. 4 at the Lawrence Park Golf Club, 3700 East Lake Road, Erie.

A social time begins with a cash bar at 5:45 p.m., with dinner to follow at 6:30 p.m. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. Cost of the dinner is \$30 per person. RSVPs are due by Nov. 28 by calling 814-899-7664, ext. 308, or by visiting the agency website at www.hys-erie.org to use a PayPal account. Music will be provided by the HYS Youth Choir. All net proceeds will benefit the HYS Youth Christmas Fund.

Clothes, toys to be distributed to needy

ERIE—A men's Cursillo group in the Diocese of Erie will continue its tradition of giving away clothes and toys every Christmas at the Community Outreach Group's clothing distribution party Dec. 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, W. 22nd and Peach streets, Erie.

Patrons will receive free clothes and a free hot lunch. Santa and his helpers will be present. For information on how you can assist with this project, visit the Community Outreach Group's Facebook page, email TimWWD@aol.com or call 814-504-2596.

Men's Conference attracts 650

About 650 men—from as far away as Toronto, Canada—turned out for the second annual Erie Men's Conference Nov. 1 at the Warner Theater in downtown Erie.

Dan Schaaf, chairman of the steering committee of the non-profit 2232 Men of Erie, said the numbers went down from last year, but at least half of those present had not attended before.

"God calls us to bring men to Christ one at a time. If it means a smaller crowd, then I'm OK with that. I'm encouraged," Schaaf said.

The Men's Conference is a day of prayer, reflection and worship, along with time to hear noted national speakers. Bishop Lawrence Persico celebrated the Mass and remained for the entire event.

According to Schaaf, there were 24 priests on-hand to hear

confessions. Speakers were Deacon Harold Burke Sivers, founder and director of DynamicDeacon.com; Jesse Romero, a full-time Catholic lay evangelist; and Father Larry



Photo by Steve Lajohn

Jesse Romero gets the hundreds of attendees motivated for the day.

Richards, pastor of St. Joseph's Bread of Life Community in Erie. Plans are already underway for a third Men's Conference in 2015.

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OSBs see boost in vocations

BY MARY SOLBERG | FAITHLIFE

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie have broken national vocation trends recently by welcoming four women into their community.

It's the first time in nearly 20 years that so many have entered the monastic religious order at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery. "It's new life," says Benedictine Sister Marilyn Schauble, vocation director. "It gives you a little spark."

The new members of the Benedictine community are:

■ Sister Pat Witulski of Buffalo, N.Y., who professed her first vows in August

■ Sister Ann Michaud of Salem, Mass., who entered the novitiate in mid-November

■ Dina Lauricella of Lusby, Md., who became a postulant in October

■ Karen Oprenhok of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, who became a postulant Nov. 2.

"It's both exciting and a real call to deepen our own commitment to this way of life," Sister Marilyn says.

The bump in vocations at the Mount also has impressed Patrice Tuohy, publisher of VISION Vocation Guide, a publication of the National Religious Vocation Conference, based in Chicago. Most men's and women's religious orders throughout the country, she says, have zero to only one new



Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB, vocation director

Contributed photo

vocation per year. "What I find interesting about the Benedictines of Erie is that they're more progressive," Tuohy says.

"They have name recognition and some popular sisters who are recognized nationally," Tuohy explains that while there has been an overall dearth in the numbers entering religious communities, researchers are beginning to see a slight increase.

One reason might be that more religious communities are using the Internet to spread their message and attract new members.

According to Tuohy, VISION's online vocation match program receives about 5,000 completed profile forms a year from people considering religious life.

"We're just starting to see the fruits of the new access to information," Tuohy says.

Sister Marilyn, who has been vocation director at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery since 2010, believes that technology helps play a role in increasing vocations.

In order to remain current, she must react quickly and efficiently, via email and texting, to vocation

inquiries. Right now, she is having conversations with women in their 20s to 40s. Sister Marilyn knows she must draw in younger women.

"You always have to think of the future of the community," she says.

The flip side of increased technology, however, is that it seems to encourage more independence, or isolation, from the very thing that personifies religious orders: communities of sharing. Also, many women being drawn to religious life now are older than those who entered a generation ago.

"I think one of the things that is challenging about religious life now is that they [women] are a little older, have degrees and jobs and own houses and cars, but they don't usually have the monastic experience of living interdependently," Sister Marilyn explains.

The newest Benedictines of Erie have joined 101 sisters living in community.

Wake Up the World! 2015 Year of Consecrated Life

Pope Francis has proclaimed 2015 a "Year of Consecrated Life," starting on the first Sunday of Advent (the weekend of Nov. 29, 2014) and ending Feb. 2, 2016, the World Day of Consecrated Life.

The Diocese of Erie will begin the year-long celebration with a Mass at the Mercy Motherhouse, 444 East Grandview Blvd., Erie, on Nov. 20 at 7 p.m., with Bishop Lawrence Persico officiating.

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Wake Up the World! 2015 Year of Consecrated Life

Why religious life?

KAREN OPRENHOK

"I am responding to God's call for me. After many years of prayer, travel and discernment, I believe that God has led me to this particular community, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, to live with them to carry out God's will by means of prayer and ministry. This is what I desire."

SISTER PAT WITULSKI, OSB

DINA LAURICELLA

"What attracted me to religious life was living life communally with like-minded people, coming together daily to pray the psalms and seek God. It was important to me to be part of an active community and the Benedictine Sisters of Erie have so many vital ministries that serve the area. It has made it easy to jump right in."

"It was my heart's desire to live in a religious community that valued the common prayer life and community living... I am humbled, blessed and privileged to work at Emmanuel Ministries, a Christian presence and outreach for the forgotten and marginal in Erie's inner-city."

ANN MICHAUD

"I was attracted to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie because of their variety of ministries directed toward the needs of the people of Erie, their inclusivity... and their dedication to being [a] healing presence and prophetic witness for peace by working for sustainability and justice, especially for women and children." That vision is so needed in our world today. When I finally visited the community, I felt as if I had finally come home."



Contributed photo

The women in initial monastic formation at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, left to right, are: Dina Lauricella, Sister Pat Witulski, Karen Oprenhok and Sister Ann Michaud.

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Our Lady of Fatima remembered



HERMITAGE—The Blue Army of Mercer County this fall organized a 97th anniversary celebration of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima. Knights of Columbus representatives led the procession at Kennedy Catholic High School, Hermitage, with Father Donald Berdis and Father Tom Sullivan. About 130 participated with prayer and song as children led the rosary. The Blessed Mother was crowned by Clarise Ortez, Angelica Scoccia, Tessa Bonomo, Elizabeth Volkay, Jessica Garcia and Lydia Grove.

Trunks of treats at St. Joseph Parish



FORCE—Cold winds did not deter the "Trunk or Treaters" at St. Joseph Parish in Force on Oct. 26. Many parishioners decorated the trunks of their vehicles and met Faith Formation students who showed off their creative costumes. This was the first year for the "Trunk or Treaters" event. The Confirmation students who participated, left to right, are: Natalie Rhoades, Mariah Mosier, Ann Marie Vargas, Tess Anderson, Devin Anderson and Hunter Fantechi.

Eighth-grader earns Eagle Scout Award



ERIE—Our Lady of Mount Carmel eighth-grader Jacob Durmis recently earned his Eagle Scout Award, the highest rank in Boy Scouting. At age 14, Jacob completed all the requirements three years ahead of the average Eagle Scout. He is pictured with his family, from left: brother, Josh; mother, Janice; and father, Chuck.

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St. Eulalia Church

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Sunday, December 8

\$15.00 Donation

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Rev. Joseph Campbell

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Holy Hour and Confession 3:00-4:00 PM

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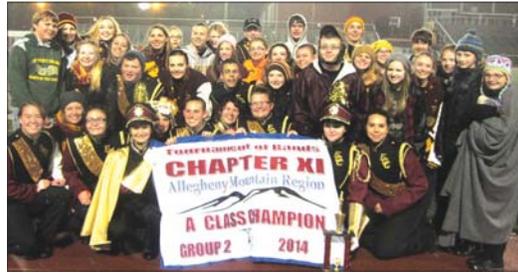


WARREN—St. Joseph Parish in Warren sponsored a Wine and Shrine Tour to the Finger Lakes region of New York State in September. The tour group is pictured here at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse. Other highlights of the trip included a

visit to the shrine of St. Marianne Cope in Syracuse, and the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard, N.Y. The participants also toured two wineries in Geneva, N.Y.

ECC band captures first place

ST. MARYS—Congratulations to the Elk County Catholic High School marching band for taking first place last month in the Tournament of Bands Chapter XI Allegheny Mountain Region 2-A Championship. The band beat out some tough competition as it posted a score of 89.06, taking high drum major, high visuals, high auxiliary and high music. Elk County Catholic High School is the only secondary school in the Diocese of Erie with a marching band.



Students awarded for drawing, writing



ERIE—Three students from St. Luke School in Erie won awards in a contest sponsored by the Erie Playhouse and Newspapers In Education. Students had a choice of submitting either artwork or a written essay. The artwork prompt was to draw the scariest haunted house you could imagine. The writing prompt was to describe a time in your life when you had to overcome fear. Pictured, left to right, are: teacher Jackie Shaffer, and eighth-graders Elizabeth Kuhn (artwork winner), Lauren Habursky (writing winner), and John Nies (artwork winner).

Students help Catholic Rural Ministry



SMETHPORT—Seventh- and eighth-grade religious education classes of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, Smethport, recently visited Catholic Rural Ministry in Port Allegany. The sisters of Catholic Rural Ministry held a Bible study for the students and the youth then helped clean and organize the ministry's garage, apply compost to the garden and shuck beans from the garden. Pictured, left to right, are: Karley Orner, Noah Costa, Derek McClain, Nathan Hollowell and Cordell Tanner.

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