

USCCB fall meeting roundup

See what the U.S. bishops accomplished in Baltimore, page 2.



FaithLife

Advent begins Dec. 3

Check out web resources, page 2; see concert and event listing, page 3.



www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

November 26, 2006

Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

Feast days



St. Lucy



St. John of the Cross

Nov. 30 St. Andrew
Dec. 4 St. John of Damascus
Dec. 6 St. Nicholas
Dec. 7 St. Ambrose
Dec. 8 Immaculate Conception
Dec. 9 St. Juan Diego
Dec. 11 Damasus I
Dec. 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
Dec. 13 St. Lucy
Dec. 14 St. John of the Cross
Dec. 21 St. Peter Canisius
Dec. 23 St. John of Kanty

Installation of lectors (permanent diaconate)

Four men will be installed into the ministry of lector by Bishop Donald Trautman at 11 a.m. on Sat., Dec. 2 at St. Mark Seminary Chapel. The candidates are in their second year of the diocese's permanent diaconate formation program. Those being installed are:

- **Joseph Cicero** – St. John, Girard
- **James Kaschalk** – St. Mark, Lawrence Park
- **Kevin Kunik** – Blessed Sacrament, Erie
- **Ron Fronzaglia** – St. Francis Xavier, McKean

For more information on the Erie Diocese's permanent diaconate program, visit www.ErieRCD.org/diaconate.asp.

Mass for refugees

Catholic Charities Refugee Ministry is sponsoring a Mass for refugees at 7 p.m. on Sat., Dec. 2 at Holy Rosary Parish in Erie. Bishop Donald Trautman will preside.

Learn how to help area refugees by visiting Catholic Refugee Ministry on the Web at www.ErieRCD.org.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception – Dec. 8 (Holy day of obligation)

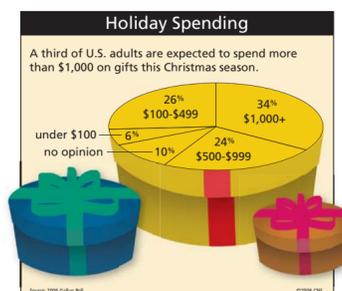
In the constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of Dec. 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." – *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*



Midnight Mass on JET-TV



For the 12th straight year, JET-TV 24 in Erie will televise Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve live from St. Peter Cathedral. The broadcast will begin at 11:30 p.m. on Sun., Dec. 24. The half-hour segment prior to Mass will include an interview with Bishop Trautman conducted by Mike Gallagher, special projects producer for JET-TV and the host for Midnight Mass.



Securing the future of Catholic education

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Among the most crucial responsibilities of the Catholic Diocese of Erie is the supervision and support of our Catholic schools.

In this issue of *FaithLife*, I am pleased to share the good news that our Catholic schools continue to fulfill their mission of assisting Catholic parents in the education and formation of their children, offering an effective means to a successful and happy life in this world and in the Kingdom of God.

We achieve this mission under the guidance of wise and experienced administrators and through the selfless efforts of many dedicated educators. Our teachers choose Catholic classrooms in order to answer the call to serve Jesus Christ by teaching his children in an atmosphere that promotes his Gospel values.

Of course, the strong foundation on which our schools rest is the commitment of our parishes, parishioners and parents. Those who sacrifice time, talent and treasure on behalf of our children promote not only their individual development of faith, but also their identities as Catholic Christians.

While the state of our schools is strong, we also face the inevitable challenge of responding to the ever-changing demographics of northwest Pennsylvania. Simply put, our numbers are shrinking. With the population of northwest and central Pennsylvania declining, we must recognize that our educational system cannot thrive unless we are dynamic and creative in response to changes we cannot control.

The statistics in this report convey a trend that must be addressed, both through our careful stewardship of educational resources and by redefining ourselves to the mission of Catholic education. If we do this, we will not only survive the impact of shifting populations, but we will secure our schools for the future.

I want to assure you that no matter what the future holds, some things won't change. We will continue to pass on our faith, achieve academic excellence, serve diverse communities and "do more with less," as is the Catholic school tradition.

Most importantly, we will always nurture the children in our care to become the people God intends them to be. In a culture that seems to exploit and eliminate a period of childhood innocence, our Catholic schools provide a safe and wholesome environment in which to learn and grow in the way God intends.

By sharing with you the information in this report, I hope you will begin to appreciate the many factors that your pastors and I need to consider in the management of our diocesan Catholic schools. In the coming weeks, I will provide more information about our schools in *FaithLife*, and in *Faith* magazine, as well as on our Web site at www.ErieRCD.org. I ask you to take the time to read this information so that you can understand the issues we must examine as we strive to maintain the finest traditions of Catholic education in the Diocese of Erie.

Please join me in prayer at this time, as we continue to evaluate how we might best serve the educational needs of the children in our diocese, now and well into the future.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Donald W. Trautman

Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman
Bishop of Erie

What is the state of our Catholic schools?

By Marybeth Hicks
FaithLife

FaithLife presents a look at the state of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie. In-depth reports will follow in *Faith* magazine and in future issues of *FaithLife*.

What trends impact Catholic schools now and in the future?

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie continue to provide a faith-based alternative to public education and strive to maintain high standards of academic excellence while fulfilling their missions, according to the Diocese of Erie Office of Education. However, enrollments in the diocese's 41 elementary and secondary schools and in public schools have dropped significantly in the past four years.

The trend of decreased enrollment is expected to continue according to both the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Diocesan Office of Education.

There has also been a dramatic shift in composition of the population of the commonwealth, including western Pennsylvania. This will mean a smaller percentage of young people, a larger percentage of those considered elderly and an increase in migration out of the state.

"When we look at population projections for western Pennsylvania, we must be realistic about the impact those estimates will have on our diocesan services, especially on our education system. There is no question that Catholic schools already are feeling the effects of demographic changes and this will continue," said Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education.

What is the enrollment at Diocese of Erie Catholic Schools?

School	City	2006-2007 School Year (Oct. 1)	2005-2006 School Year (Oct. 1)	Difference	% Difference
Elementary and Middle Schools					
Blessed Sacrament School	Erie	355	355	0	0.0%
Cathedral Center School	Erie	307	310	-3	-1.0%
Holy Family School	Erie	123	122	1	0.8%
Our Lady of Peace School	Erie	476	504	-28	-5.6%
Our Lady's Christian School	Erie	386	364	22	6.0%
Sacred Heart School	Erie	106	132	-26	-19.7%
St. Andrew School	Erie	0	98	-98	-100.0%
St. Boniface School	Erie	109	125	-16	-12.8%
St. George School	Erie	538	542	-4	-0.7%
St. Gregory School	North East	67	87	-20	-23.0%
St. James School	Erie	271	271	0	0.0%
St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic	Erie	172	204	-32	-15.7%
St. Luke School	Erie	345	367	-22	-6.0%
St. Thomas School	Corry	66	83	-17	-20.5%
Villa Maria School	Erie	282	303	-21	-6.9%
SUBTOTAL - ERIE COUNTY ELEMENTARY		3845	4143	-298	-7.2%
DuBois Central Catholic Middle School	DuBois	134	136	-2	-1.4%
Immaculate Conception School	Clarion	104	116	-12	-10.3%
Msgr. Geno Monti School	Farrell	100	141	-41	-29.1%
Notre Dame School	Hermitage	230	564	-34	-12.9%
St. Marys Elementary School	St. Marys	319	363	-44	-12.1%
Seton School	Meadville	139	159	-20	-12.6%
St. Bernard School	Bradford	163	161	2	1.2%
St. Boniface School	Kersey	64	65	-1	-1.5%
DuBois Central Catholic Elementary School	DuBois	225	227	-2	-0.9%
St. Francis School	Clearfield	138	132	6	4.5%
St. Joseph School	Lucinda	76	71	5	7.0%
St. Joseph School	Sharon	186	189	-3	-1.6%
St. Joseph School	Warren	91	121	-30	-24.8%
St. Leo School	Ridgway	127	130	-3	-2.3%
St. Marys Middle School	St. Marys	233	227	6	2.6%
St. Michael School	Greenville	155	163	-8	-4.9%
St. Patrick School	Franklin	100	112	-12	-10.7%
St. Stephen School	Oil City	176	178	-2	-1.1%
St. Titus School	Titusville	45	64	-19	-29.7%
Ss. Cosmas and Damian School	Punxsutawney	118	120	-2	-1.7%
SUBTOTAL - REGIONAL ELEMENTARY		2923	3139	-216	-6.8%

School	City	2006-2007 School Year (Oct. 1)	2005-2006 School Year (Oct. 1)	Difference	% Difference
Secondary Schools					
Cathedral Preparatory School	Erie	575	545	30	5.5%
Mercyhurst Preparatory School	Erie	642	642	0	0.0%
Villa Maria Academy	Erie	327	390	-63	-16.2%
SUBTOTAL - ERIE SECONDARY		1544	1577	-33	-2.1%
DuBois Central Catholic High School	DuBois	212	206	4	1.2%
Elk County Catholic	St. Marys	320	337	-17	-5.0%
Kennedy Catholic High School	Hermitage	292	296	-4	-1.4%
Venango Catholic High School	Oil City	104	119	-15	-12.6%
SUBTOTAL - REGIONAL SECONDARY		928	958	-30	-3.1%
Grand totals for all schools in the Diocese of Erie		9240	9817	-577	-5.9%

change. Three major trends will influence the makeup of the state's residents in the coming years: an increase in the aging population, a decrease in the population of children under 18 and the impact of migration as more people are predicted to leave rather than move into Pennsylvania.

How is the population changing throughout the commonwealth?

The population in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is in the midst of extraordinary

It is estimated that the number of Pennsylvanians between the ages of 45 and 64 will increase by 23.2 percent in the years between 2000 and 2010. Those

Bishops OK new statements, sex abuse study funding

By Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE -- As the U.S. bishops concluded the public portion of their Nov. 13-16 fall general meeting in Baltimore Nov. 14, they approved several new statements and a restructuring and downsizing of their national conference.

On Nov. 13, the first day of their meeting, they allocated money for a further study of the context and causes of clergy sexual abuse.

Among the texts they approved were:

- A new statement outlining the preparation needed to receive Communion worthily which says that serious sin is a bar to receiving the Eucharist.
- A document calling married couples to understand and live church teaching on artificial contraception.
- A statement on Iraq.

The USCCB also approved a series of guidelines for the pastoral care of persons with a homosexual inclination, gave their OK to creating a *Directory for Music and the Liturgy* for use in U.S. dioceses and authorized a revision of the Lectionary for Mass for selected days in Advent by a 205-13 vote with two abstentions.

The Communion statement, *Happy Are Those Who Are called to His Supper: On Preparing to Receive Christ Worthily in the Eucharist*, was approved 201-24 with two abstentions. The document calls on those in a state of serious sin to refrain from receiving Communion. The bishops emphasized they were addressing all Catholics, and not just politicians or any other group.

The contraception document, *Married Love and the Gift of Life*, passed 220-11 with one abstention. It strongly supports natural family planning, saying it "enables couples to cooperate with the body as God designed it," adding that contraception introduces "a false note" that disturbs marital intimacy and contributes to a decline in society's respect for marriage and for life.

The document says that a Catholic who "knowingly and obstinately" rejects "the defined doctrines of the church" or repudiates "her definitive teaching on moral issues" would not be in communion with the church and therefore should not receive Communion.

The statement on pastoral care of homosexually inclined persons reiterates church teaching that all homosexual acts are morally wrong but affirms the dignity of those with homosexual inclinations and says that experiencing such an inclination is not in itself sinful.

The hymn directory, approved 195-21 with five abstentions, is intended to ensure that hymns used at Mass are doctrinally correct and based on Scripture and liturgical texts. The document also includes norms saying that each diocesan bishop is responsible for approving liturgical songs in his diocese. The directory and norms now go to the Vatican for its assent.

The bishops voted 213-19 for a four-year strategic plan for 2008-2011 despite strenuous objections by some bishops

Decisions AT A GLANCE

Among the actions taken at their November meeting, the U.S. bishops...

- ✓ Called for nonpartisan talks on a "responsible transition" in Iraq.
- ✓ Approved statement calling on those in a state of serious sin to refrain from Communion.
- ✓ Allocated funds for the next phases of national study on clergy sexual abuse of minors.
- ✓ Voted to restructure their national operations and cut the assessment dioceses pay.
- ✓ Approved document calling married couples to live church teaching on artificial contraception.
- ✓ Gave their OK to creating a "Directory for Music and the Liturgy" for use in U.S. dioceses.
- ✓ Passed a series of guidelines for the pastoral care of homosexually inclined persons.
- ✓ Authorized a revision of the Lectionary for Mass for selected days in Advent.
- ✓ Elected Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., as their new secretary.
- ✓ Passed a \$139.5 million budget and a series of priorities and plans for 2007.
- ✓ Created a nongeographic episcopal region for the nation's Eastern-rite bishops.
- ✓ Approved a four-year strategic plan beginning in 2008.

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over some of the planned staff cuts. More than 60 jobs will be eliminated in the restructuring.

On the clergy sexual abuse study, Patricia O'Donnell Ewers, chairwoman of the National Review Board overseeing the bishops' compliance with their child protection charter, told the bishops Nov.

13, "I can't emphasize enough how important this study is for society as a whole" as well as for the church.

The first study, conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, was considered a landmark in its field, and the new study is expected to be similarly groundbreaking.

To read the complete statements by the U.S. bishops and for more coverage of the conference's November meeting, visit www.usccb.org.



By the Way...

Here's a reader update from Hermitage. The **Notre Dame Folk Group** is reporting some great sales figures for its new CD, which is being very well received. The group provided the music for the Sunday evening Mass at **Blessed Sacrament** in Erie on Oct. 1 and generated \$1,300 in sales of *Songs For Our Journey*. At a recent Mass, concert and dinner at **St. Hippolyte** in Frenchtown, the group sold \$700 worth of CDs.



Jason Koshinski

There is a Notre Dame connection to both parishes. It's the home parish for **Father Michael DeMartino**, who coordinated the Sunday evening youth Mass at Blessed Sacrament, and **Father Dennis Veltri** of St. Hippolyte served as a deacon at Notre Dame.

All proceeds from the sale of the group's CDs benefit Notre Dame Parish while all funds raised at their concerts and events goes toward the Prince of Peace Center in Farrell, a diocesan social service agency dedicated to reducing poverty throughout Mercer County. We profiled The Notre Dame Folk Group and its newest release in the Oct. 15 issue of *FaithLife*.

Several priests from the Erie Diocese participated in a program at St. Mary's Seminary and University Nov. 4-9 designed to assist newly assigned pastors. The intensive program focused on areas of need most commonly identified by priests as necessary for a new pastor to be effective. St. Mary's developed this program three years ago in consultation with bishops, experienced pastors and priests who consistently cited the lack of administrative expertise as one of the most significant problems for new pastors.

The sessions took an in-depth look at areas of administrative responsibility including: human relations, finances and financial oversight, parish schools and the pastor's role, fund raising and working with parish councils and parish staffs in communion.

Attending from the diocese were **Father William Calabrese** (St. Bibiana, Galeton, and Sacred Heart Mission, Genesee); **Father Skip Davis** (St. Titus, Titusville); **Father Michael Ferrick** (Queen of the World, St. Marys); **Father Jay Schultz** (St. Boniface, Erie); and **Father Mark Swoger** (St. Timothy, Curwensville, and St. Bonaventure, Grampian).

Due to a scheduling conflict, the date of the **December Taizé Prayer** has been changed, reports **Sister Rita Panciera**, RSM. The December Taizé will be held on the second Friday, Dec. 8, at 7 p.m. at the Mercy Motherhouse in Erie. January and following will be as usual on the third Friday of the month.

Jason Koshinski is editor of *FaithLife*. Contact him at JKoshinski@ErieRCD.org or 814.824.1171.



The Nativity Story faithful to Scripture while showing humanity

Catholic News Service review

The Nativity Story (New Line) opens Fri., Dec. 1 in theaters. Dramatization of the New Testament birth narratives from the Annunciation to the birth of Jesus, focusing on the relationship between Mary (Keisha Castle-Hughes) and Joseph (Oscar Isaac) and their arduous trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem, with subplots tracking the journey of the three Magi and the efforts of King Herod (Ciaran Hinds) to prevent the prophecy of a messiah from coming to pass. A composite of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, embroidered with apocryphal traditions and the imagination of the filmmaker, the Bible story gets the prestige treatment in director Catherine Hardwicke's artful, reverent and affecting retelling, with soulful performances from an excellent international cast — including Shohreh Aghdashloo as Elizabeth — and impressive production design. Mike Rich's screenplay manages to flesh out Mary and Joseph while remaining faithful to Scripture, poignantly suggesting the humanity beneath the halos. Some violent images. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-



Oscar Isaac (left) and Keisha Castle-Hughes (above, center) star in scenes from the movie *The Nativity Story*.

I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

Advent begins Dec. 3

Advent, the season of expectation leading up to the celebration of Christmas, begins Dec. 3 this year. This joyful period prepares us for the commemoration of the Incarnation.



Jesse Tree

Faith magazine has created Jesse Tree ornaments to help reflect on the story of salvation from the creation of the world through the birth of Jesus.

Download a free, printable set of Jesse Tree ornaments at www.ErieRCD.org, the homepage of the Diocese of Erie. Each of the 28 ornaments is accompanied by a Scripture verse and explanation of what the symbol represents. The ornaments are available in both small and large sizes.

Advent calendar

An Advent family calendar from Catholic Charities is also available on the diocesan homepage at www.ErieRCD.org. The printable calendar includes a Scripture verse, reflection and activity for every day of the season.

Catholic Charities Advent Appeal

To help bring a message of hope and a call to action, Catholic Charities has launched an Advent appeal to support diocesan agencies that provide help and hope.

Using the appeal envelope found in the Nov./Dec. issue of *Faith* magazine, donors can make a contribution to the organization of their choice: Good Samaritan Center, St. Martin Center, Prince of Peace Center, St. Elizabeth Center, Counseling & Adoption Service, Christ the King Manor, John XXIII Home, Harborcreek Youth Services and Catholic Charities.

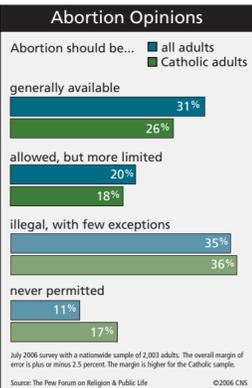
"We are encouraging donors to prioritize their giving to fight poverty, homelessness, isolation and starvation right here in our diocese and make an impact in the lives of children, families and the elderly this Advent season," said Emma Lee McCloskey, development director for Catholic Charities.

NEWS BRIEFS

U.S.

Justices focus on differences in abortion procedures in oral argument

WASHINGTON — In two hours of oral arguments Nov. 8 over a federal law banning a procedure known as partial-birth abortion, Supreme Court justices and attorneys considered the intent of Congress in passing the bill, the differences between types of abortion and who gets to decide when those differences matter. The court heard appeals of two lower court rulings that both found the 2003 Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act to be unconstitutional because it does not include provisions allowing its use in some cases to protect a woman's health. From the direction of the questioning, Justices Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader



Ginsburg, John Paul Stevens and David Souter seemed to be looking for commonality between the federal law and a similar Nebraska statute that they voted to overturn in 2000. The fifth vote in that 5-4 majority ruling was cast by now-retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Her replacement on the court, Justice Samuel Alito, asked no questions during the two hours devoted to oral arguments.

WORLD

In Turkey, pope to meet with Orthodox, Muslim, government leaders

VATICAN CITY — Although prayers and meetings with Orthodox leaders dominate the schedule of Pope Benedict XVI's Nov. 28-Dec. 1 trip to Turkey, he also will meet government and Muslim leaders. The trip originally was designed as an opportunity for Pope Benedict to join Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople for celebrations in Istanbul of the feast of St. Andrew. The pope and the patriarch send delegations to each other's churches each year for the celebrations of their patron saints' feast days: the Vatican's June 29 feast of Sts. Peter and Paul and the Orthodox churches' Nov. 30 feast of St. Andrew.

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WHY CATHOLIC? retreats offered at parishes

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

Six parishes in the Erie Diocese will host *Why Catholic?* retreats beginning Dec. 2 and running through Dec. 9.

The retreats are open to all *Why Catholic?* faith sharing groups, as well as any parishioners at the respective parishes. No registration is necessary.

Why Catholic? is a four-year program that focuses on Scripture related to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Small faith-sharing groups will meet once a week during two six-week

sessions each year. Groups have just finished the second six-week session for 2006. Year two of the program will begin during Lent 2007.

The theme of the retreats is *Discovering God in the Ordinary*. Sister Tina Geiger, RSM, of Renew International will lead the retreats. Each retreat will be divided into several parts and includes prayer, reflection on Scripture, quiet time and faith sharing.

"People who are part of *Why Catholic?* have spent the first year of the program looking at and studying the Apostles' Creed," said Sister Nancy Fischer, SSJ,

Why Catholic? parish retreats — Discovering God in the Ordinary

Sat., Dec. 2	St. Peter Cathedral, Erie, 9:30 a.m.-noon
Sun., Dec. 3	Queen of the World, St. Marys, 1:30-5 p.m.
Tues., Dec. 5	Our Lady of Peace, Erie, 7-9 p.m.
Wed., Dec. 6	St. Mary, Meadville, 7-9 p.m.
Thurs., Dec. 7	St. Joseph, Sharon, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Sat., Dec. 9	St. Agatha, Meadville, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

director of community formation and lay minister training for the Erie Diocese. "Hopefully the retreat will help them to

integrate the living of the creed into their lives. They've had the theory. Now this will help with the practice part."

While most retreatants will more than likely have been involved in *Why Catholic?* small group sessions, Sister Nancy said the retreat is also a good jumping-on point for those who have not yet participated.

"It's Advent and we hope this will be a nice opportunity for people to do something spiritual during Advent," she said. "We planned the retreats to help people do something to prepare for Christmas and leave the shop-

ping bags at home."

Bishop Donald Trautman will celebrate Mass at the conclusion of the Dec. 3 retreat at Queen of the World Parish in St. Marys. The Mass will begin at approximately 4:10 p.m.

The time for the retreat in Sharon has moved, Sister Nancy said, to accommodate football fans. The Dec. 7 retreat at St. Joseph Parish in Sharon will open in the cafeteria with a tail-gating party for the Pittsburgh Steelers-Cleveland Browns game. The retreat runs from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., ending prior to kickoff time.

Advent and Christmas events

The following Advent and Christmas events were submitted to *FaithLife* and represent a portion of seasonal happenings at parishes throughout the diocese. To find out what's happening locally during the Advent and Christmas seasons, contact your parish office.

St. Jude to host Peter Mayer Stars and Promises Alive concert

ERIE — St. Jude the Apostle Parish will again host the *Peter Mayer Stars and Promises Alive* concert on Mon., Dec. 4 at 7 p.m. This is the third year in a row that St. Jude will host Mayer, who is the lead guitarist for Jimmy Buffett's Coral Reefer Band.

Mayer will be joined on a few selections by the St. Jude children's choir.

Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door. Tickets are available at the St. Jude rectory or can be reserved by calling 814.836.8541. Tickets will not be reserved until payment is received.

Mass, illumination service at St. Paul, Erie

ERIE — St. Paul Parish in Erie will hold its 18th annual Love Lites on Tues., Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. Mass and an illumination service will be followed by a reception at St. Paul Center.

Evening of reflection at St. John, Girard

GIRARD — St. John the Evangelist Parish in Girard is holding an Advent evening of reflection Wed., Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. The reflection will be presented by Father Mike Allison, chaplain and faculty member of Mercyhurst Prep High School and Penn State-The Behrend College.

Lessons & carols, live nativity at Notre Dame

HERMITAGE — Advent lessons and carols will be presented by ministers of the Word and music, including the Notre Dame Folk Group, on Thurs., Dec. 14 at 7 p.m. at Notre Dame Parish in Hermitage.

The 4:30 p.m. Christmas Eve liturgy will feature a live nativity presentation by children of the parish.

Cathedral choirs to perform with Erie Philharmonic

ERIE — The St. Peter Cathedral combined children's, youth and adult choirs, accompanied by members of the Erie Philharmonic Orchestra, will present a concert of holiday music for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season at 7 p.m. on Sun., Dec. 17 at the cathedral. Cathedral music director and choir master William Herring will conduct along with Karen Keene as organist. The concert is free and open to the public; a free-will offering will be taken.

The cathedral will also have evening prayer services (vespers) on the first and second Sundays of Advent Dec. 3 and 10 at 4 p.m.

Concert, dinner at St. Luke, Youngsville

YOUNGSVILLE — St. Luke Parish in Youngsville will host a community-wide Advent/Christmas concert on Sun., Dec. 17 at 5 p.m. Under the direction of choir director and lead organist Joan Eighmey, the adult choir will join with the religious education children to offer their gift selections of Advent and Christmas music. The youth of the parish will also be putting on a Christmas play.

The concert is free and open to the public. Following the concert will be a tureen dinner in the parish social hall at 6 p.m.

Christmas concert in DuBois

DUBOIS — Shalom, a contemporary Catholic music ministry group from DuBois, will perform a Christmas concert Sun., Dec. 17 at 7 p.m. at the Reitz Theatre, located on Scribner Avenue between Brady and Stockdale streets. The concert is free and open to the public.

Living Nativity, concert at St. George

ERIE — The St. George youth group will present a Living Nativity scene on Dec. 18 and 19 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the garage on Georgian Way across from the church. This event is open to the public.

A concert of sacred music will be presented by St. George music minister Daniel Cabanillas on Thurs., Dec. 28 at 7 p.m. Tickets are available through the church office (814.864.0622). The concert will take place in the church and will be followed by a reception in the multi-purpose room of the school, which is included in the price of the ticket.

What is the state of our Catholic schools?

SCHOOLS from page 1

over age 65 will increase by an additional two percent. Conversely, during that same period, it is projected that the number of residents under age 18 will decrease by six percent. Historically, populations have decreased with aging, but trends point to growth in the elderly population to nearly one quarter of Pennsylvania's population by the year 2030, nearly equal to the number of young people in the state.

Are people moving away from Pennsylvania?

In addition to changes in the overall age of the population, patterns of migration also will impact the state. According to a study from Penn State University, while the state's total population has remained relatively unchanged for the past 50 years, patterns of migration now have emerged. Specifically, those moving into the state come from neighboring states and are seeking a rural lifestyle within commuting distance to business and commerce in the tri-state region.

Conversely, those moving out of the state most often move to the south or southwestern U.S. or to other areas where amenities, stronger labor markets and more affordable housing present

attractive alternatives. Projections call for negative migration in Pennsylvania in the coming years, meaning more people will leave as opposed to moving into the state.

Overall, the picture for the future of Pennsylvania's population is a steadily aging, slowly declining citizenry. The Diocese of Erie will continue its pastoral service and educational mission by monitoring these population trends on a local level and responding appropriately.

How will these population changes affect school enrollment?

Population trends already are evident in the enrollment figures for both public and Catholic schools within the 13 counties of the Diocese of Erie. Based on current trends, the overall decrease in enrollment from the current school year through the year 2010 is expected to be 9.5 percent for public schools in the diocese. This will have an obvious impact on the Catholic schools.

Declining enrollment in Catholic schools is expected to continue as birthrates and infant baptismal rates in the diocese also drop. Between 1996 and 2006, births in the 13 counties of the diocese

declined by 13 percent. More crucially, baptisms in the diocese during the same period dropped by 40 percent.

What can the Diocese of Erie do to ensure the future success of Catholic schools?

People still want Catholic schools, but viability will be the key. The Catholic school system of the future most likely will need to streamline functions and resources to achieve the mission of providing a Catholic education for all who seek it. This conclusion is not unique to the Diocese of Erie but rather reflects a national reality.

A report commissioned by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) found "the decline in the number of Catholic schools in the U.S. during the past five years reflects a demographic shift of where Catholics live more than a decline in the demand for Catholic education." Researchers said that, while 339 Catholic schools closed in the US during the last five years, this was due to the dynamic that "Catholic people move, schools don't."

future for Catholic schools is "cautiously optimistic." It urges schools to seek out new sources of funding and philanthropy so that parents will continue to have the option of a Catholic education for their children.

"Caution and optimism are two watchwords for us as we explore the future of Catholic education in the Diocese of Erie," Father Rouch said. "We must proceed with caution as we sort out the implications of the demographic research that clearly mandate action on our part, but we also must remain optimistic that the Holy Spirit will guide us to creative solutions and inspired ideas as we develop a plan that will keep our schools viable and vibrant."

Coming in the
Dec. 10 issue of
FaithLife.

Part II of
Securing the
future of
Catholic education

2005-06 Pa. legislative session comes to an end

By Amy L. Beisel
Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

Another two-year legislative session is ending in Harrisburg. Hundreds of public policy proposals were discussed and done, or left undone by the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) and the Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association (PCHA) tracked and reviewed more than 260 bills which they supported, opposed or took no position.

A notable PCC priority—the Pennsylvania Marriage Protection Amendment—unfortunately was left undone. Efforts to protect marriage will resume in the new session beginning January 2007. But many lesser known initiatives supported by the PCC and PCHA did succeed.

• Language was successfully included in the fiscal code bill companion to the state budget stipulating that **no state or federal funding for family planning services may be used to promote, perform, counsel for, or refer for abortions.** Similar restric-

tions were vetoed by Governor Rendell in the prior budget year. This is the first time such restrictions have been placed on both federal and state funds in Pennsylvania.

• Pennsylvania's **minimum wage was increased to \$6.25 per hour** beginning January 1, then \$7.15 per hour by July 1, 2007. Church teaching supports fair wages for work.

• Funding for the **Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program was expanded by \$10 million** bringing the total to \$54 million. The EITC program provides businesses with a tax credit for donations to nonprofit scholarship or educational improvement organizations, which then provide scholarships to children. It gives parents the economic means to choose the learning environment they be-

lieve best for their children, regardless of family income.

• **Overly burdensome child care regulations were withdrawn** by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). The proposed regulations insisted that religious child care centers obtain a certificate of compliance, ignoring a recent court decision which held that nonprofit child care facilities cannot be forced to obtain one. Furthermore, the regulations attempted to regulate the instructional program content of Catholic pre-schools, which is a violation of religious freedom protected under the First Amendment.

• The **"Cover All Kids" initiative passed offering health care coverage to every child** in Pennsylvania by expanding the Pennsylvania Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Under Cover All Kids, parents who currently cannot afford to insure their children will get assistance from the state. PCHA and PCC have been involved in advocacy efforts for health care coverage of children since the inception

of CHIP in 1992.

• **Deep cuts in Medical Assistance reimbursement for hospitals** were initially proposed for the 2006-2007 state budget. The cuts would have impacted the ability of vulnerable populations to access essential health care services. Advocacy efforts prompted the legislature to restore the cuts in the final version of the budget ensuring health care services to the neediest people in our communities. PCC and PCHA were also involved in efforts to prevent changes to nursing home "case mix" reimbursement that would have negatively impacted residents and providers.

The new legislative session brings new opportunities to advance important public policies that protect families, the poor and vulnerable, and stand up for social justice.

Amy L. Beisel, APR, is communications director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference — the public affairs arm of Pennsylvania's Catholic bishops and the Catholic dioceses of Pennsylvania.

Success Story #5



Nicole Hykes
Operations Manager

Nicole joined Millercreek-based Corry Publishing 6 years ago as a member of the magazine production department. Through her hard work, initiative, and uncommon discipline, she has been promoted to the position of Operations Manager for Corry Publishing's three national technology magazines. Nicole currently supervises 9 employees and helps manage a \$1 million printing budget.

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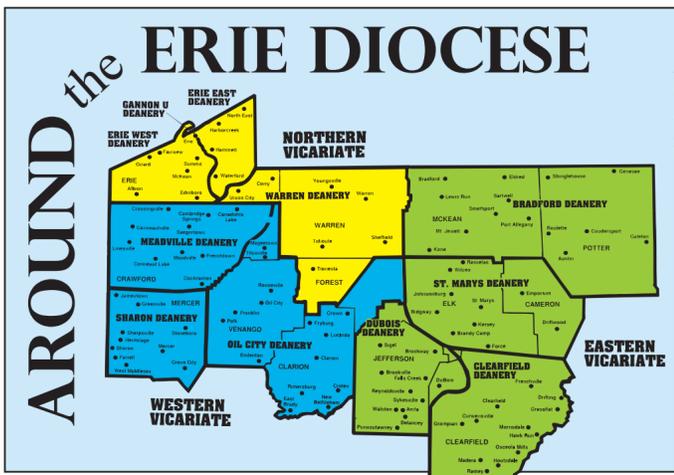
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Benedictine oblates renew and commit

ERIE — On Oct. 29, 191 men and women joined together to renew their commitment to the Erie Benedictines as oblates. There were also 21 new oblates making their initial commitment. The oblates are men and women from all walks of society, from across the United States and abroad with one common goal: to seek God through a life based on the Rule of Benedict and through a formal relationship with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. For more information on the Benedictine oblate program, visit www.ErieBenedictines.org. The newest oblates can be seen in the photo at right.



Front row (left to right): Ann Daugherty, Erie; Cheryl Spahr, Shaker Heights, Ohio; Susan Payne, Verona; Barbara Baglier, Toronto; Marcia Kusse, Rochester, N.Y.; and Cindy Liotta, Erie. Back row (left to right): Sister Marilyn Schauble, OSB, oblate director; Sister Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, prioress; Robert Zinsky, Harrisburg; Linda Logwood, Philadelphia; Sharon Stone Kilpatrick, Sperryville, Va.; Peg Butler, Shaker Heights, Ohio; Lois Manookian, Portland, Ore.; Janice Etchison, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Heather Canfield, Edinboro; and Andrew Canfield, Edinboro.

Absent from photo: Ann Fegan, Bethlehem, Pa.; Michelle Hintz, Cleveland; Janine Mariscotti, Glenside, Pa.; Suzanne Metcalf, Rome; Roxana Pierson, Greenwood, Va.; Glenda Jean Tremewan, Murphy, N.C.; and Paul Tremewan, Murphy, N.C.

St. Joseph students visit Warren seniors

WARREN — Students at St. Joseph School in Warren visited local seniors at Cambridge of Warren and the Warren Senior Center on Halloween. Students paraded through the facilities in their costumes singing a few Halloween songs. This was one of the school's service projects for the year.



Class play a 35-year tradition at DuBois Central Catholic



DUBOIS — The senior-class play at DuBois Central Catholic is a 35-year-old tradition of its Fine Arts department. The tradition began with current drama teacher Kate Kunkle and former teacher Msgr. Bernie Urbaniak, now pastor of St. Stanislaus in Erie, more than three decades ago.

This year, the senior class presented *Death by Chocolate*, a mystery/comedy set in a converted mansion in upstate New York, Nov. 9-11 in the First Commonwealth Performing Arts Center of the DuBois Area Catholic School. The cast of characters told their story on the eve of the grand reopening of the Meadowbrook Health Resort after the death of Henry Meadowbrook.

Seated (left to right) are cast members Rachel Stern, Jason Gualis, Jill Brosky, Marissa Ferraraccio, Maria Hanslovan, Ali Prescott, Caitlyn Mooneyham and Erik Johnson. Standing (left to right) are Cody Wilson, Christopher Wulderk, John McIntosh and Zac Burley.

Other members of the Class of 2007 are involved in behind-the-scene jobs such as ticket sales, set construction, make-up and stage crew.

St. Callistus youth prepare Thanksgiving meal



KANE — Youth at St. Callistus Parish in Kane recently hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for the homebound of the parish. Prior to dinner, students and their guests made a craft which will be hung in the church's gathering space on the parish Christmas tree Dec. 16. Pictured from left to right are Dawn Saquin, Elizabeth Carlson, Jeanne Smith, Ashlyn Anderson and Alexa Anderson setting the table in preparation for dinner. Marilyn

St. Joseph class of '34 reunion



ERIE — The 1934 graduating class of St. Joseph School in Erie, which meets semi-annually, held its most recent gathering during a Sunday brunch at the Erie Maennechor Club on Sept. 10. Five out-of-town graduates were unable to attend the gathering. Pictured are (front row, left to right): Betty (Barney) Williams, Jane (Knoll) Lyons, Frances (Wholehan) Williams, (back row, left to right) Anthony Yochim, Rita (Kerner) Dallas, Margaret (Williams) Leone, Rosemary (Kaltenbach) Denial and Elliot LeFaiver.

OLC hosts Grandparents Day celebration



Herb Sweny visits with three of his grandchildren (left to right): Rebecca, Shaun and Sam. Sweny has 10 grandchildren currently at OLC and another six who are OLC alumni. His seven children all graduated from Our Lady's Christian, as well.

ERIE — More than 400 grandparents went back to school Oct. 11 during Grandparents Day at Our Lady's Christian School in Erie. Grandparents spent the morning visiting classrooms, creating art projects and completing class "assignments" with their grandchildren.

A tradition at Our Lady's Christian, Grandparents Day gives students an opportunity to share their school life with their grandparents or other friends and relatives who might stand-in for grandparents.

"We hope this experience sparks the kind of conversation between students and seniors that helps them understand and appreciate each other all the more," said principal George Ogeka.

Students and their guests ended the morning with a special music and prayer service in the gym. Visitors can view photos of Grandparents Day at the OLC Web site www.ourladychristian.com.

St. Joseph School cookbook dedicated to long-time staff member

WARREN — St. Joseph School in Warren has created a new *St. Joseph's School Friends & Family Cookbook*, which has been dedicated to Marilyn Cole for all her years of generosity to the school and soup kitchen meals. Cole has worked at St. Joseph church and school for 28 years.

According to principal Sandra Harris, the cookbook has been well received. Half of the 800 cookbooks printed have already been sold. The new collection of recipes was published in early November. It includes tried and true recipes from St. Joseph staff, alumni, family and friends. Father Walter Packard, pastor of St. Joseph, also has some recipes in the book.

Anyone wishing to purchase a cookbook may contact the school office at 814.723.2030.



Marilyn Cole

Healing hands at DuBois Regional Medical Center



DUBOIS — Deacon Bob DeNoon, chaplain and manager of the Pastoral Care Department at DuBois Regional Medical Center, anoints the hands of Linda DuBois, an RN in DRMC's The Heart Center. All staff had the opportunity to have their hands blessed by the chaplains during Pastoral Care Week, Oct. 22-28. This week honors the work of the chaplains at the hospital and in the lives of patients, physicians and staff. With DuBois at the ceremony were Megan Wilson, RN, center, and Dr. Jay Ambrose, cardiologist.

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