

How well do Catholics in the pew sing?

Depends on where you sit, page 2.



FaithLife

30th annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast

Janet Folger will be the keynote speaker Feb. 2, page 3.



www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

January 13, 2008

Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

Feast days



Baptism of the Lord

Conversion of St. Paul

Jan. 13 The Baptism of the Lord
Jan. 17 St. Anthony, abbot
Jan. 20 St. Fabian, St. Sebastian
Jan. 21 St. Agnes
Jan. 22 St. Vincent
Jan. 24 St. Francis de Sales
Jan. 25 The Conversion of St. Paul
Jan. 26 Ss. Timothy & Titus
Jan. 27 St. Angela Merici

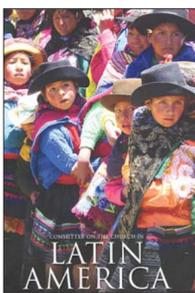
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - Jan. 18-25

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an expression of the ecumenical movement - a worldwide movement among Christians to heal the divisions within the church; to promote dialogues among churches and Christian communities; and to encourage Christians everywhere to better understand and reflect the implications of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Each year from January 18-25, Christians are encouraged to pray together as a sign of the unity that is already theirs in Christ and that that unity will become complete.

For more information, visit www.weekofprayer2008.org.

Collection for the Church in Latin America - Jan. 19-20

The proceeds of this annual collection are distributed to dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, seminaries and other Catholic institutions throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. These funds assist in the formation of priests, religious, lay ministers, missionaries, pastoral agents, catechists and youth ministers.



"These funds will enable our fellow brothers and sisters who are rich in faith but often lacking in material resources to participate more fully as disciples and to respond to their call to mission," said Bishop Donald Trautman.

The collection also helps the Erie Diocese respond to the basic needs of impoverished people in our sister-diocese of Yucatan, Mexico.

The national collection to aid the church in Latin America received more than \$7 million in contributions for the first time last year and used the funds to assist 476 projects in nearly two dozen countries.

March for Life, Washington - Jan. 22

This year marks the 35th annual national march, which coincides with the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which legalized abortion. A rally has historically preceded the march around the Capitol to the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court. Last year's crowd was estimated at more than 100,000.



Catholic Schools Week - Jan. 27-Feb. 2

The 2008 theme, "Catholic Schools Light the Way," focuses on the leadership that Catholic Schools provide to our nation, producing graduates who light the way to a brighter future for all humankind. The theme also highlights the spiritual foundation of Catholic schools, for we are on "The Way," a biblical term used to describe those who follow Jesus as disciples. The slogan, "Catholic Schools Light the Way," reminds us that we are called to "light the way" to the kingdom for others even as we walk "the way" of discipleship and grow in faith ourselves.



What is GOD asking of YOU?

National Vocation Awareness Week January 13-19

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

There must be something in the holy water in Coalport.

Father Justin Pino, who was ordained last year, is from St. Basil the Great Parish in Coalport. Two of the diocese's nine men in major seminary, including Deacon Johnathan Schmolt, who is scheduled to be ordained a priest in June, also comes from St. Basil.

Or maybe Father Alex Amico, the longtime pastor in Coalport and now pastor at St. Paul in Erie, is just doing a good job of promoting his vocation.

January 13-19 is National Vocation Awareness Week in the United States. This annual week helps raise awareness in the wider church community about the vocational choices that are available to adults—whether to the married, single, priestly or consecrated life—and to encourage others

in discerning their vocation.

The Diocese of Erie has 15 men in seminary and four women in formation for consecrated life. As a diocese of 226,000 registered Catholics spanning 13 counties in northwest Pennsylvania, there is always a need to be served.

Father Amico says the key to having young men open themselves up to the possibility of a priestly vocation has been getting them involved in the life of the church from the time they were young.

Looking for good stewards

The Catholic Foundation names first board members

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor



To paraphrase a line from the Marines, Dr. Emma Lee McCloskey is looking for a few good stewards.

McCloskey, executive director of the Erie Diocese's newly announced Catholic Foundation, is in the process of selecting board members for the foundation who will be asked to take care of the gifts of donors.

"One of the things I've found in talking with individuals about becoming a board member is that they're saying it reflects the stewardship of everything that they are and that they've received," McCloskey said. "They receive God's gifts gratefully and they're cherishing those, but they have a responsibility to share their gifts with others and return them to God with increase."

The Catholic Foundation supports religious, educational, social and pastoral ministries by investing the gifts of donors and supporting outreach in the 13-county diocese. Board members will meet several times each year, including an annual formal grant-making process stemming from the income of the foundation's initial \$6.5 million endowment.

The board currently has six members. They are: Mark and Karen Burton-Horstman; Mark and Joyce Ravnikar-Kulyk; Mary McCarthy; and Cheryl Vicary.

See FOUNDATION, page 4

Nine installed as deacon candidates



Nine men were installed as candidates for the permanent diaconate Dec. 1 by Bishop Donald Trautman at St. Mark Seminary chapel in Erie. They are all fourth-year students in the diocese's permanent diaconate formation program and are scheduled to be ordained deacons in May.

Pictured from left to right are: Owen Wagner (Notre Dame, Hermitage); Thomas Matusiak (Holy Trinity, Erie); John Wren (St. Joseph, Oil City); Kenneth Reisenweber (St.

Brigid, Meadville); Bishop Donald Trautman; John Mang (St. Francis Xavier, McKean); Lawrence Caggese (St. Leo, Ridgway); Raymond Ehrensberger (St. Mary, St. Marys); Denis Coan (St. John the Baptist, Erie); and Frank Lombardo (Holy Rosary, Erie).

For more information of the permanent diaconate program in the Erie Diocese, visit www.ErieRCD.org/diaconate.asp or contact Deacon Ralph DeCecco, director of pastoral formation, at 814.864.0504.

LOOKING AHEAD

What American Catholics can anticipate in 2008

By Carol Zimmerman
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON—Those who put stock in the expression "an idle brain is the devil's workshop" can take heart that American Catholics won't give the devil much to work with in a very busy 2008.

Four archdioceses — Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Louisville, Ky. — will be celebrating their 200th anniversaries with special events slated throughout the year. The archdioceses were erected from the Baltimore Archdiocese in 1808.

New York Catholics will also have major church events April 18-20 when Pope Benedict XVI visits their city as part of his six-day visit to the United States.

During the pope's New York stay he will address the U.N. General Assembly, participate in an ecumenical event, celebrate a Mass for priests, deacons and religious, meet children with disabilities and join a youth rally.

He is also scheduled to visit ground zero for a ceremony with responders to the 2001 terrorist attack and victims' family members. The pope will conclude his visit by



Pedestrians walk in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York Dec. 25. The New York Archdiocese marks its 200th anniversary in 2008 and Catholics there are looking ahead to a major church event when Pope Benedict XVI visits as part of his April 15-20 trip to the United States.

celebrating Mass at Yankee Stadium.

Prior to the New York visit the pope will spend two busy days in Washington for a White House reception, a visit with the U.S. bishops, a Mass at Nationals Stadium, a meeting with Catholic educators and an interreligious gathering.

Another foreign trip the pope has scheduled for 2008 is for World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia, July 15-20. By mid-December 100,000 pilgrims — including 38,000 from the U.S. — were registered for the event with large contingents attending from the United States, Italy and Germany.

A few weeks after World Youth Day concludes, the Summer Olympics will begin in Beijing, and once that coverage wraps up everyone will be narrowly focused on the 2008 elections — if they weren't already.

In anticipating, and trying to ward off, Catholic voter confusion, the U.S. bishops wrote a 10,000-word document on political responsibility, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," overwhelmingly approved during the bishops' fall meeting.

The document is part of a series that has been issued before every presidential election for more than 30 years. "Faithful Citizenship" outlines key themes for voters in 2008: right to life and dignity

of the human person; call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and caring for God's creation.

The document has received a mixed reaction. Some praised it for its clarity and emphasis on the needs of the poor; others said it was not strong enough in condemning Catholic politicians who take positions contrary to the church on abortion, embryonic stem-cell research and other life issues.

U.S. Catholics will be taking a close look not only at where candidates stand on those issues but also at how politicians respond on major issues that intersect with Catholic teaching such as the ongoing war in Iraq, immigration, marriage and civil unions and capital punishment.

Opposition to the death penalty made news at the end of 2007, with New Jersey's abolition of capital punishment signed into law by Gov. Jon Corzine Dec. 17 and a vote by the U.N. General Assembly the next day calling for a moratorium on executions.

The topic will continue to be on the front burner at the beginning of 2008 as the U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments in a Kentucky death-

See AMERICAN CATHOLICS, page 3

Prayer for vocations

God of love,
You call us to live in your love through the grace of our baptism.

Bless us with the courage to carry out the mission of Jesus. Grant us open and generous hearts to see the needs of others and to respond with compassion.

May the Church be blest with women and men who are dedicated to you through marriage, the single life, the diaconate, priesthood and the consecrated life.

It is in Christ and through Christ that we offer ourselves to you now and forever. Amen.

"They had jobs around the church," Father Amico said, "whether it was helping prepare for Mass or menial tasks like shoveling snow."

It was what his former pastor, Msgr. Geno Monti, did for him at Our Lady of Fatima in Farrell, and it encouraged him to enter seminary.

"If you have any inclination that someone might have

a religious vocation, you want to talk to them and give them a hands-on experience of what ministry is like," Father Amico said. "They should be close to the sacraments and have a good prayer life."

Everyone from priests, sisters, parents, teachers and friends plays a vital role in

See VOCATION, page 3



IN THE U.S.

■ Outreach efforts to victims of human trafficking were given new impetus by a recent California task force report that said the state is a prime target for trade in human beings. A report released by the California Alliance to Combat Trafficking and Slavery said the state's international border, numerous ports and airports, soaring immigrant population and growing economy all contribute to California being a prime target for human trafficking. It said that, beyond the sex trade, labor trafficking includes farming, construction, clothing manufacturing, domestic work, restaurants and the motel/hotel industry.

■ A Wisconsin man accused of causing his pregnant girlfriend's abortion by spiking her drink with RU-486 is being prosecuted under the Wisconsin fetal homicide law that classifies unborn children as potential crime victims. Manishkumar Patel of Kaukauna, free on a \$750,000 cash bond, was awaiting a Jan. 30 preliminary hearing in Outagamie County. "Ironically, under Wisconsin law, if the woman had taken RU-486 by her own hand, there could be no charges. God willing, more law enforcement officials will work to protect the lives of preborn children in our state, wanted or unwanted," said Peggy Hamill, state director of Pro-Life Wisconsin. Without Wisconsin's fetal homicide law, there would be no basis on which to charge Patel in the death of the child, Wisconsin Right to Life, said in a press release.

AROUND THE WORLD

■ The Vatican said recent criticism of Pope Benedict XVI by an al-Qaida leader reflected extremist fears of interreligious dialogue. Al-Qaida's deputy leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, said in a videotape that the pope had offended Muslims and that Saudi Arabian King Abdullah Aziz should not have met with the pontiff in November. It was the first meeting between a pope and a reigning Saudi king.

Asked about al-Zawahri's comments, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said Dec. 18 that the ongoing dialogue between the Vatican and Muslim scholars "is a positive fact for the entire Muslim world." "The fact that these voices that explicitly want to dialogue and work for peace have a growing importance in Islam is evidently something that worries those who don't want dialogue," the Vatican spokesman said.

■ When Catholics fulfill their right and duty to share their faith with others, they are not engaging in proselytism or showing contempt for the beliefs of others, said a new document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Sharing the Christian faith with the hope that another may accept it is a command given by Christ to his followers and is a natural result of wanting others to share something special, said the "Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization." Cardinal William J. Levada, prefect of the doctrinal congregation, presented the document at a Dec. 14 Vatican press conference. In addition to reminding Catholics of their obligation to share the Gospel with others, the document harshly criticized Catholics who believe that every religion offers salvation, and it defended Catholics in some Orthodox countries from charges of proselytism when they welcome into the Catholic Church people who freely ask to join.

■ Catholic Church officials in Hungary have denounced the government's decision to extend marriage rights to unmarried and same-sex couples. "To equate such relationships with marriages undermines society's

health and endangers children," said Csongor Szerdahelyi, spokesman for the Budapest-based Hungarian bishops' conference. "We don't discriminate against homosexuals in the church, but nor do we agree with politicians who say such liberal changes are inevitable, and who try to influence opinion by claiming this way of living is normal in the West." Hungary's parliament Dec. 17 approved a law that allows unmarried and same-sex couples to register as legal partnerships. Under the law, which will take effect in January 2009, registered gay or unmarried partners will gain the rights of inheritance and joint taxation, but not the right to adopt children. In a statement, the Hungarian bishops' conference expressed disappointment that the law equated same-sex couples with "real families."

PEOPLE OF FAITH

■ Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair became a Catholic during a private ceremony in London. Blair, previously an Anglican, was received into full communion with the Catholic Church by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Westminster. Blair was sponsored at the Mass of reception by his wife, Cherie, a Catholic. The Dec. 21 Mass at Archbishop's House, the cardinal's private residence, was attended by Blair's family and close friends. Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor said in a statement Dec. 22 that he was "very glad" to welcome Blair into church. "For a long time he has been a regular worshipper at Mass with his family and in recent months he has been following a program of formation to prepare for his reception into full communion," the cardinal said. Blair, 54, served as British prime minister from May 1997 until June 2007.



Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Aziz and Pope Benedict XVI



Tony Blair

By the Way...

Happy New Year!

Many churches throughout the diocese had blessed chalk available for parishioners to take home and use above their doorways as part of an Epiphany custom. It is customary for the faithful to bless their homes by writing over the front door: 20 + C + M + B + 08. The digits appearing at the beginning and end designate the new year. "CMB" stands for the traditional names of the Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar). The CMB also conveniently stands for the Latin prayer Christus Mansionem Benedicat, meaning "May Christ bless this house."



Jason Koshinski

Christopher Barnes and Michael Polinek from the Erie Diocese were two of 11 seminarians at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe who were recently installed in the ministry of acolyte by Bishop Robert J. Baker, S.T.D., of Birmingham, Ala.

Barnes, from St. Venantius Parish in Rouseville, is the son of Martha Barnes of Rouseville and Charles Barnes. He is a 1989 graduate of Oil City Area Senior High School and studied at Gannon University from 2004-06. He has also studied at the Venango campus of Clarion University, the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville, the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in biology, and the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science, where he received an associate degree in specialized funeral service arts and sciences in 1999.

Polinek, from St. Joseph Parish/Bread of Life Community in Erie, is the son of Mark Polinek of Girard and Charlene Polinek of Erie. He is a 1997 graduate of McDowell High School and earned a bachelor of arts degree in liberal arts from Gannon University in 2006.

Both are second-year theology students.

A World Youth Day event is being discussed in Frenchville for those who can't make it to Australia. Early plans call for the diocesan-wide gathering to include a satellite link to Sydney during Pope Benedict XVI's closing Mass. More details as they come in.

St. Martin Center is in need of a seven- or eight-passenger van to transport children in its day care program. Please contact Cheryl Kobel at 814.452.6113 Ext. 110 if you can be of assistance.

With the Christmas season now officially behind us, we can all look forward to ... Lent! Yes, it's right around the corner. Ash Wednesday is Feb. 6, and the diocesan Lenten regulations will be published in our next issue. Easter Sunday comes early this year on March 23.

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

Pope says Christmas message of peace is sorely needed



Pope Benedict XVI blesses pilgrims from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 25 during his Christmas Day blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city of Rome and the world).

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI welcomed Christmas as a "day of great hope" and said its message of peace is sorely needed in a world beset by war, poverty and injustice.

In his Christmas day blessing delivered from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, the pope appealed for an end to "the grim sound of arms" in Iraq, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Sudan's Darfur and other "crisis situations that are frequently forgotten."

"May the child Jesus bring relief to those who are suffering and may he bestow upon political leaders the wisdom and courage to seek and find humane, just and lasting solutions," he said.

The night before, celebrating midnight Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope said Christmas should be experienced as a feast of "restored creation" in a spoiled and polluted world.

That will happen when modern men and women make time and space for God, he said.

The papal Mass and blessing were broadcast live to millions of people around the world, and the pope pronounced Christmas greetings in 63 languages — including for the first time Guaraní, an indigenous language of South America.

In English, the pope said: "May the birth of the Prince of Peace remind the

world where its true happiness lies; and may your hearts be filled with hope and joy, for the Savior has been born for us."

In the message accompanying his "urbi et orbi" blessing to the city of Rome and to the world, the pope emphasized that Christ's gift of hope and salvation is offered to all peoples, especially those suffering from oppression and lack of basic rights.

"It is the most vulnerable members of society — women, children, the elderly — who are so often the victims of brutal armed conflicts, terrorism and violence of every kind, which inflict such terrible sufferings on entire populations," he said.

"At the same time, ethnic, religious and political tensions, instability, rivalry, disagreements, and all forms of injustice and discrimination are destroying the internal fabric of many countries and embittering international relations," he said.

He also cited the rising number of refugees and evacuees from natural disasters, often caused by "alarming environmental upheavals."

The birth of Christ brought a healing message of peace to the world, the pope said. But to receive it, faith and humility are required, he said.

"Who has time to listen to his word and to become enfolded and entranced by his love?" he asked.

In his midnight Mass homily, the pope asked a series of similar questions: "Do we have time for our neighbor who is in need of a word from us, from me, or in need of my affection? For the sufferer who is in need of help? For the fugitive or the refugee who is seeking asylum?"

"Do we have time and space for God? Can he enter into our lives? Does he find room in us, or have we occupied all the available space in our thoughts, our actions, our lives for ourselves?" he said.

Yet while the reality of a closed world can be seen daily, "God does not allow himself to be shut out," the pope said. He finds a space, "even if it means entering through the stable," he said.

The pope ended his homily by quoting from St. Augustine, who asked "Where is heaven?" and concluded that heaven can be found "in the saints and in the just."

The pope said the saint made an important point: that the Lord is close to the humble.

"Heaven does not belong to the geography of space, but to the geography of the heart. And the heart of God, during the holy night, stooped down to the stable," he said.

"The humility of God is heaven. And if we approach this humility, then we touch heaven. Then the earth too is made new," he said.

How well do Catholics in the pew sing? Depends on where you sit

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholics in the pew sing fairly well, in the judgment of music ministers at U.S. parishes.

The Catholics in the pews themselves, though, hold a less favorable view of their own singing ability.

In an online

survey conducted in 2007 by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 72 percent of music ministers said that the singing in the assembly was either "very strong" or "somewhat strong."

By contrast, only 39 percent of those not involved in music ministry believed that congregational singing in their parish was strong.

Despite the difference of opinion, both groups participating in the survey said the singing in their own parish is better than the general state of congregational singing in the United States.

Among musicians, 39 percent of music ministers gave a positive rating to U.S. Catholic singing overall, and only 27 percent of nonmusicians did the same. In both categories of respondents, 53 percent rated U.S. congregational singing as "somewhat weak."

About 1,400 people took part in the survey, with musicians making up about three-fourths of all respondents, according to J. Michael McMahon, the musicians' association president. The poll was taken in the fall, and results were announced Dec. 21.

Members of the Erie Diocese were invited to participate in the survey through Faith magazine.

Asked by Catholic News Service in a Jan. 2 telephone interview which side he tends to believe more, McMahon re-

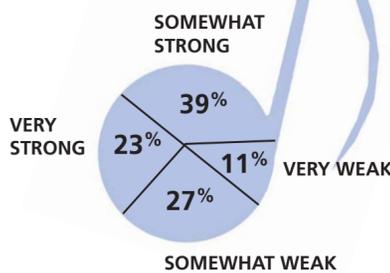
plied, "Both."

An organist and music director — McMahon plays at St. Agnes Church in the Washington suburb of Arlington, Va. — he said, "When I sit on the (organ) bench sometimes I think, 'Wow, they're singing really well today.'"

But as someone who "sat in the pews most Sundays" for about five

Can Catholics Sing?

Parish members rate their congregations' singing as...



Source: National Association of Pastoral Musicians ©2008 CNS

years until taking his current organist job, McMahon said, "It takes only a quarter of the people singing so that it sounds like a pretty good choir."

One reason suggested by McMahon was that music ministers can often hear the full sound of the assembly, while congregants can hear only themselves and those closest to them, assuming they're singing.

Another reason McMahon offered was church acoustics. The use of sound-absorbing materials deadens the sound and prevents people in the pews from sensing the strength of the singing.

"One of the things I learned" from the survey, McMahon told CNS, "was to pay more attention to what it's like to be in the congregation, ... and I think that's really hard to do."

This was the third online poll conducted by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians in as many years.

FaithLife

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General Information: (814) 824-1161
Fax: (814) 824-1170

E-Mail: FaithLife@erieRCD.org
Editorial: (814) 824-1171
Advertising: (814) 824-1168

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Briefly

Erie March & Motorcade for Life Jan. 19

The annual Erie March & Motorcade for Life will take place on Saturday, Jan. 19 as a local observance of the 35th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton Supreme Court decisions which legalized abortion.

Everyone who is able to march is encouraged to do so, but those who would have difficulty walking the distance should ride in the motorcade, which will follow the marchers.

The program will begin at the Perry Square gazebo in downtown Erie at 11 a.m. Marchers should arrive 15 minutes early; motorcade drivers should arrive 30 minutes early.

The march will conclude with a brief memorial service at the gazebo, which will be concluded by 12:30 p.m. at the latest.

Youth Stand 4 Life bus trip Jan. 21-22

For the second consecutive year, St. Lawrence Parish in Albion is organizing a diocesan-wide Youth Stand 4 Life bus trip to the national March for Life rally in Washington.

Cost of the Jan. 21-22 trip is \$72. Contact Kathleen Peterson at 814.774.0061 for more information and registration forms.

March for Life trip to Washington

People for Life is now accepting reservations for the annual bus trip to the March for Life in Washington. The upcoming march will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 22. The cost is \$40. Space is limited.

Buses will leave Erie at 11 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 21 and arrive back in Erie at approximately 12:30 a.m. on Jan. 23.

For more information, call 814.882.1333.

30th annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast

Feb. 2

ERIE - People for Life, an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation, will hold its 30th annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 2 at the Avalon Hotel in downtown Erie.

This year's keynote speaker is Janet Folger, founder and president of Faith 2 Action, a pro-life and family values organization based in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Folger hosts a daily radio program that is heard in 27 markets. She also has a 60-second daily commentary that is heard on about 70 radio stations, including WGOJ 105.5 FM in nearby Conneaut, Ohio. She writes a weekly column for WorldNetDaily and has written several books. She has also appeared on major TV news programs including NBC's Today Show, ABC Evening News, Nightline and CBS This Morning.

She was previously the main speaker at the breakfast nearly 15 years ago while she was the legislative director of the Ohio Right to Life Society.

WCTL 106.3 FM will air a live interview with Folger prior to the breakfast, tentatively scheduled for Jan. 17 at 8 a.m.

To make reservations, send \$10 per person or \$7.50 for ages 3-10 to People for Life Inc., P.O. Box 1126, Erie, PA 16512. Children under 3 are admitted free. Tickets will be mailed.

Reservations can also be made at either People for Life office: The Professional Building at 1611 Peach St., Suite 321 from 9-5 Monday through Friday or the main office at 1625 W. 26th St. Call 814.459.1333 for exact hours.

For more information, visit www.peopleforlife.org.



Janet Folger

National Vocation Awareness Week Jan. 13-19

VOCATION from page 1

helping others discern their vocation, he said.

"If people realize someone might have a vocation, they should be open and encouraging," he said. "Go to seminary just to try. If it isn't for them, at least they tried."

Sister Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ, travels the diocese speaking at schools and visiting with students about vocations, particularly women religious. But she doesn't limit herself because, as she says, "God is calling everyone."

"People are out there searching and you want to help feed their spiritual hunger," Sister Clare Marie said. "One of the great questions is, 'Have you ever wondered what God is asking of you?' That call is very deep. People sometimes don't allow it to surface and when it does surface they don't know what to do with it."

For Sister Clare Marie, promoting vocations involves sharing her own vocation story. She'll do that at upcoming talks at Immaculate Conception School in Clarion and St. Patrick School in Franklin. She and Sister Marian Wehler, OSB, of Catholic Rural Ministry, are offering a program

Vocations then and now

Religious vocations in the United States:	1995	2007
Diocesan priests	32,349	27,971
Religious priests	16,705	13,478
Total priests	49,054	41,449
Priestly ordinations	511	456
Graduate-level seminarians	3,172	3,274
Permanent deacons	10,932	15,409
Religious brothers	6,535	5,015
Religious sisters	90,809	63,699
Catholic population (millions)	57.4	64.4

— From the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Jan. 19 from 10 a.m.-noon at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Oil City titled "God's Amazing Call" for women throughout the Oil City Deanery.

Young people tend to ask her questions like "How do you know if God is calling you?" or "Is religious life enough and does it fulfill you?" Or she'll offer a question of her own: "Have you ever thought of serving the church or considered a religious vocation?"

"It goes in so many different directions," Sister Clare Marie said.

She adds that there is tremendous value in parents supporting and encouraging their own children, as well as others, in calling them forth.

"When you hear people's vocation stories, you often hear of one or two other people who have facilitated that calling," she said. "We all have a role in promoting vocations to the church."

Sometimes that promotion even happens on a basketball court.

For the past two years, the Runnin' Revs, a basketball team of priests, deacons and seminarians, have played basketball games

against CYO teams from diocesan schools. Each game is followed by prayer, a presentation on the priesthood and sharing of vocation stories by the priests themselves.

Not only does the program promote the awareness of vocations, but it also provides a positive and healthy image of the priesthood and diaconate in the Erie Diocese, said Father Rich Toohey, pastor of St. Mary of Grace Parish in Meadville and a member of the Runnin' Revs.

"Sports are part of our culture," Father Toohey said. "We try to reach out to that culture where the young people are and at the same time reinforce with them that the priesthood involves normal guys who come from all different walks of life."

The Runnin' Revs tied the Our Lady of Peace CYO team 57-57 in their game Jan. 6. Their next game is 6:30 p.m. Jan. 20 against the Cathedral Center CYO at Cathedral Center School in Erie.

Plans are being made to bring the program to the Meadville and DuBois areas. Parishes interested in the Runnin' Revs vocations program should contact Father Rich Toohey at St. Mary of Grace Parish in Meadville at 814.333.6161.

Looking ahead: What American Catholics can anticipate in 2008

AMERICAN CATHOLICS from page 1

penalty case Jan. 7. The ruling on this case will determine the constitutionality of lethal injection and whether the most commonly used combination of drugs for lethal injections constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. Until the court rules, more than a dozen states have stopped executions.

Congress failed to pass immigration reform legislation in 2007 and will likely steer clear of the issue during an election year, but that does not mean church officials will keep quiet about it.

At year-end, bishops in Oklahoma, Maryland and California

called for action on immigration, stressing the human rights of undocumented people and their need for an opportunity to legalize their status. Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony wrote letters to all the presidential candidates in December urging them to "show leadership on the issue of immigration" and to replace verbal attacks on immigrants with a focus on policy solutions.

In November, the need for embryonic stem-cell research was called into question by studies showing that human skin cells can be reprogrammed to work as effectively as embryonic stem cells, whose use has long been opposed by the church because it in-

volves the destruction of human embryos.

But since studies alone may not be enough to change public opinion, several state Catholic conferences were waging campaigns and educational programs against funding for embryonic stem-cell research.

The bishops will also continue to speak out against state legislatures seeking to legalize same-sex civil unions and denounce U.S. involvement in the war in Iraq which they have already described as "unacceptable and unsustainable."

In 2008, the new structure of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will be in place with a

\$147.7 million budget, a 16 percent reduction in the diocesan assessments and a reduction in staff of about 70 people.

Across the country some dioceses will continue to be impacted by the church sex abuse scandal as they make payments on multimillion-dollar settlements reached with abuse victims and modify the ministries they provide.

Judge Michael Merz, chairman of the National Review Board, said the church's response to the abuse crisis will be ongoing. "Church efforts for prevention, healing and vigilance will be demanded for the rest of our days," he said in a December statement coinciding with the group's five-year report on the abuse crisis.

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January 21- Buses leave Erie at 11:00 PM
January 22- March in Washington, DC
January 23- Return to Erie about 12:30 AM

Space may be limited: Make reservations today! \$40.00 a Seat. Groups are always welcome!

Some student sponsorships are currently available.

People for Life EVENTS Be a Voice for the Voiceless!
March & Motorcade for Life, Erie, PA
January 19, 2008 at 11:00 am, Will begin at Perry Square and conclude with a Brief Memorial Service at the Perry Square Gazebo

30th Annual PRO-LIFE Prayer Breakfast
Guest Speaker: Janet Folger, Christian author, columnist, radio host, and dynamic pro-life spokesperson, Music by Selah Praise Band
February 2, 2008 at 9:00 am, Avalon Hotel
Reservations: \$10.00, Ages 3-10: \$7.50, Free under 3

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St. George Catholic School
Open House
January 27th • 1-3pm
Preschool - Grade 8
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814-864-4821 www.sgs-online.org

Erie's Eastside Catholic Schools

Holy Family

Open House: Sunday, January 27

It will begin with a Mass and Opening Liturgy at noon followed by the Open House. School tours are available upon request.

452-4720, 1153 E. 9th St.

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Open House & Ice Cream Social
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Jan. 27 - Feb. 2

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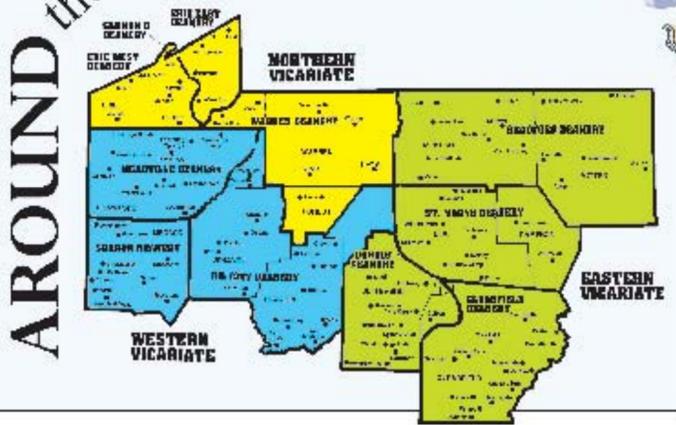
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- Date: January 27, 2008
- Time: 1:00 - 4:00 pm

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AROUND the ERIE DIOCESE



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

Are you pictured in this issue? Share this page with family and friends online by visiting archived issues of *FaithLife* at: www.ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp

St. Margaret Mission celebrates feast day

JAMESTOWN — On Nov. 18, St. Margaret Church in Jamestown celebrated the feast day of its namesake, St. Margaret of Scotland. The church was decorated in plaid, and Mark Holian of Jamestown provided bagpipe music.

A reception followed in the church social hall, where students from the church's religious education class gave a presentation on the history of St. Margaret of Scotland. Everyone in attendance received a St. Margaret prayer booklet and medal, which were provided by the church's women's guild.

St. Margaret is the mission church of St. Michael Parish in Greenville and is home to approximately 200 families and seasonal visitors to Pymatuning State Park.



Venango Catholic teacher honored by St. Vincent program

OIL CITY — A Venango Catholic High School instructor is one of 33 high school teachers in six states honored this year by the St. Vincent College Great Teacher Recognition Program.

Sherry Cook, who teaches freshmen and advanced placement biology, chemistry and environmental science at Venango Catholic, was chosen "for excellence in teaching that provides a positive and enduring influence on students."

The honored teachers were nominated by former students who are now freshmen at St. Vincent.

Joe Sporer, who nominated Cook, said she "was always looking for new ways to get us more involved in the lecture. I feel that she is the one teacher who made a difference in my science career thus far."

Father John Malthaner, prin-



Venango Catholic High School teacher Sherry Cook helps Riley Mason (left) and Ben Maust with a chemistry experiment.

icipal of Venango Catholic, said "Mrs. Cook is a dedicated, hard-working educator who continues to take courses and workshops to better herself and bring new ideas into the classroom. I know that there are young men and women

who are extremely prepared in the area of science because of their time with Mrs. Cook."

Cook, a Tionesta resident, has been at VC for 13 years. She is also the National Honor Society adviser.

Kennedy Catholic Students for Charity support Prince of Peace Center



FARRELL — On Dec. 17, the Prince of Peace Center in Farrell held its annual Christmas dinner for those in need. The Students for Charity Club of Kennedy Catholic High School in Hermitage baked, wrapped and delivered more than 100 loaves of sweet bread for this dinner. Through this act of kindness, the students were able to express their thankfulness for the many blessings they have received and help fulfill the motto of the school, "Christo Servire" — to serve Christ. Pictured from left to right are students Domenic Lombardi, Chelsea Charles, Liza Catania, Anthony DeMarco, Cassie Fill and Emily Friedrick.

Teacher from Mt. Jewett wins prize on 'Time Travel Trivia'

MT. JEWETT — Lois Kreitzer-Housler, a member of St. Joseph Parish in Mt. Jewett and teacher at Archbishop Walsh High School in Olean, N.Y., was with an earth science class Nov. 26 when she received a telephone call from Jeff Foxworthy after being selected as a contestant on his quiz program, "Time Travel Trivia."

Approximately four weeks prior to that phone call, Kreitzer-Housler heard an ad for the quiz show while listening to WDDH-FM 97.5 in Ridgway. Contestants are asked to tell the year when certain events occurred.

"I decided to check it out and registered on line," she said. "I preferred to be contacted during daytime."

Being a comic, Foxworthy often teases contestants on the show and tells them he's somebody else, Kreitzer-Housler said. "But, since his call came into our main office downstairs, he probably figured that he'd better be serious and immediately told me who he was."

She asked Foxworthy if her students could say hi to him over the phone, and he wished them a Merry Christmas. Naturally, the

15 students were thrilled to have talked to the well-known entertainer.

Foxworthy's question for Kreitzer-Housler was: When was the movie "Elf" first produced?

"I got the answer wrong the first time," said Kreitzer-Housler. "It was 2004. He gave me another shot and I won an epiphone guitar made by Gibson and signed by country musician Jack Ingram."

Before hanging up, Foxworthy thanked her for being a teacher. Just a few days passed before the guitar arrived at Kreitzer-Housler's residence. Also in the package were an autographed photo of Ingram, his latest CD and a two-CD collection of Toby Keith's Christmas selections. She took the instrument to school, and her students played it in the school's Christmas concert.

Kreitzer-Housler's husband, Kevin, is also a guitarist. They are both in the choir at St. Joseph, and Kevin played it during Mass on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

— Courtesy of Francis De Lancy, Smethport

NFP honors volunteers for service



Barb and Ed Burkett, co-directors of the diocese's Natural Family Planning and Chastity Education Office, present Dan and Nelsa Armour with a copy of "Jesus of Nazareth" along with their son Ian.

CRANBERRY — The many volunteers who contribute countless hours of service to the mission of the diocese's Natural Family Planning and Chastity Education Office were honored Dec. 16 at a reception and dinner at the home of Wayne and Patty Hepler in Cranberry.

Volunteers Dan and Nelsa Armour, members of Beloved Disciple Parish in Grove City, were presented with a copy of Pope Benedict XVI's book, "Jesus of

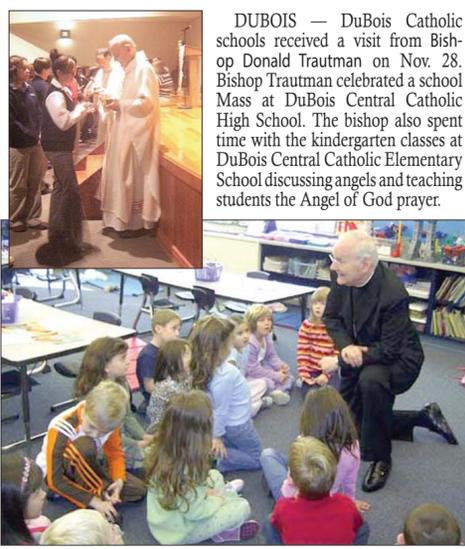
Nazareth."

Scheduling private classes as needed, working with their pastor, Father Mark Hoffman, to promote NFP and meeting with individuals to discuss NFP are some examples of Dan and Nelsa's contributions.

Dan also created a PowerPoint presentation on NFP's basic instruction series.

"We are grateful to all our volunteers," said Barb Burkett, co-director of the NFP Office.

Bishop Trautman visits DuBois schools



DUBOIS — DuBois Catholic schools received a visit from Bishop Donald Trautman on Nov. 28. Bishop Trautman celebrated a school Mass at DuBois Central Catholic High School. The bishop also spent time with the kindergarten classes at DuBois Central Catholic Elementary School discussing angels and teaching students the Angel of God prayer.

The Catholic Foundation names first board members

FOUNDATION from page 1

"I think the foundation is a good idea and I was intrigued by the concept of it," said Mark Kulyk. "In a way, I thought, 'Why hasn't the church done something like this before?'"

He will serve on the board with his wife, Joyce Ravnkar-Kulyk, but it isn't the first time the two have volunteered to serve the church together. They previously headed the capital campaign for the home parish of Holy Cross in Fairview.

The foundation will start with approximately 15 board members.

"It seems to be an efficient and workable size group with appropriate representation throughout

the diocese," McCloskey said. "We want to provide as much transparency to the donors as possible, with regards to how the foundation is running."

She said her main goals in establishing the board are to have all generations and all areas of the diocese represented.

"Having people come from very rural areas, as well as those who are living right in a city, will give a lot of different perspectives to needs of the community," McCloskey said. "When it comes to grant making, we'll know exactly where the greatest needs are."

For more information on The Catholic Foundation, visit www.tcfcd.org or e-mail catholic.foundation@ErieRCD.org.



Teacher Lois Kreitzer-Housler shares a moment with several of her earth science students who were present during Jeff Foxworthy's phone call. Pictured standing from left to right are: Collin Maybee, Sami Whiteman, Lois Kreitzer-Housler, Taneé Ireland and Kaitlyn Layman. Jason Leroy is holding the guitar.

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Mercy Center of the Arts, located at 444 East Grandview Blvd., is hosting an **Open House for preschoolers, ages 3-6, on Sunday, January 20, from 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.** We invite prospective students and their families to come meet the administration and faculty and become acquainted with this creative program which offers a unique education in the Arts & Sciences. For more information call the Center at 824-2519.

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