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INSPIRING WORDS FROM POPE FRANCIS

"When any minority is persecuted ... on account of its religious beliefs or ethnic origin, the good of society as a whole is placed in danger."

## Vatican questionnaire explores marriage and family



Father Christopher Singer, chancellor, and Sister Kathleen Dietz, FSO, vice chancellor, review the five-inch-thick stack of responses to a Vatican questionnaire collected by the Diocese of Erie.

### Catholics in region express concerns

Mary Solberg  
*FaithLife*

The Diocese of Erie has confirmed through an unprecedented questionnaire that many Catholics in the pews are concerned with the state of marriage and family life today.

More than 300 people from the 13 counties of the diocese responded to the questionnaire posted online and published in *FaithLife* newspaper in December. It asked for their input on marriage, family life and sexuality—all topics of discussion at the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family in Rome this fall.

Never before has the Catholic Church surveyed average Catholics for their personal experiences and opinions to be shared directly with the Vatican.

At the end of 2013, Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the synod, asked that bishops around the globe widely distribute a questionnaire on the family.

"Archbishop Baldisseri requested a wider input than what had commonly been done for synods because marriage and family touch the very core of society in a way that perhaps other topics do not," explained Father Christopher Singer, chancellor of the Diocese of Erie.

The Vatican is seeking a snapshot of family life throughout the world and a glimpse at how effective pastoral and educational

programs have been in promoting church teachings on sexuality, marriage and family life.

Of the more than 300 essay responses received by the Diocese of Erie, most expressed concerns for family life in today's culture, said Sister Kathleen Dietz, FSO, vice chancellor. Many shared what she called a "genuine desire" to find help for families.

To ensure confidentiality, dioceses were asked not to share specific details or responses publicly. However, Sister Kathleen and Father Singer did say that many respondents think church teachings are not readily understood.

"What I see, and what has been said, is that we need more adult catechesis," Sister Kathleen added.

About two-thirds of those who responded to the questionnaire were women. Several couples completed the questionnaire together, while individual participants represented all areas of the diocese, including both rural and urban settings.

Added Father Singer, "It has helped us get a unique insight into marriage and family life in our corner of the world...and that can only be good."

Sister Kathleen compiled a five-inch-thick stack of responses that also included input from diocesan professionals (lay, religious and clergy) who work directly in marriage and family life programs.

"It's like people were saying, 'Wow, we have a chance to speak

Let's do this,'" Sister Kathleen said.

She was most impressed by what she called "an immense interest in the topic." She and others working on the questionnaire were pleasantly surprised at how many people took the time to respond.

"One man who lives in the diocese emailed me saying he was traveling and missed the deadline for submission," Sister Kathleen recalled. "I agreed to wait for his response, and he followed up with me later to be sure I got it. It was obviously very important for him to be involved."

The Diocese of Erie summarized its findings and sent a report this month to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

A final document that includes information from all U.S. dioceses will be sent to the Vatican. Other nations also will submit their findings.

The Vatican will use the information as it prepares for next October's extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family. Synods are held periodically to address the pope on specific topics.

But an extraordinary synod is defined in canon law as intended to "deal with matters which require a speedy solution."

Pope Francis has indicated his desire to address the pastoral needs and challenges facing the modern family in the world today.

## DIOCESAN NEWS IN THE HEADLINES

In the past month, several major stories broke in the Diocese of Erie. Here is a look at what happened:

### DEC. 17: \$10 million donated to Prep, Villa



Father Scott Jabo, president of Erie Catholic Preparatory School, announces the largest gift ever to Prep and Villa. Seated are David Slomski, left, chairman of Cathedral Prep's board of directors, and Chris Hagerty, director of strategic initiatives.

An anonymous graduate of Cathedral Preparatory School in Erie gave \$10 million to his alma mater and Villa Maria Academy, surprising faculty, staff and students just days before Christmas.

Father Scott Jabo, president of Erie Catholic Preparatory School that includes both Prep and Villa, announced the gift during a news conference at Prep's library on Dec. 17. Gasps and thunderous applause filled the room as members of the school community first heard the sum of the anonymous donation.

"The gift is considered the single largest in the history of both schools. 'I think this is an awesome and amazing gift,'" said Villa freshman, Lauren Scutella.

Villa sophomore Anna Sweny was equally surprised, saying, "It's amazing. I'm extremely thankful for this generous gift."

Both girls are athletes—Scutella a swimmer and Sweny a basketball player. They expect to benefit directly from the gift, which will be used to fund ongoing renovations at both schools as well as the construction of a new gymnasium and natatorium at the Cathedral Prep Events Center on West 12th Street in Erie.

Until now, many of Prep's and Villa's sports teams—as well as athletic teams in the Catholic elementary system—had to use public school facilities for practice and competitions. Construction of the gym and regulation-size pool will begin in 2014.

According to David Slomski, chairman of Cathedral Prep's board of directors, "The gift is a strong indicator to the entire community, and in particular to prospective students and their parents, of just how much alumni cherish the education they received and the values they learned at Prep and Villa and the role they recognize those values and education play in their lives."

The \$10 million gift is expected to bolster not only athletics, but academics. The funds will be used to support recent renovations of the library at Villa and the installation of the Villa Café. Also, the gift will be used to fully renovate the library at Cathedral Prep.

### DEC. 19: Former St. Peter Cathedral business manager, wife charged

The former business manager of St. Peter Cathedral School and his wife were charged Dec. 19 with stealing nearly \$170,000 from the school and St. Peter Cathedral Parish over a 12-year period.

The Erie County District Attorney's Office charged David W. Earls and his wife, Anne B. Earls, both 62, with the theft of funds from the school and the parish from 2001 through December 2012. David Earls faces third-degree felony counts of theft by unlawful taking, access device fraud and receiving stolen property, along with a misdemeanor count of tampering with records or identification. Anne Earls faces a third-degree felony count of receiving stolen property.

In a statement, Bishop Lawrence Persico expressed his gratitude for the leadership of Erie County District Attorney Jack Daneri, saying "justice will be served through the court system."

An audit conducted by a firm hired by the Diocese of Erie last February found that funds from the school were diverted to David Earls through payroll. At various times, he allegedly gave himself "unapproved raises and processed extra paychecks for himself," totaling \$45,661.09 in unauthorized salary, according to the affidavit of probable cause that accompanied the criminal charges. Because of his alleged actions, the school was required to pay more than \$3,000 in Social Security and Medicare tax and overfunded David Earls' 401(k) by \$715.47.

Auditors also found that David Earls had insurance coverage for his dependents, but he allegedly did not apply the appropriate deductions, costing the school more than \$38,000. Auditors determined that Anne Earls, who taught preschool at St. Peter Cathedral School from 1995 to 2013, was allegedly paid \$7,825.62 more than her contracted salary; received insurance opt-out wages of \$7,236 while covered by health insurance; and was paid additional hourly wages totaling \$45,355.58 from the school and \$2,646 from the parish for work that could not be substantiated, according to the affidavit.

Because of those wages, the school paid \$4,824.33 in additional payroll taxes, detectives said.

Additionally, the audit found that David Earls allegedly made unauthorized charges totaling more than \$13,000 using the school's MasterCard and Shell credit cards.

The Earls, who now live in Falmouth, Maine, are scheduled to appear in court for their preliminary hearings on Feb. 3. They will be arraigned at that time.



St. Peter Cathedral School

### DEC. 20: Dioceses of Erie, Pittsburgh granted permanent injunction

A federal judge ruled Dec. 20 that the Dioceses of Erie and Pittsburgh will not have to offer health insurance that includes contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs.

U.S. District Judge Arthur J. Schwab of Pittsburgh made permanent an earlier temporary injunction that released the two dioceses and several church-related organizations from a Jan. 1, 2014 deadline to offer so-called "preventive services" coverage to their employees.

The latest ruling means the Diocese of Erie may continue to provide a health plan without having to comply with the requirement to provide contraceptive services to some employees. And other diocesan-affiliated agencies and schools—including St. Martin Center, Cathedral Prep and Villa Maria Academy—also will not have to comply with the mandate.

Bishop Lawrence Persico called the permanent injunction "exhilarating news."

"This is a positive step in the right direction as we strive to protect our religious freedom," Bishop Persico said. "The ruling acknowledges that the good works the church provides are integral to who we are as believers."

The permanent injunction ruling is among many recent decisions that have been made in favor of individuals and institutions that have brought suit against the government under the Affordable Care Act. Currently, there are reportedly 91 lawsuits that have challenged the so-called contraceptive mandate.

On Dec. 31, the Colorado-based Little Sisters of the Poor learned that U.S. Supreme Court Sonia Sotomayor had issued an injunction temporarily protecting them from the new law.

Emergency stays also have been granted for Catholic organizations in a lawsuit filed by the Archdiocese of Washington.

The government is expected to appeal the permanent injunction granted to the Dioceses of Erie and Pittsburgh to the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Philadelphia.



Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik, left, and Bishop Lawrence Persico of Erie talk to the press outside federal court in Pittsburgh on Nov. 12.



■ **Advance planning keeps Catholic agencies going in nasty weather**

WASHINGTON (CNS)—With a huge swath of the United States alternating between one-two punches of cold snaps and snowstorms, everybody's talking about the weather.

Catholic service providers across the country were prepared for the worst. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Baltimore works with Baltimore city authorities to keep people warm when a "code blue" is announced.

Mary Anne O'Donnell, its director of community services, said she got the code-blue call early in the afternoon of Jan. 5. That activates contingency plans to keep My Sister's Place shelter and Our Daily Bread employment center and feeding program running.

"We try to bring in some people who might be able to work additional hours, some extra volunteers, some central staff who can work at our shelter site," O'Donnell said.

My Sister's Place and Our Daily Bread haven't closed due to weather in 31 years.



CNS photo/Lim Young

A man is silhouetted against the Arctic steam rising off Lake Michigan in Chicago Jan. 6.

■ **Pope limits 'monsignor' honor for diocesan priests**

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has decided to limit the honor of "monsignor" among diocesan priests and grant it from now on only to those at least 65 years of age.

The change, which is not retroactive and does not affect Vatican officials or members of religious orders, was announced in a letter from the Vatican Secretariat of State

to nunciatures around the world, along with instructions to inform local bishops.

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, apostolic nuncio to the United States, informed U.S. bishops of the new policy in a letter forwarded to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Jan. 3.

Of the three grades of monsignor—apostolic protonotary, honorary prelate of His Holiness and chaplain of His Holiness—only the last will be available to diocesan priests who meet the new age requirement. Bishops must resubmit any pending requests for papal honors in accordance with the new rules.

Archbishop Viganò's letter did not give a reason for the change, but Pope Francis has often warned clergy against the temptations of careerism and personal ambition.

■ **Jerusalem's Latin patriarch looks forward to the pope's May visit**

AMMAN, Jordan (CNS)—Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal of Jerusalem welcomed the announcement of Pope Francis' May visit to the Holy Land and said he hopes the pilgrimage will be a "cry for peace," particularly for Palestinians, Israelis, Syrians and others beset by conflict.

Pope Francis announced his first trip as pontiff to the Holy Land, May 24-26, during his weekly blessing in Vatican City Jan. 5. His visit to Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories is planned to mark the 50th anniversary of the historic visit by Pope Paul VI to the Holy Land in 1964.

Pope Francis is expected to celebrate Masses in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, Jerusalem and the Jordanian capital, Amman, where he will begin his trip.



CNS photo/Muhammad Hamed

Pope Francis is expected to dine with Syrian refugees during his May visit to Jordan. These refugees are shown at a camp in Mafraq, Jordan.



**Editor's Notes**

Mary SOLBERG

Sometime in about sixth or seventh grade at Blessed Sacrament School in Erie, there was a lot of discussion about love of neighbor and self.

"You can't love others if you don't love and respect yourself first," it was said.

Those words struck me deeply, especially since I was a teenager learning where I fit in the world. Isn't it selfish just to think of myself? Surely I could love others without fixing that annoying habit of interrupting people, right?

But it was during those daily religion classes that I learned to recognize the God within. Before I could take care of the needs of others, I had to recognize my own shortcomings as well as my gifts. We are all made in God's image, so embrace it, love yourself and then reflect it back to others.

I think of these things now as we prepare for another Catholic Schools Week in the Diocese of Erie. (See the special supplement in this edition of *FaithLife*.) We asked some parents why they were so committed to Catholic education. Many of them talked about the importance of providing a God-centered learning environment for their children.

I know it made a difference in my life and in the lives of many of my Blessed Sacrament classmates. Since we graduated from eighth grade in 1974, we have gathered together every five years. This year marks our 40th anniversary. We are a close group, and the "kids" who organize our reunions with me—including Ann Krake, Mark Sukoff and Bob Kalivoda—know that the lessons we learned and the friends we made at our Catholic school will last a lifetime.

The near-zero temperatures and icy streets on Jan. 3 didn't prevent the Benedictines for Peace from coming out for their monthly Justice for Immigrants vigil at 2nd and State streets in Erie. They will meet at the site on the first Friday of every month until immigration reform legislation is passed.

It was nice to see **Benedictine Sisters** Marlene Bertke, Mary Lou Kownacki, Anne Wambach and Susan Doubet holding signs urging reforms to the U.S. immigration law. Joining them were about 15 others, including Kathleen Kutz, Barb Rosborough, Jane Kirk and Peggy and Al Richardson. All of them have been working for peace and justice for decades and have been an inspiration to me personally.

◆ ◆ ◆  
Those who report on Pope Francis say that the pontiff would like the word "pastor" to come to mind when Catholics think of the office of pope. The Holy Father undoubtedly views the world as his parish and has taken particular interest in young people.

Pope Francis has asked Catholic youth around the world to read, meditate and act on the Beatitudes as they celebrate World Youth Day in their dioceses in 2014 and 2015 and as they prepare to join him for the international World Youth Day in Poland in 2016.

The sisters in the Community of Anawim in Frenchville, in our own diocese, are delighted with the pope's focus on the Beatitudes. The community has used them as guiding principles since its founding in 1982.

"The Holy Father choosing the Beatitudes as the theme of World Youth Day is inviting young people into the heart of Christ," said **Sister Therese Dush, CA**, who established the Community of Anawim. "It's a real affirmation of what we've been called to do."

The theme for Krakow in 2016 is, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

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**PNC Bank gives diocese more than \$85,000**



Photo by Mary Solberg

PNC Bank Regional President Marlene Mosco presented a check in the amount of \$85,187 to Bishop Lawrence Persico, right, and Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education.

PNC Bank at PNC Financial Services recently contributed more than \$85,000 from Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program to the Diocese of Erie's STAR Foundation. The donation will provide scholarships to more than 140 children to attend Catholic schools in the 13 counties of the diocese.

According to Marlene Mos-

co, PNC's regional president, "We want to be able to help those families who have need and want a Catholic education. We want to give them the right start."

PNC has been making contributions from this tax credit program since 2001. Cumulative gifts from PNC to the STAR Foundation total more than \$750,000.

**Sister marks 101st birthday in Erie**

Mary Daly  
Mercyhurst University

At 101 years old, Mercy Sister Jeanette Densinger has lived longer than any other Sister of Mercy from Erie. Ever. And she's also believed to be the oldest living alumna of Erie's Mercyhurst University.

To mark Sister Jeanette's birthday last month, Mercyhurst University President Tom Gamble and his wife Mary visited her at the Mercy Care Center at the Sisters of Mercy motherhouse.

Bundled up in an overstuffed blue recliner, Sister Jeanette was flanked on the right by her oxygen tank and on the left by shelves of books and racks of CDs. She currently is reading *Man of Peace, The Life of Pope Pius XII* and had just finished a biography of Pope Benedict XVI.

"Come in and sit down," Sister Jeanette told the Gambles as they entered her room. "I want to tell you about this book I'm reading."

Still mentally sharp and an avid reader, Sister Jeanette doesn't let her hearing and sight impairments get the best of her. She loves classical music and up until a few years ago was quite active. She could be seen walking briskly through the halls of the Erie motherhouse, pushing her walker at a pace faster than those half her age. Nowadays, she takes the advice of



Photo by Ann Cassano

Mercyhurst University President Tom Gamble and his wife Mary visited Mercy Sister Jeanette Densinger on her 101st birthday last month.

fellow sisters: "Slow down, Sister Jeanette. Slow down!" Sister Jeanette entered the Sisters of Mercy on Sept. 24, 1944, at an age much older than most of the sisters of that era. She was 32 when she made the commitment to

religious life. She also was older than most of her classmates who attended Mercyhurst. In 1958, she graduated with a degree in music.

For most of her religious life, she was a music educator at diocesan elementary schools

in Punxsutawney, Pittsburgh, Greenville and Corry. In later years, she taught music to youngsters at the Music Center of the Arts. Until 2009, she gave private music lessons at the motherhouse.

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# Refugees living in the diocese hope for new life

Mary Solberg  
FaithLife

Their stories are gut-wrenching. Tika Neopaney lived in a refugee camp for 22 years in Jhapa, Nepal. As he describes it, there was little food, insufficient shelter and rampant sickness.

He and his wife Ruk looked at the hurting faces of their three young children—12-year-old Rosy, 9-year-old Rishika, and 8-year-old Sharika. They deserved so much more.

"We had nothing there," 35-year-old Tika said.

Sunbus Abdusaid and her husband fled war-ravaged Iraq with their young son, Abdullah. Like so many others displaced by violence, they found a temporary home in Syria. Another son, Ah-

mad, was born. But after nine years, it seemed that war had followed them. Bombings started happening nearly every day in Syria. Several of Abdullah's and Ahmad's friends were killed.

"I got tired of the bombings. I didn't want anything to happen to my children," 37-year-old Sunbus said, wiping her eyes.

Tika and Sunbus don't know each other, but they are among about 5,500 refugees now living in Erie. Like any loving parents, they wanted more for their kids, so they huddled them together and brought them to America.

## Briefly

### Transitions schedules winter meetings

ERIE—Transitions, a monthly peer ministry for those who are divorced, widowed or separated, meets the last Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 E. Grandview Blvd., Erie.

The meeting dates and topics for January through March are:

**Jan. 26**—Who am I now that I'm single?

**Feb. 23**—The many emotions of grief

**March 30**—Are you there, God?

For more information, call 814-824-1265 or email [familylife@ErieRCDO.org](mailto:familylife@ErieRCDO.org).

### Our Lady of Mount Carmel plans dinner

ERIE—Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Erie will host its 19th annual spaghetti dinner sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 4071. The fundraiser will be held at Scheffler Hall, 1553 E. Grandview Blvd., Erie, on Sunday, Feb. 23, from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Adult tickets at the door are \$7.50. Adult advance ticket sales are \$7; senior citizens 60 and over pay \$6. Call 814-825-6706 for tickets or information.

### St. Joseph Cemetery reserves gravesites

WARREN—St. Joseph Cemetery in Warren recently set aside 24 gravesites centered around a crucifix monument for any priest who may wish to be interred there.

The opportunity includes a gravesite, opening and closing the gravesite, and a poured foundation at no cost to the priest. The crucifix monument was selected by Father John Neff of St. Luke Parish in Youngville and is to be installed in the Priest Circle by Clickett Memorials of Union City.

For more information or to set aside a gravesite, contact Shawn Young at St. Joseph Cemetery, 111 Mohawk Ave., Warren, PA 16365, or call 814-723-3004.



Photos by Mary Solberg

The colorful gingerbread houses in the foreground were created by refugee families along with students from St. George School in Erie. They came together on Jan. 4 to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany.

spent two hours sitting side-by-side with refugee children, making gingerbread houses. At first the two groups gathered separately in the school cafeteria, but before long, everyone was painting and coloring, eating, listening to Christmas music and laughing.

"I'm happy. I'm drawing and coloring. America is good," said 9-year-old Rishika Neopaney.

"It's 2014 and it's a new year," 10-year-old Ahmad Abdusaid said, excitedly.

It's that hope for a new life that drives the spirit of the refugee community in Erie, said Til Subedi, a refugee case manager with Catholic Charities in Erie. Once refugees live in the U.S. for a year, most apply for permanent residency and jobs.

He worked with Marielle Lefaro, a St. George seventh- and

eighth-grade teacher, in bringing several Nepalese and Arabic-speaking refugees to the Epiphany event.

"The kids were very excited and the parents were excited to come," Subedi said.

If making gingerbread houses together breaks down barriers, then Lefaro is happy, too.

"It's so important to break down all of those walls of ignorance and fear. This is the way to do it," she said. "Unless young people have positive exposure to refugees, then they very well could live their lives in prejudice."

For seventh-grader Nikolai Thomas of St. George, the event did everything it was supposed to do.

"It's just nice to see the smile on their faces," Nikolai said of



Sunbus Abdusaid, far right, enjoys a special Epiphany moment with her two sons, Ahmad, far left, and Abdullah. They moved to Erie from Syria six months ago.

the young refugee children. "And the parents are smiling, too." This month, the United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) set aside Jan. 5-11 as National Migration week.

## DEATH NOTICE

# Mercy Sister Donna Marie Orton dies

Served as head of X-ray department at former DuBois Hospital

Sister Donna Marie Orton, RSM, died Dec. 23, 2013, at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Erie.

In her 61st year of religious life, Sister Donna Marie was born in Erie on Nov. 16, 1930. She grew up in the rural neighborhood of St. Boniface Parish in Hammet Township, south of Erie.

Sister Donna Marie entered the Sisters of Mercy on Aug. 15, 1952, and pronounced her final vows on July 31, 1958. She celebrated her golden jubilee in 2002 and her diamond anniversary in 2012.

In 1949, she graduated from Mercyhurst Seminary, now Mer-

cyhurst Preparatory School. She earned her bachelor's degree in science from Mercyhurst College in 1953 and graduated in 1959 from the Mercy Hospital of X-ray Technology in Buffalo. Sister Donna Marie taught in the following diocesan schools: St. Joseph Academy, Titusville; St. Cosmas & Damian, Punxsutawney; St. Michael,



Sister Donna Marie Orton, RSM

Greenville; Cathedral Prep, Erie; and St. Justin, Pittsburgh.

In 1959, she became the supervisor of the X-ray department at DuBois Hospital, now DuBois Regional Medical Center, where she remained for 30 years. Among her major accomplishments were planning the new X-ray facilities at DuBois Hospital and the X-ray annex in the Medical Arts Building at DuBois Regional Medical Center.

In 1990, she assumed the role of accountant for the Sisters of Mercy, until her retirement in 2010.

In 2012, when she reflected

on her hospital career, Sister Donna Marie said, "I especially enjoyed that ministry because I was able to help people who were injured or ill."

A vigil service was held Dec. 26 at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, and a funeral Mass was celebrated at the Lady of Mercy Chapel on Dec. 27. Burial was at Gate of Heaven Cemetery on Dec. 28.

Memorials may be sent to the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, 444 East Grandview Blvd., Erie, PA 16504. The Brugger Funeral Homes & Crematory, Pine Avenue Branch, handled arrangements.

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Grant amounts vary and will be provided only while LIHEAP funding remains available. Additional assistance may be available for those with a heating emergency.

## St. James robotics team takes second in competition



ERIE—The St. James School Lego robotics team of Erie finished second out of 44 teams from western Pennsylvania who participated at the "Nature's Fury" robotics competition at Penn State Behrend in December. Teams had to develop a kit around a natural disaster, as well as run a series of missions in which their robots operated

in mock disasters. The St. James "Techno Tornado Terrors" is coached by Alan Madure. Pictured in the front row, left to right, are: Brandon Lombard, David Capan, Arthur Thompson and Jacob Rose. In the back row, left to right, are: Mitchell Razanuskas, Nick Jones, Jared Boland and Justin Cooper.

## Clarion school presents Christmas program

CLARION—Students at Immaculate Conception School in Clarion presented their annual Christmas program on Dec. 19 at Meisinger Center Auditorium.

Pictured in the front row, left to right, are: Jacob Zacherl and Lucas Johnston. In the back row, left to right, are: Alex Cussins, Gavin Weaver, Zachary Troese, Isabella Tynski, Alana McMaster and Larryssa Bauer.



## Gifts at living Nativity given to local pro-life effort

ST. MARYS—Children of Sacred Heart Parish in St. Marys observed the birthday of Jesus in a special way this Christmas by carrying wrapped baby gifts for the Christ child to a living Nativity scene at the foot of the altar. All the gifts were distributed to the Maternity Closet, a local pro-life effort.

The procession included angels Maria Radkowski, Sophia Radkowski, Emily Dollinger, Cecilia Dornish, Alicia Ginther, Amelia Ginther, Lauren Rakieski, Gianna Bille, Sophia Bille, Carly Antonelli and Rebecca Ganan.

Mary and Joseph were portrayed by Elizabeth Anderson and Sean Radkowski. Shepherds were Marcella Dollinger, Rudy Bish, Dean Rakieski, Gina Antonelli and Tiffani Total. The wisemen were Audrey Dornisch and Hope Farley.



Pictured with the children are Deacon Bill Gibson, center, and Benedictine Father Eric Vogt, right.

## Knights contribute to Citizens Concerned for Human Life

DuBOIS—The Knights of Columbus of DuBois Council 519 recently gave \$1,000 to the DuBois Chapter of Citizens Concerned For Human Life.

Pictured in the front row, left to right, are: Tom Shade, grand knight, Judy Tarson, president of Citizens Concerned For Human Life, and Art Allen and Tom Tarson. In the second row, left to right, are: Jerry Melatosh, Mike Krishart and Art Ardrie. In the third row, left to right, are: Al Miklos, John Jerry, Paul Bojalad and Terry Douthit. In the back row, left to right, are: Ken Straub, Bob Boland, Dave Straub, Larry Martinson and Bob Spicher.



## Smethport parish celebrates feast day

SMETHPORT—St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Smethport recently held its 10th annual St. Elizabeth Feast Day Dinner.

The parish served 667 free turkey dinners. The remaining food was given to the Friendship Table of Bradford. All free-will offerings were donated to Catholic Rural Ministry of Potter and McKean counties and the Smethport Christian Community Services Food Bank.

Pictured presenting a check to Benedictine Sisters Phyllis Schleicher and Mary Hoffman of Catholic Rural Ministry are students from the parish religious education program: Justin Tanner, Ryan Woodring and Stephen Ness.



## Middle school students stage drama for Advent



DuBOIS—The Middle School Drama Club of DuBois Central Catholic staged "For Unto Y'All" as part of the school's Family Advent celebration in December. Cast members, seated left to right, are: Cameron Stom, Raquel Salada and Abi Zeitler. In the second row, left to right, are: Becca Liddle, Eriq Donahue, Andre Hanes and Lindsey Reiter. In the

third row, left to right, are: Mrs. Jodi Stewart, Arianna Mazoni, Makenzie Park and Emma Cooper. In the last row, left to right, are: Lillian Lee, Ashley Mayes, Carolyn Sette and Anne Lataska. Missing from the photo are Samantha Harris, Courteney DeHaven, Bradley Huey, Alex Ochs and Sydney Spencer.

## Jan Freeman Tournament benefits Our Lady's Christian

ERIE—Our Lady's Christian School donated \$4,000 to the Erie Chapter of the American Cancer Society with proceeds from the 11th annual Jan Freeman Memorial Tournament in December.

The tournament began in 2003 to honor longtime employee and school parent, Jan Freeman, who lost her battle with breast cancer that spring.

Over the past 11 years the tournament has contributed thousands of dollars to the local chapter of the American Cancer Society.

Pictured with members of the



OLC boys' basketball team and cheerleading squad are, from left to right: Father John Detisch, pastor of St. Jude the Apostle

Parish; Stephen Nemez, principal of Our Lady's Christian; and Jack Freeman, husband of Jan Freeman.

Diocese of Erie  
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More than 1,200 likes!  
Get the link at [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org)

## First-graders at St. Bonaventure decorate Jesse Tree

GRAMPIAN—First-grade students from St. Bonaventure Parish in Grampan made ornaments and decorated a Jesse Tree for the Christmas season. Each decoration is a symbol of a person or event from the Book of Isaiah in which he prophesied the coming of the Messiah, the root of Jesse.

Pictured holding their Nativity pictures, left to right, are: Davis Fleming, Shane Radzieta, Simon Mendat, Emily Kopehik and Addison Butler. Also pictured are classroom aide Jennifer Butler, left, and teacher Tracie Grimm.



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Pre-K students in weekly computer class

# Welcome to Catholic schools:



Several kindergarten students in Floss Renwick's class at St. Michael School in Greenville enjoy the advantages of iPads in the classroom. Many diocesan schools provide iPads to their students in the earliest grades on up. Other technology advantages in diocesan schools include the use of remote video conferencing. The diocese has acquired 32 such units for distance learning.

Photo by Christine McConnell

## God takes center stage in service hours

### First-grader who underwent four open-heart surgeries inspires project

Mary Solberg  
FaithLife

Five years ago this winter, 2-year-old Ethan Gradowski came back from the brink of death—literally—after suffering two cardiac arrests following surgery to repair a hole in his heart.

The procedure at Pittsburgh's Children's Hospital was supposed to be routine, but doctors discovered shortly afterward that little Ethan's coronary arteries were completely closed. His heart stopped two different times. Even a heart-lung machine and a specialized heart pump couldn't prevent what was to come next: organ failure. His lungs began to collapse and his kidneys and liver began to fail.

A priest was called to anoint Ethan.

"We did not give up hope. We were on every prayer chain available and all we did was sit and pray," says Cindy Gradowski, Ethan's mom and a parishioner of both St. Bernard and St. Catherine parishes in DuBois.

In a coma and still on the heart pump, Ethan's body miraculously began to rally near Christmas 2008. Before considering a heart transplant, physicians performed another procedure to determine the status of Ethan's heart.

"Doctors came up to us [Cindy and her husband, Joel] with tears streaming down their cheeks. I dropped to my knees, thinking the worst, but they said his heart looked normal and the coronary arteries were wide open," recalls Cindy. "He is a 100 percent miracle."

Today, Ethan, now 7, is a first-grader at DuBois Central Catholic Elementary School in DuBois. Dire predictions of blindness and cerebral palsy never occurred. He takes medication now for epilepsy and he has a slight limp from muscle failure in his right leg, but otherwise, he is a healthy boy.

This past Christmas season, Cindy Gradowski shared Ethan's story with his classmates. The children and their teacher, Brenda Aravich, decided to collect toys for the Kids Helping Kids program at Children's Hospital.

The class boxed up a couple hundred gifts—including Legos and stuffed animals—so that children like Ethan could have a little joy during their hospitalization.

"It's fun to watch kids give to kids," Aravich says. "We're trying to instill in them that it's better to give than to receive."

**Service in the 13 counties**  
Children in every grade level at schools throughout the 13 counties of the Diocese of Erie live by that belief. Many schools, like DuBois Central Catholic, do service projects throughout the year, not just at Christmas, to live out the Christian call of loving one's neighbor.

Schools write letters to nursing home residents and collect money for organizations like the American Cancer Society and the Shenango Valley's Prince of Peace Center. Students partici-

"We can bring God into every discussion that we have; that's what is so special about our schools."

— Brenda Aravich  
First-grade teacher

pate in jeans days to raise money to fight homelessness and hunger.

This academic year, fourth-graders at St. Luke School in Erie collected eight boxes of clothes, toys and other goods that were dropped over various remote islands in the South Pacific as part of Operation Christmas Drop.

Venango Catholic High School hosted the Catholic Heart Workcamp last summer, organizing teenagers from around the country in assisting people in need in the Oil City area.

St. Joseph School in Warren raised money to support a cafeteria manager who lost all of her possessions in a house fire. It also sent school supplies to Ethiopia and money for disaster relief in Japan.

For the past 11 years, Mercyhurst Preparatory School's Feed the Hungry Club has cooked and served a meal to homeless guests in center city Erie on the second Sunday of every month.



Cindy Gradowski and her 7-year-old son, Ethan, explain his open-heart surgeries to classmates at DuBois Central Catholic Elementary School.

#### Outreach to Mexico

Several schools in the diocese have conducted service projects to raise money to help offset the cost of a van for the diocesan Mission of Friendship in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

"I am grateful for the efforts of the children of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Erie to raise money for a reliable mission van," says Tricia Pipken, director of the Mission of Friendship. "Reaching out to each other in service is a central Catholic value and I'm so glad the children are practicing it."

For Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education, it's impossible to separate service from the faith.

"What makes me proud of our schools is their remarkable ability to integrate learning, faith and service," Father Rouch says.

Catholic schools, he says, teach children to study hard, pray with reverence and serve compassionately. That's what Brenda Aravich wanted to instill in her first-graders when they reached out to Ethan Gradowski and other children who need encouragement and care.

"God is part of it," says Aravich, who has taught first grade for 21 years at DuBois Central Catholic. "We can bring God into every discussion that we have; that's what is so special about our schools."

### A snapshot of schools in the diocese

#### ENROLLMENT

- Total Catholic school enrollment in the Diocese of Erie (all schools): 8,199
- Total enrollment K-12: 7,093
- K-8 elementary school enrollment: 4,969
- 9-12 secondary school enrollment: 2,124
- Total enrollment Pre-K-1, 106 (28 elementary schools have Pre-K program)
- Total parochial students (K-12) in the City of Erie: 2,351
- Total parochial students (K-12) in Erie County: 4,302; (includes city total)
- Total parochial students (K-12) in remaining 12 counties: 2,791

#### DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

Catholic, non-Catholic and low-income student enrollment (in percent)	
Elementary level:	Low income: 25%
	Catholic: 80%
	Non-Catholic: 20%
Secondary level:	Low income: 16.7%
	Catholic: 79.2%
	Non-Catholic: 20.8%

#### SCHOOLS

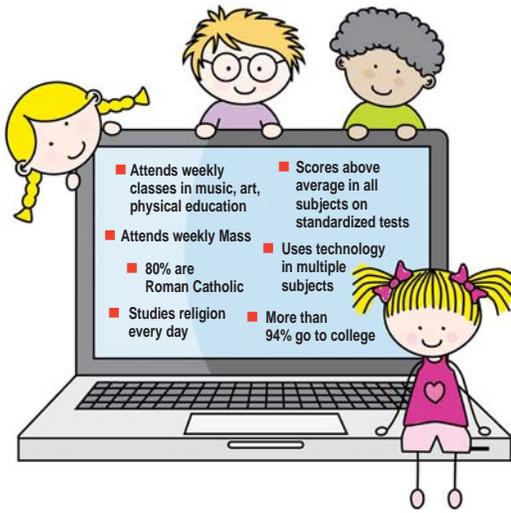
- 38 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie
- Elementary schools: 28
- Middle schools: 3
- Secondary schools: 7

#### PROFESSIONAL STAFF

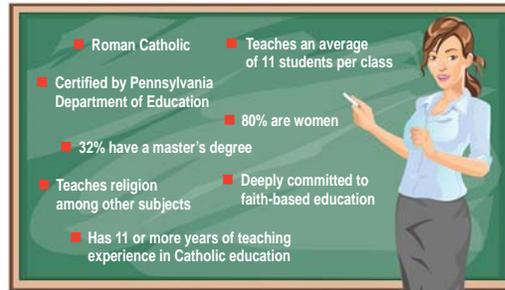
- Professional employees in our Catholic schools: 682
- Teachers (full and part-time): 646
- Elementary/middle school teachers: 456
- Secondary school teachers: 190
- Lay: 96%
- Religious/clergy: 4%
- Student/teacher ratio is 11:1

# Meet the typical Catholic school teacher, student

Here are special characteristics of a typical Catholic school teacher, student in the Diocese of Erie:



- Attends weekly classes in music, art, physical education
- Attends weekly Mass
- 80% are Roman Catholic
- Studies religion every day
- Scores above average in all subjects on standardized tests
- Uses technology in multiple subjects
- More than 94% go to college



- Roman Catholic
- Certified by Pennsylvania Department of Education
- 32% have a master's degree
- Teaches religion among other subjects
- Has 11 or more years of teaching experience in Catholic education
- Teaches an average of 11 students per class
- 80% are women
- Deeply committed to faith-based education

## Diocese appoints new school president, headmaster, principals

Several new leadership positions filled in the past year to lead five different schools



Frank "Mario" Bella

- Appointed headmaster of DuBois Central Catholic School System, DuBois, effective Dec. 3, 2013
- With more than 20 years of educational experience, he served the past four years as principal of St. Bonaventure School in New York
- Had been dean of student affairs, as well as an English and journalism teacher at St. Barnabas High School, Bronx, N.Y.



Denise Long

- Named principal of St. Francis School, Clearfield, effective July 1, 2013
- For the past 13 years, taught pre-school at St. Francis School
- Taught for four years at St. Leo School, Ridgway
- Presently pursuing principal's certification



Bill Lyon

- Named principal of Blessed John Paul II Elementary School, Hermitage, effective Aug. 5, 2013
- For four years, worked as a supervisor of student teachers at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
- Spent 35 years in public education, having taught on both the elementary and secondary levels in the New Castle School District
- For 12 of those years, served as principal in the Ellwood City School District and the Willemont Area School District



Sam MacDonald

- Appointed president of Elk County Catholic School System, St. Marys, effective Dec. 30, 2013
- Previously served as director of support services and business development for Elk Regional Health Center, and was community outreach coordinator for the PA Wilds Northcentral Region
- Visiting lecturer and teaching assistant in the English Department, University of Pittsburgh
- Founder of Boulder Dash, a 20-mile fundraising trail run in Ridgway



Melissa Novatnack

- Named principal of Blessed Sacrament School, Erie, effective Aug. 1, 2013
- Started an all-day kindergarten program at Immaculate Conception School, Clarion, where she taught kindergarten and fourth grade
- Visiting lecturer and teaching assistant in the English Department, University of Pittsburgh
- Founder of Boulder Dash, a 20-mile fundraising trail run in Ridgway

## Inner-city school pursues rigorous accreditation

95 percent of schools here are accredited by Middle States

Mary Solberg  
*FaithLife*

Holy Family School in inner-city Erie is a "shining star" among schools, said Democratic state Rep. Patrick Harkins of Erie. In December, he joined Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett and state Sen. Sean Wiley, also a Democrat from Erie, in issuing citations recognizing the achievements of Holy Family under the leadership of longtime principal, Sister Kevin Berdis, OSF. "Sister Kevin does so much with small means and a shoe-string budget," Harkins told a gymnasium full of students and visitors who gathered to recognize Sister Kevin's 50th anniversary in religious life and the school's commitment to offering a quality Catholic education to

inner-city families and students. "Sister Berdis carries the torch of education with skill and dedication." Holy Family, located on E. Ninth Street, Erie, has 118 students, 70 percent of whom are not Catholic. In the past several months, Sister Kevin undertook the rigorous accreditation process of the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. She is awaiting the final decision. Of the 38 schools in the diocese, 95 percent are accredited by Middle States, one of the premier academic evaluation associations in the nation. Schools that achieve accreditation have met high standards in philosophy and mission, in governance and leadership, in school improvement planning, finances, facilities and school climate and organization,

according to Kim Lytle, director of curriculum in the Diocese of Erie.

"It says that the school isn't stagnant, that it is continuing to look at how to improve itself," Lytle explained.

For Sister Kevin, the accreditation process at Holy Family involved intense research and time. Evaluators spent four days at the school, observing and studying how it functions.

"Our bar is high here and I will not lower it," Sister Kevin told *FaithLife*. "We have a strong Catholic identity here and our academics are very strong. These are both things that people want for their children."

Meanwhile, in the Shenango Valley, the Kennedy Catholic school system is awaiting its on-site Middle States evaluation this spring. The school system has consistently met the rigorous standards before and hopes to again.

The accreditation is granted for a seven-year period.

Father Michael Allison, president of the Shenango Valley Catholic System, is confident of its renewal.

"The MSA evaluation pro-

See ACCREDITATION, page 4

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# Prep student gets perfect score on SAT



Shaun Evans, a senior at Cathedral Prep, scored a perfect 2,400 on the SAT.

Photo by Mary Solberg

## Advises test-takers to be confident

Abby Badach  
Special to FaithLife

The second time's the charm. Just ask Cathedral Preparatory School senior Shaun Evans, who received a perfect score of 2,400 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) that he took last October. It was his second attempt at the iconic exam, the most widely used standardized test for college admissions.

When he logged onto the College Board website to access his results, Evans said he was thrilled.

"I was elated," he said. "I didn't expect it at all; it was really exciting. My family and friends were all extremely happy and congratulating me."

The SAT is broken down into three, 800-point sections: math, critical reading and writing. The writing portion was added in 2005, nearly 80 years after the SAT was first administered to college hopefuls in 1926.

Like many students, Evans did a lot of studying and took many practice tests to prepare for the exam. But he also took full advantage of academic opportunities at Prep, including taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes beginning as a freshman. He studied Latin, his favorite subject, all four years. In his junior year, he began coursework at Gannon University.

Despite his academic achievements, Evans knows that the high school experience is more than keeping your nose in books.

"If you get involved in activities that you really have fun with and are passionate about, that's

"Biochemistry, classics, theology—I'm kind of all over the place," he said. "We'll see."

—Shaun Evans



what's important...not just to look good on your college applications, but also to make the most of your time in high school," Evans said.

Evans is president of S.A.D.D. (Students Against Destructive Decisions), vice president of student government and a member of the Academic Sports League and Math Club. This year, he decided to get involved with the Prep-Villa theater program, participating in the January 2014 production of "Oliver!"

A graduate of Our Lady of Peace School in Erie, Evans also works part-time in the parish office and is an active member of the parish youth group.

"After graduating from OLP, I knew I wanted to continue at a Catholic school," Evans said. "Cathedral Prep seemed like a natural fit for me, and I heard

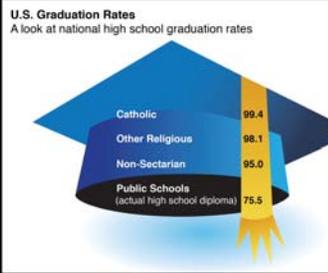
great things about the academics."

What's next for this whiz kid? Evans says he's not sure. He's still waiting to hear admissions decisions from the colleges to which he applied, and he hasn't yet pinned down a specific major.

"Biochemistry, classics, theology—I'm kind of all over the place," he said. "We'll see."

Evans has wise advice for nervous high school juniors and seniors who are preparing to take the SAT for the first time.

"Try not to stress over it, or study too much," he said. "It only hurts you the more you stress. Just be confident that you'll do your best."



Source: Broughman, S.P., Swan, N.L., and Hryczak, C.A. (2011). Stowell, R., and Siskin, J. (2013).

### More whiz kids in the diocese earn high marks

Several students in Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Erie are celebrating high honors on standardized tests. Cathedral Preparatory School senior **Andrew Wilcox** was one point shy of a perfect score on his ACT test, earning a 35 out of 36 possible points.

"I was one point off, so there's always that feeling," he said with a laugh. "But I was really happy, especially since I did better than the first time I took it."

At Mercyhurst Preparatory School in Erie, two seniors cele-

brated high SAT scores.

**Zach Zhao** earned a perfect 800 on the SAT Math I, Math II and chemistry tests. **Marc Parnell** also received a perfect 800 on the Math II test.

The SAT II subject tests are supplementary tests students can choose to take for college admission and course placement.

At Kennedy Catholic High School, Hermitage, senior **Serang Park** scored a perfect 800 in the math portion of the regular SAT exam.

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COMMENTARY

# Spirit of collaboration enhances Catholic education

By Mary Gibson  
Principal, St. Peter Cathedral School, Erie

The early Christians were big on collaboration, sharing all that they had with each other. It's how they survived centuries of persecution. The very definition of being Catholic, or universal, demands that we work with each other in spreading the faith.

At St. Peter Cathedral School in Erie, we have formed collaborative relationships with other Catholic schools, parishes, religious education programs and even a local university in order to enhance Catholic education.



Mary Gibson

On the collegiate level, we have formed the Cathedral-Gannon University Professional Development School. We open our classrooms to Gannon's School of Education

students, who give our kids individual attention and expose us to the latest in education theory. Last semester, 21 Gannon students participated; this spring, there are 60. Gannon professors have available for their use a St. Peter classroom where they instruct these future teachers and send them straight into a real-life setting.

St. Peter School and Gannon are sharing knowledge, expertise and resources to meet student needs. Our institutions are right across the street from each other, so it makes sense.

On the parish-to-parish level, we have been blessed to collaborate with Blessed Sacrament School in two key areas: food and finances. Blessed Sacrament's finance director, Joyce Wickles, has added her skills to our new finance team, on a part-time basis, adding a great deal of transparency and years of experience. We now share food services as well. This new partnership has brought an updated point-of-sale system, allowing parents to keep track of and pay for

children's purchases online.

In athletics, St. Peter Cathedral School has teamed up with Our Lady of Peace for football and St. George for wrestling. In the future, Holy Family students will swim with the St. Peter team.

In parish religious education, St. Peter Cathedral and St. Joseph/Bread of Life Community in Erie now offer a joint religious education program. We are learning about each other's parishes and people. We are strengthening our faith community beyond the confines of bricks and mortar.

In his World Day of Peace message on Jan. 1, Pope Francis stressed the importance of promoting fraternity, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas on how we should use the things we have: "They possess them as not just their own, but common to others as well, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as themselves."

The universality of our faith binds us together, and Catholic education is a beautiful place to watch it grow.

# Schools pursue accreditation

Continued from page 2

vides a much clearer picture of how effective a school system is than can be obtained merely by looking at scores on standardized tests," Father Allison explained. "MSA accreditation assures parents that we can and do deliver the high quality education their children need to succeed in college and in life."

Not all schools, public and private, are accredited. Some participate in evaluation processes by individual state departments of education and not Middle States. The benefit of Middle States is its long history of high educational standards. The nonprofit Middle States Association was established by the academic profession in 1887.



Photo by Mary Solberg

Sister Kevin Berdis, OSF, principal of Holy Family School, Erie, is surrounded by admiring students. The school recently underwent a rigorous evaluation by Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges.

# OPEN HOUSES

**BRADFORD**

**St. Bernard School**  
450 W. Washington St.  
814-368-5302  
■ Jan. 27-31, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

**CLARION**

**Immaculate Conception School**  
723 E. Main St.  
814-226-8433  
■ Fall, to be announced

**CLEARFIELD**

**St. Francis School**  
230 S. Second St.  
814-765-2618  
■ Jan. 26, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

**CORRY**

**St. Thomas School**  
229 W. Washington St.  
814-665-7375  
■ Jan. 23, 6-8 p.m.

**DuBOIS**

**DuBois Area Catholic Elementary School**  
200 Central Christian Road  
814-371-2570  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**DuBois Area Catholic Middle School**  
200 Central Christian Road  
814-371-3060  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**DuBois Area Catholic High School**  
200 Central Christian Road  
814-371-3060  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**ERIE**

**Blessed Sacrament School**  
2510 Greengarden Blvd.  
814-455-1387  
■ Jan. 26, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Cathedral Preparatory School**  
225 W. 9th St.  
814-453-7737  
■ Oct. 19, noon-3 p.m.

**Holy Family School**  
1153 E. 9th St.  
814-452-4720  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**Mercyhurst Preparatory School**  
538 E. Grandview Blvd.  
814-824-2210  
■ Nov. 2, noon-3 p.m.

**Our Lady of Mount Carmel School**  
1531 E. Grandview Blvd.  
814-825-2822  
■ Jan. 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

**Our Lady of Peace School**  
2401 W. 38th St.  
814-838-3548  
■ Jan. 26, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Our Lady's Christian School**  
606 Lowell Ave.  
814-838-7676  
■ Call for private tours

**St. Boniface School**  
9363 Wattsburg Road  
814-825-4238  
■ Jan. 26, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

**St. George School**  
1612 Bryant St.  
814-864-4821  
■ Jan. 26, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

**St. James School**  
2602 Buffalo Road  
814-899-3429  
■ Feb. 9, 1-2:30 p.m.

**St. Luke School**  
425 E. 38th St.  
814-825-7105  
■ Jan. 26, noon-2 p.m.

**St. Peter Cathedral School**  
160 W. 11th St.  
814-452-4276  
■ Jan. 26, 1-4 p.m.

**Villa Maria Academy**  
2403 W. Eighth St.  
814-838-2061  
■ Oct. 26, noon-3 p.m.

**Villa Maria Elementary School**  
2551 W. Eighth St.  
814-838-5451  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**FRANKLIN**

**St. Patrick School**  
952 Buffalo St.  
814-432-8689  
■ Call for private tours

**GREENVILLE**

**St. Michael School**  
80 N. High St.  
724-588-7050  
■ Jan. 30, 6-8 p.m.

**HERMITAGE**

**Blessed John Paul II Elementary School**  
2335 Highland Road  
724-342-2205  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**Kennedy Catholic Middle School**  
2120 Shenango Valley Freeway  
724-346-5531  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**Kennedy Catholic High School**  
2120 Shenango Valley Freeway  
724-346-5531  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**KERSEY**

**St. Boniface School**  
359 Main St.  
814-885-8093  
■ Jan. 28-30, 10-11:30 a.m.

**LUCINDA**

**St. Joseph School**  
72 Rectory Lane  
814-226-8018  
■ Jan. 27-29, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

**MEADVILLE**

**Seton Catholic School**  
385 Pine St.  
814-336-2320  
■ March 12, 5:30-7 p.m.

**NORTH EAST**

**St. Gregory School**  
140 W. Main St.  
814-725-4971  
■ Jan. 26, 1-3 p.m.

**OIL CITY**

**St. Stephen School**  
214 Reed St.  
814-677-3035  
■ Feb. 20, 9-11 a.m.

**Venango Catholic High School**  
1505 W. First St.  
814-677-3098  
■ Jan. 24 at 6 p.m.

**PUNXSUTAWNEY**

**Ss. Cosmas & Damian School**  
205 N. Chestnut St.  
814-938-4224  
■ Jan. 26, noon-2 p.m.

**RIDGWAY**

**St. Leo School**  
125 Depot St.  
814-772-9775  
■ Jan. 28, 6-7 p.m.

**ST. MARYS**

**St. Marys Catholic Elementary School**  
114 Queens Road  
814-834-4169  
■ Jan. 29, 5:30-7 p.m.

**St. Marys Catholic Middle School**  
325 Church St.  
814-834-2665  
■ Spring, to be announced

**Elk County Catholic High School**  
600 Maurus St.  
814-834-7800  
■ Spring, to be announced

**WARREN**

**St. Joseph School**  
608 Pennsylvania Ave., West  
814-723-2030  
■ Feb. 2, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

PARENTS SPEAK

# Why are you committed to Catholic schools?

"A Catholic education is the best option for both of our daughters. Learning about God's unconditional love and acceptance is a strong foundation for them as they grow in this ever-changing world. A strong academic education joined with our faith is the best gift we can give them."

**Brian and Julie Burkett**  
Ss. Cosmas & Damian School, Punxsutawney

"We believe faith is the foundation that we build our lives upon. Catholic education reinforces and supports that foundation along with a personalized and challenging curriculum delivered by a dedicated and caring staff. There is an intangible quality in Catholic education that creates compassion and connects students to their community and the world at large."

**Chris and Lisa Rakow**  
St. Patrick School, Franklin

"It is our hope that our children's Catholic education will reinforce what we try to give them at home: a Catholic worldview. We want to give our children a way to navigate and understand the challenging world around them, with virtues (not just values) as their guide."

**Andy and Cathy Dornisch**  
St. Marys Elementary School, St. Marys

"One of the reasons we chose a Catholic school is because we wanted a God-centered education. We feel our children's education would be incomplete without God. We know that we've made the right decision because they are very excited to put their faith into action in and out of school daily!"

**Heather and Joe Santone**  
Blessed Sacrament School, Erie

"St. Leo School and its faculty are helping my husband and me to prepare our children for heaven. That is our primary goal as parents. Everything else is secondary. The school loves them and cares about their souls above all else, which is why we are such supporters. All of their decisions are steeped in Christ. For that reason, there is not another place we would have them."

**Andy and Grace Messino**  
St. Leo School, Ridgway

"We are committed to Catholic education because it establishes a strong academic foundation and instills morals and values in our children, while strengthening their love and trust in our Lord."

**Dr. Robert and Alicia Gatto**  
St. Joseph School, Warren

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Cathedral Preparatory School & Villa Maria Academy

Alternate Entrance Exam Date:  
January 25, 2014  
For more information call:  
Tim Dougherty (Prep) 814-453-7737 Ext. 3  
Alicia Nelson (Villa) 814-838-2061 Ext. 3239

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Meet and greet school personnel.  
All four wings of the educational complex will be open for tours.