

Nelson Mandela remembered

Members of the African-American community in the Diocese of Erie react to Mandela's death. See page 3.



FaithLife

POPE QUOTE

INSPIRED WORDS
FROM POPE FRANCIS
 "Do not be afraid to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away."

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BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

December 22, 2013



'Person of the Year'

Third pontiff to be recognized by Time magazine

Carol Glatz
 Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis is not seeking fame or accolades, but being named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year will make him happy if it helps attract people to the hope of the Gospel, said a Vatican spokesman.

"It's a positive sign that one of the most prestigious recognitions in the international press" goes to a person who "proclaims to the world spiritual, religious and moral values and speaks effectively in favor of peace and greater justice," said the spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi.

The choice of Pope Francis "is not surprising, given the wide appeal and huge attention" to his pontificate so far, Father Lombardi said in a written statement Dec. 11, shortly after *Time* announced it had named the pope for the annual feature.

"Rarely has a new player on the world stage captured so much attention so quickly—young and

The voice of angels



Photo by Mary Solberg

As Christmas Day approaches, the voice of angels can be heard, especially at St. Peter Cathedral, the mother church of the Diocese of Erie. These members of the parish children's choir are rehearsing for the Dec. 22 Christmas concert.

Twenty-seven second- through eighth-graders in the children's choir will perform at the 4 p.m. concert, titled, "A Woman Wrapped in Silence." The concert, which is free and open to the public, will also feature the adult choir and a brass and percussion group. There

will be a candlelight procession, poetry, Scripture and Christmas carols.

Other past honorees include several U.S. presidents, Mahatma Gandhi, Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin and Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook. The magazine says the title goes to the person or idea that "for better or worse

will be a candlelight procession, poetry, Scripture and Christmas carols.

Bill Herring, the music director the past 43 years, will conduct the choir and accompany them on the organ.

Pictured in the front row, left to right, are: Thomas Prichard, Neil Edgett and Helen Ann McCormick. In the back row, left to right, are: Lauren Vargo, Matthew McCormick, Lauren Belmonte and Mary Grace Kelly.

... has done the most to influence events of the year."

The pope "does not seek fame and success, because he serves to proclaim the Gospel and God's love for everyone," Father Lombardi said, adding that if the recognition "attracts women and

Bishop's Christmas message

Joy abounds

The Feast of Christmas is upon us! The birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, fills our hearts and homes with expectation, hope and joy.

Christ's birth is a celebration of life and ensures that we are surrounded by goodness now and throughout the new year.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, shows us every day how to spread Christ's joy. In the first year of his papacy, Francis has looked at the faith through a new lens and has re-focused our attention on some of the fundamental concerns of



Bishop Lawrence Persico

Christianity: serving the poor, showing mercy and sharing God's love.

Joy is contagious. People throughout the world have responded fervently to Francis' new style of evangelization. Like the infant Jesus, he is breaking down barriers that can separate us from the true Gospel message of taking care of the needs of others.

Over the past year, I have seen time and again all of the examples of generosity by the people of the 13 counties of the Diocese of Erie. Whether it was responding to the tragedy in Newtown, Conn., or giving \$115,000 toward

tornado relief, parishioners have reached out to comfort the suffering, feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

These are the very basic tenets of our Catholic faith, and the

See MESSAGE, page 3

Cosmic rays at center of Gannon project

Nearly \$50,000 grant from NASA benefits students, scientists

Mary Solberg
 FaithLife

Two Gannon University professors and their students are building a scientific instrument that will be sent into the heavens in a little over a year.

Thanks to a NASA grant—estimated at nearly \$50,000—the students will develop a device to detect high-energy particles from space called "cosmic rays." Discovered about a century ago, cosmic rays are charged atomic nuclei that travel through space at nearly the speed of light.

According to Nicholas Conklin, Ph.D., an assistant professor of physics at Gannon in Erie, the NASA grant will allow his team of students to detect both the change in a particle and the energy of a cosmic ray.

When cosmic rays hit the Earth's atmosphere, they generate a shower of other particles, including muons. Some of these particles reach the Earth's surface, possibly damaging life on land and in the oceans.

"The data we want to collect



Photo by Mary Solberg

The Gannon cosmic ray investigation team gathers at Zurn Science Center. Pictured, standing, left to right, are: students Sultan Badakhon, Teddy Rogers, Aaron Neiman, Matt Buehler and Lanise Saunders. Seated, left to right, are: professors Nicholas Conklin and Wookwon Lee, and student Leslie Moukoro.

is the ratio of hydrogen nuclei to helium nuclei in the cosmic rays," Conklin explains. "Then we'll give that information to theorists and the scientific community."

Scientists, he says, are expected to gain insight into where cosmic rays come from and how they travel through the galaxy before they arrive on Earth. The origin of some cosmic rays remains a mystery.

Conklin and Wookwon Lee, Ph.D., an associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, received the grant from NASA's Undergraduate Student Instrument Project (USIP) Educational Flight Opportunity Fund.

About a dozen Gannon students in various fields—including

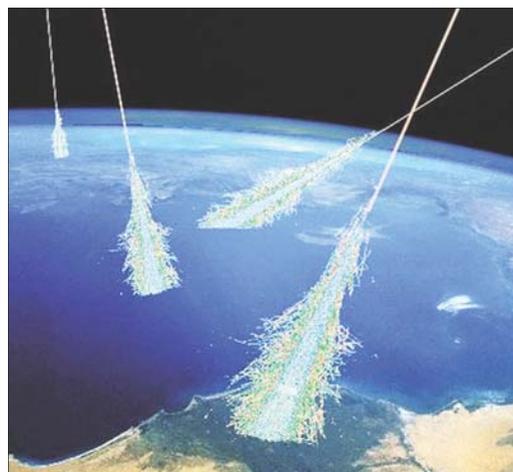


Image by Simon Szwedry (University of Chicago), NASA

These showers of high-energy particles from cosmic rays look similar to Christmas trees in this illustration.

engineering, chemistry, nursing and pre-med—have spent the past semester designing a prototype of the detector that will be sent about 118,000 feet into the Earth's atmosphere. They are gearing up for the actual construction stage of the final instrument.

"We're expecting to launch it sometime between January and February of 2015," Conklin says.

At least one Gannon student will be selected to travel to the actual launching in Oregon, where balloons will lift the instrument into the atmosphere for an estimated six-hour journey.

"This is a great experience," says Aaron Neiman, a junior electrical engineering major and the student team leader. "In a classroom, it's very scripted, but this is an experiment where

we have to solve problems on our own."

For the professors, there are two immediate benefits to the project: Students get hands-on lab experience and some get scholarships and wages for their work.

"The biggest advantage is that students are getting a hands-on lab experience so that they're more prepared when they step up into the so-called real world," Conklin says.

Clergy Appointment

The Most Rev. Lawrence Persico, JCL, Bishop of Erie, makes the following clergy appointment:



Father Alfred Patterson, OSB, parochial vicar of St. Mary Parish and Sacred Heart Parish, St. Marys, with chaplain duties at the Elk Regional Health System, effective Dec. 9, 2013.



from Catholic News Service

Actress says Mary sets example of loving and believing

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (CNS)—Preparing for the title role in “Mary of Nazareth” helped German actress Alissa Jung to realize that Mary was not only the mother of God but a real person.

“Before doing this film, Mary was always the mother of Jesus, but I didn’t think of her as an interesting person,” Jung said. “I was really taken by her. Her way of loving, giving and believing is a big example, and she’s a wonderful person. I think I changed my perspective.”

“Mary of Nazareth” is a European-made film shot largely in Tunisia that is being distributed by Ignatius Press in the United States.

Jung has been acting in television shows and movies since she was 16 years old and currently resides in Berlin.

“The first two days [of filming] I was a bit shocked. Then I calmed myself down and said, ‘First of all, you are interested in the human being, you are not interested in being an icon,’” Jung told *The Colorado Catholic Herald*, newspaper of the Diocese of Colorado Springs.



CNS photo

Luca Marinelli portrays Joseph and Alissa Jung as Mary in a scene from the movie “Mary of Nazareth.”

Mexico awards human rights prize

MEXICO CITY (CNS)—Mexico awarded its top human rights award to Norma Romero Vasquez, the leader of a group of women known as Las Patronas, who feed Central American migrants traveling through the country atop northbound trains.

She collected the award Dec. 12, feast day for Our Lady of Guadalupe, often referred to as “La Patrona,” or “Patroness,” namesake of the women’s group and of their village of coffee and cane farmers in Veracruz state.

“Our labor of humanitarian help started as something

simple: feeding migrants, which we never thought or even imagined would bring us to this point,” Romero said in remarks at the president’s residence. “We thank God and Our Lady of Guadalupe, who have guided us in the work and for keeping us on our feet.”

The award, presented by President Enrique Peña Nieto, highlighted the efforts of 14 self-described “women of faith,” whose work started in 1995, a time when offering assistance to those without the proper papers was considered a crime and people were imprisoned for doing so.



CNS photo

Norma Romero Vasquez receives applause from Mexico’s President Enrique Peña Nieto, right, and Raul Plascencia, president of the National Human Rights Commission, after she was presented the 2013 National Human Rights Award in Mexico City Dec. 12.

Indian prime minister apologizes after Christian marchers beaten

NEW DELHI (CNS)—Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh apologized to church leaders for the police beating of protesters—including priests and nuns—during a march to Parliament advocating for rights for low-caste Christians.

Singh apologized Dec. 12 when a 10-member delegation, led by Delhi Archbishop Anil Couto, called on him to press for the Christian demand to end discrimination against Christian dalits, or members of the low castes.

Archbishop Couto was among six Catholic bishops and about a dozen of different denominations detained with 400 protesters during the march the previous day. Hundreds of the protesters from across India broke through police barricades and marched to Parliament shouting, “We want justice.”



Editor’s Notes

Mary SOLBERG

The death of Nelson Mandela became personally meaningful to me when I had the opportunity to chat on Facebook with two men who live in South Africa. Both are members of Mandela’s tribe, the Xhosa, and are gardeners at my sister’s home in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

My sister, Ellen Benson Naro, is a graduate of Blessed Sacrament Grade School in Erie. A gregarious, inquisitive person, she had been talking to these men about the impact of Mandela’s death on South Africa. They shared their thoughts with me while Ellen and I were on Facebook recently.

Bobby Kama, 46, and Mzi Msewu, 22, were born at different times in South African history. Mzi calls himself one of the “born-frees” blacks in South Africa who were born after the abolition of apartheid. Bobby grew up under apartheid, but experienced the liberation of his people, thanks to Mandela’s fight for equality and justice.

“During apartheid, you and I would not be able to talk together like this,” Bobby wrote to me. “We have a long way to go, but Madiba [Mandela’s clan name] gave us a start and now it is up to each individual person to be responsible for carrying on his message of forgiveness and peace.”

Mzi appreciates Mandela’s strength and passion. He told me, “I am one of the born-frees. I can go to whichever school I want. I can learn whatever I want to learn. I can go wherever I want to go. This is because of Mandela and all the freedom fighters.”

I join Pope Francis and people throughout the world who pray that Mandela’s pursuit of equality continues in South Africa.

Kelly Goodelle is an amazing woman. The mother of two children at Our Lady’s Christian School in Erie, she finished her second Ironman competition in Cozumel,

Mexico, this month. I wrote a feature story about her in the Nov. 10 edition of *FaithLife*.

In Cozumel, Kelly beat her last Ironman time by 21 minutes, placing 27th in the women’s 35 to 39 age group. Her final time for the race (including a swim, bike and a full marathon) was 12 hours and 36 seconds. The run, she told me, was the hardest part because dreaching rain flooded the streets. “My shoes,” she said, “quickly became bricks on my feet.”

But the best part for Kelly was competing on behalf of Our Lady’s Christian. She collected a little more than \$11,000 in checks, cash and a matching gift.

Technology was put to good use last month for the students at St. Michael School in Greenville. Sixth-grader **John Michael Yurisic** joined his father, **Michael Yurisic**, and about 30 other parishioners of St. Michael Parish, Greenville, and St. Michael the Archangel Parish, DuBois, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Every night of the tour, young John Michael joined **Father David Foradori**, pastor at St. Michael, Greenville, and **Christine McConnell**, the school’s technology coordinator, in a Skype session between their hotel in Israel and the Greenville elementary school. Christine said technology helped students develop “a deeper connection to a faraway land.”

Not only is Pope Francis *Time* magazine’s “Person of the Year,” but he and I have some interesting things in common. My middle name is Frances, and, like the pope, I used to own a Ford Focus! I also feel a close connection to him because he is a Jesuit. For many years, my spiritual director was Jesuit Father Joe Scharf, a priest from the Jesuit Retreat House in Parma, Ohio. What’s more, the pontiff and I have the same birthday: Dec. 17.

I thought it was a great idea that the organization, Catholic to the Max of Steubenville, Ohio, sent the pope a giant birthday card. I’m still waiting for mine, though.

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Guest commentary Very Rev. Robert Barron
Pope Francis’ first official letter espouses joy

Christianity is grounded in what its earliest proponents called “good news,” *euangelion*. There is, therefore, something permanently fresh, startling and urgent about the Christian faith. It is not a bland spirituality or generic philosophy; it is news about something amazing and unprecedented, namely, that a carpenter from Nazareth, who declared himself the Son of God, has been raised from the dead. This is why there is a grab-you-by-the-lapels quality about the early Christian witness: the authors of the New Testament are not trading in generalities and abstract principles; they are telling the world about a revolution, an earthquake, an emergency. Jesus is risen from the dead, and therefore he is the king. And because he is the king, your whole life has to be rearranged around him.

This evangelical urgency, which Pope Francis gets in his bones, is the leitmotif of the Pope’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*). He knows that if Catholicism leads with its doctrines, it will devolve into an intellectual

debating society, and that if it leads with its moral teaching, it will appear fussy and puritanical. It should lead today as it led 2,000 years ago, with the stunning news that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and the joy of that proclamation should be as evident now as it was then.

The pope draws our attention to some of the countless references to joy in the pages of the New Testament: “Rejoice!” is the angel’s greeting to Mary, and in her *Magnificat*, the Mother of God exults, “My spirit rejoices in God my savior.”

The pope concludes with a wonderfully understated rhetorical question: “Why should we not also enter into this great stream of joy?”

Why not indeed? Displaying his penchant for finding the memorable image, Pope Francis exhortates Christians who have turned “into querulous and dis-

lusioned pessimists, ‘sourpusses,’” and whose lives “seem like Lent without Easter.”

Once this basic truth is understood, the rest of the church’s life tends to fall more correctly into place. A church filled with the joy of the resurrection becomes a band of “missionary disciples,” going out to the world with the good news.

Ecclesial structures, liturgical precision, theological clarity and bureaucratic meetings are accordingly relativized in the measure that they are placed in service of that more fundamental mission. Pope Francis loves the liturgy, but if evangelical proclamation is the urgent need of the church, “an ostentatious preoccupation with the liturgy” becomes a problem. A Jesuit, the pope loves the life of the mind, but if evangelical proclamation is the central concern of the church, then a “narcissistic” and “authoritarian” doctrinal fussiness must be eliminated.

If there is one thing, above all, that bothers Pope Francis it is the endless bickering within the Catholic Church itself. “How many wars take place within the people of God and in our different communities!” Ellists on both the left and the right want to establish a church of the pure, those who hold all of the right positions on the key issues, and they are none too shy about critiquing, attacking and excommunicating those who don’t agree with them.

But the church is meant to be a counter-sign to the divisiveness and violence of the world, a place where love, compassion and mutual understanding hold sway. When we become but an echo of the fallen world, then we are like salt that has lost its savor, and our evangelical persuasiveness is fatally compromised.

Twice in the course of his letter, Pope Francis references the ancient principle *bonum diffusivum sui* (the good is diffusive of itself). When we find something that is good or beautiful or compelling—whether it is a movie, a work of art, a book or a person—we don’t keep it to our-

See the full text of Pope Francis’ letter at www.vatican.va.

Click on The Holy See (English) and then select the *Evangelii Gaudium* button in the upper left corner.



CNS photo

selves. Rather, we are filled with a missionary fervor to share it. This principle applies, par excellence, to our experience of Christ Jesus risen from the dead. We want, with reckless abandon, to give this supremely good news away.

For Pope Francis, this energy is the beating heart of the church.

Father Robert Barron is the founder of the global ministry, Word on Fire, and the rector/president of Mundelein Seminary in Illinois.

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Briefly

Gannon University confers 186 degrees

ERIE—Gannon University awarded 186 degrees at its winter commencement exercises on Dec. 15 at the Hammermill Center in downtown Erie.

Bishop Lawrence Persico celebrated the baccalaureate Mass at Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel.

Richard John Hudic Jr., a 1991 graduate of Gannon and executive deputy secretary with the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, was the main speaker. He was awarded a doctor of Humane Letters degree.

Of the 186 degrees that were conferred, three were doctorates, 56 were master's degrees and 90 were bachelor's degrees. Two students earned associate's degrees. The graduating class included students from 12 nations.

Epiphany celebration scheduled at OLP

ERIE—Celebrate the season with song, food and fellowship at Star of Wonder—An Epiphany Celebration at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Erie on Friday, Jan. 10, at 7:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Peace Music Ministry, Selah Praise Band, Voice of Peace and SpiritSong Youth Ensemble will present the concert. Enjoy favorite Christmas selections and sing along to some classic carols. Refreshments and fellowship will follow the concert.

Sign language interpretation will be provided and childcare will be available in the church social room.

Enrichment Series continues at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in January

ERIE—The public is invited to attend an ongoing Enrichment Series in 2014 at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie.

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie offer the first event of the year on Monday, Jan. 13, at 7 p.m. with Father Jim Piszker presenting a program titled, "The Emerging Ecclesiology of Pope Francis." The talk is an attempt to categorize and synthesize the pope's vision and theology of the church based on his pronouncements and interviews to date.

Father Piszker is a priest of the Diocese of Erie and currently is chaplain and adjunct faculty member at Mercyhurst University in Erie. Since 1998, he has taught courses in Scripture, morality, sacraments, liturgy, religious studies, Christology, Mariology and ecclesiology.

For more information about the Enrichment Series, contact Sister Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, at 814-899-0614, extension 2511.

Benedictines for Peace sponsor vigils for immigration reform

ERIE—The Benedictines for Peace of Erie will sponsor monthly vigils in downtown Erie until a proposed immigration reform law is passed by the U.S. Congress.

The vigils began in December and will continue the first Friday of every month.

The "Justice for Immigrants" vigils will be held from 5:15 to 5:45 p.m. at Second and State streets in Erie. The Benedictines for Peace want Congress to pass an immigration reform bill that paves a path toward U.S. citizenship for the nation's 11 million undocumented immigrants.



CNS photo

Pro-life activities scheduled in coming weeks

ERIE—Several pro-life events are scheduled in Erie during the coming month.

People for Life invites all to participate in the downtown Erie March for Life on Saturday, Jan. 11. Participants are asked to arrive at the Perry Square gazebo by 10:45 a.m.

People for Life's annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast will be held on Saturday, Jan. 18, at the Erie Bayfront Convention Center. The main speaker will be Angela Franks, author of Margaret Sanger's *Eugenic Legacy*, a book about the founder of Planned Parenthood.

Also, buses are being reserved for the March for Life trip to Washington, D.C. on Jan. 22.

For more information and details about each of these events, go to www.peopleforlife.org.

African-American community in diocese joins worldwide praise for Mandela

FaithLife and Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Several members of the African-American community in the Diocese of Erie joined church and government leaders from around the globe in reflecting on the human rights commitment of Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa who died Dec. 5.

In a message to South Africa President Jacob Zuma, Pope Francis said he prayed that Mandela's efforts to forge a new nation based on nonviolence, reconciliation and truth after the apartheid era "will inspire generations of South Africans to put justice and the common good at the forefront of their political aspirations."

Mandela, who had been battling complications from a lung infection, died at his home in Johannesburg. He was 95.

In the Diocese of Erie, African-American board members of the Prince of Peace Center in Farrell and members of the African-American community within St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Erie lauded Mandela's commitment to peace and equality.

Mandela led a peaceful transition to democratic rule after he was released from prison in 1990. He had been jailed for 27 years for his opposition to apartheid, but in 1994 was elected South Africa's first black president.

"He had a very good impact not only in South Africa, but also on the black community in the United States," said Stella Butler, a board member the past eight years at Prince of Peace Center. "This man tried so hard to bring equality to South Africa and I hope they will continue to live out his legacy."

Ben Gibbs, another board member at Prince of Peace, said Mandela's non-violent approach to discrimination is an inspiration to everyone who encounters injustice.

"He controlled his anger," said Gibbs, who is a minister with the Church of God in Sharon. "He probably was still angry at the unfairness, but he didn't go about it in a violent way. He was like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who believed that violence only begets violence."

Cassandra Lockett, the pastoral council president of St. Mary



CNS photo/Issaan Haffjee, Reuters

Young women pray in Regina Mundi Catholic Church in Johannesburg during a service for former South African President Nelson Mandela.

of the Immaculate Conception in Erie, was impressed that Mandela did not become a bitter person during his incarceration for nearly three decades.

"It didn't make him a bitter man; it made him a better man," Lockett said. "He showed many of us that we can overcome the obstacles that we face."

Mandela's death prompted Lockett to think about when the black Catholic community of Immaculate Conception Parish on E. 14th Street in Erie combined in 2009 with St. Mary Parish on E. 9th Street. Melding the two parishes was beneficial to all parishioners...black and white.

"When you celebrate separately, you can't see each other. We've developed a love between us and we're working together on how to be just Catholic, not black or white," Lockett said.

Dr. Vernon Dobbs, a retired parishioner of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, agrees with many world leaders that Mandela "belonged to the ages."

"In my opinion," Dobbs said, "the world has lost a great man. He was able to read across the strata of all five races that God created."

On the world stage, President Barack Obama praised Mandela

for striving to achieve a "democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities."

"We will not likely see the likes of Nelson Mandela again,"

"He showed many of us that we can overcome the obstacles that we face."

—Cassandra Lockett
Pastoral council president of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Erie

Obama said. "So it falls to us as best we can to forward the example that he set, to make decisions guided not by hate, but by love, to never discount the difference that one person can make, to strive for a future that is worthy of his sacrifice."

The Catholic Church in Southern Africa expressed its gratitude "for the sacrifice he [Mandela] made for all peoples of South Africa and for the leadership and inspiration he gave in leading us on the path of reconciliation."

"The greatest way we can acknowledge the life of Nelson Mandela is to strive for the ideals he cherished: freedom, equality and democracy, and to defend these ideals from those who would corrupt them," the South-

ern African Catholic Bishops' Conference said in a statement signed by Archbishop Stephen Brislin of Cape Town.

When Mandela was released from prison, "the country was in turmoil and blood was being spilt almost daily," the bishops said. "Through his leadership at that time...he led the country on the path of reconciliation and peace, calling on South Africans to throw all arms of destruction into the sea. For this we shall always be indebted to him."

The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops also mourned Mandela's passing, calling him an icon. "In his struggle against apartheid rule, Nelson Mandela was a light for peace and equality in his country and for the whole world," said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky. "His years of imprisonment exemplified the suffering experienced by so many who seek justice."

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York described Mandela as "a hero to the world" and said that his defense of human rights against apartheid "made him a symbol of courage and dignity."

Despite the outpouring of admiration for Mandela, the American Life League criticized the 1996 "Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Bill" that Mandela signed into law in 1996, replacing South Africa's tough anti-abortion law.

Bishop Persico's Christmas message

MESSAGE, from page 1

parishes and schools in our diocese live it out every day. People pledged \$6 million to the Catholic Services Appeal to help fund more than 90 outreach efforts throughout our diocese this past year.

I also see a new interest in the

Tune in for Midnight Mass on WJET-TV

For the 18th straight year, WJET-TV 24 will broadcast Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve live from St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. Bishop Lawrence Persico will be the celebrant.

The program begins at 11:30 p.m. and includes a message from Bishop Persico as well as music by the Cathedral's adult and children's choirs under the direction of William Herring.

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faith among young people in our diocese. Several attended World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, where the universal church was most evident this past summer. In the fall, more than 60 traveled to Indianapolis for the National

Catholic Youth Conference.

These are all positive signs. They give me great hope for continued momentum in 2014.

Despite the joy of Christmas, I realize that there are many people in our communities who may be



Photo by Jason Koehnisch

struggling today. We cannot overlook the daily concerns of those who face unemployment, homelessness or even a lack of faith.

But these should not tarnish the bright hope that is offered by Christ's birth in a manger more than 2,000 years ago.

We are celebrating the great love that God has for us, that he sent his only Son to bring us salvation. Jesus' birth shows that we are not alone. God is with us. *Emmanuel*.

There are reasons for hope. There are reasons to be at peace when we acknowledge that God is dwelling in us and among us.

As we prepare to begin a new year, we have an opportunity once more to rededicate ourselves to our relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a new life, a new chance, a new joy.

Live it and share it with others. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend
Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
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Washington, DC ★ January 22, 2014

— YOUR INVITATION —

Help remind our government leaders and the entire nation that the most important thing in life is LIFE itself. Join hundreds of thousands of your fellow Americans in a march up Constitution Avenue. Visit your members of Congress. Last January, 265 people took our bus trip. Please join us this January.

To defend the right to life is to defend the dignity and value of every human being. To defend the right to life is to defend the very concept of human rights. Without LIFE, all guarantees of human rights are hollow or utterly meaningless. Legal protection and societal respect for all human lives is the preeminent civil rights and human rights issue of our times.

- + Leave Erie Tuesday evening, January 21 at 11 p.m.
- + March in Washington on Wednesday, January 22.
- + Return Thursday morning, January 23 about 2 a.m.
- + \$60 per seat (\$50 per seat until December 16)
- + Pay on-line or mail payment to People for Life.
- + Limited seating: Make reservations early.
- + Inquire about sponsorships for those on tight budgets.
- + Student and church groups are always welcome.

PEOPLE FOR LIFE

P.O. Box 1126; Erie, PA 16512
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Five men accepted as permanent deacon candidates

ERIE—Bishop Lawrence Persico accepted five men as candidates in the Permanent Deacon Formation Program of the Diocese of Erie during a ceremony at St. Mark Catholic Center chapel Nov. 9.

During the rite of acceptance, the candidates were formally recognized by the church as having an "authentic" vocation to ordained ministry.

Deacon candidates are pictured here with Bishop Lawrence Persico. Standing, left to right, are: Dave Evans of Erie, Dan Satterlee of Reynoldsville, Joe Yochim of Erie, Bishop Persico, Kevin Harmon of Pleasantville, and Jerry Peterson of Cranesville.



Bradford teams ace reading competitions



BRADFORD—Elementary and middle school reading competition teams from St. Bernard School in Bradford took first place at both levels in the IU9 fall reading competition at Fretz Middle School in Bradford on Nov. 13. Twenty-eight teams from seven area school districts participated.

In the front row, left to right, are: Jade Jimerson, Tim Mulcahy, Mikiah Langianese, and Laryssa Webster. In the back row, left to right, are: Nate Gleason, Chloe Shaw, Liam Frasier, Kaylyn Eschrich, Ryan Hughes, Gabriella Campogiani, Ethan Burton, Alex Mangold and Owen Wesmiller.

Saints alive! Reynoldsville students mark All Saints Day



REYNOLDSVILLE—Children of St. Mary Parish in Reynoldsville dressed as their favorite saints on All Saints Day. During Mass, readers gave a brief description of each saint.

Pictured, kneeling left to right, are: Hunter Hilliard and Andrew Reiter. In the first row, left to right, are: Thaddeus Sima, Logan Hockinson, Serena Mullins, Isabella Hanley, Damien Mullins and Morgan King. In the second row, left to right, are: Lindsey Reiter, Jasonna Hockinson, Afton Slima, Tyler Ohs, Brandon McGranor and Chase Slima.

In the back row, left to right, are: Michael Gilga, Jacob Sutter, Kiersten Pearce, Katie Sutter, Kelly Cribbs, Alyssa Cribbs, Bradyn Schwabenbauer, Henry Sutter and Braden Royer.

More than 17,000 plastic bags collected in DuBois



DUBOIS—Members of the Rotary Interact Club at DuBois Central Catholic pose with more than 20 large garbage bags full of plastic grocery bags collected in middle and high school homerooms. The bags are given to food pantries in the DuBois area. The bags are needed as the pantries prepare to help the needy with food items over the holiday season. An amazing 17,826 bags were collected. Pictured, left to right, are Rotary Interact members Rachel Stoltz, Maddie Meyers, Kayla Bittner, Kyle Schaffer, Amy Tomasko, Katie Russell and Tara Deemer, adviser.

Warming up for March for Life

CLARION—Parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarion knitted and crocheted scarves as part of the "Blessing of the Yarn" in anticipation of January's March for Life event in Washington, D.C. These scarves will be distributed to marchers to offset the wintry weather.

Pictured, left to right, are: Alice Clark, Nancy Rettig, Barb Speer and Bonnie Rice. The yarn is provided by Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court 2445.



Immaculate Conception students rake just in time!

CLARION—Middle school students at Immaculate Conception School in Clarion raked fallen leaves around the church and school as part of their discipleship hours requirement.

The discipleship hours program is designed to help students learn what it means to be a true disciple of God through the use of their time and talents.

Pictured, left to right, are: Isabella Tynski, Alana McMaster, Hannah Smith, Gavin Weaver and Sara Grace Zacherl.



Our Lady's Christian supports VNA



ERIE—Students at Our Lady's Christian School in Erie selected the Visiting Nurses Association of Erie (VNA) to receive proceeds from the latest Dress-Down Days event at the school. Students raised \$168.45.

Pictured, left to right, are: Madelyn List, a sixth-grader; Christine O'Brien, executive director at the VNA of Erie; Lindsey Armanini, second-grader; Stephen Nenez, principal; and Connor McEnery, a seventh-grader.



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If you need help paying your heating bills or know someone who does, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help. Applications are now being accepted. However, funds are very limited and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Don't delay, apply now. A little help can make a big difference. For more information, or to see if you qualify, visit LIHEAPHelps.com or call 1-866-857-7095.

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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.

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