

ND choir concert

Notre Dame Liturgical Choir to perform at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie, page 3.



FaithLife

Year of Faith speaker series

Ed Curtin discusses Vatican II's impact on Catholic life today, page 3.



www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

December 23, 2012

Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

Feast days



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton



St. John Neumann

- Dec. 24 Vigil of Christmas
- Dec. 25 Nativity of the Lord (Christmas, a holy day of obligation)
- Dec. 26 St. Stephen
- Dec. 27 St. John
- Dec. 28 The Holy Innocents
- Dec. 29 St. Thomas Becket
- Dec. 30 The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
- Dec. 31 St. Sylvester I
- Jan. 1 Mary, Mother of God (holy day of obligation)
- Jan. 2 Ss. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen
- Jan. 3 The Most Holy Name of Jesus
- Jan. 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
- Jan. 5 St. John Neumann
- Jan. 6 Epiphany of the Lord
- Jan. 7 St. Raymond of Penyafort
- Jan. 13 The Baptism of the Lord
- Jan. 17 St. Anthony

Midnight Mass on WJET-TV - Dec. 24



For the 17th 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 choir under the direction of William Herring.

National Migration Week - Jan. 6-12

This year's National Migration Week observance and theme commemorate the 10th anniversary of the historic joint pastoral letter of the United States and Mexico bishops conferences, "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope." This theme reminds us of our responsibility as Catholics to help newcomers integrate in ways that are respectful, culturally sensitive and responsive to social needs, and of the ongoing need for comprehensive and compassionate immigration reform.

Resources for National Migration Week and a link to the bishops' letter is available by searching "National Migration Week" at www.usccb.org.

National Vocation Awareness Week - Jan. 13-19

This annual event of the Catholic Church in the United States earmarks a time for parishes to consider their role in promoting the vocations of priests, deacons and religious order brothers and sisters to Catholics deciding on their future.



National Vocation Awareness Week is a reminder that all have responsibility to pray for vocations and to invite young people to consider a call to ordained ministry and consecrated life.

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

The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is jointly sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches. This year's theme is "What does God require of us?" from Micah 6:6-8.

The week of prayer enters into congregations and parishes all over the world. Pulpits are exchanged, and special ecumenical worship services are arranged.

We are all invited to give Christ to others every day

A Christmas message from Bishop Lawrence Persico

People often comment that as we age, time goes more quickly. I trust you can appreciate that for me, this year has gone by at warp speed. It has been a challenge to find quiet time since the moment I received the phone call telling me the Holy Father had appointed me as Bishop of Erie.

But I have, indeed, made time for prayer because it is essential to our lives as Catholic Christians. And my invitation to you this Christmas is to seek spiritual renewal as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and contemplate the Holy Family.

This is the time of year when we see individuals change in a good way. People seem more willing to acknowledge each other, offering kind words and a cheerful, "Merry Christmas!"



The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL

Unfortunately it is easy to go back to our old routines the day after Christmas.

Of course I am inspired by the many ongoing acts of charity here in the Diocese of Erie. Our efforts together mean that thousands of those in need feel love and warmth all year as they receive food,



The crèche at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil commemorating the birth of Christ and ends with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 13.

clothing, shelter and care in the name of Christ. The agencies we have created together including St. Martin Center in Erie, St. Elizabeth Center in Oil City and Prince of Peace

Center in Farrell are beacons of hope and light, to say nothing of our schools and parishes, all of which reach out to their neighbors on a regular basis.

I hope that during this special Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, you

See CHRISTMAS MESSAGE, page 3

L'Arche Erie — 40 years of nurturing, growth

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

ERIE — L'Arche began in France in 1964 when Jean Vanier welcomed two men, institutionalized due to mental handicaps, to come and live with him.

On a retreat in Toronto in 1971, Father George Strohmeier and Sister Barbara Karsznia met Vanier and heard his story. The results were life changing.

"I heard a lot about the transforming power of Jesus and the Gospel," Father Strohmeier said. "It was a spiritual message. I never heard anyone announce the Gospel in such a deep and authentic sense."

There they discovered L'Arche (pronounced larsh), a community of faith where life is shared between people with and without intellectual disabilities in a family and home setting. They decided to bring it to Erie.

L'Arche Erie began in 1972 as the first L'Arche community in the United States. Today, there are 18 in the U.S. and 130 communities in 40 countries. L'Arche Erie has 32 core members (people



L'Arche Erie brings core members (those with disabilities) and assistants together in community for mutual sharing and development.

with handicaps) and 73 assistants living in community in seven homes, one apartment and three family living situations in Erie and Lake City.

"If we are faithful and surrender to the Good News, we will bear fruit," said Father Strohmeier, co-founder of L'Arche Erie who also serves as the community's chaplain. "Forty years means Jesus is faithful."

See L'ARCHE, page 2

Parishioners donate more than \$158,000 for Hurricane Sandy relief

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

The faithful of the Diocese of Erie are giving help and hope to Hurricane Sandy victims.

Through appeals and collections at parishes throughout the diocese, people have generously given \$158,044 to date. Those funds, collected by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie, have already been forwarded to Catholic Charities USA, which will distribute them to various Catholic Charities offices and agencies on the East Coast.

"The money is going to the areas that have been most affected by Hurricane Sandy," said Mary Maxwell, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie. Donations will assist families and individuals with shelter, food and other immediate and long-term needs, Maxwell added.

She noted that people in the diocese have a history of being charitable in times of national crisis such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 or



CNS photo

A volunteer helps organize clothing donated to St. William the Abbot Parish in Howell, N.J., one of more than 20 sites in the Diocese of Trenton where victims of Hurricane Sandy in need of help can access basic necessities, like food, clothing and other items.

internationally with Japan's earthquake-tsunami disaster in 2011.

"It's amazing because these are hard times for people," Maxwell said. "But they have come through in a very generous way."

Cathedral Prep state champs



Photo by Art Becker

Cathedral Prep football players celebrate the team's 24-14 victory over Archbishop Wood in the PIAA Class AAA championship game Dec. 14 at Hersheypark Stadium in Hershey. The win in the state title game capped a perfect season for Prep, which set a school record for victories in a season (15-0).

Cathedral Prep quarterback Damian Terry had a hand in three touchdowns, rushing for a six-yard score and throwing for two others in the Ramblers' win.

More than 3,000 Prep fans traveled to Hershey to see the Erie school win its second state football championship. The first one came in 2000 in Class AAAA.

Solidarity with Newtown

As a result of the shooting tragedy Dec. 14 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., Bishop Lawrence Persico has directed that all of the parishes of the Diocese of Erie include a general intercession in the prayers of the faithful for the victims, their families and all those who are suffering.

After 20 children and eight adults were shot dead, Bishop Persico wrote to Msgr. Jerald Doyle, administrator of the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn., that the church of Erie sends its prayerful support as they cope with this sorrow. In addition to the students and staff killed, the gunman took his mother's life as well as his own.

"May God our Father console those who mourn and sustain the entire community with spiritual strength and hope," Bishop Persico wrote.

Many priests and deacons struggled to address the events that took place in Newtown last Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent. At Our Lady of Peace Parish in Erie, Father Ted Marconi and staff mem-



bers invited parishioner Chris Ehrman of Allburn Florists to create a bouquet to honor the people of Newtown.

The flower arrangement in the sanctuary has 20 white carnations representing the children who died and eight pink carnations representing the adults who died. Other small flowers represent the

community that surrounds those families and the purple ribbon represents the Advent season of longing.

The pink candle on the Advent wreath, is a sign of hope, Father Marconi said.

"We are reminded of Christ's presence with us even in the midst of darkness and death," he said.



IN THE U.S.

■ **Supreme Court to hear cases on same-sex marriage**

The Supreme Court will take up in the spring two cases over the constitutionality of same-sex marriage. In orders issued Dec. 7, the court agreed to hear a case over California's Proposition 8, which bans same-sex marriage, and one out of New York over the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which defines a marriage as being between one man and one woman. The cases likely will be on the court's calendar for argument in March, with a ruling before the end of the term in late June. After weeks of court-watching when the petitions for review of more than half a dozen cases over the same-sex marriage were on the justices' list for consideration, the orders Dec. 7 suggested the justices worked at covering multiple bases in what they granted, noted court-watchers at the Supreme Court blog, SCOTUSblog. The orders focused on two issues: how marriage is defined and whether same-sex couples who are legally married are entitled to the same kind of spousal benefits as heterosexual spouses.



■ **Federal judge says New York Archdiocese's HHS lawsuit can move forward**

A U.S. District Court judge has ruled that a lawsuit challenging the federal contraceptive mandate filed by the Archdiocese of New York and two other Catholic entities can move forward. The defendants — the U.S. departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and the Treasury — filed a request that the case be dismissed, claiming the mandate is not causing "imminent injury" and that the government plans changes to accommodate religious groups that object to the requirement on moral grounds. In his Dec. 5 decision, Judge Brian Cogan of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern district of New York, rejected the defendants' claim, saying the mandate "has caused and will continue to cause plaintiffs harm so long as it remains in place. The departments' possible decision to amend their policies does not abrogate plaintiffs' right to seek relief for their injuries," he said.

Editor's note: The case filed by the Diocese of Erie remains in litigation.

AROUND THE WORLD

■ **French bishops say vote to allow embryo research 'shocking'**

French bishops described the French Senate's approval of a law permitting the use of human embryos for stem-cell research as "shocking." "The human embryo has the right to be protected," and current French law urges "respect for the human person 'from the beginning of its life,'" said Archbishop Pierre D'Ornellas of Rennes in a statement issued on behalf of the bishops' conference. "The Senate has challenged this respect. This is shocking," the archbishop said in the Dec. 6 statement.



An illustration depicts an early stage human embryo following the union of an egg cell and a sperm cell.

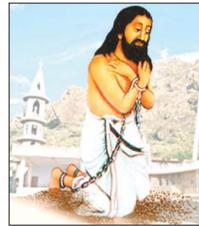
■ **Pope makes new rules to strengthen charities' Catholic identity**

Warning that Catholic charitable activity must not become "just another form of organized social assistance," Pope Benedict XVI issued new rules to strengthen the religious identity of Catholic charities and ensure that their activities conform to church teaching. The pope's apostolic letter on the "service of charity," issued "motu proprio" (on his own initiative), directs bishops in overseeing charitable works in their dioceses. The document, dated Nov. 11, was released by the Vatican Dec. 1. Charities approved by the church or supported by church funds "are required to follow Catholic principles in their activity and they may not accept commitments which could in any way affect the observance of those principles," the pope wrote.

PEOPLE

■ **Newly beatified Indian lay martyr praised for refusing to reject faith**

The life of Blessed Devasahayam Pillai, an 18th-century Catholic layman who was martyred for refusing to refute his faith despite being brutally tortured, was held up as an example for all Christians to embrace. "India can rejoice as this great martyr is now only a step away from being a declared saint," Bishop Peter Remigius of Kottar said Dec. 3, a day after 400,000 people attended the beatification ceremony in Nagercoil, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Born in an upper-caste family in 1712 and named Neelakandan, Blessed Pillai became a trusted soldier of the Hindu king, but later incurred his wrath for embracing Christianity.



Blessed Devasahayam Pillai

■ **Papal secretary named archbishop, prefect of papal household**

Pope Benedict XVI has named his personal secretary, Msgr. Georg Ganswein, an archbishop and the new prefect of the papal household. The 56-year-old archbishop-designate began working with the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 1996 in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. When the cardinal was elected Pope Benedict in 2005, Msgr. Ganswein, who was his personal secretary, moved with him into the papal apartments. As the new prefect of the papal household, a position that involves organizing papal audiences, he succeeds U.S. Cardinal James Harvey, who joined the College of Cardinals in late November and was named archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.



Msgr. Georg Ganswein

By the Way...



Jason Koshinski

Nick Fink, a 2010 graduate of Venango Catholic High School in Oil City and a junior at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, was one of four escorts for President Barack Obama during the Army-Navy football game Dec. 8 at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. Fink and another West Point cadet joined two Navy midshipmen in accompanying the president during halftime ceremonies at the stadium.

Fink graduated from Venango Catholic as salutatorian and served as class president for three years. He is the son of John and Erin Fink of Oil City.

Best wishes go out to Patricia McLaughlin, who has served the diocese's Catholic Schools Office generously and joyfully for many years. McLaughlin has resigned her position as director of Catholic schools and principal personnel, effective Dec. 31. "Patty has been an integral part of our diocesan office for a good number of years," said Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education. "We are grateful for her hard work, kind spirit and her commitment to the students, teachers and principals of our schools."

We offer our condolences to Msgr. Robert Barcio, retired diocesan archivist, and his family on the death of his sister, Betty Weaver, who died Dec. 4. Weaver was a fixture over the years at many of Msgr. Barcio's priestly assignments including Holy Rosary, St. John the Baptist, Blessed Sacrament, St. Jude, St. Luke, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Peter Cathedral in Erie as well as St. Francis of Assisi in Clearfield.

Pope Benedict XVI launched his very own Twitter account Dec. 12, sending a short inaugural message to his more than 1 million followers of @Pontifex. "Dear friends, I am pleased to get in touch with you through Twitter. Thank you for your generous response. I bless all of you from my heart," his first tweet said. He then answered a number of tweets in a Q&A format.

Here's one of his first exchanges with a follower: Q: Any suggestions on how to be more prayerful when we are so busy with the demands of work, families and the world?

A: Offer everything you do to the Lord, ask his help in all the circumstances of daily life and remember that he is always beside you.

Here's a blast from the past: An item from a 1942 edition of the *Lake Shore Visitor* advertising a "Christmas Mass Schedule for Erie and Vicinity" shows St. Peter Cathedral in Erie offering 14 Masses for Christmas—Midnight Mass, 5 a.m., 5:30, 6, 6:30, 7, 7:30, 8, 8:30, 9, 9:30, 10, 10:30 and 11. St. Ann in Erie offered 11 Masses; St. Joseph in Erie had 10 and many parishes offered six or seven. Thanks to Msgr. William Biebel, rector of St. Peter Cathedral, for bringing it to our attention.

FaithLife will take a short break for the Christmas holiday. Our next issue is Jan. 20 and will include a special section on Catholic schools.

Wishing you and your family the joy of the Christmas season and a Happy New Year!

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

L'Arche Erie — 40 years of nurturing, growth

L'ARCHE, from page 1

Today, L'Arche Erie remains faithful to the simplicity of Vanier's vision as core members and assistants share their lives together, their gifts and struggles, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

"We've been grateful for these 40 years and appreciating the growth that comes through good and hard times over the years," said Vicki Washek, executive director of L'Arche Erie.

Because L'Arche is based on being a Christian community, a lot of its core values resonate with Christian values, Washek said, such as forgiveness and love.

"The focus is on nurturing relationships so everyone can grow," she said. "We want to celebrate the gifts of each person and nurture those gifts. A lot of that happens on the person-to-person level."

Core members are put in leadership roles in their homes,



In celebration of its 40th anniversary, L'Arche Erie held a special gathering Dec. 2 at Gannon University. Pictured left to right: (first row) Linda Kelsey, Dianne Williard, Mary Ann Ramey, Donna Carr, (second row) Charlene Serfozo, Connie Reinwald, Patrick Kindle, Richard Hauser, Robert Middleton, (third row) Father George Strohmeier (co-founder and chaplain) and Seth Rotko.

Washek said, and ultimately their churches and the community. "There's a lot of growing to

gether," Father Strohmeier said. "We didn't take care of anybody who didn't take care of us." In celebration of its 40th anniversary, L'Arche Erie held a number of special events: Com-

L'Arche Erie presents L'Asagna Tasting



L'Arche Erie offers L'Asagna Tasting which will feature 11 area restaurants Jan. 13 from 1-5 p.m. at the concourse of Union Station, 142 W. 14th St. in Erie. Admission includes up to 11 samples of lasagna, dessert from area bakeries, coffee, cooking demonstrations by Chef Marc Berarducci and live dinner music. Tickets are \$13 pre-sale and \$15 at the door. Visit www.larcheerie.org for more details. For pre-sale tickets, call Laura at 814.452.2065 Ext. 230.

ber along with a seminar with Ginny Thornburgh on the inclusion of people with disabilities.

The community held a special gathering Dec. 2 at Gannon University, which included 100 friends and fam-

community members participated in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community in June at Presque Isle State Park; the Erie Seawolves baseball team held a L'Arche Erie night in July at Jerry Uht Park; the community took part in the Bayfront Maritime Center's annual cardboard boat regatta in August; in September, L'Arche Erie hosted a picnic at Camp Glinodo; L'Arche's annual fundraiser and reverse raffle was held in Octo-

ber along with a seminar with Ginny Thornburgh on the inclusion of people with disabilities. Members recently visited the men at Maria House Projects for a holiday dinner and Christmas carols.

"After 40 years, it's like watching a family grow old together," Father Strohmeier said. "It's like watching a tree take root. It's an organic experience. It's not just static passing of time. Our core members are the ones who flourish. In their sharing, they're the ones that help us."

FaithLife

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Holy Land: Apr. 1-11, Apr. 8-18, Apr. 15-25 ...
Holy Land/Italy: Apr. 1-14, Apr. 8-21, Apr. 15-28, Apr. 22-May 5, Apr. 29-May 12, May 6-19, May 13-26 ...
Italy South: Apr. 27-May 9, May 4-16, May 11-23...
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Briefly

Notre Dame Liturgical Choir to perform at St. Peter Cathedral, Erie



ERIE — The Notre Dame Liturgical Choir will present a concert of sacred music on Sunday, Jan. 6 at 8 p.m. at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. The concert is free and open to the public.

The liturgical choir, directed by Dr. Andrew McShane and Mary Catherine Levri, is the primary choir for the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame, and is visiting as part of its annual tour.

St. Peter Cathedral School and Cathedral Preparatory School graduate Brennan Kruszewski is a third-year member of the choir.

Erie March for Life

ERIE — The annual Erie March & Motorcade for Life will take place Saturday, Jan. 12 at Perry Square in downtown Erie beginning at 11 a.m. Participants are encouraged to gather at the Perry Square gazebo by 10:45.

The march will be followed by a brief memorial service for the unborn and will conclude by 12:15 p.m.

Youth, young adult Prayer & Praise 4 Life

ERIE — Get fired up before the Erie March for Life. Youth and young adults are invited to Gannon University's Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel Saturday, Jan. 12 at 9:45 a.m. for praise & worship music and eucharistic adoration. Following the 11 a.m. Erie March for Life, meet back at Gannon at 12:15 p.m. for cocoa, coffee and donuts. No registration is necessary.

Pro-life prayer breakfast

ERIE — People for Life's 35th annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast will be held at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 19 at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie.

The special guest speaker will be author and public policy expert George Weigel. Weigel is a Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., and has written 20 books including "The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America and Politics Without God" and "Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II."

Reservations are required. Tickets are on sale now. The cost is \$13 for regular tickets and \$7 for children ages 3 to 12. There is no charge for children under 3.

Payments may be mailed to People for Life, P.O. Box 1126, Erie, PA 16512. For more information or to use a credit card, call 814.882.1333 or visit www.peopleforlife.org.



George Weigel

Bus trip to March for Life in Washington

ERIE — Attend the March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Friday, Jan. 25. Buses chartered by People for Life will leave Erie Thursday evening, Jan. 24 at 11 p.m. and return about 2 a.m. Jan. 26.

Reservations are required. Cost is \$48 per seat. Send payment to People for Life, P.O. Box 1126, Erie, PA 16512.

Students and families on tight budgets are encouraged to inquire about sponsorships.

For more information or to use a credit card, call 814.882.1333 or visit www.peopleforlife.org.



Dynamic presentation opens diocesan Year of Faith series

By Anne-Marie Welsh
FaithLife

"When I read the invitation to the public that said I promised to incorporate humor into this talk, I felt a lot of pressure," said Ed Curtin, instructor and assistant principal at Mercyhurst Prep School in Erie as he opened the diocesan Year of Faith Speaker series in both Erie and Clarion in early December.

The line, in fact, garnered the first of several laughs during the evening, despite Curtin's acknowledgment that the documents of Vatican II "are not exactly fodder for great comedy."

Curtin was the first speaker of three who will present talks on how the documents of the Second Vatican Council are impacting Catholic life today (see sidebar). He discussed why there was a Second Vatican Council, highlighted some of the liturgical changes using the document *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Nations) and then discussed what this had meant to his personal faith life.

Noting that the council oc-

curred in no small part "because Pope John XXIII called it," Curtin discussed how many had expected the 77-year-old Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli to be little more than a caretaker when he was elected to succeed Pope Pius XII in 1958.

Within months, Pope John XXIII called a council of the bishops with the "distant goal of Christian unity" as well as the aim of letting "fresh air into the church." Curtin said the pope was adamant that the church be relevant in the modern world.

Today it is hard for many to recognize just how radical it was when the council stated that "all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very



Ed Curtin

nature of the liturgy."

Curtin invited participants to read *Lumen Gentium*, which he called a "hugely important document," on their own in order to appreciate it fully.

"(It) basically asks, 'Who are we as church and what is our mission in today's world?'" he said, pointing out that *Lumen Gentium* at least began the conversation of the merits of ecumenism and insisted that the church is an evangelizing, missionary church.

Curtin also discussed the emphasis on collegiality of the bishops found in *Lumen Gentium* as well as the universal call to holiness shared by all members of the church.

He urged ongoing, friendly debates in an atmosphere of trust as we continue to try to understand and live out the goals of the Second Vatican Council.

Year of Faith speaker series

Dr. David Roncolato, former youth minister at St. Brigid Parish in Meadville and now director of community service and service-learning at Allegheny College, will speak at Gannon on **March 12** at 7 p.m. and at Immaculate Conception in Clarion on **March 13** at 7 p.m. focusing on the council's document *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope). Dr. Doris Donnelly, professor and director of the Cardinal Suenens Center at John Carroll University in Cleveland, will speak at Gannon on **Nov. 5**.

Additional Year of Faith resources for parish and individual use are available at: www.ErieRCD.org.

"All of us—bishops, priests, sisters and lay people—need to be still at times and be accountable to the Spirit," he said. "Fifty years ago a huge group of people was listening, and we are learning from it still. We are fortunate, in many ways, we experienced a major shift in the church. I say we embrace it for the next 50 years or at the very least, enjoy it in this Year of Faith."

A lively period of questions and answers followed the presentations in both Erie and Clarion.

We are all invited to give Christ to others every day

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE, from page 1

will deepen your understanding and appreciation of the love God has for you. Look for opportunities to bring God's presence into the world. There is no better time than Christmas to remember that we are all gift-bearers, invited to give Christ to others every day.

I do want to recognize that Christmas can be a very difficult time of the year for people, too. Some are dealing with personal

loss or with unemployment. They can feel overwhelmed by any number of issues, and their burdens are magnified by the joy and peace they see others experiencing during the Christmas season.

The challenge for all of us is to get back to the basics. What is Christmas really all about? The answer is simple: it's about new life! It's about realizing that no matter what is happening in our lives, we are loved by God.

Find strength in the Scriptures,

which bring comfort and understanding. "Cast all of your worries upon him because he cares for you," St. Peter tells us in his first letter to the church. "The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ Jesus will himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you after you have suffered." Those are words to hold onto.

Christmas is a tangible, concrete way in which God the Father showed his love for humanity

by sending his only Son in our flesh. That alone should inspire us to share the Good News with others. We are celebrating Emmanuel—God with us!

May God bless you and renew you during this holy season.

Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend
Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie

DEATH NOTICES

Sister John Frances Aiello, SSJ

Sister John Frances Aiello, SSJ, 88, of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, died December 3, 2012. She was in her 60th year of religious life.

She was born in Johnsonburg on September 1, 1924, a daughter of the late John and Frances Chirillo Aiello. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from Holy Rosary Parish in Johnsonburg on August 30, 1953 and professed her final vows on August 15, 1959.

She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Villa Maria College in 1969 and did additional study at the University of St. Louis and Fairfield University.

She served as housemother for senior girls at the St. Joseph Home for Children in Erie and taught at St. Peter Cathedral Grade School in Erie. She also taught at St. Michael and St. Patrick schools in Erie and St. Andrew School in Erie prior to a year of canonical study in the mid 1950s. She taught at Blessed Sacrament School in Erie for more than 23 years and served as convent superior there for three years.

Prior to her retirement in 2008, she did part-time clerical work at Villa Maria Elementary School in Erie and served as part-time receptionist at Heritage Apartments on the Villa Maria campus. She resided at the Villa Maria Community Living Center in Erie.



Sister John Francis Aiello, SSJ

Father Richard Powers

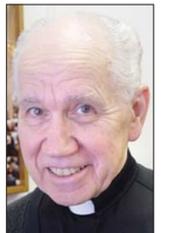
Father Richard Powers, 83, died December 13, 2012 in Canton, Ohio, after a long illness.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, he was raised in Titusville and lived in Erie most of his life until moving to Canton in 2011. He attended St. Titus grade school in Titusville and was a graduate of St. Joseph Academy in Titusville. He subsequently attended the University of Notre Dame, graduated in 1956 from Christ the King Seminary in Olean, N.Y., and earned a master's in mathematics in 1960 from Temple University.

He was ordained to the priesthood on May 10, 1956 at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie by Archbishop John Mark Gannon. Following ordination he was assigned as assistant pastor to Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Farrell (1956), taught at Cathedral Preparatory School in Erie (1956-66) and also taught at Gannon University in Erie (1966-96).

While teaching at Gannon University he served as chaplain to the Sisters of the Congregation of the Divine Spirit. From 1996-99 he served as Pastor of St. Matthew in the Woods Parish, Erie, and St. Cyprian Parish, Waterford.

After retiring in 1999, Father Powers continued serving as chaplain to the Sisters of the Congregation of the Divine Spirit and the Sisters of Mercy in Erie.



Father Richard Powers



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January 12, 2013 • 11 A.M.
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The March will be followed by a Memorial Service, which will conclude by 12:15 p.m. The Erie March is a brief event, but it is usually well-covered by the local news media. So a big turnout is very important. Please join us and bring your family and friends.

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Attend the incredible Washington, DC March for Life
January 25, 2013

Last January, 220 people took our Bus Trip. This January, so can you! Leave Erie at 11 p.m. on Thursday, January 24. March in our nation's capital city with hundreds of thousands to mark the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. Visit your members of Congress. Return to Erie about 2 a.m. on Saturday, January 26.

\$48 a seat • Inquire about sponsorships
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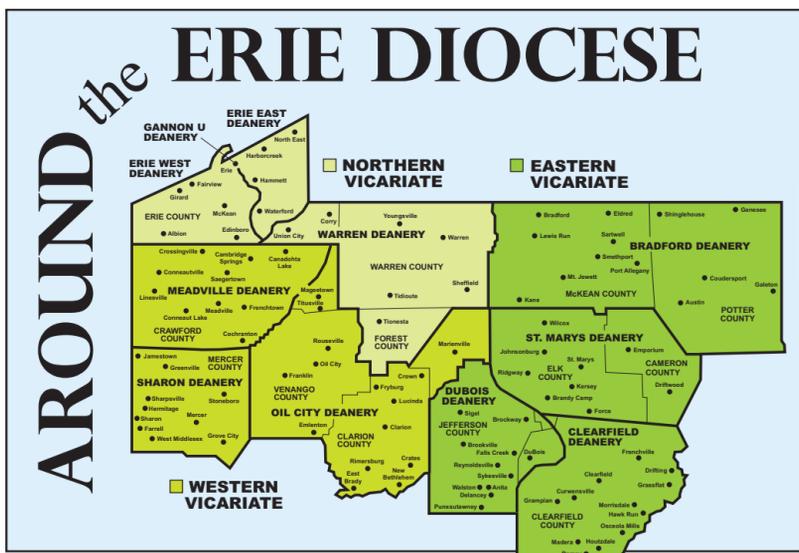
If you need help paying your heating bills, or know someone who does, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help. Applications are now being accepted. However, funds are very limited and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Don't delay, apply now. A little help 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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All parishes, missions, schools and groups are encouraged to choose a **correspondent** who can regularly e-mail news items to "Around the Erie Diocese" at <mailto:FaithLife@ErieRCD.org>

Photo Tips
Quick, important tips for taking good digital pictures.
<http://www.ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp>



DCC Middle School drama club presents 'My Big Fat Italian Christmas'

DUBOIS — The Middle School Drama Club at DuBois Central Catholic staged its first production of the school year Dec. 16 as part of the school's annual family Advent celebration. The event opened with seasonal choral and instrumental selections proclaiming the Advent season and upcoming Christmas celebration.



"My Big Fat Italian Christmas" is a play written by Jodi Stewart, a DCC alum and Drama Club adviser. The play's resounding message is one of giving to others and helping those in need as this fun-loving Italian family demonstrates through their words and actions. The welcoming home atmosphere created by the generous, kind, but somewhat quirky characters reinforces why the Christ Child was born to walk among us. According to Stewart, who also directed the production, the play reminds us of our true Christian calling: "We must love our neighbor as ourselves and our hands must be God's hands here

on earth." The event was sponsored by DuBois Central Catholic's Mothers' & Fathers' Association. Cast members of this year's holiday production of "My Big Fat Italian Christmas," staged by students in grades 6, 7 and 8 at DuBois Central Catholic, paused during a recent dress rehearsal: (first row) Markus McCullough, Makenzie Park, Zach Edwards, Lilly Lee; (second row) Tessa Stewart, Emily Metzger, Maddy Barnett, Becca Liddle, Rebecca Pifer, Emma Cooper, Thomas Grecco; (third row) Courtney DeHaven, Cameron Stom, Michael Misciewicz, Meghan Graeca, Bethany Stoddard, Pedar Garred, Emily Rhoades and Drama Club adviser Jodi Stewart. Missing from the photo is Ashley Mayes.

Giving thanks at St. Luke in Youngsville, St. Anthony in Sheffield

YOUNGSVILLE — Parishioners at St. Luke Parish in Youngsville gathered around the altar on Thanksgiving Eve to give thanks to God for the many blessings in their lives. They, in turn, blessed the families served by the Youngsville Ministerium Food Pantry with their generous donations during the month of November including 14 frozen turkeys.



St. Luke Parish, Youngsville

SHEFFIELD — November was a harvest of plenty at St. Anthony Parish in Sheffield. Parishioners donated food items that will benefit 100 families served by the Sheffield Area Food Pantry each month. Gathered around the altar for a Thanksgiving Eve service, people acknowledged the many blessings in their lives.



St. Anthony, Sheffield

Blessing of the brains at Immaculate Conception, Clarion

CLARION — On the eve of final exams, Clarion University students recently attended a "Blessing of the Brains" prayer service at Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarion. Students' anxiety over finals was met with words of encouragement, a gesture of blessing and the assurance of God's care and concern for them.



During the blessing, Father Monty Sayers, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish and coordinator and chaplain for Clarion University Catholic Campus Ministry, prayed over the students asking for the gifts of wisdom and right judgment for each of them. Following the service, Immaculate Conception parishioners provided a brunch for the students and gave them gift bags and cookies to encourage them as they studied.

ners provided a brunch for the students and gave them gift bags and cookies to encourage them as they studied.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Erie turns 50

ERIE — Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Erie began its year-long 50th anniversary celebration with a dinner and basket raffle Oct. 12 at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie.



More than 130 people attended the event which raised \$1,200 for the school. Student council members, representing the school, assisted at the raffle.

The school honored a number of alumni and faculty during the event. Pictured (left to right) are: (front row) Daniel Klebes '77, Jan Esser, a teacher at OLMC for 34 years, Brian Henry '98, (back row) Donald Krahe Jr. '68, Tim Nowakowski '85, Jeffrey Wisinski '03, Robert Sean Praetzel '81 and Maria Pregler, who accepted the award for her brother, Andrew Pregler '07. Sister Norma Day, CDS, who served as principal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s, was also acknowledged.

St. Marys Catholic Elementary School students collect items for orphans in Cambodia

ST. MARYS — As a service project for religion class, the first grade classes at St. Marys Catholic Elementary School collected needed items for orphans living at a mission in Cambodia. Father Stephen Jeselnick, a native of St. Marys and a retired colonel in the United States Air Force, will visit the orphanage and take the supplies to the children. Students donated clothing, gauze pads and bandages, vitamins, rosaries, Catholic medals and money to help Father Jeselnick's project to aid the orphanage.



The students at St. Marys Catholic Elementary School also placed the Cambodian children on the school's prayer list so they

will be remembered all year long. Pictured are first graders Gracee Breindel, Ella Hager, Alexander Chileski, Jordan Wasko, Kiri Emmert, Sophia Bille, Colby Nussbaum and Timothy Hetrick with items they donated.

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