



NEW NOVICES
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FaithLife



POPE TWEET

Pope Francis
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"May God bless all who work for dialogue and Christian unity."

www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

December 6, 2015

We have a winner!
Mary Ann Nicholls
St. Catherine of Siena Parish
DuBois

Mary Ann was one of 127 people who responded to FaithLife's recent contest giving away four passes to Erie's indoor water park, Splash Lagoon, compliments of FaithLife newspaper and Scott Enterprises. Her name was chosen in a random drawing of people who correctly answered the following two questions:

- 1 What does this German phrase mean?
*Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb aus deinem gottlichen Mund.*
- 2 Name the song from which this verse is found.

Judges accepted two responses for the first question:

"Son of God, love's pure light;
radiant beams from thy holy face."

or

The literal German translation:
"Son of God, o how laughs Love
from your divine mouth."

Of course, the verse is from the popular Christmas carol, "Silent Night," or "Stille Nacht," composed in 1818 by Franz Xavier Gruber to lyrics by Joseph Mohr in the small town of Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria. The song was first performed on Christmas Eve 1818 at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf.

DIOCESAN NEWS

Laudato Si' examined



Contributed photo

Benedictine Sister Dorothy Stoner, left, discusses the impact of *Laudato Si'* with Melissa Singh, faith formation director at St. Titus Parish, Titusville.

The Diocese of Erie now has available a web page that offers resources and information on Pope Francis' most recent encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home."

Erin Landini-Grogan, director of the Parish Social Ministry/Respect Life Office, recommends that everyone in the diocese learn about the environment encyclical by going to www.ErieRCD.org/justice.asp. It offers such resources as bulletin inserts, a discussion guide and the entire text of the encyclical.

"Pope Francis' encyclical is a beautiful document that calls people of all faiths to care for creation but also for one another," Landini-Grogan says.

This fall, several parishes, schools and religious communities throughout the diocese have been hosting gatherings to discuss *Laudato Si'*.

In October, ninth- and 10th-grade religious education students at St. Tobias Parish in Brockway spent an evening discussing the pope's message of sustaining a healthy and holy planet.

At St. Titus Parish in Titusville, about 50 people also met this fall to hear Benedictine Sister Dorothy Stoner discuss the encyclical and its meaning for the world today.

"Thought-provoking," said Barbara Feroz, an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Titusville, who drove from her home in Oil City to attend the presentation.

Attacks don't deter climate summit

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Catholic organizations advocating to protect the world and its people from the impact of climate change said the terror attacks in Paris had not dissuaded them from attending a major U.N. summit in the French capital.

"As awful and horrific as the terrorist attacks in Paris were, that can't stop us, because there are so many other people suffering around the world... from the impact of climate change," said Chloe Schwabe, director of the faith-economy-ecology project at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Schwabe is one of several representatives of Catholic organizations attending the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris through Dec. 11. The conference aims to limit greenhouse gas emissions with a global accord.

The representatives will relay the stories of people already feeling the effects of climate change in Oceania, Asia, Africa and Latin America, in hopes of convincing summit delegates of the need to mitigate climate change through safeguards that do not further compromise the poor.

Climate change "is still the No. 1 issue, it is still what we have to take care of," said Patrick Carolan, executive director of Franciscan Action Network. "These horrific events that happened in Paris are not going to stop us from doing what we have to do."

At the summit, U.N. member countries will be presented a climate petition signed by more than 700,000 concerned Catholics from around the globe, including many from the Diocese of Erie.

International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity, or CIDSE, an alliance of Catholic development agencies, said it was deeply affected by the attacks because many of its members are based in Paris and because the alliance is headquartered in Brussels, where some of the suspected killers allegedly originated.

"We are, of course, shocked and saddened by the events, but we are still very committed to all the activities planned around the topics of transformative change and climate justice," said Bernd Nilles, CIDSE secretary-general.

The Paris attacks killed 130 people at various locations. The French government has imposed a three-month state of emergency and canceled public concerts and rallies, including two major rallies in association with the summit, citing security concerns in light of the attacks, for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility.

Catholic organizations surmised that France's



CNS photo

The Eiffel Tower stands as a symbol of strength in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Paris and in the midst of this week's United Nations Climate Change Conference.

decision to ban the public events would negatively affect desired momentum behind the summit. That made it especially important now to encourage related rallies in other parts of the world, they said.

"While I do understand the security concerns, I am also fearful of closing down spaces for civil society to express itself. It does not look good for citizen participation and input in the process of the negotiations," said Genevieve Talbot, research and advocacy officer for Development and Peace, the official international development organization of the Catholic Church in Canada.

"It makes it all the more important to participate in local marches in our hometowns," Talbot said.

The connection between the world's climate and terrorism is up for debate, but worsening weather conditions have caused droughts, tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis and other disasters, leading people to "turn to whatever they can to get food, and in some cases that's going to mean... violence," Carolan said.

Both he and Talbot cited Syria as a place where severe water shortages had added to widespread discontent, paving the way to mass migration, war and terror.

"We do see the link between the effects of climate change and instability that can lead to terrorism. We sometimes use the case of Syria as an example, where an important drought since 2000 created huge discontent among the population. The place where the conflict started in 2011 was a part of the country that was hit the worst by the drought. There were about 200,000 migrants that were very unhappy with the way the regime was handling the situation. And now we know where things are," Talbot said, referring to Syria's civil war.

Sign the Global Catholic Climate Petition
<http://catholicclimatemovement.global/petition>



PASTORAL PLANNING

Diocese presents data on parishes

Feedback on schools being evaluated

BY MARY SOLBERG | FAITHLIFE

More than half of the 116 parishes in the Diocese of Erie report that they are "strong and vibrant," especially in the areas of sacraments and worship, according to pastoral planning data shared publicly in November.

Despite that positive news, one-third to one-half of parishes say they struggle with such things as long-range planning, technology, and faith formation and training of staff.

This disparity is at the heart of the current pastoral planning process underway in the diocese. Bishop Lawrence Persico and a broad coalition of task force members, consultants and parish and school leaders have been examining the strengths and weaknesses of diocesan outreach in its 13 counties.

"Knowledge and information are power, and the pastoral plan allows us to harness that power as a way to transform our parishes and our diocese," Bishop Persico said at pastoral planning progress sessions in Hermitage, St. Marys and Erie in November.

In April 2016, the bishop plans to announce a preliminary plan for all parishes that, he said, will include "significant restructuring." He then will accept feedback for a month before making his final plan for parishes in late summer 2016.

The meetings with parish leadership in November were designed to share findings from a period of self-study completed in all parishes over the past several



Photo by Anne-Marie Webb

Erie Bishop Lawrence Persico responds to questions from participants at a pastoral planning meeting at Queen of the World Parish, St. Marys. The bishop traveled to meetings in all three vicariates of the diocese in November, sharing information with pastors and key parish leaders.

PARISH FINDINGS

- 116 parishes
- 1/2 say they are strong, vibrant in sacraments and worship
- 1/3 to 1/2 struggle with formation, training, long-range planning, technology



months. Pastors and lay leaders were asked to evaluate parish vibrancy in 46 key areas.

"I am in the process of giving the recommendations very careful consideration. It is not something that can be taken lightly. It needs a great deal of prayer, thought and consultation," the bishop said.

Meanwhile, the bishop and school officials are studying feedback on a preliminary plan for schools, especially those in the greater Erie area that are most

affected by possible changes. Under the proposed plan, two grade schools would close and two middle schools would be established by eliminating sixth through eighth grades in five elementary schools.

Whether or not Oil City's Venango Catholic High School will remain open is another significant decision yet to be finalized.

The school plan has met with some opposition in Erie, with two Facebook pages devoted

to efforts to maintain the current K-8 format. Deacon Marty Eisert, chairperson of the Pastoral Planning Committee, said all feedback is under consideration as the bishop prepares to make his final decision on schools in February.

"I truly do empathize with where they are coming from because we share a love for Catholic schools, but the difficulties of decreased enrollment and increasing costs remain," Deacon Eisert said.

Newsmakers



Snippets of Catholic headlines and stories from around the world
from Catholic News Service

STAMP FOR THE STARS

ROME—Pope Francis is featured in one of two stamps released to mark the 80th anniversary of the Vatican Observatory in Castel Gandolfo, Italy.



CNS photo

Journalists claim freedom of press at 'VatiLeaks' trial



CNS photo

Italian journalists and authors Emiliano Fittipaldi and Gianluigi Nuzzi arrive for the first day of the 'VatiLeaks' case at the Vatican Nov. 24.

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Italian journalists standing trial in a Vatican court defended their right to freedom of the press, while the Vatican prosecution said the way they acquired confidential information was illegal.

All five people accused of involvement in leaking and publishing confidential documents about Vatican finances were present at the opening of the criminal trial in a Vatican courtroom Nov. 24.

The accused are: Spanish Msgr. Lucio Angel Vallejo Balda, secretary of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See; Francesca Chacouqui, a member of the former Pontifical Commission for Reference on the Organization of the Economic-Administrative Structure of the Holy See; Nicola Maio, who served as personal assistant to Msgr. Vallejo Balda when he worked on the commission; and journalists Gianluigi Nuzzi, author of *Merchants in the Temple*, and Emiliano Fittipaldi, author of *Asarica*.

Dorothy Day's granddaughter urges Catholics to act for justice

DERWOOD, Md. (CNS)—Dorothy Day's granddaughter Martha Hennessy, 60, discussed promoting peace and helping the poor during a presentation Nov. 21 at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Derwood, Md.

Her observations to a group of about 50 people were not just sentimental musings of her grandmother, who founded the Catholic Worker Movement and is a candidate for sainthood. Rather, they challenge Catholics to assume their responsibility to respond to violence, poverty and wars.

As one of Day's nine grandchildren, she spoke candidly about her grandmother, who was once quoted as saying, "Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed so easily." Hennessy is confident, however, that Day would be "great with the idea" now.

According to Hennessy, the church needs Day's example as a laywoman, mother and grandmother who lived her faith intentionally.



Editor's Notes
Mary SOLBERG

Somewhere between seeing Pope Francis in Philadelphia and sending my second son off to college this fall, I began to embrace the concept of conviviality.

Conviviality, according to the pope, is an attitude of sharing the goods of life and of being happy to do so. Its symbol, or icon, is a family gathered around the dinner table.

"Conviviality," Pope Francis said, "is a sure thermometer for measuring the health of relations. If in the family there is a problem or a hidden trouble, you understand immediately at the table. A family that almost never eats together, or does not talk at the table but instead watches the television, or smartphones, is not a close family."

In my home, we have dinner together most every night, in between our busy schedules of work, school and sports. And we do have a rule: no television or cell phones while eating.

But I think conviviality is what's most interesting about sharing meals. You set aside time to talk about anything—not only the day's events, but politics and movies—or to tell a worn-out joke that only the family understands...for the 50th time.

I would take the pope's concept of conviviality past the dinner table, though. This fall, I signed up my husband and sons, one of their girlfriends, and me for an outing to Peek'n Peak's adventure course in nearby Clymer, N.Y. And on Thanksgiving Day, we all went to the annual Turkey Trot at Presque Isle State Park.

Like many families whose children are into their teens and young adult years, we sometimes find it easier to let everyone go their own way. But drawing

everyone close for a shared activity—even if it means dangling from a zip line over a mountain—is a kind of glue that strengthens us.

As we approach the holidays, remember that conviviality, as the pope says, can't be bought or sold. It's pure gift.

◆ ◆ ◆
Congratulations to St. Michael School in Greenville whose annual reverse raffle at the Knights of Columbus last month brought in about \$5,000. Angie Surano chaired the event, with the help of many parents and volunteers, including Surano's father, Vince Cardamon, who was the master of ceremonies. Teacher Patrick Matusz served as the disc jockey.

◆ ◆ ◆
The Northwest Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals recently honored several people for their philanthropic efforts.

Among the honorees was Father Leo Gallina, sacramental assistant at St. Boniface Church, Erie. He was awarded the chapter's first-ever humanitarian award for "personifying philanthropy through his acts of joy, humility and compassion."

It's been a big year for the beloved priest, who also was named Outstanding Priest by the Serra Club of Erie last spring.

◆ ◆ ◆
In this space last month, we published a photo of the Villa Maria Academy varsity soccer team praying at the grotto at the Prep and Villa Events Center in Erie.

Prayers and a lot of talent led them to Hershey, Pa., for their pre-Thanksgiving state soccer championship win over District 1's Villa Joseph Marie.

Villa Maria sophomore midfielder Kylie Frantz made the only goal, while goalie Emma Shimke and the rest of the team helped ensure the 1-0 victory.

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HAPPY ST. NICHOLAS DAY—DEC. 6 Jesus and Santa meet in new book

BY MARY SOLBERG | FAITHLIFE

Even Santa Claus might not know what to get a baby for Christmas, especially if that baby is the Christ Child.

But, naturally, it doesn't take St. Nick long to create the perfect present in CarolAnne Socash's new Christmas book, *Santa's Gift*, self-published in April 2015 by WestBow Press.

Socash, 62, is the wife of Deacon Dennis Socash, who ministers in the Clearfield County parishes of St. Agnes, St. Peter and Paul, and Immaculate Conception. From nearby Winburne, she penned the book under the name Kathryn Sokac, a combination of her confirmation name and the original Slovak spelling of Socash.

"God could have given this story to anybody so I feel so blessed to have been chosen to tell it," Socash says.

Santa's Gift was about 20 years in the making. Socash first started writing the story after being inspired by the 1976 Raymond Gauer sculpture of Santa kneeling before the baby Jesus. How would Santa come to know about this savior, she wondered?

So, she put pen to paper to describe how an angel visited Santa Claus in the days before the "Winter Holiday." A savior would be born, the

angel announced, and his name would be Jesus.

Santa created a porcelain angel with feathers as wings, but in all the excitement leading up to his worldwide tour of gift-giving, he forgot to pack the present for Jesus.

Led by a brilliant star, Santa soon discovered the newborn Christ Child, swaddled in a manger and surrounded by Mary, Joseph, shepherds and kings. Although he felt sad to have forgotten his gift, Santa was consoled by Mary, who told him, "By your presence here, you have already given Him the best gifts that can never be replaced: the gifts of love and of yourself."

Two decades ago, Socash sent her story to Gauer, the "Kneeling Santa" sculptor.

"He said it was a beautiful story, but that I should keep it simple and cut down on dialogue. He actually gave me his blessing," Socash remembers.

Gauer died in 1997 and the story got stuffed in a closet after several foiled attempts at publication. But about a year ago, WestBow Press contacted Socash, asking what happened to her idea. After much prayer, Deacon Socash surprised his wife by withdrawing funds from the couple's credit union to fund publication of *Santa's Gift*.

"I just said, 'You need to get your story told,'" Deacon Socash says.

The story line, he says, is where fiction meets



reality. The sometimes crazy gift-giving season comes full force into the face of the newborn Jesus.

"It's the real reason for the season. The focus is back on the Christ Child," Deacon Socash says.

This Christmas promises to be a dream-come-true for CarolAnne Socash, who plans to autograph her book and hand-deliver copies to her three adult children and five grandchildren, ages 8 to 16, who live in Ohio and in Virginia Beach. Her daughter, Michelle McIntosh, is the book's illustrator.

She hopes the message will spread: "St. Nicholas still represents love and giving and joy. And those are all of the things that Jesus gives as well."

Santa's Gift is available online.

Men's Conference scheduled for 2016 More than 600 attend Women's Conference

More than 600 women attended this fall's Women's Conference at the Warner Theatre in Erie, and plans already are underway for the third annual Men's Conference this spring.

Both conferences are offered by The Reason for Our Hope Foundation, Erie.

According to Mary Therese Menger, chairperson of the Women's Conference, the second annual gathering represented a core group of women interested in living year-round what they learned in the half-day event. Nearly 200 women signed up for a six-week book study program to be held every week from January through February.

Bishop Lawrence Persico offered Mass and spoke of Mary's role in changing the course of history. "Mary reveals herself as the first and greatest disciple and provides a model that all subsequent disciples must follow," the bishop said.

The third annual Erie Men's Conference, presented by 2332 MEN, a nonprofit group of men of faith in the Diocese of Erie, is set for March 12, 2016. The conference will be held at the Warner.

Bishop Persico is scheduled to attend and preside over the opening ceremonies and closing Mass. Cost for the half-day conference is \$40 and includes lunch and free parking. For more information or to register, visit www.2322men.com.

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EVENTS

Bishop to open Holy Door Dec. 12

ERIE—Bishop Lawrence Persico officially begins the Holy Year of Mercy in the Diocese of Erie with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter Cathedral on Saturday, Dec. 12, at the 4 p.m. Mass.

The faithful of the diocese are encouraged to attend the Mass. There will be an opportunity for pilgrims to pass through the Holy Door afterward. Confessions will be available.

The following is the full list of sites for Holy Doors in the Diocese of Erie: St. Peter Cathedral, Erie; Our Lady of Mercy, Harborcreek; Divine Mercy Chapel at St. Bernard Parish, Bradford; St. Michael, Greenville; Ss. Cosmas and Damian, Punxsutawney; Sacred Heart, St. Marys; and St. Joseph, Warren.



Requesting your 'Presence for Christmas'

ERIE—Journey to the heart of Christmas with uplifting stories, song and Eucharistic Adoration by candlelight at the annual "Presence for Christmas" program Dec. 2 and Dec. 16 at St. George Church, Erie.

The event begins both days at 7 p.m., with confessions available beginning at 6:30 p.m. Fellowship follows each event. Music will be provided by Daniel Cahanillas and the Made2Worship Band. A free will offering will be taken both days to benefit Maria House Project, Erie. Contact Linda at ImageTrinity.com or call 814-490-3160 with questions.

Mercyhurst North East offers holiday concert

NORTH EAST—The Mercyhurst North East Cultural Series will feature "Herald the Season!" in the St. Mary's Chapel at Mercyhurst North East campus Dec. 9 at 7 p.m.

Ring in the holiday season with the Mercyhurst University Concert Choir and *Carpe Diem* Women, under the direction of Rebecca Ryan. A cookie and punch reception will follow.

The concert is free and open to the public; reservations are not required. For more information, call 814-725-6277.

Follow the Star 2015 makes the rounds

ERIE—The Follow the Star Christmas Tour 2015, featuring Tennessee Backporch, will be held this month at St. Jude the Apostle Parish and St. Peter Cathedral, both in Erie.

At both events, there will be a special appearance by the Villa Maria Show Choir, The Treblemakers.

Follow the Star will be held first at St. Peter Cathedral Dec. 6 at 4 p.m. Tickets for this event may be purchased at the St. Peter Cathedral rectory or at the door. For information, call 814-453-6677.

At St. Jude, the program will be held Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. The program also will feature the talents of students from Our Lady's Christian School, Erie.

Tickets for both events cost \$15 for adults and \$5 for students.

International opera singer to perform at DCC

DuBOIS—DuBois Central Catholic High School is hosting opera singer Emily Righter at a concert Dec. 6 at 2 p.m.

Righter has performed in Europe and in the United States to rave reviews for her voice and artistry. Select students and faculty will join Righter on various pieces that emphasize the Christmas season.

To reserve tickets, call the school office at 814-371-3060, ext. 601. Tickets also will be available at the door. The cost is \$5 for students; \$20 for adults. The event is open to the public.

Benedictine Sisters to share Advent reflections

HARBORCREEK—The Benedictine Sisters of Erie are hosting Advent vigils in the chapel at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie.

The final vigils will be held Dec. 12, with Sister Cecilia Sullivan, OSB, giving the reflection, and Dec. 19, with Sister Mary Lou Kowacki, OSB, offering her reflection. The public is invited to attend both events, beginning at 7 p.m.

Benedictines welcome oblates, novices

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie enjoyed a busy fall by welcoming 15 oblate initiates and two novices.

In October, 15 initiates into the Oblate Way of Life were welcomed in an Oblate Commitment Ceremony at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie. Oblates are lay persons, single or married, who seek a deeper experience of God by entering a distinct relationship with a Benedictine monastic community. They choose to live a life based on the Rule of Benedict and make a formal commitment to Benedictine prayer and values.

Currently, there are 287 women and men who are committed to the Oblate Way of Life with the Erie Benedictines.

On Nov. 1, the Benedictines also received postulants Dina Lauricella and Karen Oprenhok into the novitiate at an evening service. The novitiate is the second stage of monastic formation. Lauricella and Oprenhok will experience a year of intense prayer and study. They will minister within the monastery.

Lauricella is a former motorcycle safety instructor from Lusby, Md., and Oprenhok is a former office worker for the Canadian Federal Government. She is from Windsor, Ontario, Canada.



Contributed photos

Above: New oblate initiates with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie are pictured in the front row, from left: Colleen Ahearn of Harborcreek; Mary Hembrow-Snyder of Erie; Neal Mosher of Burlington, Ontario, Canada; and Jacqueline Small of Princeton, N.J. In the back row, from left, are: Josh Kissel of Erie; Kate Dougherty of Concord, Calif.; Nancy Leatherman of Lima, Ohio; Mary Ann Matlock of Erie; Joan Eighmey of Pittsfield, Pa.; and Mary Sullivan of Youngsville, Pa.

Not present were: Pam Erdely of Pittsburgh; Helen Kakic of San Diego, Calif.; Helen Moczarski of Lima, Ohio; James Rosati of Bridgewater, N.J.; and Carol Vaccariello of Medina, Ohio.



Karen Oprenhok, left, and Dina Lauricella are new novices with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

OBITUARY

Sister Maura Smith, RSM

Sister Maura left significant imprint on education

Sister Maura Smith, Ph.D., a highly respected educator and administrator who served as president of Mercyhurst Prep and of the Sisters of Mercy in Erie, died Nov. 13. A Sister of Mercy for 69 years, she was 89 years old.

Born in Buffalo, N.Y., she was baptized Mary Joan, a daughter of the late Edwin Leo and Eleanor Catherine (Oehler) Smith.

In 1946, she entered the Sisters of Mercy at St. Joseph Convent, Titusville, from Immaculate Conception Parish, East Aurora, N.Y. She professed perpetual vows on June 22, 1952.

Sister Maura earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Mercyhurst University, Erie; a master's degree in biology and curriculum from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.; and a doctorate in educational instruction with a science concentration from the University of Florida, where she also studied medicine.

She was a dedicated educator and administrator, having served at the following Catholic elementary schools in the dioceses of Erie and Pittsburgh: St. Catherine, DuBois; St. Titus, Titusville; St. Michael, Greenville; and St. Justin, Pittsburgh. She was principal of St. Michael School and taught at the high school level in DuBois and Pittsburgh, as well as at Ss. Cosmas and Damian in Punxsutawney. Also, she was principal of Mercyhurst Prep, Erie, from 1977-87. For more than two decades, she remained an engaged member of the Mercyhurst University board of trustees, helping to launch many of its sustainability initiatives.

Sister Maura founded Mercyhurst University's environmental studies department, for which she served as a professor and chairperson.

From 1987-96, Sister Maura was president of the Erie Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy. After taking a sabbatical as an associate in housing at the McAuley Institute, Silver Spring, Md., she returned to Erie and spent her later years educating civic groups on building better, healthier com-

munities and developing Mercy Center for Women and the House of Mercy.

Her years of engagement earned her much recognition: Mercyhurst University awarded her Alumnae of the Year Award (1998), The Archbishop Oscar Romero Award (2006), and the Sustainability Award (2009). Mercy Center for Women honored her as a Women Making History (2000). Mercyhurst Prep dedicated its newly renovated science department to her in 2007, and named her an honorary alumna in 2013.

Besides her parents, she was preceded in death by her brothers Thomas and Leo Smith; and sisters Veronica (Ronnie) Lucas and Kathy Smith. Survivors include members of her religious community, her sister Eleanor (Sally) Conroy of Cleveland, and many nieces and nephews.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated in the Sisters of Mercy chapel at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Erie. Burial was at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Erie.

Memorials may be made to the Sisters of Mercy Ministry Fund, 444 East Grandview Blvd., Erie, PA 16504.



Sister Maura Smith, RSM

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Eighth-graders attend retreat at prayer walkway



BROCKWAY—Eighth-graders from St. Tobias Parish in Brockway attended a retreat in October at the interfaith memorial prayer walkway in nearby Weedville. After meditation and reflection activities, they helped clean up the walkway and area around the large cross at the top of the hill.

National Vocation Awareness Week celebrated in diocese



FRENCHTOWN—Father Michael Polinek, vocations director for the Diocese of Erie, celebrated the opening of National Vocation Awareness Week Nov. 1 with students and parishioners of St. Hippolyte Church, Frenchtown, and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission, Cochranton. Father Polinek celebrated all of the Masses in the parish that weekend. More than 100 parishioners attended a lunch prepared by the parish men's club, and Father Polinek shared his own faith journey to the priesthood. Pictured are: Father Michael Polinek; Father Daniel Prez, parochial administrator at St. Hippolyte/Our Lady of Lourdes; and students and catechists who attended the presentation.

Kennedy students help 'Coats for Kids'



HERMITAGE—Students in the Kennedy Catholic Family of Schools in Hermitage helped the Hermitage Rotary Club raise money for its "Coats for Kids" campaign. Students who donated money were permitted to wear shirts of their favorite college football team. A total of \$209 was donated. The project was organized by the PTO at St. John Paul II Elementary School, but students from all grade levels participated. Pictured are first-graders in Katie Tiefenthal's class.

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It's all about hair at St. Luke School

ERIE—St. Luke School was in need of a new freezer for its cafeteria, so it decided to use funds from the Erie Community Foundation's Erie Gives Day and to challenge the parish and school community to raise the rest.

If \$10,000 was raised, Father Tom Trocchio, parochial vicar, would shave off his beard and mustache. If \$15,000 was raised, Father John Malthaner, pastor, would shave off his mustache, which he has had for 30-plus years. If \$30,000 was raised, then JoAnn Scheppner, advancement director, would dye green stripes in her hair. If \$40,000 was raised, then Karen Beer, principal, would dye her hair green. All the goals were achieved.

Pictured after the shaving and hair-dyeing, in the front row, are: second-graders **Melody Desuah, Natalie Spano, Jenna Johnson** and **Chloe**



Hess. In the back row are: **Russ Warner**, chairman of the board of the Erie Community Foundation; **Father Tom Trocchio**, **Father John Malthaner**, **Karen Beer**, **JoAnn Scheppner**, and **Michael Batchelor**, president of the Erie Community Foundation.

St. Michael's welcomes grandparents



GREENVILLE—St. Michael School in Greenville recently hosted its annual grandparent breakfast for students in pre-K through eighth grade. Students attended Mass with grandparents and other family members, and then enjoyed refreshments and entertainment at Lateran Hall. Many grandparents also took time to visit classrooms and enjoy crafts and games. **Sarah Williams** is pictured here with her grandchildren, seventh-grader **Hunter Blatt**, fifth-grader **Macy Blatt**, and kindergarten **Miley Blatt**.

Robotics team claims first-place honors



DuBOIS—The robotics team from DuBois Central Catholic earned the title of "best overall team" at the Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology Robotics Competition at Penn State-DuBois Oct. 24. The team, pictured here with advisers and family members, now will travel to Fargo, N.D., for a regional competition. It is the second year in a row that the DuBois Catholic team won top honors at the competition.

More than \$200 raised for shelter



ERIE—Our Lady's Christian School in Erie held a dress-down day in October to benefit Erie's ANNA Shelter, an association for needy and neglected animals. Students raised \$242.87 in monetary gifts. Pictured are: **Bella the Boxer**; **Stephen Nemenz**, principal; students **Ireland Kaercher**, **Spencer Kanne**, **William Agresti** and **Cecilia Veres**; ANNA Shelter representative **Brian Carroll**; and **Allie** the golden retriever.

Knights raise money for tuition help



CONNEAUT LAKE—The Conneaut Lake-Linesville Knights of Columbus Council #6037 recently presented a check for \$2,000 to Seton Catholic School. The funds are set aside to defray tuition expenses for parishioners at Our Lady Queen of the Americas whose children attend Seton. Making the presentation are Deputy Grand Knight **Don Schralf**, Grand Knight **John Skendall**, Seton Principal **Julia Strzalka**, and Advancement Director **Jamie Longo**.

For pastoral outreach and assistance for those abused by clergy or other church personnel, call



Doctor Robert Nelsen
Victim Assistance Coordinator
for the Diocese of Erie
814.451.1521 (This is a dedicated number for victim assistance.)

For more information, visit www.ErieRCD.org click on *For the Protection of Children*

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