

## Beyond the veil

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# FaithLife

## The humanity of every unborn child

Amy B. Hill looks at Pennsylvania's abortion statistics, page 3.



www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

February 1, 2009

## Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

### Feast days



Presentation of the Lord



Our Lady of Lourdes

Jan. 31	St. John Bosco
Feb. 2	Presentation of the Lord
Feb. 3	St. Blaise, St. Ansgar
Feb. 5	St. Agatha
Feb. 6	St. Paul Miki & companions
Feb. 10	St. Scholastica
Feb. 11	Our Lady of Lourdes
Feb. 14	St. Cyril & St. Methodius

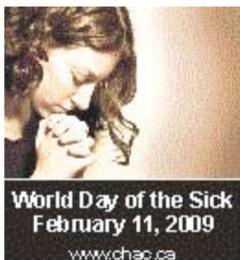
## World Day for Consecrated Life – Feb. 2

In 1997, Pope John Paul II declared Feb. 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, to be observed as World Day for Consecrated Life. This annual celebration highlights persons who are consecrated to Christ by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The day offers the opportunity to thank God for the gift of consecrated life, to promote knowledge of the life, to invite consecrated people to celebrate what the Lord has accomplished in them and to acquire more awareness of their mission in the church and in the world.



## World Day of the Sick – Feb. 11

World Day of the Sick is celebrated every year on February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is an opportunity for the ill and those who minister to them to reflect on the Christian meaning of suffering. This day also invites those involved in health care to reflect on the roots of their healing mission.



## Mass for the Year of St. Paul – Feb. 15

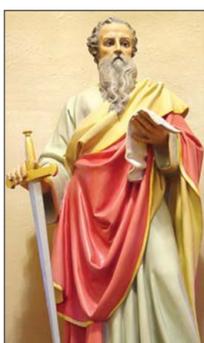
Bishop Donald Trautman will celebrate the 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Feb. 15 at St. Leo Parish in Ridgway for the Year of St. Paul.

Pope Benedict XVI has dedicated a special jubilee year to St. Paul from June 28, 2008 through June 29, 2009, to mark the approximately 2,000th anniversary of the saint's birth.

St. Leo in Ridgway and St. Paul in Erie are two churches that have been selected as pilgrimage destinations in the Erie Diocese during the Year of St. Paul.

Each location has a simple shrine to St. Paul and provides pilgrims with a prayer booklet which can be used individually or in a group setting when visiting the church outside of scheduled Mass times. A plenary indulgence is also attached to these pilgrimages.

The diocesan Web site [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org) lists a compilation of materials and resources that are recommended, including pamphlets, books and prayer services, as well as links to the U.S. bishops' resource page.



# Helping hands

## Area agencies see increased need for emergency services

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

The news on the economy and job market seems to be going from bad to worse.

Pennsylvania officials recently announced that job losses climbed to an 18-year high in 2008 with workers losing 76,000 jobs. The state's unemployment rate is currently the highest it's been since 1994.

Agencies affiliated with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie have seen an increase in the number of clients and the need for the emergency services they provide. And while the need is great, area directors say their agencies will continue to serve as best they can.

"The economy is not good

and people are afraid to spend what they have," said Deacon Tony Indelicato, director of Good Samaritan Center in Clearfield. "And then there's the threat that people feel they're going to lose their job."

Indelicato said he's recently seen an increase in layoffs at area factories and the closing of several family owned restaurants.

Good Samaritan provides counseling and financial assistance along with transitional housing for men who are unemployed or homeless.

"We have 11 guys staying with us right now, and the average is about eight," Indelicato said.

The greatest need, he said, is for assistance with utility bills such as gas and electric.

"People are asking for help," he said. "We probably have had more people request furniture, too."

Good Samaritan also operates a used furniture store where donated furniture is

refurbished and sold with proceeds going toward the operating costs of the center.

Financial donations to the center are at normal levels, Indelicato said, but furniture donations are down.

"A lot of people are coming in looking for furniture that we don't have," he said. "The need seems to be growing."

St. Elizabeth Center in Oil City operates a food pantry, clothes closet and thrift shop.

In the third quarter of 2008, the number of people signing up for the center's services was up 32 percent over those in 2007, said Deacon Tim Wren, director of the center.

"We've seen a tremendous increase in the number of people needing food and shopping at the thrift store," Wren said.

In the last three months, the center's thrift shop has averaged \$1,000 in sales each month. In previous months, sales topped between \$500 and \$600.

"All the items we sell are donated, and they typically go for \$1 for a shirt or a pair of pants," Wren said. "Our prices haven't gone up, so people

See AGENCIES, page 3

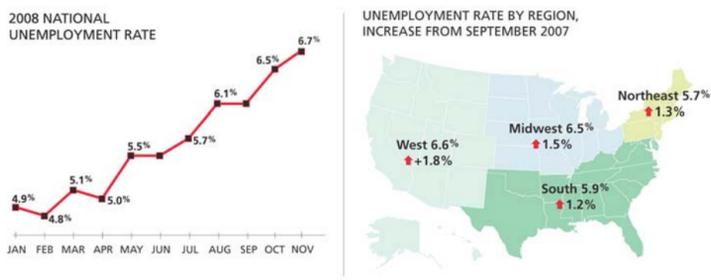


Citing a poor economy and job market, affiliates of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie report an increase in the number of clients they serve. Food pantries

and thrift stores, including St. Elizabeth Center in Oil City, are doing the best they can to keep items on the shelves.

## Rising Unemployment

The U.S. unemployment rate has risen to more than 6 percent, the highest level since 1993.



# March for Life

## Hundreds from Erie Diocese join national march in Washington

By Anne-Marie Welsh  
FaithLife executive editor

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of people from throughout the Erie Diocese attended the 36th annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., just two days after the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama. Students and parishioners from Erie, DuBois, Greenville, Grove City, Meadville and St. Marys—most likely other towns as well—made the trek to the nation's capitol to let the new president know they disagreed with his stance on abortion.

More than 85 people from Erie—many of them youth from St. Joseph Parish/Bread of Life Community—began their journey around 9 p.m. the night before the march, when they gathered for Mass and adoration at St. Mark Seminary.

The group arrived at the Verizon Center in downtown Washington at 6:30 a.m., just in time to secure a place at the national youth rally and Mass for Life attended by approximately 20,000 people. Newly elected Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper stopped by to share encouraging words with the marchers from Erie before the rally got under way at 7:30 a.m.

Pilgrims from the Erie Diocese, including many youth, joined the crowd of 100,000 at the 36th annual March for Life in Washington.



After a morning that included confessions, the rosary, meditations led by Steve Angrisano and the band, Who Do You Say I Am as well as Mass led by Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington, attendees streamed out of the arena to join the crowd estimated at 100,000. They marched up Constitution Avenue and around the back of the Capitol Building, passing the Supreme Court. By the time the earliest marchers returned to the starting point, many marchers were just getting to

the starting point. Among the highlights of the day was a message from Pope Benedict XVI read to those attending the youth rally:

"The Holy Father encourages young people to make their voices heard in addressing this burning moral and social issue with honesty and integrity," he said, "working as wise and committed citizens for the building of a truly just and humane society, in which every member of the human family is allowed to share in the banquet of life."



## Speakers highlight pro-life prayer breakfasts

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

Nearly 600 people attended the 31st annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast sponsored by People for Life Jan. 17 at the Ambassador Conference Center in Erie.

Ramesh Ponnuru, senior editor for *National Review* magazine and author of "Party of Death," was the keynote speaker.

"The pro-life movement right now is at a perilous juncture," Ponnuru told the crowd. "The incoming president favors legal abortion at every stage of pregnancy and favors its support by taxpayers. He opposes providing legal protection to infants who survive early-term abortions. He has pledged to nominate judges who support the legal regime of Roe v. Wade, and he's joined by a congress that probably has a record number of supporters of abortion."

He pointed to a potential upside in the pro-life movement including a reduction in the abortion rate, a shift in popular attitudes toward abortion and the passage of what he called some modest pro-life laws.

"The lesson I think is simple," Ponnuru said. "The more marginal a practice abortion becomes, the fewer supporters it will have."



Ramesh Ponnuru

Photojournalist Michael Clancy was the keynote speaker for Pro-Life of Mercer County's annual pro-life breakfast Jan. 17 at the Hickory VFW in Hermitage.

Clancy is known for his "Baby Samuel" photo.

In 1999, Clancy was hired by *USA Today* to photograph a spinal bifida corrective surgical procedure. It was to be performed on a 21-week-old fetus in-utero at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. At the time, it was the earliest a surgical team would consider an in-utero surgical procedure.

During the surgery, the child reached out of the womb and grasped the hand of the surgeon. Clancy captured the event on film and has subsequently shared the image along with his conversion story to tens of thousands of people throughout the United States.

## Clergy appointments



The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL, Bishop of Erie, announces the following clergy appointment:

Father Stephen Anderson, appointed ecumenical officer for the Western Vicariate of the Erie Diocese for a term of five years.



Youth attended Mass at St. Mark Catholic Center's chapel (above) in Erie Jan. 21 before heading to the national youth rally and Mass for Life (right) Jan. 22 in Washington



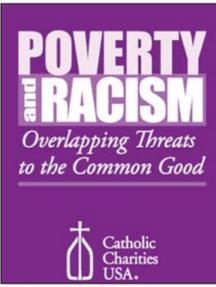


## IN THE U.S.

■ An apostolic visitation team concluded that U.S. Catholic seminaries and houses of priestly formation are generally healthy, but recommended a stronger focus on moral theology, increased oversight of seminarians and greater involvement of diocesan bishops in the formation process. "This visitation has demonstrated that, since the 1990s, a greater sense of stability now prevails in the U.S. seminaries," the report said. "The appointment, over time, of rectors who are wise and faithful to the church has meant a gradual improvement, at least in the diocesan seminaries." The report, dated Dec. 15, was published on the Web site of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)) to coincide with National Vocation Awareness Week, which began Jan. 12.



■ As part of its continuing nationwide campaign to cut poverty in half by 2020, Catholic Charities USA is ramping up efforts to help people understand the ties between poverty and racism. Precious Blood Father Clarence Williams, senior director of racial equality and diversity initiatives at Catholic Charities USA, said Catholics must begin to understand the depth of poverty and take significant steps to alleviate it across



racial lines. "We're showing how blacks are overrepresented in the poor," he said. On Jan. 15 Catholic Charities introduced a section on its Web site ([www.catholiccharitiesusa.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org)) that will help parishes, prayer groups and study circles open the conversation about race and poverty. Called "E Pluribus Unum," the online resource offers discussion points, prayer and Scripture readings.

■ The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has pledged that he and his fellow prelates will work with the administration of President Barack Obama and the 111th Congress to "advance the common good and defend the life and dignity of all, especially the vulnerable and poor." In a Jan. 13 letter to the then-president-elect, Chicago Cardinal Francis George offered a broad outline of policy priorities that concern the U.S. bishops, ranging from economic recovery that covers all segments of society to protecting the lives of the "most vulnerable and voiceless members of the human family," especially unborn children. Cardinal George reminded Obama that the bishops approach public policy as pastors and teachers and that the moral principles that guide them have been developed through their experience in caring for people in need.

## AROUND THE WORLD

■ The traditional U.S. model of church-state relations has been praised by Pope Benedict XVI as a form of "healthy secularism," but it risks being eroded by those who want to limit religion's influence in public life, speakers at a Rome conference said. The conference Jan. 13 marked the 25th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the United States and the Holy See. It was the last of a series of five encounters sponsored over the past year by the U.S. Embassy to the Vatican on the theme of religious liberty. The U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, Mary Ann Glendon, introduced the program by pointing out that there are competing models of religious freedom in the United States, and that the future direction of church-state relations

is a subject of intense debate. Speakers agreed that there are persistent efforts in the United States to restrict religion to the private sphere — something not intended by the framers of the Constitution.

## PEOPLE OF FAITH

■ Father Richard John Neuhaus, a former Lutheran minister who became a Catholic priest and a staunch defender of church teaching on abortion and other life issues, died Jan. 8. He was 72. The founder and editor in chief of the journal *First Things*, Father Neuhaus had been diagnosed with cancer in late November. A native of Pembroke, Ontario, he often was invited to lecture and participate in panel discussions on religion in the contemporary world. His views on abortion, stem-cell research, cloning and social issues contributed greatly to Catholic and other religious discourse on politics and society.



Father Richard John Neuhaus

■ Italian Cardinal Pio Laghi, a former Vatican nuncio to the United States who tried to convince President George W. Bush not to invade Iraq in 2003, died Jan. 10 at the age of 86. Cardinal Laghi had been suffering from a blood disorder. Cardinal Laghi was a seasoned Vatican diplomat who spent a total of 17 years in the United States, first as an assistant to papal representatives in the late 1950s, then as the Vatican representative. When the Vatican and the United States established full diplomatic relations in 1984, he was named the first apostolic nuncio.



Cardinal Pio Laghi

## By the Way...

Just to clarify our headline and story on Villa Maria Academy and Cathedral Prep in the Jan. 18 issue: Boys currently enrolled at Villa will have the opportunity to continue their education and graduate from Villa. For the incoming freshman class and all future classes, only girls will be enrolled at Villa and only boys will be enrolled at Prep.



Jason Koshinski

"We just want to make sure that the boys who are currently enrolled at Villa know that they are welcome here," said Gerri Cicchetti, president of Villa Maria Academy.

There are 62 boys currently enrolled at Villa.

The Erie Diocese announced Jan. 7 that in an effort to ensure Catholic secondary education for students of the Erie area, Villa and Prep will operate as a co-institutional school with two separate campuses.

The Runnin' Revs, the diocese's basketball team consisting of priests, deacons and seminarians, recently completed an undefeated winter schedule. The Revs travel throughout the diocese to promote the priesthood. At each stop, the team plays a game against the local parochial CYO teams of high school students. Each game is followed by prayer, a presentation on the priesthood and sharing of vocation stories by the priests themselves.

The Runnin' Revs came out on the winning end of some highly competitive games at packed gyms at Mount Carmel School in Erie, Elk County Catholic High School in St. Marys and St. Michael School in Greenville.

St. George Parish in Erie will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2009. Throughout the year, [www.stgeorge50.com](http://www.stgeorge50.com) will be filled with stories and a schedule of special events.

The Catholic Schools Office is looking for substitute teachers who would like to sub in a Catholic school. If you have a bachelor's degree in any field from an accredited college or university and would like to sub in a Catholic School, contact Kim Lytle, director of teacher personnel, at 814.824.1248 or e-mail [klytle@eriercd.org](mailto:klytle@eriercd.org). A completed application and clearances will be needed. Training is provided. Certified teachers who are now retired or not working are also urged to call.

Jason Koshinski is editor of *FaithLife*. Contact him at [JKoshinski@ErieRCD.org](mailto:JKoshinski@ErieRCD.org) or 814.824.1171.



By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

## Beyond the veil

## Debate continues on why number of nuns is declining

Photo by CNS

Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre poses in Aix-en-Provence, France.

VATICAN CITY — Statistics leave no doubt that the number of women religious has dropped sharply over the last 50 years, but there is an ongoing debate over the reasons for the decline.

The question surfaced recently when *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, asked one priest to review another priest's book about the phenomenon.

Italian Claretian Father Angelo Pardilla, author of "Religious Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," said the principal cause for the decline was that many religious misunderstood the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and lost a sense of their identity.

He cited as proof the fact that the number of vowed religious — both men and women — has dropped sharply since Vatican II, except in the contemplative orders that still wear habits and live with a regimented community life.

But Father Giancarlo Rocca, a scholar of the history of religious orders, questioned Father Pardilla's thesis in the review he wrote for the Vatican newspaper.

Father Rocca agreed with Father Pardilla that factors contributing to the de-

cline include materialism, secularism, the anti-authority movement of the late 1960s and declining family size.

But he said a misreading of the Second Vatican Council could not be the prime culprit, because in many places the num-

ber of women religious has declined.

Previously, he said, the socially approved options for women were either to marry and have children or join a religious order. He said it was no surprise that the orders hardest hit were those founded to teach or to nurse — two professions previously open only to unmarried women.

Sister Carol Regan, the superior general of the Holy Union of the Sacred Hearts and a member of the executive council of the International Union of Superiors General, said, "It is too facile to attribute it (falling numbers) solely to a misreading of Vatican II."

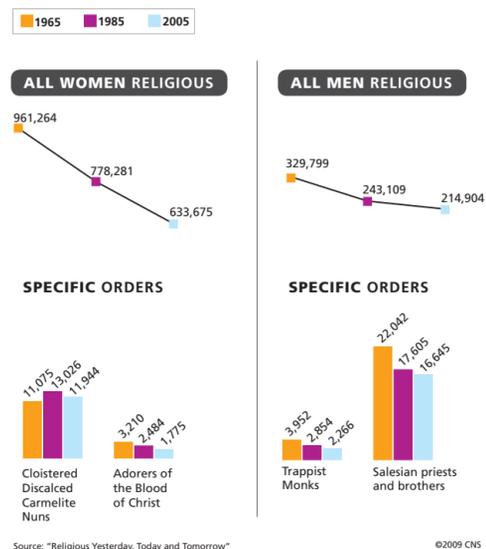
For the Holy Union, which was particularly strong in France and Belgium, "the drop-off of new entrants began in the 1950s, perhaps even the late 1940s, in other words, after World War II with all the horror that brought to continental Europe," she said. The women's movement and the broader choices it gave women also obviously contributed to changed attitudes about religious life, she said.

Sister Regan said her order has about half the members it had in 1965, but is growing in Africa, especially in Cameroon and Tanzania.

"Our congregation leadership will come soon, very soon, from the Southern Hemisphere and all of us have to be prepared to welcome that," she said.

## Declining World Religious

Statistics gathered by Italian Claretian Father Angelo Pardilla show definite decline of men and women religious.



bers began to drop in the 1930s, long before the council opened in 1962. For Father Rocca, the key is the eman-

## Gallup finds two-thirds see religion's influence on the decline

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Two-thirds of Americans see religion as having a declining influence on U.S. society, marking one of the lowest ratings in the five decades since the Gallup Poll first began asking the question.

The 67 percent of U.S. adults who said "religion as a whole" was losing its influence on American life in a poll released Dec. 23 was exceeded only by the 75 percent who saw a declining influence in 1970, at the height of the Vietnam War, and the 69 percent who saw such a decline in 1994, during the first term of President Bill Clinton.

"After a long period of doubt about the influence of religion during the Vietnam War era — from 1965 through 1975 — a December 1976 Gallup Poll found nearly as many Americans saying religion was increasing in influence, as disagreed (44 percent vs. 45 percent)," said a report on the survey by Lydia Saad, Gallup Poll senior editor.

"This relative high point for perceptions that religion was on the rise could have been associated with the election a month earlier of Jimmy Carter as president, an avowed born-again Christian," she added.

The high point for those who said religion was increasing its influence came in December 2001, three months after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsyl-

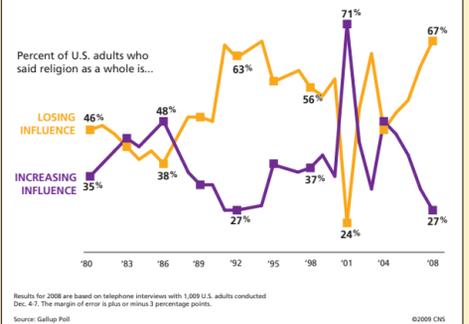
vania, when 71 percent of Americans saw a rise in religion's influence.

Saad said "this measure of public perceptions about religion has been quite volatile" since Gallup first asked the question in 1957, "with shifts in perception often corresponding to major political events."

In the December 2008 survey, the view that religion was losing its influence was higher among men than women (70 percent to 64 percent).

## Religion's Influence on American Life

Two-thirds of Americans think religion is losing its influence on American life. Over the years, opinions on this topic have been volatile, with changes corresponding to major political or historical events.



Among those who attend religious services weekly, 74 percent saw a decline in religion's influence, compared to 63 percent of those who seldom or never attend religious services.

The survey also asked whether Americans believe "that religion can answer all or most of today's problems, or that religion is largely old-fashioned and out of date."

The percentage who believe religion can answer most problems has been on a relatively steady decline from 82 percent in 1958 to 53 percent in the latest survey. The percentage who see religion as old-fashioned has grown from 7 percent in 1958 to 28 percent today.

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## Briefly

### Family Honor at St. George

ERIE — Do you find it uncomfortable to talk to your son or daughter about love, chastity, dating, marriage or human sexuality? Would you like the opportunity to connect with your son or daughter and open the line of communication?

Then experience the Family Honor "Real Love & Real Life" program with your 7th or 8th grade child at St. George School, 1612 Bryant St. in Erie, on Thursday, Feb. 5 from 6:45-9:15 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 7 from 8:45 a.m.-4 p.m.

Contact Mary Lou McCall at 814.866.3273, Barb Pulice at 814.866.2775 or e-mail [FamilyHonorNWPA@aol.com](mailto:FamilyHonorNWPA@aol.com) to register or for more information. Registration forms and information can also be downloaded online at [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org). Cost is \$35 per family (includes lunch on Saturday).

Family Honor Inc. is a national program that creates opportunities and provides tools for parents and children to connect on important life issues, with a special emphasis on chastity and God's gift of sexuality.

### Theology on Tap

ERIE — Father Scott Detisch will present "Eucharist: Real Presence—Real Living" during a Theology on Tap discussion Thursday, Feb. 12 at The Brewerie at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. in downtown Erie.

Father Detisch will focus his presentation on the Eucharist as the center of Catholic life and as the center of a Catholic's life. He is the pastor of Holy Cross Parish in Fairview and has served as a theology professor at Gannon University and Christ the King Seminary in Buffalo. He earned his doctorate in theology from Duquesne University.

The Theology on Tap session will begin with a gathering at 7 p.m. followed by the discussion and Q & A session at 7:30. No registration is required.

A popular outreach to young adult Catholics, Theology on Tap targets singles and married couples for faith-inspired discussions in a pub style setting. The Catholic Church defines a young adult as someone between the ages of 21-40.



Father Scott Detisch

Watch a Theology on Tap WELCOME VIDEO at [ErieRCD.org](http://ErieRCD.org)

### Rainbows begins next session Feb. 16

ERIE — The next session for Rainbows, a program that fosters emotional healing among children grieving a loss from a life-altering crisis, begins Feb. 16 from 7-8 p.m. at St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 E. Grandview Blvd. in Erie and runs through May.



Rainbows is a support group for children who have suffered a significant loss in their lives, either by death, through divorce or any other painful transition. The program is not a counseling or therapy session; it is strictly a peer support group with caring, trained adults providing guidance.

For more information on Rainbows in the Erie Diocese, call 814.824.1250 or visit [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org).

### Marriage Encounter

Out of ideas for Valentine's Day? Consider Marriage Encounter, a long-standing marriage enrichment program in the Erie Diocese. The next WWME weekend is scheduled for February 20-22 in Fairview. For registration information call 814.823.4600 or visit [www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org); supported by Catholic Charities.

### Reflection Day for Women in Eldred

ELDRED — The sisters of Catholic Rural Ministry of the Bradford Deanery will host a *Reflection Day for Women* on Saturday, Feb. 28 at St. Raphael Parish's Coleman Center, 16 First St. in Eldred.

Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, OSB, of the spirituality ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie will present "The Cry of the Prophet."

There will be time for input, discussion, reflection and prayer. Donation of \$15 includes lunch and the book, "The Cry of the Prophet... A Call to Fullness of Life."

Contact Margaret French at 814.945.6245 or Sister Phyllis Schleicher, OSB, at 814.544.8017 or e-mail [crm@zitomedia.net](mailto:crm@zitomedia.net) to register by Feb. 25.

The program runs from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

# Area agencies see increased need for emergency services

AGENCIES, from page 1

are definitely buying more."

Thrift shop sales generate funds to offset the cost of food the center distributes. Currently there are more than 200 families receiving food from St. Elizabeth, and 400 families had signed up for food during 2008.

"What we're hearing from people is that there are few jobs available and that nobody's hiring," Wren said. "They're taking applications but there's no projected hiring at the moment. Most people are low income, not working or working and not making enough to make ends meet."

A bright spot has been that donations—financial, food and clothing—to the center have been up.

"I can't explain that one," Wren said. "But it touches you. Every donation helps more people than you realize. We've been very blessed."

The Prince of Peace Center in Farrell helps people who are relatively impoverished to begin with, said Joe Fletcher, director of the center. But they are seeing people who are new clients because of the economy or job layoffs, Fletcher said.

"We can only anticipate that unless something happens very quickly for these people, they will have to make some drastic changes in their lifestyle," he said.

The center provides financial assistance, emergency food and

clothing, furniture and appliances through its thrift store, along with advisement and referrals for other services.

The numbers are up for the Prince of Peace food pantry's bi-weekly distribution. Its soup kitchen isn't overwhelmed, but the number of visitors has also increased.

"The big issue is that you're limited to the number of state grants that you have," Fletcher said. "With the price of food going up, we can't stretch the money as far, as well."

The center recently received a gift of \$30,000 worth of items from Magnotto's Shop-n-Save. But the gift was a one-time shot in the arm, Fletcher said, because the grocery store has since closed.

"We were able to purchase a number of items from them since they opened," Fletcher said. "They gave us bread every day."

While end-of-the-year giving was strong, Fletcher said Prince of Peace continues to get support from the community.

"The more we bring in, the more we can help. That's the bottom line," he said.

St. Martin Center in Erie reports that business has picked up

### Unemployment Rates by State

The southern and far-western states have some of the highest rates of unemployment.



Source: Northeast Midwest Institute

©2008 CNS

quite a bit.

"I would definitely say we're getting hit hard," said Cheryl Kobel, executive director of St. Martin Center. "We've had a lot of increases with people coming to us for financial and food assistance. Our housing department is really seeing people that have started to stress. We're putting in a lot of hours to keep up with the demand for service."

St. Martin Center offers emergency food and financial assistance, housing counseling and a thrift store, among other services.

Kobel said for many clients who have lost their jobs, unemployment benefits are running out and they are in need for assistance with rent and utilities.

"We're having to reduce the amount we help so we can spread it a little further," she said. "Any financial donations to help those who are desperately in need right now would be greatly appreciated. That's the biggest need right now."

Kobel said the center has received an increasing number of clients who have been referred from other agencies that have been hit hard in regard to funding.

"St. Martin Center is usually the last resort," she said. "And if we can't help, the help is probably not out there."

For more information on these Catholic Charities affiliates, visit [www.ErieRCD.org/charities.asp](http://www.ErieRCD.org/charities.asp).

# The humanity of every unborn child

By Amy B. Hill  
Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

The Pennsylvania abortion statistics are out. The report consists of twelve pages of different numbers.

We can look at the abortion numbers in many different ways. Overall, in 2007, there were 36,663 abortions performed in Pennsylvania. That is a decrease of 68, or 0.2 percent from the year before. Although statistically that is not much of a change, any downward trend is worth celebrating.

Teenage girls age 19 and under had 6,557 abortions, or 17.9 percent, a slightly upward trend from the year before. This statistic ought to spark a debate about education. Could we do more to promote chastity among young people?

The largest group of abortion seekers is women age 20-24. They account for 12,365, or 33.7 percent of all abortions. This is true

not only in Pennsylvania but of abortion statistics nationwide. The largest group obtaining abortions is college-aged women.

Of all abortions, 45 percent or 16,482 terminations of life were provided to women who had at least one previous abortion. More than 58 percent of abortions were provided to women who had at least one previous live birth. Abortion proponents often say that abortion should remain safe, legal and rare; but this troubling statistic suggests that some women may see abortion as merely a method of birth control. In 2007, 1,196 abortions were provided to women who had four or more previous abortions.



Amy B. Hill

The ethnic background of women was also reported. About 55 percent of abortions in Pennsylvania were provided to white women. African-American women constituted about 39 percent of the abortions provided and Hispanic women accounted for about six percent of the total.

The statistics also break down the number of abortions by county of residence, by weeks of gestation and by type of abortion procedure. All of it is informative, but it is interesting that the words "baby" or "child" appear nowhere in the report. The victims of abortion are never mentioned. The words "mother" or "father" do not appear either. The word "life" is not listed even once.

We need to put the 2007 Pennsylvania Abortion Statistics report in perspective. We must remember that the women and the babies represented by these

numbers are human beings. They are God's children. They are unique and special individuals. Each abortion represents a lost life and a woman scarred. In 2007, 68 fewer boys and girls were aborted than in 2006. If 68 lives were saved, by now they are learning to walk and talk. Let's pray by the time they grow up to be mothers and fathers, there will be no abortions, let alone 36,663 of them.

To view the 2007 Pennsylvania Abortion Statistics report, log on to the Pennsylvania Department of Health Web site at [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us) and click on "Health Statistics" then "Birth and Death Statistics."

Amy B. Hill is communications director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference—the public affairs arm of Pennsylvania's Catholic bishops and the Catholic dioceses of Pennsylvania.

### DEATH NOTICE

## Sister Theresa Massello, SSJ, dies at 105

Was diocese's oldest woman religious

ERIE — Sister Theresa Massello, SSJ, formerly Sister Aloyse, 105, of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, died January 21, 2009. She was in her 82nd year of religious life and was the oldest woman religious in the Erie Diocese.

Sister Theresa was the first member of St. Paul Parish in Erie to enter the convent. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1927 and professed her final vows in 1933.

Sister Theresa's extensive career in education included being named assistant supervisor of schools for the Erie Diocese in 1961. Prior to that, she taught

at St. Peter, Holy Rosary and St. Joseph Home for Children in Erie. She also taught at St. Bernard, Bradford, and St. Brigid, Meadville.

Following her term as an administrator, she became principal at St. Brigid, Meadville; St. Leo, Ridgway; and Sacred Heart, Erie. She also taught at Sacred Heart, Our



Sister Theresa Massello, SSJ

Lady's Christian and Cathedral Prep schools in Erie.

Sister Theresa retired in 1982 and spent time ministering as switchboard operator at the sisters' motherhouse, tutoring elementary students and volunteering for the congregation's prayer call. In 1985, she was honored at the 12th annual St. Joseph's Day Family Communion Breakfast sponsored by the Giuseppe Mazzini Civic Association for outstanding service through her many years of teaching and education ministry.

The daughter of the late Michael and Magdalene Fatica Massello, Sister Theresa was an alumnae of Villa Maria Academy, Erie. She earned a bachelor's

degree in elementary education from Villa Maria College, Erie, and attended St. Francis College, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Gannon University, Erie; and St. Bonaventure University, Olean, N.Y. She also participated in various workshops at the University of Dayton, Boston College and Villa Maria College.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two sisters, Mary and Ann; and four brothers, Nick, John, Louis and Joe. She is survived by the members of her religious community; one sister, Lucy, another brother, also named Nick, and a brother-in-law, Philip Pirrello. She is also survived by several nieces and nephews.

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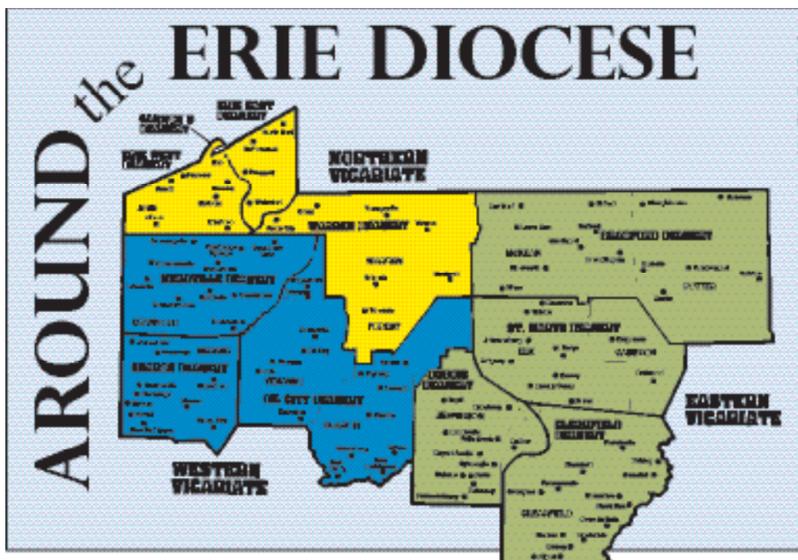
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All parishes, missions, schools and groups are encouraged to choose a correspondent who can regularly e-mail news items to "Around the Erie Diocese" at [FaithLife@ErieRCD.org](mailto:FaithLife@ErieRCD.org)

Visit [ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp](http://ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp) to download quick and easy photo tips on a wallet-size card.



### Pastoral council formation retreat held in Smethport

SMETHPORT — Parish council members and priests from parishes in Bradford, Mt. Jewett, Port Allegany and Smethport recently gathered for a pastoral council formation retreat in Smethport.

Twenty people attended the event, conducted by Matt Clark of the Erie Diocese's Office of Worship and held at the Smethport Senior Center.

Pictured from left to right, are: (front row) Tony DeSio, parish council president at St. Joseph, Mt. Jewett; Father Vincent Cieslewicz, pastor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, Smethport; Matt Clark; Tim Holohan, parish council president at St. Elizabeth of Hungary and retreat coordinator; Father Leo Gallina, pastor of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Bradford; David Geitner, parish



council president at St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Bradford; David Geitner, parish council president at St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Bradford; and Father John Murphy, pastor of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, Port Allegany.

### Gannon celebrates winter commencement



ERIE — Gannon University recently welcomed to campus Father Ron Witherup, SS, STL, Ph.D. (fourth from left), superior general of the Society of the Priests of St. Sulpice. Father Witherup was the keynote speaker for Gannon University's December commencement ceremony and was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree during the ceremony. He attended Gannon from 1968-70, during which time he resided at St. Mark's Seminary.

Shown with Father Witherup are a number of

Gannon priests: (left to right) Father Jason Glover, instructor, Theology Department; Father George Strohmeier, university chaplain; Father Robert Susa, retired faculty member and administrator; Gannon President Dr. Antoine Garibaldi; Bishop Donald Trautman, chairperson of the Gannon Board of Trustees; Father Joseph Gregorek, professor, biology; Father Casimir Wozniak, assistant professor and chair of the Theology Department; and Father Nicholas Rouch, diocesan vicar for education.

### Seven installed to ministry of acolyte



ERIE — Seven men were installed to the ministry of acolyte Jan. 24 by Bishop Donald Trautman during a Mass and ceremony at St. Mark Seminary chapel in Erie.

The men are currently in their third year of study in the Erie Diocese's permanent diaconate formation program.

Pictured from left to right: (front row) Jim

Owens (Blessed Sacrament, Erie); Fred Keck (Holy Rosary, Erie); Bishop Trautman; Rick Rueberger (St. Anthony, Sharon); Dennis Socash (Ss. Peter and Paul, Hawk Run); Dick Brogdon (St. Jude, Erie); (back row) Msgr. Robert Smith, permanent diaconate formation program director; Richard Opolka (St. Patrick, Franklin); and Doug Konzal (St. Joseph/Bread of Life, Erie).

### DCC's chapter of FBLA raises funds for Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

DUBOIS — This year's fundraising efforts of DuBois Central Catholic High School's chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) will go to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. DCC students were recently greeted with smiles, hot chocolate and donuts as they entered school. Members of DCC's FBLA chapter held the breakfast event to raise funds for this year's state-wide project. Pictured from left to right, students Kristen Nesbit and Miller Hopkins join FBLA adviser Betty Heberling in placing an order; FBLA officers Andrew Kenawell (parliamentarian), Katie Plyler (president) and Steve Cook (vice president) coordinated the fundraiser. A second fundraiser to benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation is already in the planning stages.



### Epiphany blessing at St. Marys Catholic Middle School

ST. MARYS — On Jan. 6, Father Meinrad Lawson, OSB, pastor of St. Mary Parish in St. Marys, celebrated the Epiphany Blessing with the students and staff of St. Marys Catholic Middle School.

During the prayer service, student servers went from classroom to classroom with a censor and holy water to bless each room.

It is customary for the faithful to bless their homes by writing, typically in chalk, over the front door: 20 + C + M + B + 09. The digits appearing at the beginning and end of the Epiphany blessing designate the new year. "CMB" stands for the traditional names of the Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar).

The CMB also conveniently stands for the Latin prayer



Christus Mansionem Benedicat, meaning "May Christ bless this house." Pictured is Daniel Millsop hanging the blessing poster above a hall doorway while Stephanie Zimmerman and Maria Gismondi look on.

### Knights donate \$10,000 in funds for diocesan youth programs

ERIE — The Knights of Columbus Central West recently presented Bishop Donald Trautman and the Erie Diocese a check for \$10,000, which will go toward youth ministry programs.

Funds are raised through the sale of calendars, which are based on the state lottery's Daily Number. Proceeds are typically \$5,000 per year.

Knights of Columbus Central West includes 64 councils and 15 districts in the Erie Diocese plus several other parishes.

"The project started around 20 years ago," said Mark Baker, immediate past chairman of the Knights of Columbus Central West and a member of Council 6191 in Edinboro. "We were looking at a project to raise funds for the bishop to utilize, and one of



the areas that he needed help at the time was the youth fund. So we present him with a sizeable check every two years."

Pictured from left to right: Ray Barber, state secretary; Fa-

ther Steve Schriber, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Erie Diocese; Bishop Donald Trautman; Mark Baker, past chair; and Steve Cash, coordinator.

### Northwest Savings Bank donates \$63,000 to STAR Foundation



ERIE — Northwest Savings Bank has donated \$63,000 to the Erie Diocese's STAR Foundation, which provides families with tuition assistance for Catholic schools.

Businesses can receive credits for certain types of taxes paid to the state by making a contribution to the STAR Foundation of the Diocese of Erie. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program allows businesses to receive up to 90 percent of their contribution in tax credits.

Jim Martin, president of Northwest's Erie region, recently presented Bishop Donald Trautman with a check for the STAR Foundation.

"Northwest serves an area very similar to that of the diocese," Martin said. "We're pleased to be a part of this program because it directly impacts those students who wish to have a Catholic education."

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