

Getting the red hat



Pope Benedict XVI creates 22 new cardinals, including two from the U.S., page 2.

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FaithLife

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

Sermon on the Mount



Hollywood actor Frank Ruyneon to perform one-man drama in Erie, page 3.

March 11, 2012

Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

Feast days



St. Patrick

- March 11 Girl Scout Sunday
- March 17 St. Patrick
- March 19 St. Joseph
- March 23 St. Turibius de Mogrovejo

Confirmations

Bishop Donald Trautman will visit the following churches to offer the sacrament of confirmation:

Queen of the World, St. Marys – Sunday, March 11 at 2 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Mary, St. Marys; Sacred Heart, St. Marys; and Queen of the World, St. Marys.

St. Boniface, Erie – Monday, March 12 at 7 p.m. Confirmation classes include Holy Family, Erie, and St. Boniface, Erie.

St. James, Erie – Friday, March 16 at 7 p.m.

St. Jude the Apostle, Erie – Monday, March 19 at 7 p.m.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Erie – Thursday, March 22 at 7 p.m.

Christ the King, Houtzdale – Friday, March 23 at 7 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Agnes, Morrisdale; St. Basil the Great, Coalport; Immaculate Conception, Osceola Mills; St. Peter and Paul, Grassflat; St. Severin, Drifiting; and Christ the King, Houtzdale.

St. Eusebius, East Brady – Saturday, March 24 at 4:30 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Richard, Rimersburg, and St. Eusebius, East Brady.

Immaculate Conception, Brookville – Sunday, March 25 at 3 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Charles, New Bethlehem, and Immaculate Conception, Brookville.

Parish missions

Sacred Heart, St. Marys

ST. MARYS – Sacred Heart Parish, 325 Center St. in St. Marys, is sponsoring a parish mission March 18-21.

Father Anthony Gramlich, MIC, will be the presenter of the Divine Mercy mission.

The mission will begin at 7 p.m. each evening Sunday through Wednesday. Topics will include the "A B Cs" of Divine Mercy, the feast of Divine Mercy and how to receive the graces of Divine Mercy Sunday.

For more information, contact Laurey Kraus at 814.781.6746 or visit www.thedivinemercy.org/parishmissions.



Father Anthony Gramlich, MIC

St. John and Holy Rosary, Erie

ERIE – St. John and Holy Rosary parishes in Erie are sponsoring a parish mission March 25-27.

Sister Therese Dush, CA, and Sister Suzanne Thiabault, CA, from the Community of Anawim in Frenchville will be the presenters. They will discuss baptism and confirmation the first night, reconciliation the second night and Eucharist the final evening.

March 25 and 27 are at Holy Rosary, 2701 East Ave., and March 26 is at St. John the Baptist, 509 E. 26th St. All are welcome.

Blessed Sacrament, Erie

ERIE – Blessed Sacrament Parish, 1626 W. 26th St. in Erie, is sponsoring a parish mission March 12-15.

Father Tom Hartle, OFM, will be the mission speaker.

Mission services will be held March 12, 13 and 14 at 7 p.m. Mass will be celebrated March 15 at 7 p.m. The sacrament of reconciliation will be offered each evening.

For more information, contact the parish office at 814.454.0171.

Two elementary schools to close

St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic in Erie and Msgr. Geno Monti in Farrell to close after 2011-12 academic year

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

The Diocese of Erie announced March 2 that two diocesan elementary schools will close at the end of the 2011-12 academic year but that all 131 children currently enrolled in these schools will have access to other Catholic schools in their areas.

St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic School in Erie and Msgr. Geno J. Monti School in Farrell will close when the school year is completed in June.

Bishop Donald Trautman made the announcement at a news conference at St. Mark Catholic Center in Erie March 2, a day after parents, teachers and faculty were informed at each school.

"The decision to close these schools



"The decision to close these schools was very difficult; no bishop ever wants to make this announcement. But we had to face the facts."

—Bishop Donald Trautman

was very difficult; no bishop ever wants to make this announcement," Bishop Trautman said. "But we had to face the facts: the significant efforts we have made, including the tens of thousands of dollars the diocese had invested to make tuition more affordable and to keep our technology current, has not lessened the financial burden on the parishes or slowed enrollment decline."

No other Catholic schools in the diocese will close in 2012, he said.

The bishop cited declining enroll-

ment and financial pressure as two of the compelling reasons for the closing.

First, he said, Catholic schools are facing the same reality of declining population that public schools are experiencing. He cited the enrollment numbers at each school. St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic has experienced a 75 percent decline in enrollment in 10 years, going from 432 students in 2001-02 to 107 students in 2011-12. Msgr. Geno Monti School currently has an enrollment of 24 students in grades K-5. The upper grades of Msgr. Geno Monti School were merged last year into Kennedy Catholic Middle School in Hermitage.

See CLOSINGS, page 3

10 things to remember during Lent

Editor's note: The following Lenten reminders are from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. For more Lenten resources from the USCCEB, a link is posted on the homepage at www.ErieRCD.org.

On our Lenten journey to the foot of the cross, here are 10 things to remember for Lent:

1 Remember the formula

The church does a good job capturing certain truths with easy-to-remember lists and formulas: 10 Commandments, seven sacraments, three persons in the Trinity. For Lent, the church gives us almost a slogan—prayer, fasting and almsgiving—as the three things we need to work on during the season.

2 It's a time of prayer

Lent is essentially an act of prayer spread out over 40 days. As we pray, we go on a journey, one that hopefully brings us closer to Christ and leaves us changed by the encounter with him.

3 It's a time to fast

With the fasts of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, meatless Fridays and our personal disciplines interspersed, Lent is the only time many Catholics these days actually fast. And maybe that's why it gets all the attention. "What are you giving up for Lent? Hotdogs? Beer? Jelly beans?" It's almost a game for some of us, but fasting is actually a form of penance, which helps us turn away from sin and toward Christ.

4 Work on discipline

The 40 days of Lent are also a good, set time to work on personal discipline in general. Instead of giving something up, it can be doing something positive. "I'm going to exercise more. I'm going to pray more. I'm going to be nicer to my family, friends and coworkers."

5 It's about dying to yourself

The more serious side of Lenten discipline is that it's about more than self-control—it's about finding aspects of yourself that are less than Christ-like and letting them die. The suffering and death of Christ are foremost on our minds during Lent, and we join in these mysteries by suffering, dying with Christ and being resurrected in a purified form.

6 Don't do too much

It's tempting to make Lent some ambitious period of personal reinvention, but it's best to keep it simple and focused. There's a reason the church works on these mysteries year after year. We spend our entire lives growing closer to God. Don't try to cram it all in one Lent. That's a recipe for failure.

7 Recognize weaknesses

Of course, even when we set simple goals for ourselves during Lent, we still have trouble keeping them. When we fast, we realize we're all just one meal away from hunger. In both cases, Lent shows us our weakness. This can be painful, but recognizing how helpless we are makes us seek God's help with renewed urgency and sincerity.

8 Be patient with yourself

When we're confronted with our own weakness during Lent, the temptation is to get angry and frustrated. "What a bad person I am!" But that's the wrong lesson. God is calling us to be patient and to see ourselves as he does, with unconditional love.

9 Reach out in charity

As we experience weakness and suffering during Lent, we should be renewed in our compassion for those who are hungry, suffering or otherwise in need. The third part of the Lenten formula is almsgiving. It's about more than throwing a few extra dollars in the collection plate; it's about reaching out to others and helping them without question as a way of sharing the experience of God's unconditional love.

10 Learn to love like Christ

Giving of ourselves in the midst of our suffering and self-denial brings us closer to loving like Christ, who suffered and poured himself out unconditionally on the cross for all of us. Lent is a journey through the desert to the foot of the cross on Good Friday, as we seek him out, ask his help, join in his suffering and learn to love like him.

Rite of Election

Church to welcome new members at Easter Vigil

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

Sixty-four catechumens and 112 candidates, along with their sponsors, families and guests, filled St. Peter Cathedral in Erie and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Clearfield for the Rite of Election ceremony Feb. 26. About 700 people participated in both locations.

Bishop Donald Trautman presided over services at the cathedral. Msgr. Robert Smith, vicar general of the Diocese of Erie, presided at St. Francis of Assisi.

The Rite of Election, celebrated annually in cathedrals and churches around the world on the first Sunday of Lent, marks the official countdown to initiation or admission into the church. It formally acknowledges the readiness of those preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation—baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist—at the Easter Vigil, this year on April 7. Candidates and catechumens are participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)



Bishop Donald Trautman greets candidate Anna Marie Sementilli of St. James Parish in Erie during the Rite of Election Feb. 26 at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. At right, Catechumen Mason Tootell of St. Joseph Parish in Warren signs the Book of the Elect while his sponsor Diana Tootell looks on.

at their parishes.

Those participating included:

- 64 catechumens, those seeking baptism and the sacraments of initiation into the church.
- 79 candidates who are already baptized in another religion but seeking mem-

bership in the Catholic Church.

- 33 candidates who are previously baptized Catholics completing the sacraments of initiation—penance, Eucharist and confirmation.

See RITE OF ELECTION, page 3

Praying for vocations



CLARION – Each Sunday at Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarion, a 10th grade student takes home a chalice. The purpose is to encourage the 10th grade families to pray together and to pray specifically for vocations.

Having a chalice in the home provides families with a visible reminder that family life is drawn from Christ in the

Eucharist, said Ann Liska, the parish's director of religious education. In addition, the chalice reminds families of the essential need for priests, Liska said.

Pictured with the chalice (left to right) are Ben Babington, Riley Shall, Claire Gribik, Father Monty Sayers, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, and Antonio Troese.

IN THE U.S.

Philly reaches final decision on future of several grade schools

Forty-nine Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia will form 23 regional schools and 10 schools will close outright, according to a Feb. 17 announcement. The decision represents modifications to original recommendations that were reached through an appeals process ordered by Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput. The appeals followed the archdiocese's Jan. 6 recommendation that one school would close outright and 81 schools would form 37 regional schools. "These changes are occurring for a number of reasons," Auxiliary Bishop Michael Fitzgerald said. "Some schools will remain free-standing parish schools because they have demonstrated that they are poised for long-term viability. Some schools are closing outright to allow welcoming schools to retain their identity. Other schools may still form a regional school but at a different location that may be better."

States, women, senators join fight against HHS contraceptive mandate

Seven states have filed suit against the Department of Health and Human Services' mandate that nearly all health insurance plans cover contraceptives free of charge, saying that it violates religious freedom and leaves "countless additional religious freedoms vulnerable to government intrusion. Joining the attorneys general of Nebraska, South Carolina, Michigan, Texas, Florida, Ohio and Oklahoma in the lawsuit were a Catholic nun, a lay missionary working with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, Plus X Catholic High School in Lincoln, Neb., and the Omaha-based Catholic Mutual Group, a self-insurance fund that covers more than 125 dioceses or archdioceses and 200 Catholic religious congregations in the U.S. and Canada. The latest lawsuit was filed as protests against the HHS mandate mounted. More than 4,500 women signed a letter calling on President Barack Obama, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Congress "to allow religious institutions and individuals to continue to witness to their faiths in all their fullness." In addition, 18 U.S. senators asked Obama to rescind the mandate, saying that its implementation "will unjustly impact religiously affiliated organizations and individuals."



AROUND THE WORLD

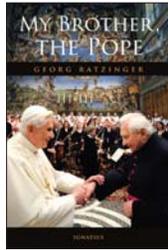
Bishops look at role of family in evangelization

Making final preparations for the world Synod of Bishops on new evangelization, a committee of cardinals and bishops discussed how difficult it is today to transmit the faith to others. The ordinary council of the general secretariat of the Synod of Bishops met at the Vatican Feb. 16 to discuss a draft of the working document for the synod, which will be held at the Vatican Oct. 7-28. The theme of the gathering will be: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith." In a discussion about challenges to faith and to handing on the faith, the council members focused particularly on the role of the family, a statement said. Within the family, it said, young people "learn both the content and the practice of the Christian faith. The irreplaceable work of the family is continued in the catechesis offered by church institutions and, especially, through the liturgy with the sacraments and the homily."

PEOPLE

Teddy bears and tabernacles: the pope's childhood, told by his brother

Recounting their rural Bavarian childhood and subsequent lifelong friendship, the elder brother of Pope Benedict XVI offers a privileged look at the personal side of the spiritual leader of 1.3 billion Catholics. "My Brother, the Pope," published March 1 by Ignatius Press, is based on interviews with Msgr. Georg Ratzinger by German writer Michael Heselmann. Joseph, the future Pope Benedict, enjoyed playing with stuffed animals as a child, Msgr. Ratzinger says, and he was particularly attached to a pair of teddy bears. Glimpses of the boys' destinies came early on. When a cardinal visited their small town in 1931, arriving in a black limousine, 4-year-old Joseph exclaimed, "I'll be a cardinal someday!" Nevertheless, Msgr. Ratzinger says, his brother was never ambitious, and external honors have been "always unwelcome" to him. "My brother was somewhat better behaved than I," Msgr. Ratzinger says, yet he recounts a boyhood prank in which the two tricked a local farmer into losing track of his oxcart.



By the Way...

Bishop Donald Trautman penned an op-ed piece that was published in the March 4 edition of the *Erie Times-News*. The commentary is a take on the federal government's mandate that would compel insurance companies to offer the employees of religious institutions contraceptive and sterilizations free of charge through their health plans.



Jason Koshinski

Bishop Trautman examines the responsibility church leadership has in being true to our religious beliefs and values while maintaining an interest in preserving the right to religious freedom as Americans.

The piece, published with the headline "Bishops will likely file suit 'to protect our religious liberty,'" is also available under the Opinion section at www.goerie.com.

The **Runnin' Revs**, a basketball team of priests, deacons and seminarians, will take on a team of local teens from the Cool Catholic Youth group on March 11 at the Warren Area Elementary Center (WAEC) gymnasium, 343 E. Fifth Ave. in Warren, from 6-8 p.m. A presentation on the call to priesthood, along with food and drinks, will follow.

Come see **Father Rich Toohy, Father Michael Polinek** and all the **Runnin' Revs** as they risk their ACLs, Achilles tendons and athletic pride to promote the call to priesthood.

Speaking of promoting the priesthood, WSEE-TV reporter **Lisa Weismann** completed a three-part series on the men studying for the priesthood at St. Mark Seminary in Erie which aired Feb. 20-22. The series, titled "A Chosen Path," spotlights some of the 22 seminarians at St. Mark's. With students from the dioceses of Erie, Altoona-Johnstown, Greensburg and Scranton, the seminary's enrollment is the highest in almost 30 years.

"A Chosen Path" can be viewed online at www.erievnews.com. The annual **Chrism Mass** for the Diocese of Erie will be celebrated on the Monday of Holy Week, April 2 at 4 p.m. at **St. Peter Cathedral** in Erie.

The Chrism Mass is one of the most solemn and significant liturgies on the church calendar. During the Mass, Bishop Trautman will bless the sacred oils used for celebrating the sacraments throughout the diocese for the entire year. They are then distributed after Mass and brought to each parish. Also, each priest in the diocese is invited to attend to renew their commitment of service and to receive the support and prayers of the people.

The **Community of Anawim** in Frenchville recently launched a new website at www.anawimcommunity.org as part of a recruitment push for the religious community. Anawim is a community for men and women living in a simple lifestyle with an emphasis on prayer and service of the poor done in the spirit of the Beatitudes.

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

Pope creates 22 new cardinals

By Cindy Wood
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI created 22 new cardinals from 13 countries, including two from the United States — placing red hats on their heads and calling them to lives of even greater love and service to the church.

The churchmen who joined the College of Cardinals Feb. 18 included Cardinals Timothy Dolan of New York and Edwin O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem and former archbishop of Baltimore.

In their first official act in their new role, the new cardinals were asked to join their peers in giving the pope their opinion, in writing, on the canonization of seven new saints, including Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, an American Indian, and Blessed Marianne Cope of Molokai, Hawaii.

The pope announced at the consistory that the canonization ceremony would be celebrated Oct. 21 at the Vatican.

Cardinal Dolan said he was delighted that his first act as a cardinal was to join with the College of Cardinals in affirming the canonization of Blessed Kateri, who was born in what is now New York state, and Mother Marianne, who served there

before going to Hawaii.

"As grateful as I am for being a cardinal," he told reporters later, "I really want to be a saint. I mean that, but I have a long way to go."

St. Peter's Basilica was filled to overflowing for the ceremony, and several thousand people sat in a sunny St. Peter's Square watching on large video screens. Choirs from New York and from several Italian dioceses provided music for the service.

At the end of the ceremony, the College of Cardinals had 213 members, 125 of whom were under the age of 80 and, therefore, eligible to vote in a conclave to elect a new pope.

The consistory took the form of a prayer service. After the Gospel reading, in what the Vatican described as an allocation, not a homily, the pope told the cardinals that love and service, not an air of greatness, are to mark their lives as cardinals.

Cardinal O'Brien told reporters afterward that the ceremony and the pope's remarks underscored that becoming a cardinal "is not a reward, it brings on greater responsibilities — something the pope experiences every day."

He said that when he knelt before the pope, "I thanked him; I said I'd serve him completely with my whole heart."

Cardinal Dolan, who delivered the main address on evangelization at a meeting of the College of Cardinals the day before, said that when he knelt before the pope, the pope thanked him again for his presentation. "I said thank you, for this, I'm the one who is grateful," he said.

"The Gospel and the homily were very sobering," he said, because they recalled the words of Jesus that "we're not in it for the prestige, we're not in it for the honor, we're not in it for the glory. We're in it to serve."



Cardinal Timothy Dolan



Cardinal Edwin O'Brien

Composer David Kauffman appearing in concert in Hermitage, at NPM SongFest in Grove City

David Kauffman, who composed Mass of Renewal and many other compositions, will appear at two events in the Diocese of Erie.

Kauffman will perform in concert at Notre Dame Parish in Hermitage on April 21 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors (60 and older) and students. For more information, contact Gretchen Wagner at 724.981.5566 Ext. 109.

Kauffman will also be featured at the annual SongFest and spring banquet sponsored by the Erie Diocese chapter of NPM (National Association of Pastoral Musicians) on April 22 at Beloved Disciple Parish in Grove City.

Mass of Renewal is the Mass setting that

was chosen as the favorite of NPM members at the SongFest in 2011. It was also the winner of the competition for new Mass settings presented at the 2010 NPM convention in Detroit.

Registration for the SongFest and banquet will begin at 2:30 p.m. Reservations for this event are due by April 1 and are limited to 150 people. The cost for the SongFest and banquet is \$15 for NPM Erie Chapter members and \$20 for guests. For attendance at the SongFest only, the price is \$10, and reservations for this option must be made by April 15.

Send reservation information (name, address, phone number, e-mail, parish and town) to Ed Horneman, 10877 Eastview Ave., Meadville, PA 16355. Your check must accompany the reservation. For more information contact Bernie Connelly at 814.734.5446.



David Kauffman

Pope Benedict XVI to visit Mexico, Cuba

Pope Benedict XVI will meet with Cuban President Raul Castro, Mexican President Felipe Calderon and bishops and Catholics from the region when he visits Mexico and Cuba in late March.

He will also greet bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as pray at the shrine of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre in Cuba.

It will be his third visit to the Americas after the United States in 2008 and Brazil in 2007. The pope is scheduled to be in Leon, Mex-

ico, March 23-26 and Santiago de Cuba and Havana March 26-28.

During his trip, Pope Benedict will celebrate three outdoor Masses, including one marking the 400th anniversary of the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, patroness of Cuba.

In Mexico, he will have a special meeting with children and a vespers service with bishops from Latin America, and in Cuba he will make a private visit to the shrine of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre.

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Fax: (814) 824-1170
E-Mail: FaithLife@erieRCD.org
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Briefly

Lenten talks with the Sisters of Mercy

ERIE — The Sisters of Mercy invite the public to Wednesday Lenten talks at their motherhouse, 444 E. Grandview Blvd. in Erie.

- Sister Rita Panciera, RSM, director for the House of Prayer, will speak March 14 at 6 p.m. in the Community Center on "Enriching Daily Life Through Prayer, Meditation and Reflection."
- Sister Dolores Jablonski, RSM, former executive director of the Mercy Hilltop Center, will talk March 28 at 6 p.m. in the Our Lady of Mercy Chapel on "Prayer, Service and Reflection."

Erie's eastside Catholic community sponsors Lenten programs

ERIE — Erie's Eastside Catholic Faith Formation Ministry is sponsoring the following programs during Lent:

- The junior high youth of the eastside parishes will present a contemporary shadow drama of the Stations of the Cross at Holy Rosary Church, 2701 E. 28th St. in Erie, Sunday, March 18 at 7 p.m.
- Hollywood actor Frank Runyeon will be at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, 315 E. Ninth St. in Erie, presenting a one-man drama of the Sermon on the Mount, a story brought to life in his spellbinding performance Saturday, March 24 at 7 p.m.



Frank Runyeon

Family Honor program at St. George, Erie

ERIE — St. George Parish, 5145 Peach St. in Erie, will host Family Honor's "Real Love and Real Life" program Friday, March 23 from 6 to 9 p.m. and Saturday, March 24 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Family Honor is designed to teach parents and children to communicate effectively about important life values, with a special focus on the truth and goodness of human sexuality and the virtue of chastity.

This program, recommended for 7th and 8th grade students and their parents, helps parents support their children in making holy and healthy relationship decisions. The \$40 fee per family also covers lunch on Saturday.

Registration forms are available in both the St. George school and church offices. Visit www.familyhonor.org. For more information, call Sue at 814.866.9222.

Mother-daughter teas

The Diocese of Erie's NFP/Chastity Education Office is sponsoring a series of mother-daughter teas.

This program is designed for girls age 10 and older and their mothers. It explores God's special gift of human fertility and the beauty and wonder of growing up and becoming a woman.

Mother-daughter tea locations include:

- Saturday, March 24 at St. Michael Parish in Greenville from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Sunday, April 1 at St. Mark Catholic Center in Erie from 1 to 3:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 22 at DuBois Catholic Middle School from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

For more information or to register, contact the NFP/Chastity Education Office at 814.824.1259 or 1.800.374.3723 Ext. 259 or visit www.ErieRCD.org/nfp.asp.

Gannon University open house

ERIE — Gannon University will host its annual spring open house on Saturday, March 31.

Open house is an opportunity for prospective students and their parents to see the campus, learn more about academic programs, attend presentations on admissions and financial aid and meet with faculty, staff and the university's intercollegiate athletic coaches.

Registration will be held from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St. in Erie. Gannon University President Dr. Keith Taylor will offer a brief welcome to attendees at 11:45 a.m. in the Hammermill Center, 620 Peach St.

Advance registration is encouraged but not required. For more information, contact the Gannon University Office of Admissions at 814.871.7240 or toll free at 1.800.426.6668.



Church to welcome new members at Easter Vigil

RITE OF ELECTION,
from page 1

In his homily, Bishop Trautman told the candidates and catechumens that they are beginning anew, which should also be the theme of our Lenten observance.

"Beginning anew means turning away from the past and turning to God for love, mercy and strength," the bishop said. "Beginning anew means conversion. Every disciple of Christ must experience conversion. A conversion is a 180-degree turnabout, a turn from sin to God."

Beginning anew means discovering Christ and his church in a new way, he said.

"You, our catechumens and candidates, are experiencing a new beginning," Bishop Trautman said. "I congratulate you and I commend you for responding to the invitation of Christ. The Lord is calling you to new life, to a deeper realization of his church and love. The Lord loves you very, very much. And that is why he's called you to this deeper friendship with him."



Photo by Matt Clark/Office of Worship

Msgr. Robert Smith, vicar general, poses with a group of catechumens participating in the Rite of Election Feb. 26 at St. Francis of Assisi in Clearfield. Those participating represented areas of the Eastern Vicariate including Brockway, DuBois, Kane, New Bethlehem, Ramey, Ridgway and St. Marys.

Diocese announces two elementary school closings

CLOSINGS, from page 1

Second, the bishop said, is that the St. John Parish pastoral council recommended that St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic School be closed because the parish could no longer afford to support the school. One-hundred percent of the parish income was being used to keep the school open, Bishop Trautman said.

"I am proud of the fact that diocesan-directed \$120,000 in tuition aid and \$70,000 for various education initiatives were given to the students at St. John-Holy Rosary over the last two years alone," Bishop Trautman said. "During that same timeframe, students at Msgr. Geno Monti received more than \$74,000 in tuition assistance from the diocese, and the parish subsidy to the school was substantial."

Several Catholic elementary schools are located within a two-

mile radius of St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic School, and the remaining Catholic schools in the City of Erie and Erie County are available to accept students. Plans are underway for students to visit these other schools in the hope they will continue their education at a Catholic school, Bishop Trautman said.

St. John Baptist School and Holy Rosary School merged in 2004 to form St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic School.

Students at Msgr. Geno J. Monti School in Mercer County are being encouraged to attend Blessed John Paul II Elementary School, a new school which opened in 2011 when Notre Dame School in Hermitage and St. Joseph School in Sharon were closed as part of a larger, strategic regionalization of Catholic schools resulting in the creation of the Shenango Valley Catholic

School System.

As an incentive to continue with a Catholic education, the diocese will offer each student (pre-K through grade 7) at St. John-Holy Rosary Eastside Catholic and Msgr. Geno Monti a one-time \$700 voucher to help with tuition if they enroll in another Catholic elementary school. Other tuition assistance will be available through the STAR Foundation and the Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program.

During the meetings held at each school, officials assured parents and teachers that the diocese will assist in making the transition as smooth as possible for families and others. Diocesan

offices will also work with affected staff members at both schools in the weeks and months to come, Bishop Trautman said.

At the schools, the principals along with priests, including Father John Jacquet, pastor of St. John Baptist and Holy Rosary parishes in Erie, and Father Donald Berdis, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima-St. Ann Parish in Farrell, met with students.

The Diocese of Erie currently operates 40 schools across its 13-county area of northwest Pennsylvania including seven high schools, three middle schools and 30 elementary schools. In the 2012-13 school year, the number of elementary schools will drop to 28.

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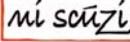
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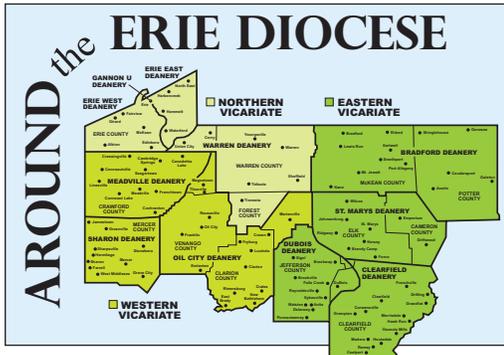
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Venango Catholic students compete in district chorus event

OIL CITY — Alyssa Zlotnicki and Natt Licht represented Venango Catholic High School at PMEA District III Chorus on Jan. 26-28. The festival was hosted by Keystone High School and directed by Dan Hayes, a musical theatre professor at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

"It was an amazing experience to sing with 180 other people," Licht said of the experience.

New choir robes were recently purchased for the students to wear for the festival by former student Catherine Valasek Caponi in memory of her father Emanuel M. Valasek.

"We had borrowed robes for district chorus last year," said Chad Hill, choir director at Venango Catholic. "This year we decided to purchase robes that better represented VC for our students attending the festival."

Zlotnicki was selected to continue on to PMEA Region II Chorus which will be held March 7-10 at Ridgway High School.

For more information on how you can help the Venango Catholic choir with the cost of choir robes, call 814.677.3098.



Alyssa Zlotnicki and Natt Licht pose in their new choir robes. The Venango Catholic students recently attended a district chorus competition.

Mix It Up Day at DuBois Central Catholic

DUBOIS — DuBois Central Catholic School recently participated in national Mix It Up Day, a program that helps develop inclusive school communities.

What makes this annual event at DuBois Central Catholic so special is that middle school students in grades 6, 7 and 8 join faculty, staff and administrators at the same lunch table. Seating is arranged by birthday months. Student-created posters directed more than 90 lunch-goers to their seats.

According to adviser MaryAnn Piccirillo, adults and students of varying grade levels not only must eat together, but then interact with one another through various games and activities for prizes. It was the responsibility of members of this semester's leadership class not only to serve as table moderators for the games but also to ensure that everyone was included.

By providing the props and prizes, deciding on the games



It's thumbs up for National Mix It Up Day celebrated at DuBois Central Catholic Middle School recently. Adviser MaryAnn Piccirillo (left) poses with the students who organized this year's event: (seated) Kasey Baronick, Mara Baronick, Stephanie Rossi, Natalie Curtis, (standing) Zach Keitz, Joey Varsicetti and Luke Weis.

and creating activities, leadership class members demonstrated collaboration and creativity. "Scanning the cafeteria and seeing the smiles and hearing the laughter made this project worthwhile for everyone," Piccirillo said.

Catholic Schools Week at St. Joseph School, Lucinda

LUCINDA — In celebrating Catholic Schools Week, Rep. Donna Oberlander visited St. Joseph School in Lucinda.

The theme for the day was "In Our Nation." Oberlander spoke with the students about her work as a representative and shared many of her experiences at the Capitol Building in Harrisburg.

Oberlander is pictured with teacher Jim Steudler and his 6th grade students.



Penny war at Holy Family School, Erie, benefits breast cancer

ERIE — The students of Holy Family School in Erie had a penny war pitting class against class to raise money for a cause.

Catholic schools were invited to collect pennies for Pink Zone, a breast cancer awareness drive sponsored by the Gannon University women's basketball team. In two weeks, Holy Family School students raised more than 165 pounds of pennies, which equals about \$285. Pink Zone money is donated to the Erie Unit of the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Fund.

The students also reach out to the community in other ways. Every month they donate their jeans day money to various organizations. Every year during Lent, the student body collects money for St. John's Mission in Barberton, South Africa.



Pictured left to right are ShiAnn Conners, Jaelen Carson, and Ahleona Thompson

St. Luke School, Erie, receives \$10,000 UChoose grant

ERIE — St. Luke School in Erie was the recipient of a \$10,000 UChoose grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) for an instructional language arts program at the school.

Modeled after the nationally recognized Pepsi Refresh Project, the ECGRA UChoose Grants program gave voters a chance to choose how ECGRA awarded three grants: (1) \$5,000, (1) \$10,000 and (1) \$15,000. Non-profit agencies in Erie County uploaded project ideas to ErieUChoose.com. After confirming that projects met submission guidelines, Erie County voters were permitted to vote once per day in each of the three grant levels Nov. 28 through Jan. 11.

The grants were awarded Jan. 12 at the Watson-Curtze mansion in Erie.

"It was nice to win," said Jeremy Hewitt, St. Luke School's



Laura Mikinski and Jeremy Hewitt from St. Luke School in Erie pose with an oversized check for \$10,000 from ECGRA's UChoose Grant program.

director of advancement. "We got a lot of votes from our parents, parishioners and alumni."

With the grant funds, the school has purchased a Spartan Tutors program, said Hewitt.

The after-school program will offer students additional instruction and tutoring in a number of

areas, Hewitt said, including finding techniques to help students with dyslexia.

Kindergarten teacher Laura Mikinski is already a trained tutor with the Spartan system.

The long-term goal is to open the program to students from other schools, Hewitt said.

St. Peter Cathedral Mardi Gras Gala raises \$65,000

ERIE — St. Peter Cathedral Parish and School celebrated Mardi Gras Gala 2012 at the Ambassador Banquet and Conference Center on Feb. 18. The cathedral honored Frank and Mary Therese Riley for their gifts of time, talent and treasure. The chair-couples for the evening were Dr. Richard and Sally DiBacco, the Honorable Michael and Roberta Palmisano, Chris and Patty Bloomstine and Nick and Emily Hutchinson.

More than 220 guests enjoyed both a live and silent auction. Items included a guitar autographed by Pat Monahan and Train, an afternoon of wine tasting at Sparkling Ponds with a chauffeured limo ride and a stained-glass window from the wooden doors of the cathedral in the 1960s.

The event raised \$65,000. A portion of the proceeds have been established into the Frank and Mary Therese Riley Scholarship Fund. The scholarship will be merit-based in supporting a student of the cathedral with a Catholic education. The proceeds will also benefit the parish needs and school technology vision and all-day Pre-K program beginning in the fall.



Msgr. William Biebel, rector of St. Peter Cathedral, presented Frank and Mary Therese Riley with a Celtic cross at the cathedral's Mardi Gras Gala. The event honored the Rileys for their dedication to the cathedral parish and school.

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