

Rosary remembrance

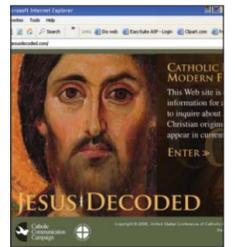
Rome to mark anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death with rosary, page 2



FaithLife

Jesus Decoded

Web site separates fact from fiction in *Da Vinci Code*, page 3



www.ErieRCD.org

BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

March 19, 2006

Confirmation Schedule

St. Titus Parish, Titusville – March 19
St. John Parish, Tidioute – March 21
St. Mary Parish, Crown – March 24

Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

Feast of the Annunciation – March 25

"Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'" - Luke 1: 30-33



Benedictine Sisters' Forum on Religious Life – March 25

The Benedictine Sisters' 150th anniversary year celebration continues in March with a forum for women religious: "Where in the World is the Body of Christ?" The event, a conversation on the future of religious life, will take place on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. Sister Phyllis Schleicher, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters from 1990-1998, will serve as honorary chair of the event. The focus will be an examination of the theological and ecclesial concepts that form the foundation to religious life and how these are expressed in the monastic and apostolic traditions. Invitations have been extended to women religious in the dioceses of Buffalo and Cleveland as well as Erie and members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Region IV.



Middle school youth rally Elk County Catholic High School, St. Marys – March 25

The theme of this year's rally is *Saving Grace*. Keynote presenter, the Catholic edu-tainer Bob Perron of St. George 4 Christ Ministries (Strive Toward Obeying Our God Every Day), will blend humor and education focused on receiving and giving grace. Spreading the Gospel in song, also featured will be popular bilingual (English and Spanish) Christian band, Who Do You Say I Am. Other rally activities include living stations, a service project activity and a vibrant youth Mass.



Dedication of new church addition and office space, St. Michael Parish, Greenville – March 25 at 5:30 p.m.

Last year, St. Michael's broke ground on a major renovation project. Plans called for the sanctuary to be extended back by 40 feet, creating space to enlarge the church's seating capacity from 325 to 550. A new administration building and gathering space have also been built. Bishop Donald Trautman will dedicate the project.



First anniversary of death of Pope John Paul II – April 2

23rd annual Holy Week retreat with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie – April 12-16

Comfort My People – Deepening the Jubilee Heart will be led by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and Fr. Donald Cozzens, a visiting professor of religious studies at John Carroll University and a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland. The retreat includes Holy Week liturgies, prayer, serving a meal at Emmaus Soup Kitchen, a seven-mile peace pilgrimage with public Station of the Cross and reflection time. For more information, contact Sr. Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski at 814.899.0614 ext. 2402, e-mail spirituality@mtsbenedict.org or visit www.eriebenedictines.org on the Web.

Clergy appointment

The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL, Bishop of Erie, announces the following clergy appointment:
Fr. William Fischer, OSFS, appointed part-time chaplain of St. Mary's Home at Asbury Ridge, Erie, while continuing in the ministries and residence assigned by his religious community. Effective March 1, 2006.

The Diocese of Erie will welcome 288 new members into its parishes at the April 15 Easter Vigil

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

Ninety-eight catechumens and 190 candidates, along with their sponsors, family and friends, packed St. Peter Cathedral, Erie, and St. Joseph Parish, Force, for the Rite of Election ceremony March 5. About 1,000 people participated at both locations.

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

The Diocese of Erie will welcome all 288 new members into its parishes at the April 15 Easter Vigil.

The Rite of Election, celebrated annually in cathedrals and churches around the world on the first Sunday of Lent, formally acknowledges the readiness of those preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation — baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist — at the Easter Vigil.

During the ceremony, candidates are called and come forth to greet the bishop. Catechumens are called and, accompanied by their godparents, come forth to sign the Book of the Elect. The godparent places the right hand on the shoulder of the catechumen as the book is signed.

Sr. Marie Kebort, SSJ, is the director of religious education at St. Patrick Parish, Erie, and has been involved with the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) for 11 years. She says the Rite of Election ceremony is a very profound part of the RCIA process.

"When they go to the cathedral and they see all the people and hear their names called, it's really an experience for them," Sr. Marie says.

For candidates and catechumens, they come to the RCIA process in different ways, she says: Their spouse may be Catholic; they may want to learn more about the faith; some come because they have missed the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation or both and want to get married; then you have people who just walk in.

"They all come for different reasons and with different experiences," Sr. Marie says. "God's grace works differently in everybody."

This year, Sr. Marie has 12 people in her RCIA program from St. Patrick, St. Stanislaus and the Holy Family/St. Casimir/St. Ann cluster. Right from the beginning, parishes are involved in welcoming members of the RCIA class.



Top photo by Jason Koshinski, bottom photo by Theresa Dayton.

Top, Bishop Donald W. Trautman greets a candidate during the Rite of Election at St. Peter Cathedral. Bottom, Msgr. Robert Smith poses with the elect at St. Joseph Parish in Force.

See RITE OF ELECTION, page 3

Faith magazine seeks Teen of the Year nominations



Faith magazine is looking for young people who will inspire their peers by their character, achievements, commitments and/or activities. All are invited to nominate a young person between the ages of 13 and 19 as one of Faith magazine's 2006 Teens of the Year. Nomination forms are available at www.eriecd.org/faithcurrent.asp or can be requested by calling Faith at 814.824.1160 or 800.374.3723 ext. 160.

Two Teens of the Year will be photographed and interviewed for the September 2006 cover story as well as given the opportunity to designate a \$150 donation to the organization of their choice. All nominations must be received in the Faith office, 429 E. Grandview Blvd., Erie, PA 16504, by Monday, April 17.

Sister parish tribute to St. Joseph

Each year, one family from the parish of San José Obrero (St. Joseph the Worker) in the Archdiocese of Yucatan, sister to the Erie Diocese, receives the honor of clothing, decorating and taking care of the parish statue of St. Joseph. Note that this year, St. Joseph is wearing a carpenter's apron featuring a real hammer.

Pope Pius IX proclaimed Joseph as the patron of the universal church in 1870, honoring him for the support, protection and guidance he provided and naming March 19 as his feast day. Pope Pius XII added a second feast honoring St. Joseph the Worker, celebrated May 1.

San José Obrero is the sister parish of St. Michael in Greenville.



Photo by Art Becker

Reconciliation – experiencing the mercy and healing of Jesus

We are fast approaching Holy Week, the holiest week of the year, when we will commemorate the death and rising of Jesus. During the past weeks of our Lenten journey, the Lord has called us to conversion. The Lord asks us to step back and reflect on our way of life, that we might have a change of heart and draw closer to him. As we rapidly approach Holy Week, we shall recall our Lord laying down his life for our salvation. We have all made this Lenten journey before, but this Lent must be different. This must be a time of turning toward God with new love and determination. This must be a time of reconciliation.

Catholic life? We are often ashamed of our weakness and selfishness, fearful of our inability to change and puzzled as to what we should do. Just as God reassured Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, "I love you with an everlasting love," so now through the priest in the sacrament of penance, God reassures us of his constant love. That love never wavers despite our sins. His mercy gives us new hope.



Bishop Donald Trautman

Many are my sins but greater is God's mercy. Christ has given us a sacrament in which he grants us full pardon – total amnesty. Confession is a sacrament that bestows upon us the joy of forgiveness. We have

The Lord has given us the sacrament of penance – reconciliation. We need to confess our sins and experience the mercy and healing of Jesus. The sacrament of reconciliation affords us the opportunity for new life. Let us not put off our coming home to the Father.

Forgiveness is a profound transaction. Not to forgive others who have hurt us is to be imprisoned by the past, to be imprisoned by old grievances that do not permit life to proceed with new business. Not to forgive is to yield oneself to another's control. If one does not forgive, then one is controlled by the other's initiatives and is locked into a sequence of outrage and revenge – an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Forgiveness frees the forgiver.

Why is the sacrament of penance and reconciliation so important in

all belonged at one time to those "who did not know what they were doing." But we have heard Jesus' prayer from the cross, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing." Suddenly, we discovered forgiveness and joy that comes from a new life in Christ.

This Lent we need to pray Psalm 51, "Be merciful, God, for we have sinned." This is the perfect Lenten psalm. We need to pray it as we prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation. And let us reflect on the words of this psalm: "A clean heart create for me, O God, and renew your spirit within me."

+ Donald W. Trautman

Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL
Bishop of Erie

By the Way...

Mercyhurst College officially welcomed **Dr. Thomas J. Gamble** as its new president on his first day March 1. Dr. Gamble addressed the community for the first time as president March 6.



Jason Koshinski

Dr. Gamble holds a doctorate in psychology from Syracuse University and a magna cum laude B.A. in philosophy from Gannon University. He is a post-doctoral graduate of the Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University.

A formal inauguration is scheduled for Sept. 16.

Sister Maura Smith, RSM, will be honored March 28 by **Mercyhurst College** and its Religious Studies Department with its **Archbishop Oscar Romero Award**. The award recognizes Sister Maura as staunch advocate of peace, justice and sustainability. She is the 12th recipient of the Romero Award, which is presented annually to an individual "living the call of faith and justice in an extraordinary manner."

A member of the Mercyhurst College Board of Trustees, Sister Maura is a former president of the Sisters of Mercy Erie Regional Community and former principal of Mercyhurst Preparatory School. She is active in promoting issues of justice and peace on the Mercyhurst campus and the Erie community.

In honoring Sister Maura, the college recognizes a woman of faith whose vision, tenacity and creativity have spawned so many successful initiatives over the years, including the Mercy Center for Women, Erie DAWN, the Learning Differences Program at Mercyhurst College and the Mercyhurst Green Team. Stairways Behavioral Health, the Healthy Youth Development Council, Partnership of Women Religious and the Congregational Action to Life with Love are other community organizations to which she has lent her dedication and expertise in recent years.

The **OLP Playhouse** will present a reader's theater production of **Pope John Paul II's** most widely produced play, **The Jeweler's Shop**, the weekend of March 31-April 2. Billed as "a poetic drama exploring aspects of human existence through love and marriage," *The Jeweler's Shop* is a thought-provoking reflection planned to honor the late pope on the first anniversary of his death. Due to the complexity of the material, director Heidi Arnold said the play is more appropriate for an adult audience.

The ensemble cast of 7 will perform at the **Our Lady of Peace School** gymnasium on Friday, March 31 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 2 at 2 p.m.; and at **Holy Trinity Parish**, Erie on Friday, April 1 at 7:30 p.m.

The show will be taken on the road the weekend of April 21-22; parishes located outside of Erie County interested in hosting the show should call Mary Ann Muller, producer, evenings at 814.824.2630.

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

Rome to mark anniversary of Pope John Paul's death with rosary

ROME (CNS) — The Diocese of Rome will mark the first anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death April 2 with the nighttime recitation of the rosary in St. Peter's Square. Cardinal Camillo Ruini, papal vicar of Rome, said the 9 p.m. rosary would allow Catholics "to relive the climate of intense prayer that accompanied the passing of Pope John Paul II to his definitive encounter with the Lord." Thousands of people were in St. Peter's Square praying the rosary and keeping vigil when the pope died. Announcing the anniversary rosary Feb. 25, the Diocese of Rome said Pope Benedict XVI will greet those gathered in St. Peter's Square from the window of his apartment.



Rosary vigil: The faithful gather in prayer in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican April 1, 2005 for Pope John Paul II.

U.S.

Catholic health care groups to run medical clinic outside New Orleans

CHALMETTE, La. (CNS) — Six months after Hurricane Katrina, St. Bernard's Parish, a civil entity just east of New Orleans, looked as if the hurricane just occurred. There was no longer standing water, but the businesses, homes and shopping centers in the small towns and neighborhoods were completely in shambles. Ten percent, or 7,000 residents, have returned to an area with almost no electricity or running water. On March 4, the parking lot of the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Chalmette was as packed as it may have been in its pre-Katrina days, but the people were there to get free lunches from a charity-run food tent, consult officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency or insurance workers in trailers on-site, or receive health care at a triple-wide trailer run by three local doctors with financing and staffing assistance from the U.S. Public Health Service. The federal contract for the clinic, which has been seeing about 150 patients a day, is about to run out. Two Catholic health care systems — Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System based in Baton Rouge and Ascension Health in St. Louis — have stepped in and are planning to run the clinic in the near future.

WORLD

Vatican document says church fails to defend Gypsies from prejudice

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

— Despite movements to protect minorities and to value other cultures, civil society and even the Catholic Church often fail to defend Gypsy communities from blatant prejudice and discrimination, a new Vatican document said. "From habitual prejudices to signs of rejection," Gypsies still suffer exclusion and expulsion, "often without any reaction or protest from those who witness them," said the document from the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers. The council's "Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies" was released at a Feb. 28 Vatican press conference. Msgr. Bruno Nicolini, who coordinates pastoral work among Gypsies in the Diocese of Rome, said the document provides ideas and norms for ministry, "but it will be more difficult to change the ideas of the people of God. It will take longer than establishing specific pastoral projects because people have to be convinced that we can live together."



Life of a Gypsy: A Gypsy family shares a modest meal in a tent that serves as their home in the southern Iraqi city of Ad Diwaniyah in this Nov. 2 file photo.

Polish statistician downplays study showing decline in Mass turnout

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) — A church statistician downplayed a recent study showing a continued decline in Mass attendance in Poland. "Mass attendance is only one way of measuring a society's religiousness," said Pallotine Father Witold Zdaniewicz, professor and director of the Warsaw-based Catholic Church Statistics Institute. "The data clearly show a persistent drop in numbers going to church, but the causes and explanations vary considerably." Father Zdaniewicz told Catholic News Service that results of a Sunday Mass head count taken in November would be announced before Pope Benedict XVI's May 25-28 visit. In mid-February, the Polish

Press Agency reported that Catholic Church Statistics Institute figures showed 43 percent of Catholics attended Sunday Mass regularly in 2004, compared to 47.5 percent in 2000. Under communist rule in the 1980s, church attendance was 60 percent; in 1991 it was 50 percent. Father Zdaniewicz said the data had to be looked at "holistically — we can't just consider bare numbers and percentages."

Vatican Radio employees present pope with iPod

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

— A group of Vatican Radio employees gave Pope Benedict XVI a brand new iPod nano loaded with special Vatican Radio programming and classical music. To honor the pope's first visit to the radio's broadcasting headquarters, the radio's technical staff decided the pencil-thin, state-of-the-art audio player would make the perfect gift. Now that Vatican Radio offers podcasts in eight different languages, the pope has the technological capability to plug in and import the radio's audio files. Pope Benedict visited the programming and broadcasting hub of "the pope's radio" March 3 to mark the station's 75th anniversary.

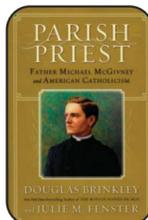


iPope: Pope Benedict XVI participates in a live broadcast during his visit to Vatican Radio March 3. The radio's staff gave the pope an iPod nano as a gift. Vatican Radio offers podcasts in eight different languages.

PEOPLE

Author says McGivney bio could help restore respect for priests

ROME (CNS) — Supporters of the sainthood cause of Father Michael McGivney are hoping that he will become the first American-born parish priest to be canonized. A new biography is introducing a wider audience to the 19th-century priest — and may also help restore respect for the many good priests in the United States, said one of the book's authors. Julie M. Fenster, a historian who co-wrote "Parish Priest: Father Michael McGivney and American Catholicism," spoke about the book to U.S. priests and seminarians Feb. 27 at Rome's Pontifical North American College. At a time when the image of the U.S. priest has been damaged by sexual abuse committed by a small minority of clergy, the book chronicles the good work of a priest who, after founding the Knights of Columbus, worked as a simple pastor until his death at age 38. "I'm hoping this book might act as a gyroscope to reset some of the balance for people whose only exposure to parish priests is out of those headlines" on sexual abuse, Fenster said in an interview.



Ghanaian proves Operation Rice Bowl is effective

PORTLAND, Ore. (CNS) — Thomas Awiapo is living proof that the coins and bills Catholics stuff into cardboard rice bowls each Lent can cultivate hope out of hardship. As an orphan in the village of Wiaga, Ghana, young Thomas survived by begging and becoming a child laborer. He would move from farm to farm, offering to work for food. He had never even considered going to school. The idea was beyond his world — until he heard that students got lunch. School was for him, he decided. Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' international relief and development agency, provided the food that drew Awiapo. He sat through classes mostly for the meal of wheat and sorghum cereal and milk powder. "The crux of the matter is that if there had not been that snack at school, which was paid for by Catholic children and adults from the U.S., my life would have been much different," Awiapo told the *Catholic Sentinel*, newspaper of the Portland Archdiocese. "I am grateful for their sacrifices." Today Awiapo works for CRS in the northern Ghanaian city of Tamale, and he recently toured U.S. cities on behalf of CRS and Operation Rice Bowl.

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The official news bulletin of the Catholic Diocese of Erie

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Dust off your Dancing Shoes!

It's Time for the Catholic Charities Ball

April 21st ~ 7pm-midnight

Proceeds benefit Rainbows
Find out more. Call 814-824-1250

RETREAT FOR PRIESTS

Presented by Fr. Richard Gielow, CM

Ordained as a Priest of the Congregation of the Mission of St. Vincent DePaul in 1970, Fr. Gielow served for five years as Director of Vocations for the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers, and for six years as rector and principal of St. John's High School Seminary in Kansas City. He holds a B.A. in Philosophy, an M.Div. in Theology from DeAndreis Institute of Theology, and an M.A. in Religious Education from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Fr. Gielow is currently Director of the Vincentian Parish Mission Center in Kansas City and is the National Spiritual Advisor to the Ladies of Charity of USA. Listed in "Who's Who" as a "well-known preacher and Retreat Director," he has been a member of the Vincentian Parish Mission team since 1982.

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FISH DINNERS

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Dinner includes:
baked or fried haddock, potatoes, vegetable, cole slaw or apple sauce, bread, butter & beverage.
A Sundae Bar is available for an additional \$1.00

Cost: \$7.00 for adults; \$3.50 for children 5-12; FREE for 4 & under.
Also available, Macaroni & Cheese Dinner for \$5.00.
Take-outs available.

Rite of Election

from page 1

One of the first things classes do is talk about why they are there. That, Sr. Marie says, leads to open faith sharing. Classes also focus on Catholic practices, the sacraments, church history, social justice and moral living.

"By the time the Easter Vigil comes around, they are immersed in the faith," Sr. Marie says.

What happens during the Rite of Election?

The church formally announces the names of those who will soon celebrate the sacraments of initiation. Those who are named will celebrate baptism, confirmation, and first communion at their parishes during the Easter Vigil. These individuals enter the cathedral as "catechumens" and leave as "elect."

The key moments of the rite are the affirmation by the godparents and the act of admission or election. In the affirmation, the godparents testify that the catechumens are worthy to be initiated. Their testimony reveals the church's positive judgment about the catechumens' desire and behavior.

The bishop invites the catechumens to sign the book of the elect. During the act of admission or election, the bishop declares that the catechumens are members of the elect, to be initiated at the next Easter Vigil.

What is a candidate?

One who is baptized in another Christian tradition or who was baptized Catholic but not formed in the faith.

What is a catechumen?

One who is preparing for baptism in the church.

WORDS of the SHEPHERD



"Christ kept to his course given him by the Father. Christ resisted the devil and won. We, too, are winners if we stay the course given us by God. When you become disillusioned or discouraged or doubtful, imitate Christ. Resist the temptation. Keep to the course given you by God. His strength is sufficient for you. Don't lose heart. Begin anew."

— Bishop Donald Trautman, speaking to catechumens and candidates at the Rite of Election March 5 at St. Peter Cathedral.

U.S. bishops launch *Jesus Decoded* Web site

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A new Web site sponsored by the U.S. bishops' Office for Film & Broadcasting, on the marketing hype behind the movie; and a commentary, "What's Wrong With *The Da Vinci Code*?", written by Father John Wauack, a U.S. priest of Opus Dei, the personal prelature which figures prominently in the novel.

The Web site, www.jesusdecoded.com, was launched March 9. A film version of the book is slated for nationwide release May 19.

The site contains Catholic teachings about information that was fictionalized in the popular novel, including the nature of Jesus; his relationship with Mary Magdalene; the first four ecumenical councils of the early church and how they shaped today's teaching about Jesus; contemporaneous accounts of Jesus' life that were not selected for the New Testament; the role of women in the church throughout history; and the "Last Supper" paintings by Leonardo da Vinci and other artists of his era.

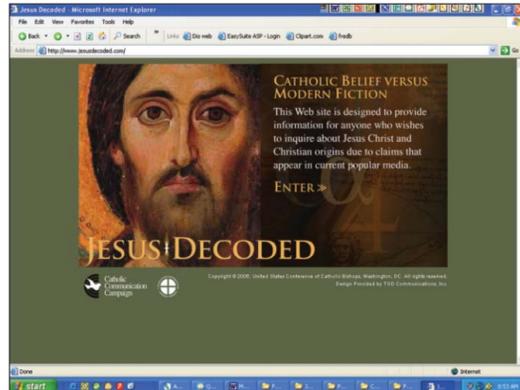
Also found on the site are a Catholic News Service "Vatican Letter" column by John Thavis, the CNS Rome Bureau chief, on the level of Vatican reaction to

the book and forthcoming movie.

There also is an essay by Harry Forbes, director of the U.S. bishops' Office for Film & Broadcasting, on the marketing hype behind the movie; and a commentary, "What's Wrong With *The Da Vinci Code*?", written by Father John Wauack, a U.S. priest of Opus Dei, the personal prelature which figures prominently in the novel.

The site also has production information on the CCC's *Jesus Decoded* TV special, including information on air dates and times in cities around the United States. The program, shot on location in Israel, Turkey and Italy, includes interviews with international scholars versed in art, history and Scripture who "help separate Catholic truth from popular fiction." It has been offered to NBC affiliates, but each affiliate's management makes the decision whether to air it.

"Many of my students and myself included enjoy a good, fast-paced novel, and enjoyed *The Da Vinci Code* on that level, as a tall tale of adventure," said Alan Schreck, chairman of the theology department at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, who contributed an essay to the Web site on early church ecumenical



The homepage of www.jesusdecoded.com

councils.

"There's a level where this book is appealing to people," Schreck told CNS. "That is what makes it dangerous to someone, if they believe it's a historical representation or an accurate theological presentation."

Rather than cover up the truth about Jesus, as the novel suggests, the early church councils tried to uncover the truth, according to Schreck.

In those councils, the participants "asked critical questions and had entertained different views of who Jesus was, his mission, and in this process saw the need to clarify the truth about

Jesus that sprung from the most authentic and reliable sources about him," Schreck said. "And there were many sources about him that were being promulgated."

The *Jesus Decoded* TV special will be available by mid-April on DVD from USCCB Publishing for \$19.95. A companion booklet, *The Authentic Jesus*, sells for \$2.50, and a box of 100 parish bulletin inserts on the same theme sells for \$12. Prices do not include shipping and handling. Orders may be placed by phone at: 800.235.8722.

Papal Audience



"We understand that in order to fully realize our lives in freedom, the trial that freedom itself brings, that is, temptation, must be overcome. Only freed from the slavery of falsehood and sin thanks to obedience to the faith that opens him to the truth can the human person find the full meaning of his existence and obtain peace, love and joy."

— Pope Benedict XVI, meditating on biblical desert scenes prior to his weeklong Lenten retreat March 5-11.

Despite difficult year, Catholic Charities USA chief sees signs of hope, gratitude

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — It hasn't been an easy first year for Father Larry Snyder as president of Catholic Charities USA.

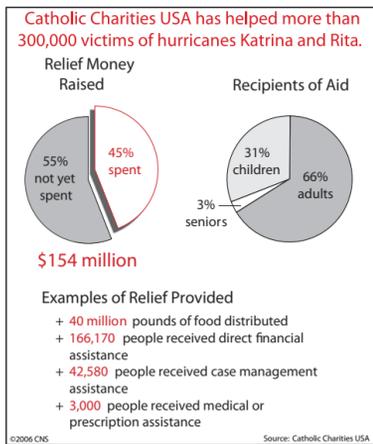
There have been battles over immigration reform and the federal budget, struggles to keep the needs of the poor and vulnerable in the public eye, and, looming over everything for the past six months, the tragic effects of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Gulf Coast region and the massive reconstruction effort now under way.

But through it all, the priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has found signs of hope, gratitude for the world's generosity and a renewed appreciation for the tens of thousands of Catholic Charities staff members and volunteers around the country who have stepped up to the new

challenges.

"They say that a tragedy tests the moral fiber, and Katrina and Rita tested the moral fiber of this country," Father Snyder said. "But it also tested the church and the Catholic Charities network, and we came out of it looking pretty good."

The priest, who has headed Catholic Charities USA since Feb. 1, 2005, spoke to Catholic News Service at the organization's headquarters in Alexandria Feb. 23, the day the Bush administration released its report on "lessons learned" from the federal response to



Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed.

Father Snyder said he was pleased that the report included several recommendations made by Catholic Charities — that the government ensure better lines

of communications after a disaster, for example, and that there be "bureaucratic accommodation" to allow for quick response to human needs in an emergency situation without too much government red tape.

He cited the case of New Orleans' Second Harvest agency, which operates under the Catholic Charities umbrella there and had "warehouses full of food" that had been given by the government for seniors. After Katrina hit, the agency

petitioned the government to distribute the food to hurricane victims, but got no response.

Eventually the agency decided to distribute the food that was so desperately needed, Father Snyder said. "After the food was all gone, the permission from the government finally came through," he said.

Since the hurricanes hit last August and September, Catholic Charities has assisted more than 300,000 victims of Katrina and Rita — including 87,000 children and 10,000 seniors. More than \$69 million has been allocated to 76 local Catholic Charities agencies and other Catholic organizations helping families and individuals affected by the hurricanes.

In all, Catholic Charities

raised a record \$154 million to assist in hurricane recovery efforts, including substantial donations from Catholic charitable organizations worldwide, including Korea, Canada and Germany.

The hurricanes taught the nation one lesson that Father Snyder and local Catholic Charities workers have always known — the poor are the hardest hit when disasters strike.

In New Orleans, 30 percent of the poor didn't have cars to leave the city, the priest noted. Although there was an emergency evacuation plan in place, "many pieces fell apart," he added. Even though buses were available to evacuate the poor, for example, many of the bus drivers had already left the city.



Fr. Larry Snyder

OBITUARY

Redemptorist Father Charles Fehrenbach dies at 96

Redemptorist Father Charles Fehrenbach, 96, who taught and mentored many of the confreres of the Baltimore Province, died Feb. 6, 2006 at St. John Neumann Residence in Saratoga Springs.

"He was a father to so many of us," said Redemptorist Father John McGowan. "He was well known and loved by us and also by the diocesan priests of Erie." His was the longest line of penitents waiting to speak to him in confession at St. Mary's Seminary in North East, Fr. McGowan added.

Fr. Fehrenbach was assigned to St. Mary's Seminary, where he served as registrar and taught from 1942 to 1959.

"He loved to be in the middle of a crowd," said Father John Hamrogue, a confrere who met him at St. Mary's Seminary. He not only enjoyed time with his family, but also with the priests of the Diocese of Erie, where he was well known and appreciated for helping out with Masses, preaching and teaching special Lenten courses in the parishes, Father Hamrogue said.

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St. Andrew students learn about art through Kids as Curators program

St. Andrew School in Erie was one of several schools to participate in this year's Kids as Curators exhibit at the Erie Art Museum.

The students' inter-generational exhibit, For Old Time's Sake, was created by 24 seventh- and eighth-grade students at St. Andrew School, drawing from the collections of the entire St. Andrew community.

The class requested loans of collections from their community through their parish newsletter, and students brought in pieces of their own. They identified five categories within the larger collection that revealed both commonalities and differences between the generations, including religion, clothes, media, sports and toys. Five groups of students each developed an exhibit around one of these themes.

Students worked with their teacher Anita Rogowski, art teacher Kathy Gnachinski and Erie Art Museum assistant curator Suzanne Proulx-Bavaro.

Initially, students were more interested in their classmates' objects than the older artifacts from the community. But as they became more involved with designing their displays, soliciting objects and researching the history of the objects, they became more interested in the differences between the older items and their own. Through their historical research and conversations with the owners, they learned how manufactured objects reflect changes in culture. As the students listened to stories about the objects told by the lenders, they learned how objects are vessels for personal, community and cultural memories and histories.

Students created a display titled Religion in the Home which featured arranged objects such as books, statues, icons and rosary beads. The display conveys that the home is an inti-



Two displays from St. Andrew School's Kids as Curators exhibit at the Erie Art Museum featured religion in the home (left) and media.

mate, sacred environment for private prayer.

The displays were on exhibit at the Erie Art Museum's annex gallery from Feb. 10-March 18.

Artist residencies in conjunction with this exhibit were made possible through the Arts

Council of Erie in partnership with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Additional residency funding was made possible through a grant from the Rotary Club of Erie, the DCED Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program and donations.

Cathedral Women's Council celebrates 15 years, hosts Garden Party May 9

The St. Peter Cathedral Women's Council is in high gear as it prepares for its crystal anniversary Garden Party on Tuesday, May 9 to celebrate 15 years of Catholic service to the Erie area.

A highlight of the Garden Party will be 13 theme baskets brimming with selected items to appeal to all tastes. Baskets chairwoman Janet Blatt has assembled a wide array of baskets, including an American Girl basket with the popular doll and accessories; a Tween basket for young misses; a sports basket with golf and tennis items plus gift certificates; a Family Night basket of board games, gift certificates and DVDs; a Hardy Boys basket chock full of athletic equipment and games for boys; and a Creative Memories basket with scrapbooking and craft supplies. Each of the baskets is valued at more than \$250.

A \$3,000 crystal package with 15 unique crystal pieces will be raffled as a grand prize in addition to a tuition package valued at more than \$2,000 to Cathedral Center School. Rounding out the events will be a silent auction of more than 50 items including many original



From left to right, Cathedral Women's Council members Kimberly Brown, Mary Lou Scottino and Janet Blatt feature the grandma's attic basket with quilt, pillows, hatbox & sailor doll; a dinner party basket with candlesticks, wine glasses, tablecloths & table runner; and a story time basket with hand-painted chair, books, DVDs, teddy bear plates and a teddy bear.

works by area artisans and crafters.

The Garden Party is moving to a new location this year - St. Patrick's Cauley Center, 215 E. Fourth St., Erie. A well-lit parking lot and security will be provided. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. Music will be provided along with a cash bar. Tickets are \$25. Reservations can be made by calling Joan White at 814.454.6640 or Mary Lou

Scottino at 814.459.6258.

The Cathedral Women's Council has provided more than \$130,000 in funding over the past 15 years to St. Peter Cathedral, Cathedral Center and in worthy community outreach efforts, according to Adrienne Marnen, CWC president. Last year's Garden Party drew about 500 women from throughout the Erie area and diocese and was a sold-out event.

Edinboro community sponsors Lenten mission with Fr. Chircop

The Roman Catholic community of Edinboro is sponsoring a Lenten mission or "spiritual spring break" March 20-22 to which all are invited. Fr. Philip Chircop, SJ, a native of the Island of Malta who has crisscrossed the globe in his spiritual ministry, will be the presider each evening. *Covenant: The Promise of Presence* will begin at 7 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings, March 20-22, at Our Lady of the Lake Parish 814.734.3113, 128 Sunset Dr., Edinboro.

Fr. Chircop, who currently resides at the Jesuit Spiritual Retreat Center near Toronto, is a retreat facilitator and spiritual director. He has led spiritual retreats, conferences, seminars and workshops in Europe and North America, as well as in Caribbean nations, Australia and the Philippines. Participants in his programs have included clergy, educators, business leaders, law enforcement officers and lay people in parish ministry. Before embarking on his work as a spiritual retreat director, he served in many capacities: as a campus minister at the state university in Malta, a high school principal, a worker-priest at a shipyard, a factory worker in Germany, a laborer in the sugarcane fields of Louisiana, a deacon in a remote Maltese fishing village, and in his youth as a summer-substitute altar server at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. He holds degrees in

pastoral theology, communications and spirituality from the University of Malta and Le Centre Sévres, Faculté des Jésuites de Paris.



Fr. Philip Chircop

A dynamic thread runs through Fr. Chircop's retreats and workshops. Some of his favorite topics include the importance of humor, finding God in the daily grind, facing up to distractions in prayer, healing our images of God, nurturing creativity, following disciplines for wellness and watching films prayerfully (a.k.a. Video Divina).

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