

Lenten fasting

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FaithLife

Thinking of our soldiers

Cathedral Prep's JROTC reaches out to soldiers overseas, page 4.



www.ErieRCD.org

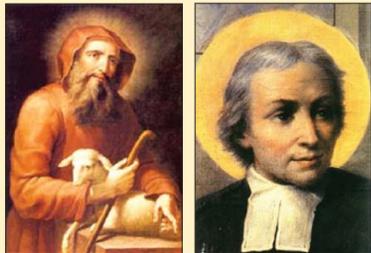
BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

March 27, 2011

Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

Feast days



St. Francis of Paola

St. John Baptist de la Salle

- April 2 St. Francis of Paola (1416-1507), hermit, founder of the Minim Friars
- April 4 St. Isidore of Seville (c.560-636), bishop, doctor of the church
- April 5 St. Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419), priest
- April 7 St. John Baptist de la Salle (1651-1719), priest

Confirmations

St. Tobias, Brockway – Sunday, March 27 at 11 a.m. Confirmation classes include Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sykesville; St. Mark, Reynoldsville; and St. Tobias, Brockway.

Immaculate Conception, Brookville – Sunday, March 27 at 3 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Charles, New Bethlehem, and Immaculate Conception, Brookville.

St. Boniface, Erie – Monday, March 28 at 7 p.m.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Bradford – Friday, April 1 at 7 p.m. Confirmation classes include Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Hawk Run, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Bradford.

St. Catherine of Siena, DuBois – Saturday, April 2 at 11 a.m. Confirmation classes include St. Bernard, Falls Creek; St. Michael the Archangel, DuBois; St. Joseph, DuBois; and St. Catherine of Siena, DuBois.

St. Bartholomew, Sharpville – Saturday, April 2 at 4:30 p.m. Confirmation classes include Good Shepherd, West Middlesex, and St. Bartholomew, Sharpville.

Queen of the World, St. Marys – Sunday, April 3 at 2 p.m. Confirmation classes include Sacred Heart, St. Marys; St. Mary, St. Marys; and Queen of the World, St. Marys.

St. Gabriel the Archangel, Port Allegany – Sunday, April 3 at 7 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Eulalia, Coudersport, and St. Gabriel the Archangel, Port Allegany.

Holy Redeemer, Warren – Monday, April 4 at 7 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Anthony, Sheffield; St. Luke, Youngsville; St. Joseph, Warren; and Holy Redeemer, Warren.

Blessed Sacrament, Erie – Wednesday, April 6 at 7 p.m.

Christ the King, Houtzdale – Friday, April 8 at 7 p.m. Confirmation classes include St. Basil the Great, Coalport; St. Agnes, Morrisdale; Ss. Peter and Paul, Hawk Run; Immaculate Conception, Osceola Mills; St. Mary of the Assumption, Frenchville; St. Severin, Drifting; and Christ the King, Houtzdale.

The new Roman Missal

Silence

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal's* (GIRM) section on sacred silence has been expanded, recommending that "even before the celebration itself, it is commendable that silence be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner." (45)

Admonishing that the Liturgy of the Word "must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation," (56) the *Instruction* cautions against "any kind of haste which impedes recollection" and recommends brief moments of silence throughout the liturgy, especially after the readings and the homily so that the word of God may be "taken into the heart by the fostering of the Holy Spirit." (56)

– United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

COUNTDOWN: There are 245 days to the implementation of the new Roman Missal (as of March 27)

As Japan disaster unfolds, world's Catholics offer prayers, help

By Catholic News Service

TOKYO – As the magnitude of the disaster in Japan unfolded, religious and humanitarian aid organizations stepped up efforts to provide assistance.

The earthquake was followed by tsunamis that wiped out entire cities and by fears of catastrophe at nuclear power stations damaged in the quake. Government officials estimated that tens of thousands of people lost their lives in the March 11 disasters.

The Diocese of Sendai includes the areas hardest-hit in the disaster, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News.

Japanese church officials are setting up an emergency center to coordinate humanitarian aid operations in Sendai, the area most devastated by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Bishop Martin Tetsuo Hiraga of Sendai and the diocesan chancellor, Father Peter Shiro Komatsu will be the director and vice director of the center, and a Caritas worker will be stationed there to coordinate aid work, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News. Clergy and laypeople from other dioceses may also join the work.

The center is expected to operate for six months, UCA News reported.

Father Komatsu said gasoline is the most needed commodity.

After the magnitude 9 earthquake, reactors at the Fukushima nuclear power plant were hit by explosions, and Japanese officials were working to avoid leakage of radiation. They ordered evacuations for hundreds of thou-

sands of people.

Earlier, Bishop Hiraga told Vatican Radio that many area residents, cut off without electricity and with some phone service just restored, were unaware of the worsening situation at the Fuku-

shima plant.

"You living in other countries have a much better idea of the tragedy," the bishop told Vatican Radio.

"We are terrified," the bishop said. "We only have the govern-

ment announcements, we have no other source of information. We don't even know what has happened to our parishes in the towns and villages along the coast. We

See JAPAN, page 3



(CNS photo)

A man walks through destruction in the town of Minamisanriku, Japan, March 14. Government officials estimated that tens of thousands of people lost their lives in the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Rite of Election Church to welcome new members at Easter Vigil

Tens of thousands of new Catholics will join the church at the Easter Vigil.

The Diocese of Erie will welcome 221 new members this year.

Sixty-three catechumens and 168 candidates, along with their sponsors, families and guests filled St. Peter Cathedral in Erie and St. Callistus Parish in Kane for the Rite of Election ceremony Feb. 13. About 1,000 people participated in both locations.

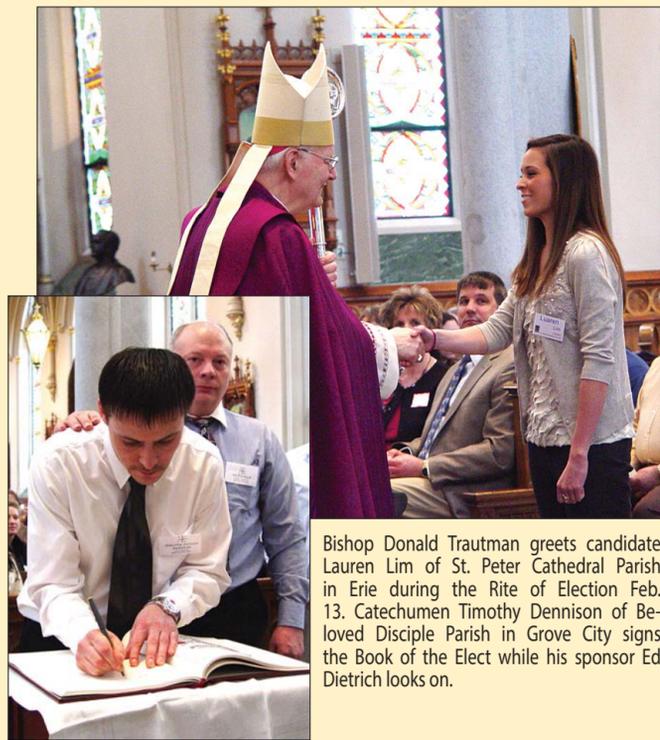
Bishop Donald Trautman presided over services at the cathedral. Msgr. Robert Smith, vicar general of the Erie Diocese, presided at St. Callistus.

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.

Catechumens, or those to be baptized, are preparing to enter the Catholic Church by receiving the sacraments of initiation—baptism, confirmation and Eucharist—at the Easter Vigil.

Candidates, who are already baptized in another faith tradition and seek full communion with the church, are preparing to receive confirmation and first Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.



Bishop Donald Trautman greets candidate Lauren Lim of St. Peter Cathedral Parish in Erie during the Rite of Election Feb. 13. Catechumen Timothy Dennison of Beloved Disciple Parish in Grove City signs the Book of the Elect while his sponsor Ed Dietrich looks on.

Newest volunteer starts blog for Mission of Friendship

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

Volunteers and organizers of the Mission of Friendship have been searching for ways to keep people posted of the weekly happenings of the mission and its programs.

One of the newest volunteers at the Mission of Friendship seems to have found a way to do that: in the form of a blog.

The blog, *Misión de Amistad: A Journey of Faith and Friendship*, seeks to update viewers on visits from guests, work from visiting volunteer groups, sister parish news and information otherwise pertinent to the Mission of Friendship.

The blog was created by volunteer Beth Boyd and will be maintained by her throughout the coming months. Her latest posts include topics such as her first day as a volunteer, celebrating Carnaval in Merida and a new church in Temozon. The blog can be found at <http://bethboydmissionoffriendship.blogspot.com>.

"It is our sincere hope that this blog may become a source of information for those who have most generously supported and have taken an interest in the Mission of Friendship throughout the years," said Cari

Volunteer Beth Boyd is pictured with some of her new friends at the Mission of Friendship in Merida, Mexico.



Serafin, a coordinator of the mission.

The Mission of Friendship is a formalized exchange between the Diocese of Erie and the Archdiocese of Yucatan, Mexico. This year marks the mission's 40th anniversary.

Boyd is the most recent volunteer arrival to the *Misión de Amistad*. A native of Warren, she is a graduate of Mercyhurst College with a degree in psychology and world languages and cultures. She is a member of Holy Redeemer Parish in Warren and said she has been inspired to join the Mission staff through a variety of experiences, including her relationship with Mercyhurst College, her parish and previous study abroad opportunities.

Boyd can be contacted at bboyd22@lak-ers.mercyhurst.edu.

Ash Wednesday



Bishop Donald Trautman distributes ashes on Ash Wednesday, March 9 at the Roman Catholic Chapel at the Millcreek Mall in Erie. Ash Wednesday marked the first day of Lent, a time for Christians to prepare for Easter by doing penance for sins and seeking spiritual renewal through prayer, fasting and good works.



IN THE U.S.

Cardinal places 21 Philadelphia priests on leave as inquiry continues

Continuing his response to the clergy sexual abuse scandal in the Philadelphia Archdiocese, Cardinal Justin Rigali placed 21 priests on administrative leave from their clerical assignments March 7. The unprecedented step to remove such a large group of priests responds to the Philadelphia grand jury's Feb. 10 report that called for the archdiocese to "review all of the old allegations against currently active priests and to remove from ministry all of the priests with credible allegations against them." The priests' placement on leave is not a final determination, according to a press release issued by the archdiocesan communications office. The action follows "an initial examination of files looking at both the substance of allegations and the process by which those allegations were reviewed," the statement said. Each case will be subject to a further review in a "thorough, independent investigation."



Cardinal Justin Rigali

School choice bill promoted in Pennsylvania

Sen. Anthony Williams, a Democrat who represents Philadelphia, called the bill that would give low-income parents tuition vouchers to transfer their children from failing public schools to schools that succeed a "moral imperative." The bill passed by a vote of 8-2 in the Senate Education Committee March 1. "For too long we have trapped and failed thousands of children and their families and failed the taxpayers who have paid for this expensive failure," he said. Nearly 70 years after the U.S. Supreme Court banned segregated schools, declaring that "separate is not equal," Williams has adapted the famous ruling to describe his own crusade for choice: "Failing schools are not equal," he said. Williams is lead co-sponsor of S.B. 1 — the Opportunity Scholarship Act — along with state Sen. Jeffrey Piccola from the Harrisburg area

and 15 other legislators. Under terms of the legislation, a family of four earning less than \$28,688 could use vouchers to send their children to the school of their choice — public, private, Catholic or charter. The money would come from the per-pupil subsidy the commonwealth pays to local school districts. The vouchers would cover tuition up to the current cost of the base subsidy: \$8,950.

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference urges Catholics to advocate for this bill. Continuous updates are available at the Catholic Education link found at www.pacatholic.org. Sign up to become an advocate for the issues of your choice at the same site.

Catholic leaders: repeal of death penalty advances 'culture of life'

The repeal of the death penalty "advances the development of a culture of life in our state," the Catholic Conference of Illinois said March 9. "As we begin the Lenten season on this Ash Wednesday, and we reflect on the crucifixion of Jesus and the mystery of his death and resurrection, there is no better time for this landmark law to be approved," said the conference, which represents the state's Catholic bishops on public policy issues. The statement was issued the same day Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law a bill to abolish the death penalty, making Illinois the 16th U.S. state to do so. Effective July 1, the law also will direct funding to services for victims' families and for law enforcement training. "No longer will there be a risk in Illinois that an innocent person will be convicted and sentenced to death," the Catholic conference said.

AROUND THE WORLD

Stamp issued by Vatican and Poland honors Pope John Paul II

A stamp showing Pope John Paul II, Jesus of Divine Mercy and St. Peter's Basilica is being jointly issued by the Vatican and Poland to celebrate the May 1 beatification of the Polish pope. The stamp will be available April 12.



Pope sends aid to earthquake victims in New Zealand



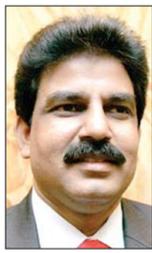
A rescue worker looks through the rubble of the severely damaged Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Christchurch, New Zealand, Feb. 24.

Pope Benedict XVI has donated \$50,000 to those affected by a deadly earthquake that hit Christchurch, New Zealand, Feb. 22. The pope asked the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Vatican's humanitarian relief agency, to send the money to assist victims there. A magnitude 6.3 earthquake rocked New Zealand's second-largest city last month, causing more than 160 deaths and widespread damage. The death toll was expected to rise as workers continued to comb through the rubble.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Vatican condemns murder of Pakistani minister for minorities

The Vatican condemned the killing of a Catholic government minister in Pakistan who had spoken out against anti-blasphemy laws. Shahbaz Bhatti, the Pakistani minister for minorities and the first Catholic to serve in that position, received several threats against his life after criticizing the country's anti-blasphemy laws, which have been used to persecute Christians and other religious minorities. Bhatti was attacked in his car in Islamabad March 2, when gunmen opened fire on his vehicle and proceeded to drag him out, according to press reports. Bhatti was immediately taken to the hospital, where doctors were unable to save him from massive gunshot wounds.



Shahbaz Bhatti

By the Way...

A recent snowstorm in Erie provided Father Larry Richards with the opportunity to use Skype for the first time. Father Larry was scheduled to deliver one of the keynote talks at a men's conference in Minnesota. When his plane was grounded, he made his presentation to 550 participants through the software application which allows users to make voice calls and video chats over the internet.



Organizers said he was very well-received. It just may give Father Larry some options as he tries to balance his responsibilities as pastor of St. Joseph Parish/Bread of Life Community in Erie with his speaking engagements, which number at least 45 for 2011.

His first book, "Be a Man," was the number one seller for publisher Ignatius Press for more than a year. It recently fell to No. 2. But Father Larry wasn't too disappointed. It was Pope Benedict XVI's new book, the second volume of "Jesus of Nazareth," that took the top spot.

The perpetual adoration chapel at St. Joseph/Bread of Life, which has been going since 2004, will receive a visit from a special monstrance blessed by Pope John Paul II. The Serra Club of Erie is bringing the monstrance to the chapel May 15-21. The monstrance is one of six that was blessed by the late pope in 2004, each for a different continent, for use in eucharistic adoration and prayers for vocations. It travels North America and is used by various dioceses.

Friends in Venango County held a farewell party on March 20 at the Catholic Rural Ministry for Sister Emilie Rose LeBoeuf, SSJ, who is moving to the Sisters of St. Joseph Community Living Center in Erie.

Sister Emilie Rose spent the past 16 years of her ministry in Venango County. Much of that time was spent teaching at Venango Catholic High School in Oil City. She also taught at CareerLink in the same town, where she celebrated her 50th year in education and volunteered at the Oil City Housing Authority.

About 45 well wishers stopped by to visit her. "It was kind of an emotional farewell," Sister Emilie Rose said. "It was wonderful. We just sat around and talked."

The confirmation season in the Diocese of Erie began March 14 at St. James Parish in Erie. Bishop Donald Trautman's schedule is booked solid from March through June, then picks up again in the fall. It marks the beginning of another busy time of year during which the bishop will put the bulk of more than 35,000 miles on his car visiting parishes throughout the 13-county diocese.

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

Fasting has spiritual, physical benefits but also points to good works

By Marylynn G. Hewitt
Catholic News Service

DETROIT — That empty stomach rumble, a reminder of fasting during Lent, is beneficial spiritually and physically. It also is a way to draw attention to the work of the church and to help charitable organizations.

Catholics are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, which means eating only one full meal during the course of a day, and to abstain from meat on Fridays.

"The greater portion of fasting is the honoring of the suffering death of our Lord Jesus Christ," said Franciscan Father James Goode, president of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life. "I tell people when they are in the midst of a crisis in their life, try fasting and prayer, and then have that assurance that God will hear our prayer."

The 70-year-old priest says he would fast before being given a new assignment. "It was the experience of saying, 'Not my will, but God's will, be done.' God was able to help me to understand where he was leading me. Prayer and fasting brought me peace. It

brought me comfort. It brought me that assurance that Jesus is still mine. And that there is nothing in life that he won't be with me through."

Members of the New York-based apostolate are encouraging others to join in using Tuesdays during Lent as additional days of fasting and prayer "for the end of abortion and all acts of violence that are destroying our community."

Pax Christi USA also is recommending fasting beyond the Friday requirement during Lent. John Zokovitch, director of national field operations for the organization that is moving its headquarters from Erie to Washington, says it "goes along with Catholic understanding of fasting being about personal atonement, but also about certain self-purification, a certain amount of resituating ourselves to the important things in our life."

"Within the context of Pax Christi, it's with the Gospel call to be peacemakers and justice seekers," said the 42-year-old member of Holy Faith Catholic Church in Gainesville, Fla. While there is no specific priority cited for this year's Lent fast,



Fasting during Lent is beneficial spiritually and physically, but also can be a way to draw Catholics' attention to the work of the church and to help charitable organizations. Catholics are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, which means eating only one full meal during the course of a day and abstaining from meat on Fridays.

Zokovitch says in the past year the hallmarks of Pax Christi—prayer, study and action—have emphasized the war in Afghanistan, immigration and nuclear disarmament.

Fasting and abstinence should go back to being a communal practice for families and parishes who skip a meal, spend the time in prayer and donate the money to

charity, says Msgr. Charles Murphy, 75, director of the diaconate program for the Diocese of Portland, Maine. "When I was growing up, you could look around a restaurant and know who was a Catholic by who was not eating meat."

He also remembers the total fast of food and water from midnight until receiving Commu-

nion, a fast with "the actual feeling of hunger so that you create a space that only God can fill." He equates it with the "Christian rhythm of life of fasting and feasting."

Msgr. Murphy points to Pope Paul VI's apostolic constitution on penance in 1966, which recommended all Catholics voluntarily fast and abstain throughout the year. Outside Lent, those practices could be substituted with prayer and works of charity. Msgr. Murphy says the changes were prompted because prior to 1966, "it was so laden with the language of sin that people were approaching it without the spiritual basis for this practice."

Fasting fell out of favor. In February 1980, a few months after visiting the United States, Pope John Paul II had dinner at the Pontifical North American College in Rome where Msgr. Murphy was the rector. The pope asked the rector about the lack of fasting in the United States.

"I didn't have an answer for him then," recalled Msgr. Murphy, who said his answer became his book, "The Spirituality of Fasting: Rediscovering a Christian Practice," published by Ave

Maria Press in 2010.

He also promotes the partial fast observed during Lent as a way to "heal our bodies, minds and spirits of bad habits. They say it takes 40 days for the body to reset itself biologically and that's what Lent is."

America's appetite could stand to benefit physically by fasting, said Dr. Raymond J. Casciari, chief medical officer at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, Calif. Fasting "tends to make you more alert and tends to make you less depressed."

Most people begin to metabolize fat after 12 hours of fasting. "We need to access that fat, otherwise it just continues to build. That's a huge problem in this country right now," said the physician, a member of St. Norbert Parish in Orange. "The more fat we build the more likely that we will get all sorts of diseases related to fat: diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, strokes."

A weekly fasting day, staying hydrated with water, would be a good thing for most people, he said. Just as important is breaking that fast with a small meal, rather than trying to make up for the meals missed.

FaithLife

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General Information: (814) 824-1161
Fax: (814) 824-1170

E-Mail: FaithLife@erieRCD.org
Editorial: (814) 824-1171
Advertising: (814) 824-1168

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Spaghetti Dinner

Sunday, April 10
Serving noon until 5 p.m.

St. Paul's Center - 16th and Walnut Sts., Erie
Admission: \$7 adult \$4 children
Bake sale • 50/50 • Chinese auction
St. Paul's Catholic Church - Holy Name Society

Briefly

Sisters of St. Joseph to host appreciation events in Meadville, Bradford

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania will host appreciation events in Meadville and Bradford as part of the congregation's ongoing 150th anniversary celebration.

The sisters will be at St. Agatha Parish in Meadville on Friday, April 1 for a liturgy and reception beginning at 7 p.m. One of the sisters' earliest ministries was the founding of Spencer Hospital in Meadville.

On Sunday, April 3, the sisters will host an event at St. Bernard Parish in Bradford where the Sisters of St. Joseph ministered for many years. The Bradford celebration will include a liturgy at 1 p.m. followed by a reception.

The events are free and open to the public; no pre-registration is required.



Gannon to honor Dr. and Mrs. Garibaldi

ERIE – Gannon University will host a special celebration for Dr. Antoine and Mrs. Carol Garibaldi on Thursday, April 7.

The celebration is free and open to the public and will be held from 3:30-6:30 p.m. in the Yehl Ballroom of the university's Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St. in Erie.

The university will acknowledge Dr. Garibaldi's nearly 10 years of distinguished and exemplary service as president of Gannon.

RSVPs are not required. For more information, call 814.871.5842.



Dr. Antoine Garibaldi

Free seminar at Saint Vincent for caregivers

ERIE – Caring for a loved one who is sick, frail or dealing with a terminal illness? An upcoming seminar presented by the Saint Vincent Spirituality and Medicine program and the Saint Vincent Palliative Care Team can help.

"Aging, Illness and Dying: A Time of Grace," a free seminar for caregivers, will be offered Thursday, April 7 from 7-9 p.m. at Saint Vincent Health Center McGarvey Learning Center, 232 W. 25th St., Erie.

The program will feature an expert panel of presenters including Saint Vincent Medical Director for Palliative Care Michael Cooney, MD; Beverly DiSantis, RN, BSN, of the Saint Vincent Palliative Care team; Ann Flick, BSSW, M.Ed., Regional Home Health and Hospice social worker; and Saint Vincent chaplain Father Dennis Martin.

Participants will learn the difference between palliative care and hospice and be provided valuable information about the physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of palliative care as well as tips on health care decision making. Also included will be information about advanced directives and bereavement.

The seminar is free but reservations are required. To register, call 814.866.4817.



As Japan disaster unfolds, world's Catholics offer prayers, help

JAPAN, from page 1

have no way of contacting them. I can only hope that the people of my diocese can stand together and be strong enough to overcome this disaster."

Japanese officials estimate at least 18,000 people died in the disaster.

Niigata Bishop Isao Kikuchi, president of Caritas Japan, said, "We have received so many e-mails from all continents, filled with words of compassion and prayer. We are very grateful for this solidarity. We believe that aid activity is needed, but prayer is also important in such a situation."

Pope Benedict XVI was among those sending his prayers.

Saying he, too, was horrified by the images of the death and destruction caused by the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, Pope Benedict XVI asked people to join him in praying for the victims.

"May the bereaved and injured be comforted and may the rescue workers be strengthened in their efforts to assist the courageous Japanese people," the pope said in English March 13 after reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter's Square.

Speaking in Italian after the Angelus, the pope said, "The images of the tragic earthquake and the consequent tsunami in Japan have left us deeply horrified."

"I want to renew my spiritual closeness to that country's dear people, who with dignity and courage are dealing with the consequences of the calamity. I pray for the victims and their families and for all who are suffering because of these terrible events. I encourage all those who, with laudable speed, are working to bring help. Let us remain united in prayer."

The Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Vatican's charity promotion and coordinating office, announced March 14 that the pope donated \$100,000 to the relief efforts of the Japanese bishops' conference.

UCA News reported that Catholics in mainland China were among Asian Catholics who expressed solidarity with the earthquake victims in Japan and added prayers to their Masses March 13. Jinde Charities in northern China's Hebei province also offered an initial \$10,000 to support Caritas Japan's relief efforts.

In Seoul, South Korea, Cardinal Nicholas Cheong Jin-suk offered prayers and an initial \$50,000. Korean Protestants and Buddhists



A Japan civil defense officer holds a 4-month-old baby girl who was rescued along with her family from their home in Ishimaki, northern Japan, March 14. Government officials had estimated that 18,000 people may have lost their lives in the March 11 earth quake and the tsunami it triggered.



(CNS photo)



A woman weeps after being told of the death of relatives at an evacuation centre in Kesenuma, Japan, March 15.

(CNS photo)

also offered prayers.

New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan has assured Japanese Archbishop Leo Jun Ikenaga of Osaka of the prayers and solidarity of the U.S. Catholic Church amid the ongoing rescue and relief efforts in his nation.

"I write today conscious of the terrible earthquake that has struck Japan. The first

news reports of the preliminary estimates of suffering, loss of life and physical damage challenge our ability to grasp the reality of such a massive event," Archbishop Dolan wrote March 14 as president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The letter, released March 16, was addressed to the Archbishop Ikenaga as head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.

"My letter is to make a first contact with you to assure you of the prayers and solidarity of the bishops and faithful in the United States at this difficult moment," the USCCB president said. "We commend the church and the people of Japan to the intercession of Mary, the mother of Jesus, asking her to care for all of those left in conditions of suffering because of the quake and the aftershocks."

The U.S. bishops' Catholic Relief Services is responding to the tragedy by working with Caritas Japan and by receiving donations, said Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., chairman of the CRS board.

"These will be used for the immediate humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable and support the local Catholic Church in its ongoing mission," Bishop Kicanas said in a statement.

Catholics interested in supporting CRS relief efforts can visit <http://crs.org/japan>.

People in the News

The Catholic Foundation announces new appointments to board of directors

The Catholic Foundation of the Diocese of Erie, Inc. announces the appointment of Dr. Joanne Carlburg and Jim Martin, CFRE, to its board of directors.

Dr. Carlburg earned her doctor of education at the State University of New York at Buffalo and is a substitute teacher with the Catholic elementary schools and retired reading specialist for the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5. She has received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Gannon University as well as the Annie Sullivan Award from the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5.

Martin, a graduate of Gannon University, is Community Affairs Director, NW PA Region in Community and Health Initiatives for Highmark. He was selected by the NW PA Association of Fundraising Professionals as Volunteer Fundraiser of the Year in 2010. He served as the 2009-11 campaign chair for United Way of Erie and volunteers on numerous business, church and environmental boards.



Dr. Joanne Carlburg



Jim Martin

By Amy B. Hill
Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

Pennsylvania's "day of reckoning has come," announced Governor Tom Corbett with calls for fiscal discipline and no new taxes. On March, the governor unveiled his \$27.3 billion spending plan for the commonwealth's 2011-2012 fiscal year. The budget proposal represents a 3-percent overall decrease from last year, but program cuts are more surgical than across the board.

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) will be following the debate on a number of different line items.

Education

Calling for a system of "portable education funding," Governor Corbett voiced his support for school choice. The proposed budget returns the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program to \$75 million.

Senate Bill 1, independent of the budget, proposes an increase in EITC to \$100 million and voucher plan to help the neediest students

in chronically failing schools. The governor did not specify his support of Senate Bill 1; but he did say that education funding should

be "something a student can take with him or her to the school that best fits their needs. One size does not fit all. But as it now stands, not all get to choose. Let's give them school choice."

It is likely the legislature will debate Senate Bill 1 alongside the budget.

The line item that provides textbooks and materials to nonpublic school students was decreased 1.7 percent; auxiliary services and special education programs for nonpublic school students are 1.2 percent less.

Funding that reimburses public school districts for transportation of students to nonpublic schools

will increase slightly. It is calculated by the number of students who need this service.

Help for people in need

The governor promised to maintain services that care for the commonwealth's neediest citizens. Most programs in the Department of Public Welfare remained at last year's funding levels or in some cases increased. Others however will be cut.

The Human Services Development Fund (HSDF) is a flexible funding program that provides many services that are not being met anywhere else. For example, some Catholic Charities agencies receive HSDF funding to provide services to people with disabilities to help them live independently. The program was completely cut from the budget.

Pennsylvania's state funded alternatives to abortion program received a one percent cut. In the massive state budget, this cut may seem insignificant; but in dire economic times support from a state program may be quite significant to a woman choosing life for her

child.

Health care

The state budget plan also significantly cuts Medicaid payments to health care providers and eliminates the adultBasic health insurance program. The adultBasic program provided health insurance for a low-cost premium to approximately 40,000 adults who are uninsured but make too much money to qualify for Medicaid. Current enrollees can sign up for the Special Care Program offered by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies, but it provides less coverage and a higher premium may make it unaffordable for most of the qualified working poor.

The legislature will debate the budget in the coming weeks. By law, June 30 is their deadline to pass it and send it to the governor's desk.

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

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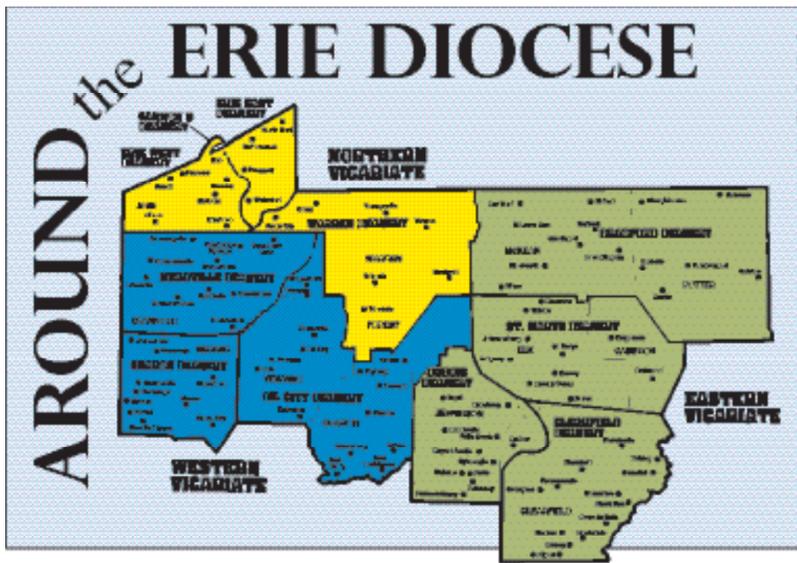
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All parishes, missions, schools and groups are encouraged to choose a correspondent who can regularly e-mail news items to "Around the Erie Diocese" at FaithLife@ErieRCD.org

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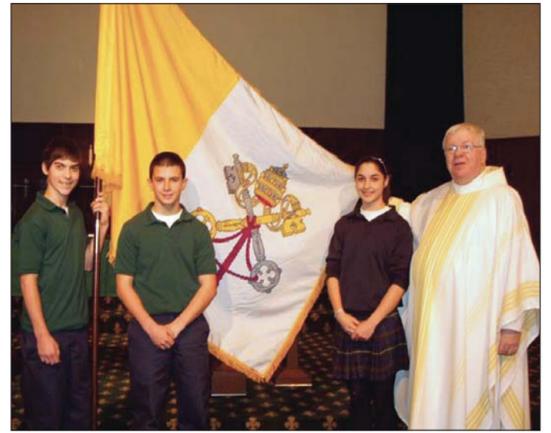
Student council raises funds for new Vatican flag at Blessed Sacrament

ERIE – Student council members at Blessed Sacrament School in Erie recently organized two fundraisers to raise money to purchase a new papal flag for church altar.

Students sold candy cane-grams during the Christmas season and Valentine's Day grams. Students could purchase the candy grams for 25 cents and have the card sent to another student or teacher.

Msgr. Dan Magraw, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, dedicated the flag at the school Mass Feb. 25.

Pictured with Msgr. Magraw are (left to right) student council officers Thomas Rosenthal, Benjamin Bruno and Sara Gromacki. Missing from the photo is Leah Applebee.



Venango Catholic captures KSAC crown

OIL CITY – The Venango Catholic boys basketball team finished the season with a 23-1 record, including going undefeated during the regular season.

The Vikings captured the 2010-11 KSAC championship with a 65-61 win over Union Feb. 19.

"I'm really proud of the kids," Venango Catholic head coach Ed McIntyre said. "They have worked awfully hard, and (winning the title) is good for them and it's good for the school. I'm just really happy how it turned out."

Maxx Rynd (holding KSAC plaque) was the leading scorer in District 9 at more than 25 points



per game. Rynd also became Venango Catholic's all-time leading scorer with 1,749 points.

Venango Catholic was just the fifth District 9 boys basket-

ball team to go unbeaten in the regular season since 1996. The top-seeded Vikings fell to North Clarion 72-70 on Feb. 26 in their playoff matchup.

Shenango Valley forms new school board, holds meetings

The board of the Shenango Valley Catholic School System held its first several meetings recently. Its initial task is to review all the important considerations in establishing the new system and making recommendations to the Diocese of Erie and Bishop Donald Trautman as the system is established.

Pictured left to right are school board members: (sitting) Father Glenn Whitman, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Sharon; Msgr. Robert Malene, pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd, West Middlesex and chair of the board; Father Jeffery Noble, pastor of Notre Dame Parish, Hermitage; Father Daniel Kresinski, pastor of St. Adalbert Parish, Farrell and St. Anthony Parish, Sharon; (standing) Father Nicholas Rouch, Vicar for Education; Patricia McLaughlin, director of the Catholic Schools Office; Dr. Kelleen Bonomo; Robert Wilson; John Hudson; Judge Francis Fornelli; William Kerins; and Patricia Cindric. Missing from the photo is Atty. Jessica Smith.



The Diocese of Erie, along with parishes and schools in the Shenango Valley, recently announced several changes that will lead to the regionalization of Catholic schools in the area. Students in preschool through grade 5 at St. Joseph School in Sharon and Notre Dame School in Hermitage will attend the new Blessed John Paul II Elementary School.

The new school will be housed at the current Notre Dame School. Students in grades 6 through 8 at St. Joseph and Notre Dame, along with students at Msgr. Geno Monti School in Farrell, will attend the new Kennedy Catholic Middle School, which will be housed in a separate wing at Kennedy Catholic High School's campus in Hermitage.

Immaculate Conception students attend Chorus Fest

CLARION – Seven students from Immaculate Conception School in Clarion, under the guidance of their music teacher, Bonnie Champion, recently participated in the Chorus Fest hosted by Purchase Line High School in Commodore, Pa.

This year's guest conductor was Joy Hess, a teacher at Pine Richland S.D. in Gibsonia, Pa.

Participation in this year's event totaled 224 students from 32 school districts.

Pictured from left to right are Immaculate Conception students Daniel Stewart, Phylcia Hock-



man, Catherine Buchanan, Alessandra Troese, Courtney Reiner,

Laryssa Bauer and Zakary Bauer.

Cathedral Prep's JROTC reaches out to soldiers overseas

ERIE – Cathedral Prep's Air Force JROTC has made it one of its priorities to not forget our soldiers overseas.

ROTC has been engaged in a letter-writing campaign for soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen stationed overseas in hostile fire areas. Earlier in the year, ROTC mailed out a number of letters. Cadets recently assembled care packages for some of these deployed heroes. Under the direction of Cadet Austin George and with financial assistance from the American Legion Riders, Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary organizations from American Legion Post 571 in Wesleyville, 20 packages were sent out on March 16. Several of the theology classes took time to write letters which were included with the packages themselves.

The majority of the packages were sent in care of a single point of contact who is a member of the Fairview-based medical company of the Army Reserve that was activated this past fall and is now serving overseas. Along with necessities, more than 350 letters



were dispersed in the packages.

Pictured left to right are Cathedral Prep seniors Patrick Cooper, Joe West, Austin George, Geoff Novakowski, Zack Kuhn and John Wagner on their way to the

Post Office to mail their packages.

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St. Anthony Women's Guild hosts Day of Reflection

TIONESTA – The Women's Guild of St. Anthony Parish in Tionesta hosted a Day of Reflection on March 12.

Sister Clare Marie Beichner, SSI, and Sister Marian Wehler, OSB, of Catholic Rural Ministry in the Oil City Deanery, were the spiritual presenters.

The 35 women in attendance were from St. John Parish in Tidououte, St. Anthony Parish in Tionesta and guests from the community of Tionesta.



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