



## Diocese of Erie goes to U.S. Supreme Court for oral arguments on healthcare.

> SEE COVERAGE BELOW  
and in the next issue of *FaithLife*.

**NUMBER OF BAPTIZED CATHOLICS ON THE RISE**

**PAGE 2**

# FaithLife

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BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

March 27, 2016

### Bishop's Easter message

## Contemplate God's mercy this Easter

Happy Easter to my diocesan family in northwestern Pennsylvania!

The celebration of Christ's rising comes this year in the middle of the Jubilee Year of Mercy in the Catholic Church. What better time to contemplate the face of God's mercy than during Lent and today, at Easter?

Let's first consider what we've learned during Lent.

Standing at the foot of the cross, we watched Jesus suffer pain and humiliation. Why didn't he say or do something to rescue himself from this fate?

We walked with him on the path to Golgotha, carrying the heavy wooden cross on his back. Why didn't he ask someone to save him?

We listened to Jesus along the Sea of Galilee. He challenged us to live differently, but didn't he know that others might resist him?

These are the faces of Jesus: the inspired teacher, the steadfast savior, the suffering man.

We sometimes see his face in us, don't we? We suffer. We are determined. We can be inspired. Because he walked before us and shared in our humanity, he mercifully consoles us and shows us the way to peace.

We are left with many "why's" in Jesus' journey on earth. Why did the Son of God not magically lift himself out of uncomfortable situations? The answer becomes clear when, after he rises from the tomb, we see him as he truly is: God, who came to us in human form and showed us the way to a new life.

While on earth, Jesus asked his disciples: "And who do you say that I am?"

To some, he was the Lord. To others, he was a prophet. Still others considered him an instigator or criminal. When the chief priests and Pharisees asked some of the guards why they did not arrest him right away, they answered: "Never before has anyone spoken like this man."

Today, at Easter, Jesus speaks to us individually. He says: "I lived with you. I know what you are experiencing. Follow me."

For us to continue the conversation with Jesus we must develop a relationship with him through prayer, the Eucharist and the sacraments. We must also learn from Jesus as he speaks to us through the Gospels.

Our lives reflect both the selfless, merciful love of Jesus and the all-too-human, broken lives of his disciples. In the midst of both worlds, Jesus sends us forth—especially at Easter—to continue his presence in the world.

Bishop of Erie

## U.S. bishops support genocide petition

Erie Bishop Lawrence Persico joined Catholic bishops throughout the country this month in supporting a petition to stop genocide in the Middle East and to convince the U.S. Department of State to include Christians in any formal declaration of genocide.

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), issued an urgent call March 15 for Catholics to sign a petition ending America's silence about the ongoing genocide against Christians and other minority groups in Iraq and Syria. The State Department last week agreed with those who signed the petition that ISIS's actions against Christians constitute genocide.

"The Diocese of Erie supported the petition wholeheartedly. We encourage the faithful of the diocese to continue aiding Christians in the Middle East with prayers and other appropriate help," Bishop Persico said.

To learn more, go to:  
[www.ChristiansAtRisk.org](http://www.ChristiansAtRisk.org)  
or  
[www.InDefenseOfChristians.org](http://www.InDefenseOfChristians.org)

## JESUS IS WITH US

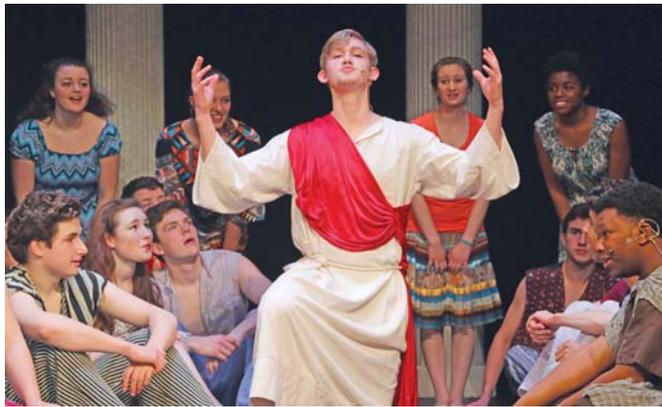


Photo by Mary Solberg

Senior Jacob Mays portrayed Jesus in Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Jesus Christ Superstar" at the H. David Bowes Auditorium at Cathedral Preparatory School this month. Surrounding Mays are some of the 80 students from Prep and Villa Maria

Academy who were featured in the production.

According to 1 Corinthians 15:6, after Jesus rose from the tomb on Easter Sunday, he appeared to more than 500 people. Indeed, Jesus is with us.

## Supreme Court hears landmark case on religious liberty

By CNS and MARY SOLBERG | FAITHLIFE

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Visuals often are much easier to grasp than a complicated thicket of issues. That may be why the Little Sisters of the Poor have become the public face of *Zubik v. Burwell*, which went before the U.S. Supreme Court March 23.

*Zubik* is not just about the religious order's legal challenge of the Obama administration's contraceptive mandate for employers. It is a consolidated case also involving the Pennsylvania dioceses of Erie and Pittsburgh, the Archdiocese of Washington, Priests for Life, East Texas Baptist University, Southern Nazarene University and Geneva College.

Both sides on the mandate issue have been working to attract public support. The Little Sisters, like Priests for Life, have launched a website explaining their viewpoint.

In January, two Little Sisters sat in the House Chamber for the State of the Union address, invited by House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin. Pope Francis met with some of the sisters in Washington last September during his apostolic visit.

At press time, Bishop Lawrence Persico and representatives of the Diocese of Erie were headed to Washington for oral arguments in *Zubik v. Burwell*. A decision is expected before the court term ends in June.

Before leaving for Washington, Bishop Persico asked the people of the diocese to pray and fast during the Supreme Court hearing.

"We are simply arguing that religious organizations should not be required to provide or facilitate insurance coverage for services that violate our religious beliefs. If we do not secure this right, what is to stop the government from using the same arguments to mandate that the Catholic Church provide coverage for abortions?" the bishop wrote in a letter read at all Catholic churches of the 13-county diocese.



Photo courtesy of Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik, left, and Erie Bishop Lawrence Persico talk to the press outside the federal court in Pittsburgh on Nov. 12, 2013.

## Dioceses of Erie, Pittsburgh at center of national debate

See photos, coverage of this past week's Supreme Court case on the Diocese of Erie Facebook page.

With the recent death of Justice Antonin Scalia, it is widely predicted the Supreme Court case will result in a 4-4 tie. If that happens, either the lower court rulings would be affirmed, or the court will set the case aside for re-argument when Scalia's seat is filled.

Under the federal Affordable Care Act, most employers, including religious ones, are required to cover employees' artificial birth control, sterilization and abortifacients, even if employers are morally opposed to such coverage.

Churches and institutions that primarily employ and serve their own members are exempt.

To respond to religious objections, the Department of Health and Human Services created an "accommodation." Any organization

with religious objections to providing the coverage must state that in writing in order for HHS or the Department of Labor to direct a third party to provide contraceptive coverage to the organization's employees.

Plaintiffs object to that third-party notification because they say they still would be implicated in providing coverage they oppose.

According to Bishop Persico: "Surely our government can find a way to allow employers to follow their consciences and live in freedom. Religious liberty protects the right of each of us to pursue the truth, to embrace it and to shape our lives around it—all without government interference."

## 'Endless human tragedy'

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Five years after the war in Syria began, there is a "feeling of helplessness in front of an endless human tragedy," said Msgr. Richard Gyhra, charge d'affaires at the Vatican's observer mission to U.N. agencies in Geneva. At night, a sea of tents houses internally displaced people in Idlib, Syria, March 15.



CNS photo

## Newsletters



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

### ■ Pope debuts Instagram account



CNS photo

**Pope Francis meets Kevin Systrom, CEO and co-founder of Instagram.**

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Firming up his presence on social media, Pope Francis made his debut on the photo-sharing app Instagram March 19.

Msgr. Dario Viganò, prefect of the Secretariat for Communications, said the pope's new account "Franciscus," offers another side of his pontificate through photos.

Two days after his Instagram account started, the pope had 1.5 million followers. His Twitter account has more than 25 million followers in nine languages.

Whether at general audiences or during foreign trips, thousands of people try to take a coveted "papal selfie" with the pope. While it is unlikely the pope will pose for his own selfies, the account will offer viewers a glimpse into the pope's life and messages.

The opening of the pope's Instagram account came just over two weeks after he met with Kevin Systrom, CEO and co-founder of Instagram.

"Today I had the honor of meeting Pope Francis," Systrom wrote to his followers on the photo-sharing app. "We spoke about the power of images to unite people across different cultures and languages."

### ■ Papal trip considered to Armenia

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Vatican is studying the possibility of Pope Francis visiting Armenia in late June, according to Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman.

Father Lombardi confirmed that Pope Francis desires to make the trip, but denied that it already was set for June 22-26.

"It is true that a trip to Armenia in late June is being studied," he said March 18, but papal trip planners have not yet visited the country and neither the dates nor the program have been finalized.

The vast majority of the residents of Armenia—some 92 percent—belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the Oriental Orthodox churches. Of the country's 3 million inhabitants, the Vatican says about 280,000 are Catholic, belonging either to the Latin-rite or to the Armenian Catholic Church, an Eastern church in full communion with Rome.

### ■ Iowa institute launches program to find cures for genetic diseases

SIoux CITY, Iowa (CNS)—Millions of Americans are affected by more than 7,000 rare diseases.

With that in mind, the John Paul II Medical Research Institute in Iowa City is launching a new rare genetic disease program to find treatments and cures for a variety of rare diseases.

Jay Kamath, the institute's CEO, said the organization has always had an interest in expanding research into the area of rare disease and felt it was time to do more now.

"As the name implies, rare diseases do not affect the same number of people as a chronic condition such as diabetes, but it's also kind of a misnomer in the sense that while there are less than 200,000 individuals who suffer from a (particular) rare disease, there are more than 30 million Americans who have some form of a rare disease," he said.

Most are children, Kamath stressed, and 30 percent of them will die before age 5. About 98 percent of rare diseases, he added, have no effective treatments.



## Editor's Notes

Mary SOLBERG

tradition, too, especially since those who take a name are asked to pray for the child in addition to giving candy.

Margaret Benedict devoted her life and musical talents to Holy Rosary Parish in Johnsonburg. On March 6, she died at the age of 94, but her legacy at the church will continue forever.

Margaret served as the church organist for the past 83 years, since she was 11 years old in 1932. Besides organ duties, she was a member of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, and was a choir member and a choir director at the church.

Sympathies to her surviving children: Susan Hansen of Johnsonburg, and Barbara Sorg of Kersey.

Congratulations to **Alfred Lander** of Lucinda for being named the recipient of the 2016 Citizen of the Year Award by the Clarion Area Chamber of Business and Industry. An attorney and co-founder of the Law Office of Greco & Lander, P.C., Lander is a member of the Finance Council of the Diocese of Erie and has served in many capacities at St. Joseph Parish, Lucinda.

Born and raised in Lucinda, Lander has been involved in numerous community activities, including development of the first 4.3 miles of the Rail 66 Trail. The award additionally recognizes Lander for being co-chair and co-creator of the Children's Scholarship Fund of Pennsylvania, and for sponsoring Clarion University of Pennsylvania's Civic Engagement Scholarship.

Under our patron, St. Patrick, the Diocese of Erie always has reason to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with many festivities at parishes and schools throughout the area.

In Greenville, St. Michael School hosted a dinner/dance for the first time in many years, welcoming about 100 people. All proceeds went to the school, but a big thank-you goes out to **Marguerite Scullin** for her behind-the-scenes help in organizing the event.

Mary Solberg is the editor of FaithLife. Email: [msolberg@ErieRCD.org](mailto:msolberg@ErieRCD.org) Call 814-824-1171 Twitter: @ERIERCDsolberg

Malinda Bostick of Erie can't imagine young kids not having a brightly colored Easter basket with lots of goodies.

Three years ago, she got the idea of erecting an Easter egg tree for the parishes of Holy Rosary and St. John the Baptist.

People are asked to take a name from a hanging paper egg and return a wrapped Easter basket for distribution to needy children in the area during Holy Week.

This year, parishioners donated about 150 baskets and the Knights of Columbus paid for another 30. Baskets were given to young children at St. Martin Center, Holy



Photo by Mary Solberg

About 150 baskets filled with treats were placed under the Easter egg tree during Lent at Holy Rosary Church in Erie.

Family School and the Mercy Center for Women.

"We thought children in need should be remembered not just at Christmas, but at our great feast of Easter," Bostick says.

The basket-giving tradition has become quite popular at Holy Rosary and St. John. Bostick thinks other parishes would enjoy making it a part of their Lenten

# Venango Catholic granted 30 days to develop plan for viability

BY MARY SOLBERG | FAITHLIFE

Representatives of a group called "Save VCHS" met for two hours March 17 with Bishop Lawrence Persico to discuss efforts to keep Oil City's Venango Catholic High School open.

Last month, the bishop announced that the high school would close at the end of this academic year due to years of declining enrollment and difficult finances.

After the meeting at St. Mark Catholic Center in Erie, Bishop Persico gave the group 30 days to come up with a viable plan that would ensure the school is able to maintain a healthy enrollment and move forward without a deficit.

"I want to give the commu-

nity time to respond to this challenge, but I am concerned that it may give them false hope. If they cannot produce a plan that shows the viability of Venango Catholic, then my decision to close Venango Catholic remains in effect," the bishop said.

The "Save VCHS" group has until April 18 to provide the diocese details of its plan. Bishop Persico outlined two requirements: 102 students enrolled and an additional \$300,000 for the operating budget that would include the hiring of three staff.

New hires would oversee technology, development and marketing.

Those representing the Venango Catholic community at the meeting included longtime teachers Tom McNellie and



Venango Catholic High School

Cindy Eckert, Venango alumna Christine Zagar, and supporter Amanda Slider, who has done marketing work for the group since the school closure announcement in February.

They were accompanied by canon law attorney Philip Gray of the St. Joseph Foundation in Ohio, and attorney Gregory Merkel of McFate and Merkel in Seneca.

In a statement to the *Oil City Derrick*, Slider said, "We were greatly encouraged by the bishop's collaborative approach and we are looking forward to working with the diocese to prepare this long-range plan for the future of VC."

According to Slider, about \$120,000 already has been pledged by the "Save VCHS" group for next year.

## Baptized Catholics grow to 1.27 billion



VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The number of baptized Catholics worldwide has grown at a faster rate than that of the world's population, according to a report released March 5 by the Vatican's Central Office for Church Statistics.

The percentage of baptized Catholics as part of the general population remains highest in North and South America, where they represent about 50 percent of the world's Catholics.

- 1.27 billion baptized Catholics worldwide, or 17.8% of global population
- In the past decade, the number of Catholics in Africa increased by 41%
- Catholics in Asia increased by 20%
- Catholics in Europe increased by 2%

Graphic by CNS/Rich Papalio

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EVENTS

**St. Michael School to present 'The Nifty Fifties'**

GREENVILLE—Middle school students at St. Michael School in Greenville will present the musical "The Nifty Fifties" on April 1 at 7 p.m. and April 2 at 6 p.m. in Lateran Hall. Prior to the performance, students will offer an à la carte, diner-themed dinner to raise money for an upcoming field trip to Washington, D.C.

Admission at the door for the musical is \$3 for adults and \$2 for students (prek-grade 8). Advance-sale tickets are available by calling the school at 724-588-7050.

**St. Callistus Church to host parish mission**

KANE—"Awaken Your Heart," a Year of Mercy parish mission, will be held at St. Callistus Church in Kane April 3-5. Joel Stepanek, director of resource development for Life Teen International, will direct the mission each evening.

The mission will be held April 3 from 6:15 to 7:30 p.m., and April 4 and April 5 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. All sessions will be held in the church. For more information, call 814-837-6694.

**Centering prayer workshop offered**

HARBORCREEK—Mercy Sister Rita Panciera will facilitate a centering prayer workshop April 9 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Mercy Church, 837 Bartlett Road, Harborcreek. This workshop is suitable for the experienced as well as beginners. Lunch is included. There is no cost for the day, but a free will offering will be accepted. Pre-registration is due by April 5. To register or for questions, call Donna Clark at 814-899-5342.

**Clarion retreat focuses on environment**

CLARION—The Sisters of Catholic Rural Ministry in Oil City are sponsoring an afternoon retreat April 9 from noon to 3 p.m. on Pope Francis' environment encyclical, "Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home."

Sister Barbara Lenarcic, HM, and Sister Barbara O'Donnell, HM, will give presentations at the Immaculate Conception Conference Center at Immaculate Conception Parish, 715 E. Main St., Clarion. A free will offering will be accepted. Registrations are encouraged by calling 814-226-8433, ext. 100, by April 6.

**House of Mercy to host spring tea event**

ERIE—The 5th Annual House of Mercy Spring Tea will be held April 10 from 1 to 3 p.m. at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School's Scheffler Hall in Erie. The Sisters of Mercy and the House of Mercy neighborhood outreach program invites friends, mothers and daughters to the event, featuring food, hot teas, live entertainment and a gift basket raffle.

For more information or to order tickets, contact Sister Michele Schroeck, RSM, at 814-898-0167. Tickets are \$20 per person. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door.

**Mercyhurst University to host Empty Bowls**

ERIE—Mercyhurst University in Erie will host its annual Empty Bowls dinner April 10 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Laker Inn, Carolyn Herrmann Student Union.

Guests will dine on a simple meal of soup and bread, a stark reminder of poverty in the community. The event will feature music and a silent art auction. Proceeds benefit the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania. Tickets are \$15 for soup and a hand-crafted bowl, or \$5 just for soup. Advance tickets are suggested; email [muempybowl@gmail.com](mailto:muempybowl@gmail.com).

**Wolves Club to sponsor Italian Market**

ERIE—The Wolves Club of Erie Den VIII will sponsor its annual Taste of Italy & Italian Market on April 24 from noon to 3 p.m. in the lobby of the Boston Store, 716 State St., Erie.

Sample Italian cuisine and enjoy live entertainment and a gift auction. Proceeds will benefit the Wolves Club of Erie Scholarship Fund for Gannon University and Mercyhurst University. Admission includes food and beverages. Advance tickets are two for \$25; tickets at the door are \$15 each.

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**Two Benedictines recognized for work to feed hungry, protect environment**

FAITHLIFE staff report

Erie Benedictine Sisters Mary Miller and Pat Lupo have spent most of their lives addressing two social ills of our time: hunger and the world's endangered environment.

Both women are being recognized this month and in April for their accomplishments in their respective ministries.

On March 23, PennFuture—a leading environmental organization—presented Sister Pat with its 2016 Celebrating Women in Conservation Award for her commitment to environmental activism and her achievements in conservation in Pennsylvania.

PennFuture was created by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Heinz Endowments to conduct professional advocacy for strong environmental and public health policies. It provides tens of millions of dollars of free legal services to citizens throughout Pennsylvania.

Currently, Sister Pat does environmental education and advocacy for the Benedictine Sisters. Also, she works with youth at the Neighborhood Art House and the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, both in Erie.

Having represented her religious community on various local and Great Lakes boards, Sister Pat was part of Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf's transition team



Sister Pat Lupo, OSB, brings constant attention to environmental concerns in Pennsylvania.



Sister Mary Miller, OSB, prepares and serves food at Emmaus Soup Kitchen in Erie.

that reviewed environmental protection.

On April 8, Mercyhurst University and its Department of Religious Studies will honor Sister Mary Miller with its annual Romero Award for "living the call of faith and justice in an extraordinary manner." The award states that for 35 years she "has been the face of care and hope for the poor and hungry of Erie."

The award takes its name from the late Archbishop Oscar Rome-

ro, who is remembered for his uncompromising commitment to the poor and oppressed in El Salvador. Mercyhurst presented its first Romero Award in 1991 to peace activist Father Daniel Berigan.

Since 1981, Sister Mary has been director of Emmaus Ministries in Erie. More than 300 local volunteers assist with Emmaus Ministries, considered the largest on-site charitable food provider in the state of Pennsylvania.

Sister Mary, who is in her 52nd year of religious life, regularly prepares and serves meals at Emmaus Soup Kitchen.

Mercyhurst's Romero Award recognizes Sister Mary's contributions to people of all faiths, most notable in her quote: "The only personal glimpse of God we will ever see on this earth is in the faces of those around us. And to know God we must acknowledge those faces and reach out to them with love."

OBITUARY

Father William J. Maloney

*Pittsburgh native served parishes in Erie Diocese*

Father William J. Maloney, 93, died March 17 in Pittsburgh.

Born in Pittsburgh, March 23, 1923, Father Maloney was the son of the late Charles and Colletta (Sohl) Maloney.

After attending Holy Rosary Elementary School and Central Catholic High School, both in Pittsburgh, he spent a year at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and at St. Charles College, Catonsville, Md., before attending St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore for his priestly formation.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Erie on May 6, 1948, at St. Peter Cathedral by Archbishop John Mark Gannon. Father Maloney began his



Father William J. Maloney

parish ministry as parochial vicar of St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. After serving there until January 1949, he was appointed parochial vicar of Holy Redeemer Parish in Warren, an appointment he held until 1954.

He spent the next five years as parochial vicar of St. Joseph Parish in Oil City. In 1959, he was appointed chaplain at Saint Vincent Hospital in Erie, a position he held until 1965. He was appointed pastor of St. Peter Parish in Conneautville in 1965, and of St. Eusebius Parish in East Brady in 1966. In 1972, he was named pastor of St. Adalbert Parish in Sharon, serving there until his appointment as pastor of St. Michael Parish in Emlenton in 1977.

Upon his 60th anniversary as a priest, Father Maloney said that prayer was essential to nurturing our spiritual lives.

"You cannot be happy and holy if you do not pray, especially priests," he said.

Father Maloney retired from active ministry in 1991, returning to his home diocese of Pittsburgh.

For many years of his retirement, he celebrated Mass and heard confessions at St. Paul Parish in Butler, Pa.

Survivors include his sister Mildred Regan, and nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his sister Coletta Moran, and his brother, Leo Maloney.

Visiting hours were held at the Charles W. Trenz Funeral Home in Penn Hills, and at St. Bartholomew Church. Bishop Emeritus Donald Trautman served as main celebrant of the funeral Mass on March 23 at St. Bartholomew Church.

Burial was at Christ Our Redeemer Cemetery, Ross Township, Pa.

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# PHOTOS from AROUND the DIOCESE

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## Students have a lot of heart



ERIE—Our Lady's Christian School dress-down day raised \$137.61 for the American Heart Association. Each month, students raise money for a local non-profit. Pictured, from left, are: eighth-grader Stella Przybilinski, Christy Mastrian from the American Cancer Society, seventh-grader Colin Morphy, Principal Stephen Nemenz, and eighth-graders Abigail Stubenbort and Elizabeth Swanson.

## Religious education students from Emporium visit Erie



EMPORIUM—High school religious education students from St. Mark Parish, Emporium, recently visited Erie with pastor, Father Paul Siebert. The group toured St. Peter Cathedral, where Father Siebert presided at a Mass. Students also assisted at the Upper Room homeless shelter, and then visited St. Mark Catholic Center, where they met with Bishop Lawrence Persico, Father Steve Schreiber, Father Michael Polinek and seminarians. Pictured at the Cathedral are: Father Paul Siebert, Emily Richnaffsky, Madi Guisto, Jared Whiting, Adam Shaffer, Molly and Sarah Abriatis, Kendyl Guisto, Andy Richnaffsky, Kira Aikens, Elyse Spelalski, Adam Brown, Noah Abriatis, Trisha Kossman and Joe Delucia.

## Clarion, Slippery Rock students gather for mercy retreat



CLARION—Students from Clarion University and Slippery Rock University gathered for a 24-hour mercy retreat Feb. 26-27 in Clarion. The retreat included discussions on mercy, the roadblocks to being a person of mercy, and the faces of mercy. Bishop Lawrence Persico, Father Michael Polinek, vocations director, and Father Monty Sayers, Clarion University chaplain, joined the students for lunch and the sacrament of reconciliation.

Pictured in the first row, from left, are: Samantha Placzek, Kara Kendzioriski, Ang Shriane, Jukyong Son, campus minister Ann Enderle Liska, Helen Patterson and Mercy Sister Tina Geiger. In the second row, from left, are: campus minister Diane Magliocco, Alana Garrison, Chris Lee, Chris Gillis and Benedictine Sister Marian Wehler. In the third row, from left, are: Maura Kelly, Sara Kucenski, Anna Swartwout, Melissa Totin, Ryan Walker and Jungkeon Jo.

## St. Michael's basketball team takes second



GREENVILLE—The boys varsity basketball team at St. Michael School in Greenville took second place recently in the Diocese of Erie championship match-up against Blessed Sacrament School, Erie.

Pictured in the front, from left, are cheerleaders Jenna McCloskey, Anna Cooper, Kayley Tatta, Shai Hargrove, Hannah Leonard, Julianne Johnson, Tessa Tatta, Abigail Harcourt and Katherine Cooper. The cheer squad is coached by Jacki Rowe, with assistant Brenda Hargrove.

Basketball team members include: Jake Johnson, Hunter Blatt, Halle Murcko, Kyle Higbee, Luke Faber, David Cianci, Joseph Pileger, Evan Cianci, Will Tota and Ryan Campbell. They are coached by Conner Scullin, Gene Cianci, Chris Clark and Sam Faber.

## Benedictine Sister Monica Steiner recognized for life of service



LUCINDA—During Catholic Schools Week, students at St. Joseph School in Lucinda celebrated Mass with Sister Monica Steiner, OSB, in honor of her many years of service as principal. Sister Monica retired last year. Pictured in the bottom row, from left, are: Jillian Ochs, Marshall Bauer, Sister Monica and Kaden Davis. In the top row, from left, are: Maddie Homan, Claire Kriebel, Jack Maxwell and Leroy Ochs. Behind the children is Sister Benita DeMattis, OSB, principal.

## Disability and Deaf Ministry sponsors Lenten retreat



FAIRVIEW—Members of the Disability and Deaf Ministry of the Diocese of Erie are pictured with Father Michael Polinek, vocations director, during a retreat at Camp Notre Dame in Fairview on March 5. Father Polinek served as retreat leader. Retreatants discussed Lent and the Gospel story of the Prodigal Son. Interpreters were available throughout the day, which included the sacrament of reconciliation and a Mass.

## Pope's encyclical draws many together at St. Stephen Parish in Oil City



OIL CITY—Father Matt Ruyechan, at right, discusses Pope Francis' environment encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*—On Care for Our Common Home," with about 60 people from seven area parishes who met Feb. 8 at St. Stephen Parish in Oil City. Father Ruyechan, pastor and one of the "ministers of mercy" in the Diocese of Erie, read the "Canticle of St. Francis" and discussed how caring for the earth also means caring for the poor, both physically and spiritually.

## St. Luke students collect items for Our Neighbor's Place



ERIE—St. Luke School families conducted a Lenten service project to benefit those served by Our Neighbor's Place in Erie. Students collected more than 180 cans of soup, 70 boxes of crackers, 165 boxes of granola bars, 80 bottles of body wash/soap, 130 toothbrushes, 220 tubes of toothpaste, and other toiletry items. Pictured are fifth-graders Sam Roeback, Jaclynn Donovan, Grace Lyle and Aidan Richter.

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