



"I pray every day for all who are suffering in Iraq. Please join me."

## Middle East

### Diocese of Erie joins Catholic agencies seeking funds for refugees

By Mary Solberg, FaithLife, and Beth Griffin, CNS

The Diocese of Erie has united with Catholic dioceses and organizations throughout the country in launching a public appeal to help Christians and other religious minorities displaced by war in Iraq, Syria and Israel.

Last weekend, parishes in the Diocese of Erie took up a special collection to provide humanitarian relief and pastoral support for those suffering in the Middle East. Funds collected will be sent to Catholic Relief Services and other Catholic agencies to help displaced populations in Iraq, Gaza and Syria.

Upon the request of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Lawrence Persico joined all U.S. bishops in calling attention to the recent atrocities in the Middle East and the Christian responsibility to help.

In a letter to Catholics in the 13 countries of the diocese, Bishop Persico stated: "It has been the custom, indeed the duty, of Christians since the early days of the church to pray for those Christians undergoing persecution. This duty is ours today. As our brothers and sisters in the Middle East ... suffer and die for their faith, I ask you to accompany them with your prayers and sacrifices that they may persevere and remain strong in their faith, that they may find help and refuge, and that Christianity may continue in the place in which it was born and began to thrive."

Joe Haas, director of Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services in the Diocese of Erie, said the most recent upheaval in Iraq at the hands of Islamic State terrorists will have repercussions for years to come. Many Iraqi Christians who have been forced to flee their homes are likely to face years in refugee camps before they are resettled in Erie and other communities around the globe.



Members of the Yazidi religious minority who fled from violence in Mosul, Iraq, receive humanitarian aid in Dohuk province, in the northern part of the country. Catholic relief agencies are trying to raise more money for additional aid in the region.

The Refugee Resettlement Program of Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services in Erie resettles about 200 refugees per year. The estimated 50 Iraqis living here now were displaced during the Gulf War more than 20 years ago.

"We have the obligation as Americans and as Catholics with all of our resources to reach out to people who don't have that wealth," Haas said.

Haas expects it to take two to five years before the recent Middle East conflicts.

"That's why it's so important to make pledges to Catholic Relief Services and other agencies today. Those who give are helping people for the long-term," Haas said.

Worldwide, here are some of the Catholic or-

ganizations currently seeking funds for war-torn areas in the Middle East:

- Catholic Near East Welfare Association [www.cnewa.org](http://www.cnewa.org)
- Jesuit Refugee Service [www.jrsusa.org](http://www.jrsusa.org)
- Knights of Columbus [www.kofc.org](http://www.kofc.org)
- Catholic Relief Services [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)

■ Aid to the Church in Need [www.churchinneed.org/help/iraqandSyria](http://www.churchinneed.org/help/iraqandSyria)

Aid to the Church in Need, an international Catholic charity under the guidance of the Holy See, has pledged an initial \$1 million, of which \$458,000 has already been given. Edward Clancy, ACN's director of outreach, said funds are being directed to local bishops in Syria and Iraq.

Catholic Near East Welfare Association, a charitable organization mandated by the Holy See to work for, through and with the Eastern

Catholic churches, launched an appeal July 28 for aid to Iraq. It released an initial grant of \$75,000 to purchase infant formula, diaper and handicapped-accessible toilets and showers for camps holding displaced Iraqis.

The Knights of Columbus Catholic fraternal organization committed \$1 million Aug. 12 for humanitarian aid in Iraq. This includes an initial \$300,000 and a pledge to match \$500,000 in donations from the public.

Catholic Relief Services, the official overseas relief and development organization of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, committed an initial \$1 million for Iraq. Money is being used to provide food, water, essential living supplies, psychological support, education for displaced children and preparation for longer-term resettlement.

### Catholic Education Collection Sept. 20-21

One out of every three students who attend Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie receives some form of tuition support.

That's just one of the many benefits of the upcoming Catholic Education Collection, conducted in all parishes the weekend of Sept. 20-21.

"This collection is for the good of the whole church," said Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education of the Diocese of Erie.

According to Father Rouch, the collection replenishes the Religious Education Endowment Fund (REEF) and The Catholic Foundation's Education and Formation Endowment. It also supports Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

The diocese uses the funds for tuition assistance, curriculum support to parish religious education programs, spiritual development opportunities, and scholarships/grants for religious education instructors and teachers. Half of what is collected in the diocese remains in parishes to support educational programs.

"Every lay Catholic should be really concerned that we develop well-educated children in the faith," Father Rouch said.

### Clergy Appointments

The Most Rev. Lawrence Persico, JCL, Bishop of Erie, makes the following clergy appointments:

**Father Joseph C. Campbell**, pastor, St. Stanislaus Kosika-Holy Trinity Parish, Sharon, while continuing as pastor of St. Anthony and St. Adalbert parishes, effective July 18, 2014, term unspecified.

**Deacon Ralph DeCecco**, facility chaplain/program director of Chaplaincy Ministry, State Correctional Institution-Albion, effective July 17, 2014.

**Father James Fatuszczak**, leave of absence at his request, effective Aug. 21, 2014.

**Father Ross Miceli**, parochial administrator, St. Boniface Parish, Kersey, while continuing as a faculty member at Elk County Catholic High School, St. Marys, effective Aug. 29, 2014, term unspecified.

**Father Alfred Patterson, OSB**, pastor, St. Mary Parish, St. Marys, effective July 24, 2014, term unspecified.

**Father Jorge Carlos Villegas**, pastor, St. Stephen of Hungary Parish/Iglesia San Esteban de Ungaria, Erie, effective Aug. 2, 2014, for a term of three years.

### Gannon going strong



Dan Fromknecht, a senior sport and exercise science major at Gannon University, rides a computer trainer program at the school's newly dedicated \$14.5 million Recreation and Wellness Center in downtown Erie. Looking on are Bishop Lawrence Persico and Jason Willow, director of Gannon's Exercise Science program. Bishop Persico blessed the modernized facility and had a chance to see the new Human Performance Laboratory and the 51,000-square-foot indoor field house. "It's incredible," Fromknecht said at the dedication. "It's really going to help us put together everything we're learning in the classroom and actually experience it." On Sept. 5, Gannon also blessed its new state-of-the-art Center for Communication and the Arts at W. 7th and Peach streets.

### Young church is changing

For Kathleen Peterson, getting teen-agers involved in their Catholic faith requires more than feeding them pizza.

"We need to provide opportunities to young people so that they become strong disciples of Jesus Christ," says Peterson, program coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the Diocese of Erie.

Changes brought on by a fast-paced, technologically driven culture have altered the way the church reaches out to young people. Although the diocese is hosting the Oct. 26 Middle School Youth Rally at Our Lady of Peace Parish, Erie, Peterson says young people today are seeking more intimate encounters.

Teen-agers are increasingly finding God in retreats or discussions with peers and adult mentors.

Peterson and Father Stephen Schreiber, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, are finishing up their first year of a new framework—called Totus Tuus—to inspire young people. Totus Tuus means, "Through Mary we come to Jesus." It is a program that includes annual hikes for girls and guys, a camping experience, retreats and monthly gatherings.

Totus Tuus encounters are held monthly in Erie, the Shenango Valley and in Warren. It's a chance to talk about faith with like-minded young people. Every component of Totus Tuus includes the sacraments, fellowship and prayer.

"I want to focus on the joy and hope of our young church," Father Schreiber says. "The church is very much alive among these kids."

Students like Sarah Beaver, a senior at Villa Maria Academy, are the face of the new youth ministry. She has been active in diocesan youth activities since she was a sophomore and has encouraged classmates to get involved.

"I love bringing people to Christ," Beaver says. "I love to see others connect with Christ."

It's exactly the type of teen-to-teen outreach that Father Schreiber says is needed.

Monthly gatherings will resume Sept. 15 at St. Mark Catholic Center, Erie. A retreat for young men will be held Nov. 21-23; a girls' retreat is scheduled Dec. 12-14.

For more information, go to [www.onthevine.us](http://www.onthevine.us).



Casey Corritore, Ellie Pietras and Mary Pratt were among 15 teens who participated in a diocesan-wide Hike for Girls this summer along the Clarion River.



### Priest reaches 105

HAM-SUR-HEURE-NALINNES, Belgium—Father Jacques Clemens is pictured leaving St. Benoit Catholic Church in Belgium this summer. He celebrates Mass at the parish every Sunday. Father Clemens celebrated his 105th birthday on July 11, and is believed to be the world's oldest living priest who still holds a regular service, said church officials.

CNS photo

## Newsmakers



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

### ■ Pope helps launch Google Hangout

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis said young people need two things: the courage to dream of big things as well as strong roots and respect for their culture, their heritage and the wisdom passed down from their elders.

On Sept. 4, the pope held his first Google Hangout—a live video conversation—across five continents with teenagers who belong to the international network of “Scholas occurrentes.”

The Scholas initiative was begun in Buenos Aires and supported by its then-Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio, who also used to teach high school when he was a young Jesuit priest.

“Today’s young people need three key foundations: education, sports and culture, that’s why Scholas unites everything,” he said.

He urged teens to speak out against war and injustice, and to stick together like a team, defending each other against gangs and other negative influences.



CNS photo

Pope Francis has a video chat with a Salvadoran student in the pontiff’s first Google Hangout.

### ■ Colts linebacker depends on faith

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS)—Daniel Adongo, 24, is a linebacker for the Indianapolis Colts. But the lifelong Catholic and native of Kenya had never played American football and knew little of the game before the Colts signed him to a contract in July 2013.

Adongo played in a few games at the end of the 2013 season and showed promise for the future. In the Colts’ first pre-season game Aug. 7 against the New York Jets, he sustained a season-ending bicep injury on his first play. Through this challenge, his Catholic faith has kept his feet firmly planted on the ground.

“My faith is not going to waver just because I got injured,” Adongo told *The Criterion*, newspaper of the Indianapolis Archdiocese.

For eight years, Adongo was a student at Strathmore School in Nairobi, founded in 1961 by priests of Opus Dei.

Students at Strathmore School in Nairobi, Kenya, jostle each other to have their photo taken with Indianapolis Colts linebacker Daniel Adongo.



CNS photo



### Editor’s Notes

Mary SOLBERG

When my 93-year-old father died five years ago, I took great consolation in the words of a nurse at St. Mary’s at Asbury Ridge in Erie.

As I held my father’s hand—only hours before he died—the nurse looked at me with joy and said, “He is looking at Jesus’ face right now.” All the tears shed during the previous weeks began to stop at that moment. I knew that my father was in the presence of the divine.

When someone dies in our circle of friends or in our family, we need to trust that they are embraced by a loving, forgiving, gentle Christ. We share this confidence today as the diocese mourns three priests and two sisters who died in the past month. They each left behind enduring legacies, friendships and good works.

One of those who passed away was Sister Anastasia Valmont, SSJ, who was instrumental in establishing St. Mary’s at Asbury Ridge, where my father lived the last few years of his life. I talked with Sister Anastasia about a month before she died, discussing her long career in nursing. She said that the elderly only need “TLC” tender loving care.

“I think when you get a little bit older, that’s more of what you’re looking for,” Sister Anastasia said.

The recent loss of priests and sisters here brings to mind, of course, the aging population of these spiritual leaders. Vocations are certainly on the decline. Consider that there are only 139 active priests available in the 13 counties of the Diocese of Erie. We did not have a single ordination this year.

There is a push in our diocese and in the universal church—thanks to Pope Francis—to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Bishop Lawrence

Persico issued a prayer card for religious vocations earlier this year, and the Diocese of Erie will host several Eucharistic holy hours for vocations the week of Nov. 2 as part of National Vocations Awareness Week.

Meanwhile, Sister James Francis Mullan, SSJ, has talked to Father Stephen Schreiber, director of vocations, about forming a team that will visit parishes and schools to promote vocations. My own pastor, Father Dan Hoffman at Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edinboro, is asking parish families to take turns bringing home a vocation cross for a month. Families are asked to pray daily for vocations.

I am excited for this because it will not only continue to give new life to our parish, but to our individual families as well,” Father Hoffman wrote.

Although the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has not received official confirmation from the Vatican, Pope Francis stated in August that he expects to attend the 2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia.

At a news conference, the pope said he was considering a three-city U.S. tour that would include a trip to New York City, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. He prepared for crowds as Philadelphia officials anticipate more than 1 million visitors for the occasion.

It’s nice to see Crusade, the frog, back in front of St. Luke School in Erie. The sculpture was stolen at the end of last school year, but she reappeared one night—broken and damaged—on the nearby campus of Mercyhurst University. George Lyons, owner of Contemporary Motor Cars and a St. Luke grad, repaired the figure. Artist Scott Rispin of Erie gave her a make-over.

On Sept. 8, the new and improved Crusade was blessed by Father John Malthaner, pastor.

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## Mercyhurst unveils mural project

In 1969, Mercyhurst Prep student Maria Alvarado Gomez drew a picture of a sapling growing in the back of the East Grandview Boulevard school in Erie.

Today, 45 years later, the sapling is full grown and Gomez’ picture has been permanently etched in an outdoor mural and pillar art project at the school.

The tree drawing is one of several pictures from school history that were created in vinyl and wrapped around 24 columns that stretch between the school’s front entrances.

“The sapling was a fantastic metaphor to begin this creative project,” said Mercyhurst alumnus and mural artist Todd Scalise.

A 1991 graduate of Mercyhurst Prep, Scalise collaborated with students, faculty and alumni to create the artwork for the pillars and another 1,416 square feet of the school’s brick facade along the roof line. The horizontal mural includes 177, 8-foot panels of artwork that represent Mercyhurst pride.

“This is who we are as a Mercy community,” Mary Ellen Dahlkemper, president, told those gathered for the unveiling on Aug. 27.

Bishop Lawrence Persico blessed the mural the previous evening.

Mural work began last March, with Scalise bringing his expertise as a designer and entrepreneur. He is the owner of Mosaix and Higherglyphics in Erie. Mercyhurst students/graduates who contributed were: Dan Kelsey, Claire Pomorski and Anna Dzuricky, all 2014 grads, and Sarah McCall, a senior.

Generous gifts from Mercyhurst Prep board members and other donors helped pay for the \$55,000 project.



Photo by Mary Solberg

Jumping with excitement for the new outdoor mural at Mercyhurst Preparatory School in Erie are sophomores, left to right: Rebecca Praelzel, Ashley McWilliams, Lexi Hitchcock, Claire Kenny and Catherine Klein.

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**Benedictines for Peace organize event**

ERIE—Members of Benedictines for Peace will host an environment event, "My Home—Our Planet—the Future? Commit to Make a Difference," on Sunday, Sept. 21, from 2 to 4 p.m. at Perry Square in downtown Erie.

The celebration is in conjunction with the People's Climate March held that same day in New York City. Activities at the Perry Square event will include speakers, musical presentations by area youth choirs, activities for children and families, and ideas for reducing one's personal carbon footprint. Participants will be asked to sign a pledge to care for the Earth. For more information, email Janice Etchison at [jetchison17@gmail.com](mailto:jetchison17@gmail.com).

**Chancellor to lecture on 'Theology of Body'**

ERIE—Father Christopher Singer, chancellor of the Diocese of Erie, will lecture on the message of St. John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," from its origins to its deepening by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to the challenge of Pope Francis to "have life and have it to the fullest."

Father Singer's lecture series—titled "The Heart of Christianity: Finding God and the Meaning of Life Written Within our Minds and Bodies"—will be held the following Wednesdays: Sept. 24, Oct. 8, Oct. 22 and Nov. 5. The talks will be held in the auditorium at St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 E. Grandview, Erie, from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

**Blessed Mother Bible study begins Sept. 30**

SHARON—An eight-week Bible study, "Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother," will be held at St. Stanislaus Koska-Holy Trinity Parish, 370 Spruce Ave, Sharon, beginning Tuesday, Sept. 30, and continuing every Tuesday through Nov. 18. Sessions will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

For more information or to register for the study, call Nancy Radachy at 724-347-7526 or email [saintstans@roadrunner.com](mailto:saintstans@roadrunner.com) by Sept. 16. A \$27 registration fee will include an illustrated work study set.

**Elk County Right to Life sponsors lecture**

ST. MARYS—Georgette Forney, president of Anglicans for Life and co-founder of Silent No More Awareness Campaign, will be the guest speaker Oct. 5 at Sacred Heart Church in St. Marys.

The Elk County Right to Life committee is sponsoring the talk, "What's so bad about abortion?" Forney will present the physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual consequences of abortion. For more information, contact Laurey Kraus at 814-781-6746. The event begins at 7 p.m. There is no charge to attend.

**Silver Rose to pass through Diocese of Erie**

ERIE—The 54th Running of the Roses—Knights of Columbus Silver Rose Program honors a centuries-old custom of young men in Mexico carrying live Castilian roses from church to church to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Knights of Columbus councils in Erie and Crawford counties are sponsoring visits this month by a silver rose that is en route to Connecticut. The public is invited to all of the celebrations held in the Diocese of Erie. The schedule is as follows:

- Sept. 21 at 4 p.m. at St. Margaret Mission, Jamestown, Pa.
- Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. at St. Peter Cathedral, Erie
- Sept. 24 at 7 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle Parish, Erie
- Sept. 25 at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Parish, Warren.

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**Sisters, priests leave enduring legacies**

**Father John Thomas Dugan**

Father John Thomas Dugan, 70, a priest of the Diocese of Erie for 44 years, died Aug. 25 in Philadelphia.

Father Dugan was born Jan. 29, 1944, in Phillipsburg, Pa., the son of Thomas and Mary Jo (Weist) Dugan.

He attended elementary school in Osceola Mills and high school in Phillipsburg. He was a student at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University before entering St. Mark Seminary in Erie. He attended Gannon College in Erie for two years as part of his seminary training and was then sent to Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, N.Y., for his major seminary formation. Bishop Alfred Watson ordained him a priest for the Diocese of Erie on May 7,

1970, at St. Peter Cathedral.

Father Dugan began his priestly ministry as parochial vicar of Holy Redeemer Parish, Warren, where he remained until 1972. He subsequently served as parochial vicar at St. Brigid Parish in Meadville (1972-78), while also serving as director of Campus Christ at Allegheny College. He then served as parochial vicar at St. Bernard Parish in Bradford (1978) and at St. Joseph Parish in Sharon (1978-84), where he



Father John Thomas Dugan

was also parochial administrator (2008-10). St. Jude the Apostle Parish, Erie (2010-14), and Our Lady of Peace Parish, Erie, from February 2014 until his death.

Visiting hours were held at Holy Cross Church in Fairview on Aug. 29. Msgr. Robert Smith, vicar general of the diocese, presided at an evening prayer service at the church. Bishop Lawrence Persico was the main celebrant of a funeral Mass on Aug. 30 at Holy Cross. Burial was in the priests' circle at Calvary Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to The Catholic Foundation to benefit clergy health and welfare. Send to: The Catholic Foundation, Diocese of Erie, 429 E. Grandview Blvd., Erie, PA 16504.

**Father Martin A. Hanhauser, OFM**

RINGWOOD, N.J.—Father Martin A. Hanhauser, OFM, a professed Franciscan friar for 77 years and a priest for 72 years, died Aug. 16 at Holy Name Priory, Ringwood, N.J. He was 98 and the oldest friar in the Holy Name Province.

Born Nov. 10, 1915, in St. Marys, he was the son of the late Frederick and Mary Barrett Hanhauser. He graduated from

Strong Vincent High School in Erie in 1933. After attending Gannon College in Erie, he graduated from St. Bonavent-



Father Martin Hanhauser, OFM

ture University in Allegheny, N.Y., in 1939. He earned a master's degree and a doctorate in math and physics from St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo., in 1952 and 1956, respectively.

Father Hanhauser was received into the Order at St. Bonaventure Church in Paterson, N.J., in August 1936, and professed first vows there the following year. He professed final

vows in September 1940. Following ordination to the priesthood in 1942, Father Hanhauser spent the next 40 years in higher education.

Survivors include his nephew, Urban Behringer, of Erie.

Memorials may be sent to: The Franciscan Friars of Holy Name Province, Office of Development, 144 W. 32nd St., New York, NY 10001-3202.

**Msgr. John J. Lucas**

Msgr. John J. Lucas, 75, died Aug. 27 at UPMC Hamot in Erie.

Msgr. Lucas was born on Feb. 13, 1939, in Grasslatt, in the town of Michael and Veronica (Kuzilla) Lucas Sr.

After attending elementary school in Grasslatt and high school in Cooper Township, he entered St. Mark Seminary in Erie and attended Gannon College (1957-59). He received his major seminary formation at St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, Md. Bishop Frederick Hall ordained him a priest for the Diocese of Erie on May 27, 1965, at St. Peter Cathedral.

Msgr. Lucas began his priestly ministry as a teacher at Cathedral Preparatory School in Erie, while

serving as weekend assistant at Holy Family Parish. He remained at Holy Family until 1967, at which time he was appointed parochial vicar of St. Thomas Parish in Corry (1967-80). He was appointed pastor of St. Hippolyte Parish in Guys Mills in 1980 and then served as pastor at Our Lady, Queen of the Americas in Conneaut Lake (1985-98) and Holy Redeemer Parish in Warren (1998 to 2012). He was parochial administrator of St. Peter Parish, Conneautville, in 1997.

Msgr. Lucas served as a dean in two separate deaneries of the diocese: the Meadville Deanery for four years and the Warren Deanery for more than a decade. He was a member of the Priests'

Senate.

An active member and spiritual director of Cursillo in Crawford County, Msgr. Lucas also was a chaplain to the Knights of Columbus in Corry and was a Fourth Degree Knight.

On Oct. 27, 1996, Msgr. Lucas was made a Chaplain of His Holiness, with the attendant title of Monsignor. He retired from active ministry in 2012, but continued to assist with parish Masses throughout the Erie region.

Survivors include three siblings: Michael D. Lucas Jr., and his wife, Marlene, of Erie; Andrew Lucas, and his wife, Shirley, of Niagara Falls, N.Y.; and Maureen Lucas of Girard; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. Besides his parents, he was preceded in death by a sister, Ann Polmar, and an infant sister, Agnes Lucas.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Sept. 2 at Holy Redeemer, with Bishop Lawrence T. Persico presiding. Burial was at St. Gregory Roman Catholic Cemetery in North East.

Memorials may be made to the Bishop Michael J. Murphy Residence for Retired Priests, 400 East Gore Road, Erie, PA 16509.



Msgr. John Lucas

**Sister Rita Pruchniewski, OSB**

Benedictine Sister Rita Pruchniewski, 88, died Aug. 16 in her 70th year of religious life. At the time of her death, she was surrounded by community members and her family.

Formerly known as Sister Charles, Sister Rita was one of two daughters of the late Charles and Helen Pruchniewski. She attended both Holy Trinity and St. Hedwig parishes in Erie. On June 30, 1943, she entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and four years later pronounced her perpetual vows. Only 11 days before her death, she renewed her vows in celebration of 70 years of monastic profession.

Sister Rita held a bachelor's degree in sacred music from Manhattanville College and a master's in music, with a concentration in

voice, from Duquesne University. She was an accomplished vocalist and violinist. Her ministry in music spanned 40 years and extended to many schools: Sacred Heart and St. Joseph, Sharon; St. Joseph and St. Stephen, Oil City; St. Gregory, North East; Immaculate Conception, Clarion; and St. Benedict Academy in Erie. She also shared her musical expertise as a member of the Erie Philharmonic Chorus and Erie Chamber Orchestra.



Sister Rita Pruchniewski, OSB

Accounting was her other forte, having put her skills to use in the business office at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie from 1975-81. Also, she was bookkeeper at Benetwood Apartments from 1981-91. In 1991, she became a reading instructor at St. Benedict Education Center, a ministry she continued until 1995. During these years, Sister Rita held a number of community positions, including local superior at various mission houses and member of the community liturgy committee. From 1983-95, she served as director of oblates.

Most recently, as an infirmarian resident, Sister Rita was engaged in the ministry of prayer and presence at Mount St. Benedict Monastery. She took pleasure in

visits from sisters, family members and friends, extending hospitality and welcome to all with whom she came in contact.

Sister Rita was preceded in death by her sister, Betty Jo Marz, in 2012; and brother-in-law, Bob Marz, in 2014. Besides her Benedictine community, she is survived by her nephew, Bob Marz, and his wife, Gerry; two nieces and their husbands: Rosemary and Bernard Niebauer and Helen and Robert Titus; and several great- and great-great-nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie. Burial was at Trinity Cemetery. Memorials may be made to the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, 6101 East Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511.

**Sister Anastasia Valimont, SSJ**

Sister Anastasia Valimont, SSJ, spent most of her 75 years of vowed religious life helping and healing others.

She died on Aug. 31 at the age of 93. In a recent interview, she reflected on her long nursing career, saying, "It's a really great vocation to take care of the sick."

Sister Anastasia was born in Karthaus on Dec. 3, 1920, the daughter of the late Herman and Nellie Fye Valimont. In 1939, she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Peter and Paul Parish, Karthaus, and professed her final vows on Aug. 15, 1945.

Sister Anastasia earned a nursing diploma from Saint Vincent School of Nursing in 1943, a bachelor's in nursing from Villa Maria College, Erie, in 1950, and a master's in nursing from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., in 1956.

Sister Anastasia ministered as

a nurse at Saint Vincent Hospital in Erie and Spencer Hospital in Meadville. She taught at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and later became director of the nursing school at Spencer Hospital, where she eventually served as administrator.

She was director of nursing at Saint Mary's Home of Erie and later served as its administrator, making her mark as a pioneer in nursing home administration. She led Saint Mary's Home through a period of great growth and expansion, having been instrumental in establishing its Alzheimer's facility,

Adult Day Care, Total Continuum of Care, and the Friends of Saint Mary's. She oversaw the opening of Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge.

Sister Anastasia also oversaw the merger of Spencer Hospital and Meadville City Hospital, now known as Meadville Medical Center. Besides nursing, she helped form a pro-life organization in Meadville and in Erie. She served on former Pennsylvania Gov. Milton Shapp's Abortion Law Commission. She was a member of Rotary International for more than 20 years, receiving its Paul Harris Award in 2009. In her retirement, she continued to serve on the boards of Meadville Medical Center, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Board of Nursing Home Administrators, and Gannon University. She also acted as a consultant to the administration and board of Saint

Mary's Home of Erie and participated in the SSJ Prayer Card Ministry.

Besides her parents, she was preceded in death by a sister, Thelma Nashwiner, and her husband, Harold; a brother, Robert, and his wife, Mary Louise; and a brother-in-law, William Lidgett. In addition to members of her religious community, survivors include a sister, Tina Lidgett of Niagara Falls, N.Y.; five nieces and three nephews; and many great-nieces, great-nephews and friends.

Visiting hours and a Mass of Christian Burial were held at the Villa Maria Community Living Center in Erie. Burial was at Calvary Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Community Support Fund of the Sisters of St. Joseph, 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA 16506-1249.



Sister Anastasia Valimont, SSJ

## St. Basil the Great parishioner receives scholarship



COALPORT—Zachary Gobert, center, of St. Basil the Great Parish in Coalport, won this year's annual scholarship from the Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. Victoria #646. Gobert is pictured with officers Betty Reese, Barb Archer, Annette Freeberg, Peggy Murawski and Susie Tiesi. Gobert is planning to major in pre-med at St. Francis University, Loretto.

## Mercy Sister takes flight at age 90



Photo by Gary Lencki

ERIE—Ninety-year-old Mercy Sister Mary Matthew Baltus sits in the front cockpit of a 1944 Boeing Stearman biplane on Aug. 28 at Erie International Airport. Pilot Scott Allen, right, took Sister Matthew for a flight over Presque Isle State Park, Mercyhurst University and the nearby Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse and Mercyhurst Prep. An anonymous donor made Sister Matthew's flight possible after she bid too low on a biplane flight package at a Mercyhurst Prep Gala fundraiser. Sister Matthew is celebrating her 70th anniversary as a Mercy Sister this year. At Mercyhurst, she was a professor of math and astronomy, dean of students, interim academic dean, president of the college senate and a trustee.

## Victorious Missionaries go to the Uht



ERIE—Members of the Victorious Missionaries in the Diocese of Erie pose in front of Jerry Uht Park in downtown Erie for the Aug. 19 SeaWolves game. PNC Bank purchased 13 tickets as well as food vouchers for the group. Everyone also received a SeaWolves cap. The Victorious Missionaries group offers spiritual support for all people with disabilities and the chronically ill. It looks beyond suffering and struggles to the victory born through the spirit of love.

## Five men enroll at St. Mark Seminary



ERIE—Five new seminarians enrolled this summer at St. Mark Seminary in Erie. Two of the men are from the Diocese of Erie; the other three are from the Diocese of Buffalo. Pictured, left to right, are: Adrian Fritzsche of St. Gregory Parish, North East, and a graduate of Cathedral Prep; Joseph Petrone of St. Joseph/Bread of Life, Erie, and a graduate of Gannon University; Wayton Duncan of Our Lady of Victory Parish, Lackawanna, N.Y., and a graduate of Buffalo City Honors High School; Patrick Strevchak of the Nativity of the Lord Parish, Orchard Park, N.Y., and a graduate of Canisius High School; and Eric Eggert of Infant of Prague Parish, Cheekowaga, N.Y., and a graduate of St. Mary's High School.

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12-2 pm Gem City Brass Quartet • HUGE Theme Basket  
2-4 pm Erie's own Elvis Raffle (one of Erie's finest!)  
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4-6 pm Rich Greco with Boogie Woogie Piano • Erie Clowns • Bake Sale  
5-7:30 pm Canadian Mist • Casino Games • BINGO  
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7:30-9:30 pm West County Rangers • BBQ Dinner

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**LUKE LIVE** Tuesday Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>  
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5145 Peach St., Erie  
[www.stgeorgeerie.org](http://www.stgeorgeerie.org)  
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