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- Read the Oct. 13 online or print edition of *FaithLife*
- Count the number of times the word "pope" is used
- Send your guess by email to [faithlife@ErieRCD.org](mailto:faithlife@ErieRCD.org) no later than Oct. 25. (One entry per person.)

If there are multiple winners, names will be put in a random drawing.

# FaithLife

## POPE QUOTE

### INSPIRED WORDS FROM POPE FRANCIS

"Where there is the cross, there is hope."

[www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org)

BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

September 29, 2013

## 1st anniversary

### Bishop Persico finishes first year at the helm

Mary Solberg  
*FaithLife*

If you're the bishop of a 10,000-square-mile diocese, you've got to get up pretty early to go anywhere. Bishop Lawrence Persico has done just that since being installed as the leader of the Diocese of Erie one year ago.

Consider the bishop's schedule this past Trinity Sunday, May 26:

In his car at 4:30 a.m., he started driving to Immaculate Conception Parish in Osceola Mills, a small church located at the farthest, southeastern reaches of the diocese in Clearfield County. The first Mass was at 8:30 a.m., followed by 10:30 a.m. Mass at nearby St. Agnes Parish in Morrisdale, and noon Mass at St. Peter and Paul Parish in Hawk Run.

He and Father Chris Singer, the chancellor, logged about 450 miles on their odometer visiting the three parishes, known as the Central Moshannon Cluster.

"He [Bishop Persico] met with every single person who wanted to meet him," said Father Robert Horgas, pastor of the three parishes. "It was a very delightful time. He's very pastoral. He's not stuck in his office."

For the people of the Moshannon Cluster, the visit was significant and uplifting. "I wrote Bishop Persico a letter saying we had not had a bishop here in many years. I put the letter in the mail one day and he literally called me the next day. I was stunned," Father Horgas said. "He definitely wants to get to know his people, his parishes, and his priests."

In his inimitable style, Bishop Persico deadpans that "it was dark" at the beginning of his trip to the outskirts of the diocese that weekend. In the mostly rural counties of the diocese, roads pass through remote areas that include farms and woodlands. The 62-year-old bishop intends to eventually visit all 117 parishes.

Since being installed as bishop Oct. 1, 2012, Bishop Persico has visited churches in all but three counties: Cameron, Potter and Forest. He has traveled, however, through those outlying counties for meetings and visits with Catholics, including a gathering with the sisters of Catholic Rural Ministry.



Photo by Mary Solberg

Bishop Lawrence Persico admires a cardboard replica of St. Peter Cathedral made by religious education students at St. Peter Parish, Conneautville, to mark the occasion of his first anniversary as bishop of the Diocese of Erie.

"He has a sincere interest in the sisters' outreach efforts," said Benedictine Sister Phyllis Schleicher of Catholic Rural Ministry in Potter and McKean counties.

Bishop Persico is the first to admit that he prefers to be among the people rather than in an office.

"I just enjoy being out among the people," he told *FaithLife*. "It's a lot more fun than sitting behind a desk. I find it energizing."

In his yearlong episcopate, Bishop Persico has experienced the highs and lows of life at the helm of a vast organization of schools, parishes, and charitable programs. The financial situation at St. Peter Cathedral School and Parish in downtown Erie, he said, has been the biggest challenge.

A lien of more than \$300,000 filed against the school by the Internal Revenue Service earlier this year has been resolved

through anonymous donations. However, a follow-up audit of the school and parish prompted the bishop to turn over the results this summer to Erie County District Attorney Jack Daneri. On Sept. 14-15, Bishop Persico informed parishioners of his decision to pursue further legal counsel [see sidebar].

Calling the situation "a bump in the road," Bishop Persico said, "We're going to work together through this. We have financial policies in place and we have to follow them."

The positive, supportive reaction among St. Peter parishioners has given Bishop Persico hope for a secure future.

"The parishioners were especially grateful that I was frank with them. It helps to establish a trust," he added.

Bishop Persico continues to assess the always crucial concerns of Catholic education. As the diocese begins the initial phase of strategic planning, he is con-

## St. Peter audit given to district attorney

Bishop Lawrence Persico announced to parishioners at St. Peter Cathedral Parish Sept. 14-15 that the downtown Erie parish is a half-million dollars in debt and that an audit report has been given to the Erie County District Attorney's Office.

Father Michael Ferrick, rector, said parishioners have rallied and given their full support in overcoming the challenge. [See more from the bishop in the anniversary story at left.] "I sensed talking to the people that

we are going to move forward together and accomplish great things," Father Ferrick said. "I think people were relieved that the bishop put it out there and now we can move on. There's a positive energy in the parish."

Father Ferrick is confident in the school's principal, Mary Gibson, who is beginning her second year at St. Peter School, and the newly formed St. Peter finance department, headed by director Joyce Wickles.

### Bishop Persico's statement to Cathedral parishioners:

In March I spoke to you about the lien that had been placed against St. Peter Cathedral School.

Today, I am here as your bishop and your pastor, knowing my first commitment is to keep you, the parishioners and school parents, informed. Previously I told you I was engaging the firm of Schaffner, Knight, and Minnaugh to conduct a forensic audit of the school and parish.

After five months of investigation, the audit firm submitted a report on their findings. Having reviewed the report with the auditors and the diocesan attorney, it was clear to me that the findings needed to be turned over to the district attorney's office. I have now taken this step.

As I have stated in the past, parishioners have a right to know what has transpired. Whether or not charges are filed, I will share more information with you in the future. I trust you understand I cannot go into further detail regarding this matter until the district attorney makes a decision about the appropriate legal actions to be taken.

I know many of you are deeply concerned about what the situation means to the future of our parish and school. We have been blessed by generous donors who have helped us take care of some of the immediate financial concerns. However, we still have a long road ahead.

I'm sure you will be as surprised as I was to learn that the parish carries a half-million dollars in debt.

Bishop Tobias Mullen built this cathedral one stone at a time, halting construction several times until he was able to raise enough funds to continue. We will take inspiration from his wise stewardship and ensure fiscal responsibility not only at St. Peter Cathedral but in all the parishes across our diocese. Our debt is large but it is not insurmountable.

Today our challenge is to recommit to all that this parish means to our community. Your help and support is absolutely necessary for the vitality of our parish, and will help your rector, Father Michael, and me to lay the foundation for a secure future.

Thank you for the kindness you have already shown as we have worked to sort out the situation. I ask you, as parishioners, for continued support, prayers and patience until this matter is resolved.



Photo by Mary Solberg

Members of the media interviewed Bishop Lawrence Persico on Sept. 16, the day after the weekend announcement at St. Peter Cathedral.

**In his first year as bishop, Bishop Persico has confirmed more than 1,050 students.**

See ANNIVERSARY, page 3

## October is World Mission Month

The mission spirit in the Diocese of Erie is alive and well for World Mission Month in October.

In the past academic year, students at the elementary, high school, and college levels in the diocese contributed more than \$2,500 to two separate mission efforts, according to Pat Marshall, director of the Office of Diocesan and International Missions.

"Our students are learning that they are called to be missionaries now, and do not have to wait until they are adults," Marshall said.

Students gave about \$2,000 to the Mission of Friendship in Merida, Yucatán, Mexico. The Mission of Friendship is the result of the sister-diocese relationship between the Archdiocese of Yucatán and the Diocese of Erie. Students also gave about \$600 to the Los Campeones School in Guatemala.

Marshall is hoping to see more school fundraising projects for missions in the coming year. She's especially interested in collecting enough money to purchase a van for the Mission of Friendship. A van is essential,



Photo by Mary Solberg

Brother priests of sister parishes share a moment at Holy Rosary Church in Erie on Sept. 8. Pictured are: Father Juan Ismael Sánchez Domenzain, pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in the village of Chichimilá, Yucatán, left, and Father John Jacquel, pastor of Holy Rosary.

she said, to transport families, students, and staff for various activities and meetings.

"The van we have now is pretty much falling apart," Marshall

said. "We need to raise money for a new, used van."

In the Diocese of Erie, there are currently 18 parishes that have a sister-parish relationship with

churches in the Yucatán. In September, Father Juan Ismael Sánchez Domenzain, pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in the village of Chichimilá, Yu-

### 2012-13 fundraisers for the missions

- St. Luke School, Erie**  
\$350 for the Los Campeones School, Guatemala
  - Elk County Catholic School System, St. Marys**  
\$260 for the Los Campeones School
  - St. Joseph School, Lucinda**  
\$1,034.62 for the Nueva Vida after-school program for girls, Mission of Friendship, Merida, Yucatán
  - Holy Redeemer religious education students, Warren**  
\$359 for their sponsored Amigos family in Mexico, Mission of Friendship
  - St. Leo School, Ridgway**  
\$200 for their sponsored Amigos family, Mission of Friendship
  - Gannon University, Erie**  
\$100 to the Mission of Friendship.
- To discuss a fundraiser for the Mission Office, call Pat Marshall, director, at 814-824-1231.

catán, visited the Diocese of Erie for the first time since becoming pastor eight months ago.

He met with Bishop Lawrence Persico as well as Father John Jacquel, pastor of Holy Rosary Parish, Erie, which is the sister parish of Our Lady of the Assumption in Chichimilá. During a Mass at Holy Rosary on Sept. 8, Father Jacquel encouraged parishioners to nurture the mission spirit.

"We need our relationship, our friendship to grow," Father Jacquel said.

Also, two longtime Yucatecan

employees of the Mission of Friendship will be visiting the diocese for about three weeks this fall. This will be the first trip to the Diocese of Erie for Silvia González García, director of the mission's day care center, and Gladys Vázquez Peña of the Amigos sponsorship program.

And in Sharon, St. Joseph Parish is hosting a Mexican fiesta on Sunday, Oct. 13, from noon to 3 p.m. Proceeds will benefit St. Joseph's sister parish, St. Francis Xavier in Yucatán, Mexico.



**Flooding ravages Acapulco**

MEXICO CITY (CNS)—The Archdiocese of Acapulco has suspended church services and instructed priests to turn their parishes into support centers after torrential rains on Sept. 17 left the city cut off from other parts of Mexico. The flooding forced residents to flee to safer ground and trapped thousands of tourists in what is normally a busy vacation period. Mexicans across the country opened collection centers to support those affected by the storms. Caritas Mexico, the church's charitable arm, opened a bank account and requested cash donations, saying goods would be too difficult to transport into the affected areas. Tropical Storm Manuel dumped up to 24 inches of rain on Mexico's Pacific Coast.



CNS photo/Tomas Bravo, Reuters

People wait to receive food rations in the flooded Mexican beach resort of Acapulco Sept. 18. At least 80 people have been killed from the devastating twin tropical storms.

**Pope Francis discusses overemphasis on sexual, medical ethics**

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In a lengthy and wide-ranging interview with the Jesuit press, Pope Francis spoke with characteristic frankness about the perils of over-emphasizing Catholic teaching on sexual and medical ethics; the reasons for his deliberate and consultative governing style; and his highest priority for the church today.

The pope's remarks appeared in an interview with Jesuit Father Antonio Spadaro, editor of the Italian journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*. The interview, conducted in August, was the basis for a 12,000-word article published Sept. 19 in the U.S. magazine *America*, and simultaneously in other Jesuit

publications in other languages.

"We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods," the pope said in the interview, noting that he had been "reprimanded" for failing to speak often about those topics. "It is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time."

Two days after the *America* story, Pope Francis affirmed the sacredness of unborn human life and linked its defense to the pursuit of social justice.

"In all its phases and at every age, human life is always sacred and always of quality. And not as a matter of faith, but of reason and science," the pope said Sept. 20 to a gathering of Catholic gynecologists.

Pope Francis characterized abortion as a product of a "widespread mentality of profit, the 'throwaway culture,' which has today enslaved the hearts and minds of so many."

**Sitcom writer's road to Catholicism no laughing matter**

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Tom Leopold has been funny longer than he has been a Catholic.

Leopold has spent the better part of his adult life writing sitcoms, including episodes of "Cheers," "Seinfeld" and "Will and Grace." He recently came back from England, where he did what he called some "punching up" of a batch of scripts for new episodes of "The Muppet Show." Leopold joined the Catholic Church only last year. It took a family crisis to set him on a path toward Catholicism.

"My daughter had this very serious, life-threatening eating disorder," Leopold said.

She was in treatment in Arizona, where the hospital would not release her until Christmas Day. It was the first time he prayed. But why Catholicism? "I prayed, and Jesus was the first to show up. What else am I going to do?" he replied.



Tom Leopold



**Editor's Notes**  
Mary SOLBERG

What fun it was to read the blog from the diocesan Year of Faith pilgrimage to Italy this month. Of course, one of the highlights of the trip was when the group of 84 from the Diocese of Erie had a close-up view of Pope Francis driving by thousands of people gathered at St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sept. 18.

Another big moment on the 12-day trip was when pilgrims **Floyd and Delphine Gerber** of Queen of the World Parish, St. Marys, celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary at a Mass at the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore, the main church of Florence, Italy.

**Father Ted Marconi**, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish, Erie, and **Father Ed Lohse**, a priest of the diocese who is now an official with the Congregation for Clergy at the Vatican, celebrated Mass that day at the basilica. A link to the blog is available at [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org).

A couple Sundays ago, I had the pleasure of walking the path of the Poetry Park at E. 22nd and Ash streets in Erie with **Benedictine Sister Mary Miller**. Sister Mary, who is the director of Emmaus Ministries, pointed out all of the art sculptures and flowers that line the walkway at the park. Kids in the neighborhood ran around preparing for an afternoon of readings and music. It was hard to imagine that two abandoned houses once stood on the lots that now make up the Poetry Park, located across the street from Holy Trinity Parish.

It's no wonder that the Benedictines of Erie were recently recognized by **Erie County Executive Barry Grossman** for their work to make Erie a more hospitable,

peaceful, compassionate city. Grossman presented the Benedictines with the Excel Award for September.

I love the nickname "MT" for the late **Sister Marie Therese of the Carmelite Monastery** in Erie. Apparently, Sister Marie Therese enjoyed explaining that "Sister MT" meant that she was empty of self in order to be filled with God. She died in Erie on Sept. 10 at age 93.

Anyone who has given the loss of a baby might be interested in reading the self-published book, *TRiumph*, by **Susan Yurkewicz**, a parishioner of St. Joseph Bread of Life Community in Erie. Susan found it therapeutic to write about the anguish of losing her son, John Michael, in 2009 from Trisomy 18, a rare condition caused by an error in cell division known as meiotic disjunction. He was born at 37 weeks gestation. Susan told me that writing her book was painful, but "tremendously healing." She worked with The Reason for Our Hope Foundation (founded by her pastor, **Father Larry Richards**) to offer the book to the public. *TRiumph* will be available in October by going to [www.triumph-story.com](http://www.triumph-story.com).

A note to all readers: *FaithLife* is sponsoring a contest in October that will give the lucky winner a \$75 gift certificate to Hofmann's Church & Religious Goods in Erie. When you read the Oct. 13 edition of the paper, online or hard copy, count the number of times the word "pope" is used. Then just email [faithlife@erieRCD.org](mailto:faithlife@erieRCD.org) to give us your answer no later than Oct. 25. (One entry per person.) If there are multiple correct answers, names will be put in a random drawing to select the winner. Start counting on Oct. 13!

Mary Solberg is the editor of *FaithLife*.  
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**Small Christian Communities thrive**

GREENVILLE—Dominican Sister Donna Ciango—internationally recognized for promoting parish vitality and pastoral direction—will kick off a year-long celebration of the 25th anniversary of Small Christian Communities in the Diocese of Erie.

"Sister Donna is renowned for her work in faith formation, so we are lucky to have her here to begin our celebra-



Contributed photo

Dominican Sister Donna Ciango

tions," said Sister Nancy Fischer, S.S.J., director of the Office for Religious and director of Small Christian Communities.

Sister Ciango will speak at St. Michael Parish in Greenville on Oct. 7 at 7 p.m. The event is the first of many expected to be held in the diocese to celebrate the 25th anniversary. About 50 parishes in the Diocese of Erie currently have small groups that meet to discuss their faith in light of their everyday lives. Sister Ciango is the director of faith formation at St. Rose of Lima Church, Short Hills, N.J., and is an adjunct faculty member at Drew University's doctor of ministry program. She holds a doctorate from Drew and is director of Church Leadership Consultation.

Her current book, *Open Our Hearts: A Small Group Guide for an Active Lent*, is a faith-sharing resource from Ave Maria Press.

Sister Fischer is working with a committee to plan other events through 2014. She has been meeting with parish groups throughout the diocese to determine their small community needs. Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Harborcreek currently is working on a video with the Diocese of Erie to showcase the benefits of small groups.

"We want to show people what a difference these small communities can make in their lives," Sister Fischer said. "The support, the caring, the growth in faith helps people integrate their faith into their daily lives."

Sister Fischer is committed to helping small groups flourish. "It helps us lead our lives in light of our faith," she added.

**Seeing double at the Erie Irish Festival**



Photo by Judy Erming

ERIE—People were seeing double at the Erie Irish Festival this month...and it wasn't the Guinness. The oldest twins of St. Patrick Parish in Erie are shown holding the parish's youngest twins, four-month-old Meredith Jane, left, and Katherine Maeve, right. They are the daughters of Matt and Abby Lechner, parishioners of St. Patrick. Holding the babies

are the parish's oldest twins, Kathleen Wehan, left, and Eileen Balczun. They are not related to the babies. Thousands of people attended the festival at Rainbow Gardens in Erie Sept. 13-15. Besides plenty of food and refreshments, the event featured live Irish entertainment, sheep shearing, and a traditional Irish breakfast.

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**An Evening with Immaculée**  
Due to the lack of ticket sales, the Immaculée Ilibagiza event scheduled at St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Erie on Oct. 22 has been cancelled. Anyone holding tickets may return them to the rectory, 2801 W. 6th St., for a full refund.  
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Holy Land: Mar. 10-20, Mar. 31-Apr. 10, Apr. 7-17 ...  
Italy South: Apr. 26-May 8, May 3-15, May 10-22 ...  
Italy/Lourdes/Fatima: Apr. 5-17, Apr. 12-24 ...  
Italy/Lourdes: Apr. 19-30, Apr. 26-May 7, May 3-14  
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**19th Annual Erie Diocesan Rosary March**  
Sunday, October 13, 2013  
Saint Peter Cathedral  
(10th and Sassafras Sts., Erie)  
Assemble at 2:00 pm  
Speaker: Msgr. Richard Sullivan  
Pray the rosary with us  
More info: John Walsh, 814-868-1100  
Sponsored by The World Apostolate of Fatima

## Briefly

### Marriage Tribunal announces fall sessions

ERIE—Anyone who is divorced and would like to remarry in the Catholic Church is encouraged to attend any of the three remaining information sessions offered by the Office of the Tribunal this fall.

Marriage Tribunal staff members will offer information sessions to those who are interested in petitioning for an annulment (declaration of nullity).

Tribunal staff will be available to meet with individuals. The forms necessary to begin the annulment process also will be available. No registration is required. For more information, call the Erie Tribunal Office at 814-824-1140.

Here is the October schedule:

- Wednesday, Oct. 2—Notre Dame Parish, Hermitage, at 7 p.m.
- Sunday, Oct. 6—St. Catherine of Siena Parish, DuBois, at 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Oct. 10—Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edinboro, at 7 p.m.

### Warren parish plans October mission

WARREN—A parish mission for the Catholic community of Warren will be held Oct. 6-9, beginning at 7 p.m. each day at St. Joseph Parish, Warren.

Father Paul Bryan, C.S.R., and Sister Mary Sninsky, O.S.F., will address the theme of the mission, "God's Unconditional Love." Father Bryan also will give a talk after each daily Mass. On Tuesday, Oct. 8, there will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation. On Wednesday, Oct. 9, the mission will close with a Mass in honor of Mary, Our Mother of Perpetual Help. For more details, call Cathy and Bruce Atwood at 814-726-0615.

### Catholic Rural Ministry hosts retreat

PORT ALLEGANY—An afternoon of reflection for women will be held at the Catholic Rural Ministry Center near Port Allegany on Sunday, Oct. 20, from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Benedictine Sister Anne McCarthy will reflect on stories and themes from the life of Benedictine of Nursia, as well as the themes and stories of our lives. Storytelling, sharing, space for reflection, leisure time, and refreshments will be included. Register by Oct. 17 by calling Margaret French at 814-945-6245 or Benedictine Sister Phyllis Schleicher at 814-544-8017.



Gathered at the last reflection day, left to right, were: Margaret French of Kane, Josephine Convey of Port Allegany, and Benedictine Sisters Phyllis Schleicher and Anne McCarthy.

### Annual White Mass for medical personnel set for October

ERIE—The Catholic Medical Alliance of Erie has scheduled its fifth annual White Mass for physicians, dentists, pharmacists, medical students, and nurses on Saturday, Oct. 5, at 11 a.m. at the Sisters of Mercy motherhouse, 444 East Grandview Blvd., Erie. Reservations are requested by Sept. 26 by calling 814-864-4755. Lunch is \$7 per person with a family discount.

Bishop Emeritus Donald Trautman, Msgr. William Biebel, and the Very Rev. Joseph Gregorek will concelebrate, with a lunch and brief presentation to immediately follow.

### HYS organizes fundraiser for programs

ERIE—Harborcreek Youth Services, 5712 Iroquois Ave., will host a spaghetti dinner Sunday, Oct. 13, from noon to 4 p.m. The cost for dinner is \$6.75 for adults, \$5.75 for those 62 and older, \$3.75 for children ages 5 to 12, and free to those under 5. Take-outs are available for an extra 50 cents. There will be special activities, including a 50/50 raffle, bake sale, and theme baskets. The fundraiser benefits resident recreation programs of Harborcreek Youth Services.

### Gannon and Mercyhurst recognized by U.S. News & World Report

ERIE—Gannon University and Mercyhurst University, both Catholic institutions in Erie, were recognized as top schools in the nation this month.

Gannon was named as a best value in the U.S. News & World Report's 2014 edition of *Best Colleges*. The downtown Erie university ranked 11th on the "Great Schools at Great Prices" list of regional universities in the north. It also tied for 54th among the best regional universities in the north.

Mercyhurst tied for 37th among the best regional universities in the north, up 10 spots from two years ago.

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# Journey to polska reunites family

By Mary Solberg  
FaithLife

**Editor's Note:** FaithLife will publish occasional articles about vacations taken by people of our diocese. This is the first installment. The journeys are not pilgrimages, but rather vacations with a spiritual twist.

Elizabeth Butterfield of Erie looks over the details of a family photograph taken 25 years ago. She was only 3 at the time, sitting to the right of her 2-year-old sister, Renata, who was ready to blow out candles on a birthday cake.

Holding Renata, in the middle, is their grandmother, whom they affectionately call Babcia (pronounced bob-cha). On the left is another sister, 4-year-old Joanna.

It's one of those pictures that is the stuff of family lore. Now married and the mother of two young children, 28-year-old Elizabeth doesn't have a distinct memory of the occasion that brought her grandmother, Wanda Polakowski, all the way to Erie from Gdansk, Poland. But that visit captured on film so long ago has stayed close to Elizabeth's heart.

"It's hard to have a clear recollection when you're that young, but I remember seeing these pictures and people talking about her visit," says Elizabeth, who is a member of Our Lady of Peace Parish and an employee of the Office of Communications for the Diocese of Erie. "I do know my Babcia surrounded us with a lot of love and she was here to help care for us."

Wanda Polakowski came to



Photo by John Butterfield

The Polakowski family reunites in Gdansk, Poland, this summer. Pictured sitting, left to right, are: Tyler Butterfield, Kaz Polakowski, Lea Butterfield, Babcia Wanda Polakowski, and Joanna Polakowski. Standing, left to right, are: Janina Polakowski and Elizabeth Butterfield.

Erie in March 1988 to meet her son Kaz's four children, ages 3 months to 4 years, and her daughter Jane's two children. She stayed about six months and then returned to Gdansk.

Since then, Elizabeth's parents have returned twice to their native Poland. Social upheaval throughout Eastern Europe in the late '80s and early '90s and the high cost of airfare prohibited them from taking all their children to see their grandmother... that is, until this past summer.

On Aug. 4, Elizabeth and her husband, John, and their two children, traveled to Poland to reunite with Babcia, who is now

93. They were joined by Elizabeth's parents, Kaz and Janina, and her sister Joanna. They stayed in an apartment near Babcia, who lives in Gdansk with her daughter and son-in-law.

"It was a surreal experience," Elizabeth says of first seeing Babcia again. Although they had communicated by telephone over the years, they had not held each other for so long.

"It was hard to hold back tears. To see her was just amazing, especially to introduce her to my children, her great-grandchildren," Elizabeth recalls. "She just enveloped us in her arms. You could just feel the kindness and love pouring from her."

Babcia stayed at home while Elizabeth and her family visited Oliwa, Poland, where her father grew up. They also visited Sopot, a city on the Baltic Sea, and saw the famous Basilica of Our Lady of Lichen, the largest church in Poland. Back in Gdansk, they saw a piece of the Berlin Wall that is still prominently displayed.

While they explored family history, Elizabeth saw first-hand how her faith-filled ancestors got through good times and bad. The path to Polska, she says, was not just a vacation, but "food for the soul."

Send your vacations with a spiritual twist to [faithlife@ErieRC.org](mailto:faithlife@ErieRC.org).

## NFP couple heads to Papua New Guinea

Ed and Barb Burkett of Meadville have devoted most of their married lives to spreading the message of Natural Family Planning in the Diocese of Erie. As if the contraceptive culture in America weren't enough of a challenge, they now are starting mission work in Papua New Guinea, a small country in Oceania that has high rates of HIV/AIDS due to polygamy and prostitution.

"I'm excited and a little nervous, but we're going to do whatever God wants us to do," says Barb, who with her husband directs the diocesan Natural Family Planning/Chastity Education Office. "This is one time in my life when I am letting go."

The Burketts, both 68, were asked by Capuchin Bishop William Fey of the Kimber Diocese of Papua New Guinea to educate catechists and married couples about marriage and family life, including Natural Family Planning. Although there is a significant population of Catholics in the country, many are not aware of NFP.

"We are trying to help the people there fully live the Catholic faith, to embrace and benefit from the faith. We need to explain the teachings of the church to enrich their lives, not to hurt them," Barb explains.



Photo courtesy of the Seraphic Mass Association

Ed and Barb Burkett are co-directors of the Natural Family Planning/Chastity Education Office for the Diocese of Erie.

According to the Papua New Guinea Aids Council, the number of HIV/AIDS cases in Papua New Guinea has increased since 2010. Such disparate organizations as Catholic Health Service and the International Planned Parenthood Federation are making inroads into the independent nation that occupies the eastern half of the island

of New Guinea.

When Bishop Fey, who is a friend of the Burketts, asked them to go to Papua New Guinea, they considered it a personal challenge. They will leave Oct. 3 for a two-month stay, traveling to different towns giving lectures and presentations on married life.

It will be a physical challenge as well, with many areas lacking a developed infrastructure. In fact, only four of the 19 parishes in the Kimber Diocese have flush toilets.

For Ed Burkett, who retired about four years ago as a medical research assistant with University Hospitals in Cleveland, the mission effort in Papua New Guinea is an opportunity to model Christian, Catholic marriage. There are also monogamous couples there who will benefit from more knowledge of NFP.

"People have to have a vision of God in their lives," Ed says. "We want to share a model of marriage that shows that God is at the center of our lives."

Bishop Lawrence Persico granted a temporary leave of absence to the Burketts until December. Gretchen Lorei will be the temporary part-time replacement.

## First anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

sions of the symbiotic relationship between parishes and their schools.

"We are taking the Gospel message and presenting it to future generations. How well are we doing that?" he asked. "How effective are we? Are there ways we can do something different or better?"

But for Bishop Persico, strategic planning isn't just about

schools and parishes; it's about seeing the larger picture that includes increasing vocations and reviewing all programs of the diocese.

"The Diocese of Erie is no longer the diocese it was 20, or even 10 years ago," he said. "We need to create a culture of vocations where we constantly remind people of the importance of praying for vocations."



First-graders in the religious education program at St. Michael Parish in Fryburg sent Bishop Lawrence Persico a homemade Doctor Saus memory book depicting the bishop traveling place to place, especially in his car. Religious education students from throughout the diocese sent the bishop many items in honor of his first anniversary.

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## 800-pound knight in shining armor installed at Gannon University

ERIE—Workers install the new 8-foot, 800-pound Golden Knight statue at Gannon University's Gannon Field on Sassafras Street in Erie on Sept. 18.

Artist Jon Hair, who has created sculptures for 35 colleges across the country, constructed Gannon's shiny new knight.

"He can guard the main gate now," Hair told *FaithLife* as he stood at the entrance to Gannon Field.

Gannon maintenance workers pictured at the site are: Carmen Toscana, left, and Tony Ferrara, Ernie Belk, a retired executive of Belk Stores, the largest privately owned department store company in America, commissioned the sculpture for Gannon.



Photo by Mary Silberg

## New grotto blessed at Dollinger Field

ERIE—Father Scott Jabo, president of Cathedral Preparatory and Villa Maria Academy, Erie, joins Prep freshman Mark Majewski and Villa Maria Academy junior Nicole Masson in a blessing of the new Marian grotto in honor of Larry Krasinski, a retired teacher at Cathedral Prep, and the late Joann Mullen, who had taught at the school for many years.

The grotto is located at Dollinger Field on W. 12th Street in Erie.

"Mary has long been an important figure in the faith life of the school," Father Jabo said.

The grotto was donated by David and Terri Strasser and their children, David and Alexandra, of Erie.



## STAR Foundation discusses tuition grants

ERIE—New and returning members of the Student Tuition Assistance Resources (STAR) Foundation—the diocesan scholarship program that is funded through business contributions—met at Bishop Lawrence Persico's home Sept. 13 to discuss the ongoing effort to make Catholic education more accessible to families.

This school year, the STAR Foundation gave \$1.44 million in tuition grants to 1,800 students.

Pictured, from left to right, are: David Murphy, chief financial officer, Diocese of Erie; Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar for education; Chris Hagerty, director of strategic initiatives, Cathedral Preparatory School and Villa Maria Academy, both in Erie; James Martin, Erie region president, Northwest Savings Bank; Doug Starr, president, ECCA Payroll and Business Solutions, Erie; Bishop Persico; William



Hilbert Jr., president, Reddog Industries, Erie; Attorney Jessica Smith, owner of Sharon Fence, Mercer; William Grant, director of stewardship and annual giving, for the Diocese of Erie; Marlene Mosco, regional president, PNC Bank, Erie; Robert Ordway, retired from Northwest Savings Banks, St. Marys; Sharon Varischetti, director of major gifts, DuBois Area Catholic School, DuBois; and Charles Banducci, director of school finance, Diocese of Erie.

Missing from the photo is Dennis Prischak, president of The Plastek Group, Erie.

## Kids meet police, firefighters at St. Luke School



ERIE—The priests, teachers and second-graders of St. Luke School in Erie welcomed several police officers and firefighters to the school on Sept. 11, the 12th anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The children said "thank you" to Erie area police officers, firefighters, and emergency responders with special songs and cookies.

## Educational speaker presents technology workshop

DUBOIS—Steve Dembo, director of social media strategy and online community for the Discovery Educator Network, presented an all-day workshop at DuBois Central Catholic for pre-school through 12th-grade teachers and administrative staff.

Dembo demonstrated multiple ways to integrate technology into the regular classroom experience.

Pictured left to right are: secondary school principal Dawn Bressler, Steve Dembo, middle school teacher Tara Kramer,



and technology director Mary Kay Stoddard. The workshop was made possible through the school system's Tech 21 Initiative.

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**ANNUAL QUILT SHOW**  
with a TURKEY AND HAM DINNER  
Sunday October 6, 2013  
Serving 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
St. Joseph Hall, Lucinda  
Adult \$8.00, Child \$3.50  
Preschoolers Free  
Takeouts are available!

Check the top of page 1 for details on a \$75 gift certificate to Hofmann's in Erie

View all FaithLife pages ONLINE  
[www.ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp](http://www.ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp)

**St. Mary of Grace Church Annual Columbus Day Spaghetti Dinner**  
Social Center, 1085 Water St., Meadville  
Sunday, Oct. 13, 2013, 11:30 AM - 5:00 PM  
Pasta dinner features homemade Italian sauce, meatballs, salad, beverage and dessert.  
Cost: \$8 for adults; \$5 for children ages 5-10.  
Dine in or take out. Lucky money tree and bake sale. (Homemade cannoli will be available for purchase!)  
EXCITING RAFFLES! CASH DRAWINGS!

**Mount Aloysius College Invites You**  
Ecumenical Luncheon & Lecture\* for Fall 2013  
-Join Us Wednesday, October 9th to Engage With-  
Dr. Philip Jenkins  
"Implications for a Global Christianity"  
Ecumenical Luncheon and Lecture:  
Cosgrave Center, 12:30 p.m.  
\* Invited Guests and Clergy  
\* Fee of \$12 Includes Lunch — registration needed\*\*  
Public Lecture:  
Alumni Hall, 3:00 p.m.  
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**SAINT STANISLAUS CHURCH ANNUAL PARISH DAY**  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2013 NOON-6:00 PM  
Parish Hall - 520 East 13th Street, Erie (handicap accessible)  
POLISH PLATTER DINNER Takeouts available  
COST Adult: \$10.00, Child 6-12: \$5.00, Child under 5: FREE  
PRIZES Grand Prize - \$1,000 One Prize - \$500 Five Prizes - \$100  
THINGS TO DO Children's games, raffles, theme baskets, bake sale and Chinese auction  
\* All proceeds to benefit Saint Stanislaus Parish \*

St. Joseph Church / Bread of Life Community  
24th and Sassafras Sts., Erie  
**Oktoberfest**  
October 11th 5 PM to 11 PM Keystone Bavarians Geek Army  
October 12th 1 PM to 6 PM Heimat Klang Troupe The Mad Bavarian The Man's Room Band  
October 13th 12 PM to 6 PM The Heener Brothers Augsburg German Band  
Authentic German cuisine Heated Beer Tent, Theme Baskets & Kids Game Room!  
Follow us at [winanewbenz.at](http://winanewbenz.at)  
Mercedes Benz drawing: Sunday at 5 PM  
Free Parking and Admission

**PARISH DAY**  
Sacred Heart's Annual Roast Beef Dinner  
Sunday, October 6 from Noon-5:30 PM  
Sacred Heart Auditorium, 26th and Liberty, Erie  
Adult: \$8, Child: \$4.50, Under 5: FREE  
Baked Goods, Instant Bingo, Chinese Auction, Theme Baskets, Win a 55" Samsung flat screen TV or 26" LED/HDTV  
GRAND PRIZE 2013 Roush Mustang "Stage 3" 585 HP OR \$40,000!  
For more info: Rose 866-5356 or Kathy 528-4981

Save the Date!  
**Saturday November 23, 2013**  
1st Annual Erie Men's Conference, 2013  
At the beautiful Bayfront Convention Center 9:00AM to 3:30PM  
Three nationally known Catholic speakers  
Bishop Lawrence T. Persico in attendance Adoration + Confession Mass  
Don't miss this opportunity to grow in faith!  
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