

The Catholic Register

Official Publication Of
The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown



Volume 92, No. 44 Published Bi - Weekly (USPS 094 - 280)

www.dioceseaj.org January 7, 2019

Heart Of A Priest

Extraordinary Relic Tour Coming To Diocese Of Altoona-Johnstown

By Tony DeGol

This new year is beginning with an extraordinary grace-filled opportunity in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

The diocese has been chosen as a stop on a national pilgrimage tour of the Incorrupt Heart of Saint John Vianney, the patron saint of priests.

The "Heart of a Priest" tour will be at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona on Thursday, January 31.

Faithful from the diocese will have the opportunity throughout the day to visit the Cathedral to pray and venerate the relic.

The Cathedral's normal weekday Mass schedule – 6:45 a.m., 8:00 a.m., and Noon – will remain in place on that day. An additional Liturgy will be added at 5:30 p.m. with Bishop Mark L. Barchak as celebrant and priests of the diocese as concelebrants.

The Incorrupt Heart of Saint John Vianney, which is usually housed at the Shrine of Saint John Vianney in Ars, France, will be present for veneration from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Priests will also be on hand throughout the day to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Bishop Mark is especially excited and grateful for the privilege of the Diocese of Altoona-

Johnstown being included on the tour.

"Saint John Vianney is not only the patron saint of parish priests, he is the patron saint of all priests," he stated. "He ministered during a tumultuous time in France where so many priests were imprisoned or defected."

Saint John Vianney was given the most lowly parish assignment in his diocese, Bishop Mark reminded.

"Even though he was not blessed with an abundance of talents, his pastoral ministry as a leader, reformer, and confessor was extraordinary," he added.

Because of his ardent prayer life, Saint John Vianney is a role model for priests, according to Diocesan Director of Vocations Father Matthew Reese, who shares the Bishop's enthusiasm for this opportunity in our diocese.

The faithful who come to venerate the relic on January 31 are asked to pray for an increase in vocations in our diocese.

"To have a more direct spiritual connection to Saint John Vianney, one of the holiest priests that ever lived in history, can only inspire young men to have a sense of zeal in wanting to give their lives in service to

(Continued on Page 9.)



Catholic Climate Change Observers Criticize U.N. For 'Lack Of Ambition'

By Jonathan Luxmoore
Catholic News Service

WARSAW, Poland (CNS)

-- Catholic participants and observers criticized a "lack of ambition" by government negotiators at a U.N. conference on climate change that ended Dec. 15 with agreement on a rulebook to implement the 2015 Paris climate accord.

The final document that emerged from the 24th U.N. Conference of Parties, or COP24, in Katowice, Poland, outlines a careful balance among the needs and concerns of the most developed nations, emerging nations and poor countries whose inhabitants already are experiencing the effects of climate change.

"Many people expected a complete derailment of this conference, so the fact that countries were able to agree on a rulebook shows there's still some spirit of commitment," Rebecca Elliott, communications director at the Global Catholic Climate Movement, told Catholic News Service December 17. "But they should have gone further," she added. "The church has always stressed the importance of solidarity, and this is what we'll be working towards in future -- for new ambitions to be placed on the table, and new signs that countries are committed to protecting vulnerable people around the world."

An estimated 23,000 people, including a delegation



(CNS photo/Kacper Pempel, Reuters)

CONFERENCE: Children attend a Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice demonstration before the final session of the COP24 U.N. climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, December 14.

from the Holy See, participated in the conference.

The Vatican delegation, led by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, agreed that "the rulebook does not adequately reflect the urgency necessary to tackle climate change, which represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."

"Moreover, the rulebook seems to downplay human rights, critical in reflecting the human face of climate change, which affects the most vulnerable people on earth. Their cry and that of the earth demand more ambition and greater urgency," said the delegation's final statement, which was released by the Vatican December 19.

While grateful that leaders and other stakeholders confirmed their commitments and found consensus on the rulebook, the Vatican said it saw how participants "struggled to find the will to set aside their short-term economic and political interests and work for the common good."

Elliott noted that Catholic representatives, including the Vatican contingent, had "brought a moral imperative to the conversation" on the need to respond to the challenges global warming already poses to people in the world's poorest countries. It was a perspective that rulebook negotiators discussed widely during talks that extended well into the night of December 15, more than a day

after the conference was to end.

Another Catholic group, Brussels-based CIDSE, welcomed the final agreement, especially because an October report from the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned of "catastrophic consequences" if global warming exceeded 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit this century.

However, CIDSE added that the lack of "solid financial commitments" and "strong mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions" in the rulebook showed governments were still failing to "reflect the urgency" and were "shying away from their responsibility to act."

"We are in a time of climate emergency -- to save our planet, we will need to make drastic changes in our policies and lifestyles," the organization said in a statement December 16.

"People asked governments to put transformative actions in place at this COP. While nobody expected one conference to solve the climate crisis by itself, we did expect better than this -- and we deserve better," the statement said.

The rulebook sets out how governments will measure, report and verify their emissions-cutting efforts under the Paris agreement, which comes into force in 2020, but falls short of what scientists have said is needed to rein in climate change.

Martin Krenn, policy officer with the Austrian Catholic Church's International Development and Mission office, de-

scribed the outcome in a Dec. 15 television interview as a "bitter disappointment" for not including human rights, food security and "gender justice." He said a "comprehensive transformation of consumption patterns and production systems" was still needed to support climate-vulnerable developing countries.

Meanwhile, the chairman of the German bishops' Social Affairs Commission, Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, warned that climate problems could not be solved "solely through new technologies," but also needed a "change of lifestyles."

"Everyone -- cities, local authorities, civil society groups and individuals -- can and must make their contribution," Bishop Overbeck told KNA, Germany's Catholic news agency.

"It's very regrettable the results of climate science research are still not accepted by all," he said. "We cannot afford to doubt the findings of the overwhelming majority of climatologists and postpone the consequences till the day of judgment."

In its statement, CIDSE said Catholic campaigners had joined other civil groups in a "huge protest" on the final day of COP24, demanding "immediate and ambitious action" to ensure "the burden does not once again fall on the poor and those who are most affected by -- but

least responsible for -- the climate crisis."

It added that the commitment of Catholics would "contribute to the awakening they create all around them, through the power of their actions and their witness."

"Climate justice is a moral imperative and solidarity cannot exist without humility; politicians of wealthy nations should be humble enough to recognize their duty to put the interests of others first, to understand that we share one common home," CIDSE said.

Elliott said church-linked organizations would continue following intergovernmental discussions closely and would "not forget" the U.N.'s target of reducing carbon emissions by around half over the next 12 years.

"This conference has shown cooperation for the common good is still possible, and that's what people around the world are looking for," Elliott said.

"The church is offering moral leadership on a very big scale and (is) waking up a moral voice in all countries. With cardinals and bishops around the world, the pope has spoken very strongly on climate change as something integral to the practice of our faith. This is something we can expect to continue."



(CNS photo/Kacper Pempel, Reuters)

COP24: President Michal Kurtyka speaks during a final session of the U.N. climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, December 15.



Gazette Printers

ALTOONA AREA OFFICE

3495 Route 764 Suite 100
Duncansville, PA 16835

For all your Printing, Mailing,
Binding, Design & Fulfillment needs

Contact Michael Callidge
Phone | 814-515-1627

mcallidge@gazetteprinters.com

www.gazetteprinters.com

Your local connection to great printing.

In The Alleghenies

Nursing Program Excels

Mount Aloysius College in Cresson nursing graduates have once again demonstrated their job readiness with a high pass rate on the National Council Licensure Exam NCLEX) for Registered Nurses. For the 2018 annual reporting period (October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018), nursing graduates achieved a 96.15% first-time pass rate. This number is higher than the national average of 88.57%.

NCLEX pass rates are commonly used to the gauge academic quality of nursing programs. Doctor Julie Luetschwager, Dean of the School of Nursing, stated, "The keys to such a strong program outcome reflected by the highest licensure pass rate we have had in more than a decade is the commitment of the faculty to continuous quality improvement in their teaching/learning strategies, the excellent learning resources we have at Mount Aloysius."

Letrent's PHARMACY

Family owned since 1972



- Prescriptions
- Hallmark Cards
- Gifts

135 W. Pitt Street
Bedford, PA
(814) 623-1442

www.letrentspharmacy.com

Annual Ecumenical Prayer Services Set

Two annual ecumenical services are planned for later this month. Every year, the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown partners with its friends in the Lutheran and Orthodox faith traditions to sponsor the two services. This year, the Lutheran and Orthodox communities will host the events. The

first one is scheduled for Sunday, January 20 at 3:00 p.m. at Saint James Lutheran Church in Huntingdon. The second service will happen on January 27 at 3:00 p.m. at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral in Johnstown. All are invited to attend to pray for Christian unity.

March For Life Prayer Service

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak will preside at a Prayer Service on the eve of the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. It will be held on Thursday, January 17 at 7:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona. Those

planning to travel to Washington the next day are invited to attend the prayer service for a special blessing from the Bishop. Those who will not participate in the March for Life are also invited to attend to pray for the sanctity of human life.

Saint Francis Will Sponsor Sixth Pro Life March On The Mountain

Saint Francis University in Loretto will sponsor the sixth annual March on the Mountain on Tuesday, January 22. The gathering is a local version of the national March for Life in Washington, D.C. The March on the Mountain will begin with the Rosary at 10:30 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Chapel, followed by a

walk around the campus mall at 11:00 a.m. The walk will last for about an hour. Mass will be celebrated in the chapel at Noon, followed by a period of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. All are invited to attend any or all events scheduled that day.

Coming Up On Proclaim!

Upcoming guests on "Keeping The Faith," Bishop Mark L. Bartchak's segment of "Proclaim!" will include:

January 13 -- In preparation for the upcoming March for Life in Washington, D.C., Father Matthew Baum, Administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish in Dudley and Saint Stephen Parish in McConnellsburg, and Nicole McIntosh share their experiences from past marches.

January 20 -- Vocations Director Father Matthew Reese, diocesan seminarian Michael Pleva, and Serra Club official Susan Brett look forward to the Saint John Vianney Relic Pilgrimage coming to the diocese later this month.

Girls' Retreat:

Generosity The Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus invite girls in grades 7-12 to a weekend retreat, Generosity, from Jan 25-27, 2019. Held at St. Joseph Convent, 1872 Munster Rd., Portage, the weekend begins Fri 6:00pm with a meal thru Sun. 1:00 pm with a meal. Please register by Wednesday, January 23rd by contacting Sister Jacinta sisterjacinta@gmail.com or 814-886-4459. Meals will be provided. Suggested donation \$45.

A Married Couples Weekend Get-Away:

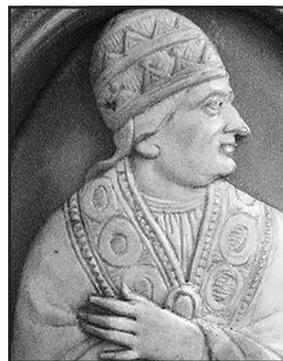
Each Day is a New Start will be held at St. Joseph Convent, 1872 Munster Rd., Portage PA from Friday, February 8th at 5:30pm with dinner to Sunday, February 10 at Noon with brunch. The presenter for the weekend will be Rev. Lawrence F. Kozak, MDiv, MA, a priest of the Philadelphia Diocese serving at St. Helena in Blue Bell, PA. A suggested donation of \$75 Weekend/ \$35 Day is being requested to cover meals and costs. Please register by Wednesday, Feb 6th by contacting Sister Jacinta sisterjacinta@gmail.com or 814-886-4459. Organized by the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Boys' Retreat:

Bravery The Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus invite boys in grades 7-12 to a weekend retreat. The theme will be: Bravery. The retreat is from Feb 15-17, 2019 and will be held at St. Joseph Convent, 1872 Munster Rd., Portage. The weekend begins Fri 6:00pm with dinner and ends Sun. at 1:00pm with a meal. Please register by Wednesday, February 6th by contacting Sister Jacinta sisterjacinta@gmail.com or 814-886-4459. Meals will be provided. Suggested donation \$45.

Women's Retreat:

"Learn from Me for I am Meek and Humble of Heart. The Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus invite Women (age 18 and older) to a weekend retreat. The retreat will be held March 8 - 10, 2019 at St. Joseph Convent, 1872 Munster Rd., Portage. The weekend begins Fri 6:00pm with dinner and ends Sun. 1:00 pm with a meal. Please register by Wednesday, March 6th by contacting Sister Jacinta sisterjacinta@gmail.com or 814-886-4459. Meals will be provided. Suggested donation \$65



Blessed Gregory X

1210 - 1276

Teodaldo Visconti was an Italian canonist tapped by Pope Clement IV to preach a crusade to recover the Holy Land. He went on pilgrimage to Palestine and Syria and negotiated for the pope with the Eastern emperor. After the pope died, a three-year vacancy ensued; a committee of six cardinals finally chose Teodaldo. He returned to Rome, was ordained both priest and bishop, and in 1272 was crowned Pope Gregory X. He called the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 to organize a new crusade. The council secured a short reunion with the Greek Orthodox, enacted clerical reforms, and established new procedures for papal elections, but never mounted the crusade.

THE CATHOLIC

REGISTER

SERVING THE DIOCESE OF
ALTOONA - JOHNSTOWNPublished Bi-weekly at
925 South Logan Boulevard
Hollidaysburg PA 16648Phone (814) 695 - 7563
FAX (814) 695 - 7517Subscriptions: \$8.00 Parish Based
\$18.00 IndividualPeriodical Class Postage Paid At
Altoona PA and other mailing offices.
Postmaster send change of address to:
925 South Logan Boulevard
(USPS 094 - 280)
Member Publication Of
The Catholic Press AssociationPublisher:
Most Reverend Bishop
Mark L. BartchakManager:
Bruce A. TomaselliSecretary:
Frances M. Logrando

Vocation View

By Father
Matthew ReeseDiocesan
Director Of
Vocations

Recently, we received news around the Diocese that we will be one of the host dioceses in the entire United States to receive the Incorrupt Heart Relic of Saint John Vianney, patron saint of all priests as declared by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, the Year of Priests. This saint is special to me for multiple reasons. I grew up in Saint John Vianney Parish in Mundys Corner, PA. Being the patron of all priests alone provides a special connection. Also, I have personally felt that he has directed me to minister to certain people throughout my time as a priest.

Though I and many priests may fail to live up to the great standard and image of what a priest should and could be, Saint John Vianney is still inspiring to all of us for one or more of his great attributes.

What are some of these attributes? He was humble and trusting in God. He never was considered to be intellectually strong and so his formators considered not ordaining him to the priesthood. It was his humble and strong prayer life that changed their minds.

He persevered through many struggles. Beyond his first great struggle of being ordained, he faced the challenge of ministering to a town of people who had lost their love for God and were caught up in apathy towards religion and life. His perseverance and expression of love for the people began to put a spark in their hearts. Like any pastor he faced the normal struggles of administering a school and orphanage. Anything he did in the parish though he did with great passion.

He also faced internal struggles of doubt and feeling like a failure. He tried three separate occasions to leave his parish assignment because he felt unworthy to continue. I can tell you that many of our priests feel this way at times, especially in today's so-

ciety where the sins of priests are on display, whether justly or not. Every priest in this age who has any sensitivity feels the weight of their own sins and thus feels deeply unworthy of the ministry to which he is called. Amazingly, a great saint like John Vianney felt these same feelings and tried to flee his calling because of it. Sometimes, the best image we can have of a saint is seeing how they struggle through their failings as opposed to focusing on the areas of their lives that have already been perfected.

Finally, Saint John Vianney was well noted for pouring himself out in his ministry. He was gifted with the ability to read hearts which made him an excellent confessor, so much so that he had people coming to him from the entire country of France to go to confession. He would spend up to 18 hours per day in the confessional. He fasted by only eating boiled potatoes and drinking milk. He slept very little and when he did the devil would visit him in the night to attempt to disrupt it. The greatest thing that was ever said of this beautiful saint was said to him by the devil in one of his encounters. The devil told him, "If there were three priests like you on earth at one time, my kingdom would not stand!"

Think about that for a moment, and then ponder just how difficult it can be to live the vocation of priesthood to perfection. It was said to me once by a friend that boys seek challenge in life and that this desire drives them towards their vocation in life. There is no greater challenge than to become a priest, especially in this day and age. How would Saint John Vianney be perceived today if he were living at this time? Perhaps as a radical; perhaps as a crazy man; or perhaps as he truly is – a man who loves God and tried his best, even if he was imperfect.

Community Steps Up To Support All Soles Project

Photo And Text By
Tony DeGol

Growing up, Debbie Zakrzwski was one of eight children.

Her parents were not wealthy, but they always made sure their children had clean clothes and nice shoes.

"With eight kids, my dad bought a lot of shoes," she said with a laugh.

So Zakrzwski could not help but think of her late father, Frank Smiach, when she heard about the All Soles Project sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

It is an effort to collect new boots for children who do not have the appropriate footwear for cold and snow.

Since Catholic Charities launched the effort this past fall, donations have been right in step.

That includes support from Zakrzwski and other members of her family in memory of Smiach, who was a member of Most Holy Trinity Parish in South Fork.

It seemed like a natural connection, Zakrzwski remarked, not only because of all the shoes he purchased for his family, but because he passed in 2016 – on All Souls Day.

"I always felt such a comfort that my father passed on that day because everyone is praying for souls on that day," added Zakrzwski, a member of Saint Matthew Parish in Tyrone and one of the parish secretaries.

In celebration of the family's support, Catholic Charities has made Smiach the "patron saint" of the All Soles Project. His photo sits on top of the shelf that holds a stash of



ALL SOLES PROJECT: A photo of the late Frank Smiach sits on top of a shelf holding a collection of boots for children in need of appropriate footwear for the snow and cold. Smiach's family is among the supporters of the continuing All Soles Project.

donated boots for children who need them.

It is a project near and dear to Michelle Johnston, an emergency financial assistance case manager at Catholic Charities.

Since the program started, Johnston recalled a little girl who came to Catholic Charities with sneakers, but no boots. After showing her some options, the girl tried on a pair and told Johnston how cool she felt with her new boots.

"So it really touched her heart and, of course, it touched ours, and we want to be able to keep that going," Johnston explained. "On a really miserable day when it is wet and cold, a child can pick up a pair of boots and put them on and be confident that they will get to school on time and safely, and they're going to be warm the entire way."

Some of the need for boots is coming from families who are receiving heating assistance from

Catholic Charities.

"Not every family has the need, but when it presents itself, and it usually does every year around this time, we're able to say yes, and it's such a great honor for us to be able to give winter boots to kids," noted Johnston.

So while the Christmas season is winding down, the time of giving can continue. Catholic Charities is welcoming donations of new boots for children up to grade six. Individuals can contact the agency about being a sponsor for sneakers for youth past that age.

Cash donations for the project are also greatly appreciated. All monetary donations to the program will be used to purchase shoes for the children.

In Zakrzwski's mind, supporting the effort is a no-brainer.

"It's just the right thing to do," she said. "My parents were good role models, and I'm just passing it on. You always have to help other people."



Mother of Good Counsel Protect The Vulnerable



By Paul Ashton, Psy.D., D.Min.

The following article is the copyrighted property of National Catholic Services, LLC (National Catholic), all rights reserved, and is republished here with National Catholic's permission. It originally appeared on the VIRTUS® Online website for continuing education for adults at www.virtus.org. The information and opinions provided on The Virtus® Forum are for educational purposes only. Opinions of experts expressed on The Virtus® Forum are not necessarily the opinions of sponsors or The Virtus® Forum. The Virtus® Forum does not guarantee the validity of any expert opinion.

Lord, you know that our thoughts on earth are full of fear and uncertainty; through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom your Son took flesh and blood, send us the Spirit of counsel to teach us how to know your will, and to guide us in all we do.

Each January 1st the Church celebrates the beginning of the New Year by commemorating the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. Most especially for the VIRTUS® family, there is no better way to begin the year than by honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary whose selfless life was devoted to her Son, Jesus.

For the past 13 years the VIRTUS® coordinators from around the country gather for a conference that draws us together in prayer. This conference is educational, spiritual, recreational and prayerful. We have learned that sharing each other's burdens certainly lightens them, and in the same way coordinators learn from one another and carry this knowledge and experience back to their home arch/dioceses.

Reporting Child Abuse

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak and the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown are firmly committed to protecting children and young people. If you have any information concerning suspected sexual or other abuse of minors, you are urged to report it immediately to

- - PA Child Line **1 - 800- 932 - 0313** (intake is available 24/7)

- - Pennsylvania Attorney General Hotline **(888) 538 - 8541**

- - Pennsylvania State Police Headquarters **(717) 783 - 5599** or your local Pennsylvania State Police Station

- - Your local police department

If there is an indication of imminent danger, you should call 911 immediately.

The Diocese reports all information regarding sexual abuse of minors to law enforcement. You are urged to do the same. Anyone may and should report suspected child sexual abuse.

To report to the Diocese any suspected abuse of a minor, please call Jean Johnstone at **(814) 944 - 9388**.

Prayer is certainly a major part of our gatherings and each year we remember victims, survivors, thrivers and all who are involved in the work of Protecting God's Children. We pray to our Mother of Good Counsel asking her to protect all children and vulnerable persons. We know from sharing the good news stories that through her intercession God responds in mighty ways. Consider the thousands and thousands of Catholic faithful who are represented by the coordinators who attend. Consider the thousands who fall under the care of our dear Blessed Mother every second of the day. We rely on her to guide and counsel us.

Many of the arch/diocesan coordinators are mothers and fathers who have their own children to watch and guide. They give tirelessly of themselves so others might have the opportunity to learn and live in safe environments. We remember them especially this New Year and ask God's blessings on their families.

As we start the New Year, we remember that Mary's life was devoted to the good care and protection of her Son and to lead all to God the father. In this spirit we pray for her intercession to guide us throughout the year by propelling us to:

- Listen more to what our children have to say
- Be more mother and father and less friend to them
- Teach them gratitude by example
- Continue to learn
- Profess our values
- Spend more time with our children
- Impart good self-esteem to them
- Model honesty for them
- Laugh, sing and enjoy life with them

- Be their greatest cheerleader
- Teach them about competition and fairness
- Be the chief witness to our children's lives
- Show care and concern about everything in their lives

- Celebrate moments
- Pray with them

May all of us join in union of prayer to bless all of the children and vulnerable people of the world!

May we all have a blessed and Happy New Year!

Prayer for the Vulnerable

Gentle Mother of all Good Counsel, hear our prayers for those who are vulnerable and need your protection. Guide their steps to persons and places that hold safe the love you have for your Son, Jesus.

We ask for your guidance and counsel to make good decisions as we seek to protect all of God's Children. Never let us forget the important mission we have begun to protect all those whose voices are silent and unheard. Dearest Mother, you know that our voices are small, but God's power working through us and with your intercession is all we need. Amen.

For inquires on youth protection and safe environment efforts within the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown please contact Cindy O'Connor at (814) 695-5579, extension 2621 or via email at coconnor@dioceseaj.org.

Assistance And Resources For Victims And Survivors

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown is committed to the safety and protection of children and youth, and to supporting the victims and survivors of sexual abuse. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) and trained professionals serving local agencies greatly assist with the needs of victims of sexual assault and their loved ones in the healing process.

In an effort to educate the public and raise awareness of the support available in our community, the diocese continues to refer victims and survivors to the resources provided by PCAR and the local centers to help spread the word. The diocese's collaboration with these agencies is limited to our mutual desire to help those who are suffering and is not an endorsement of other policies or positions the agencies may hold.

No one should suffer alone. If you need of help, please take advantage of the contact information on this page. Please join the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in praying for all those who have been affected by sexual abuse in our society. May God grant them healing and peace.

PCAR partners with a network of rape crisis center programs to bring help, hope and healing around issues of sexual violence to all 67 counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. To find services

within Pennsylvania call **PCAR at 1-888-772-7227**.

For information on Sexual Abuse Victim Assistance and Service Agencies within the eight counties of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown (Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset) please refer to:

Bedford County: Your Safe Haven Inc. (800) 555-5671 or (814) 623-7664

Blair County: Family Services, Inc. (800) 500-2849 or (814) 944-3585

Cambria/Somerset Counties: Victim Services, Inc. (800) 755-1983 or (814) 288-4691

Centre County: Centre County Women's Resource Center (877) 234-5050 or (814) 234-5050

Clinton County: Clinton County Women's Center (570) 748-9509

Franklin/Fulton Counties: Women in Need/ Victim Services (800) 621-6660 or (717) 264-4444

Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata Counties: The Abuse Network 24-Hour Hotline (717) 242-2444. Toll-Free PA Hotline (888) 810-2444; Mifflin County Office (717) 242-0715; Juniata County Office (717) 447-1885 and Huntingdon County Office (814) 506-8237 or (717) 242-2444

Catholic Charities Inc. of The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown: Victim Assistance Coordinator (814) 944-9388, extension 204.

In His Formal Christmas Message, Pope Francis Prays For Peace And Brotherhood Throughout The World

By **Cindy Wooden**
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Delivering his formal Christmas message and blessing, Pope Francis prayed for a world where all people would recognize that they are brothers and sisters and would work for justice and for peace.

The birth of Jesus proclaims that “God is a good father and we are all brothers and sisters. This truth is the basis of the Christian vision of humanity,” the pope said Dec. 25 before giving his blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) and appealing for peace in Syria, Ukraine, the Holy Land, Yemen, Venezuela, Nicaragua and throughout Africa.

Tens of thousands of people gathered in St. Peter’s Square under clear blue skies for the blessing and millions more watched on television or on computers, tablets and phones; the pope’s blessing went to all of them.

“May the little child whom we contemplate today in the manger, in the cold of the night, watch over all the children of the world, and every frail, vulnerable and discarded person,” Pope Francis said.

“May all of us receive peace and consolation from the birth of the Savior and, in the knowledge that we are loved by the one heavenly Father, realize anew that we are brothers and sisters and come to live as such!” he prayed.

In his message, Pope Francis said that believing in Jesus means believing that all people are brothers and sisters. Without that recognition, he said, “our efforts for a more just



(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

GUARDS RETURN TO VATICAN: Swiss Guards leave Pope Francis’ Christmas message and blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) delivered from the central balcony of Saint Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican December 25.

world fall short, and even our best plans and projects risk being soulless and empty.”

The pope said his “wish for fraternity,” included “fraternity among individuals of every nation and culture,” among “people with different ideas, yet capable of respecting and listening to one another,” and among people of different religions.

“By his incarnation, the son of God tells us that salvation comes through love, acceptance, respect for this poor humanity of ours, which we all share in a great variety of races, languages, and cultures,” the pope said.

Since all people are created by God, human differences shouldn’t be a threat, but a blessing, he said. After all, “when an artist is about to make a mosaic, it is better to have tiles of many colors available, rather than just a few!”

Being brothers and sisters does not mean humanity will

not experience differences and even tensions, he said, but there should be “an unbreakable bond uniting us.”

The pope prayed that a rediscovery of fraternity would “enable Israelis and Palestinians to resume dialogue and undertake a journey of peace that can put an end to a conflict that for over 70 years has rent the land chosen by the Lord to show his face of love.”

He prayed that the people of Syria, where Christians and Muslims once lived in peace, would find that again after more than seven years of war.

Speaking less than a week after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country, Pope Francis urged the international community to “work decisively for a political solution that can put aside divisions and partisan interests, so that the Syrian people, especially all

ings it has endured and restore dignified living conditions for its citizens.”

And as tensions continue over the status of the Orthodox communities in Ukraine, with Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople set to recognize the country’s new independent Orthodox church over the objections of the Russian Orthodox Church, Pope Francis said, “I am close to the Christian communities of the region, and I pray that they may develop relationships of fraternity and friendship.”

For Africa he prayed that “the Holy Child, the King of Peace,” would “silence the clash of arms and allow a new dawn of fraternity to rise over the entire continent, blessing the efforts of all those who work to promote paths of reconciliation in political and social life.”

Pope Francis prayed for the continued rapprochement between North and South Korea, for a recovery of “social harmony” in Venezuela and for an overcoming of “divisions and discord” in Nicaragua.

He also prayed for every Christian who celebrates Christmas “in difficult, if not hostile situations,” adding a prayerful hope “May the Lord grant that they, and all minorities, may live in peace and see their rights recognized, especially the right to religious freedom.”

those who were forced to leave their own lands and seek refuge elsewhere, can return to live in peace in their own country.”

In Ukraine, where a Russia-supported war has been raging in the eastern regions since 2014, the pope prayed that Jesus would “bring relief,” adding that “only with a peace respectful of the rights of every nation can the country recover from the suffer-



(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

FAN PHOTO: A woman takes a photo before Pope Francis’ Christmas message and blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) delivered from the central balcony of Saint Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican December 25.

171 South Pleasant Ave.,
Somerset, NJ 08876
A Member of
Suncoast Group

The Medicine Shoppe
PHARMACY

Michael J. Fapora, R.Ph.

814-443-9500

“What a Pharmacy Was Meant To Be”

WARNER’S Since 1950
Florist, Gifts, Greenhouses

179 S. Montgomery Street, Hollidaysburg
814-695-9431

SFU Hosts Seventh Annual Sensitive Santa Event



VISITS SANTA: Seven-year-old Evan Decker visits with Santa at the Seventh Annual Sensitive Santa event hosted by Saint Francis University. The event affords children with Autism and other disabilities who are unable to wait in lines and filter sensory stimulation from lights and sounds that are encountered during a typical visit to see Santa. The event is sponsored by the Saint Francis Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Departments.

CATHEDRAL PRAYER GROUP "WINTER SCHEDULE"

Everyone is warmly welcome!



Mon, Jan. 14th, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Cathedral.

Thur, Jan. 31st, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Bishop Guilfoyle.

**Mon, Feb. 4th, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Cathedral—
Fr. Jonathan St. André—speaker.**

Thur, Feb. 21st, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Bishop Guilfoyle.

Mon, Mar. 11th, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Cathedral.

Tue, Mar. 19th, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Bishop Guilfoyle.

Mon, April 8th, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Cathedral.

Thur, April 25th, Praise & Worship, 7 pm, Bishop Guilfoyle.

Please clip and save.



GABRIEL PROJECT: The Christian Mothers from Saint Therese Parish in Johnstown held a baby shower to benefit the Gabriel Project. Participating in the shower pictured (left to right) are: Betty Dukery, Shirley Duris, Vee Ramirez, Linda Maurer, Dee Shank, Carol Bender, Gail Bala, coordinator for the Johnstown Gabriel Project; Diane Taylor, Charlotte Lieb, Dorothy Lengyel, Therese Hubbard, Nancy Shultz, Ann Figart, Loretta Domenick, Helen Sorchilla, and Beverly Bross. Absent from the are: Christine Adams, Helen Delic, Margie Gehlman, Margie Hutchinson, and Linda Pritt

Pennsylvania Priest Will Serve Jail Sentence

By Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS)

-- A priest who once served in the Diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, was sentenced to prison for sexually molesting a boy in the 1990s.

Father John T. Sweeney, 76, received a sentence of 11 months to five years in state

prison and must register as a sex offender for 10 years, a judge in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, said December 21.

The priest pled guilty in July to a misdemeanor indecent assault on a minor after he was accused of abusing a 10-year-old boy while counseling him about misbehaving on a school bus.

Father Sweeney, who retired in 2016, is the first priest convicted of charges stemming from a Pennsylvania grand jury investigation that focused on allegations of abuse. He was arrested in July 2017 for the incident that occurred during the 1991-92 school year at St. Margaret Mary School in Lower Burrell, about 25 miles northeast of Pittsburgh.

The grand jury subsequently issued a report in August detailing allegations against 300 priests that involved more than 1,000 children over 70 years in six of the state's eight dioceses.

Meanwhile, the Archdiocese of New York suspended an elderly priest who had been celebrating Mass in two states despite settlements paid for allegations of sexual abuse of teenage boys.

Catholic News Service could not reach Joseph Zwilling, archdiocesan communications director, for comment. He told The New York Times that Father

Donald G. Timone would no longer be allowed to remain in ministry while church officials consider if he will be permanently removed from ministry.

Father Timone, who retired in 2009, was in residence at St. Joseph Church in Middletown, New York, and celebrated Mass at the parish as recently as early December, the newspaper reported. He also was serving as chaplain, spiritual adviser and teacher at John Paul the Great Catholic University in Escondido, California, visiting every few months, a school official said.

Lidy Connolly, vice president of administration at the university, told Catholic News Service December 27 the archdiocese informed the school December 20 that Father Timone's letter of good standing had been revoked. She said he no longer worked at the school.

The New York Archdiocese's Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program made settlements in spring 2017 to two victims who alleged that Father Timone abused them while they were undergoing counseling. The program was established to compensate victims of clergy sex abuse who agreed to release the archdiocese from further legal claims.

Annual Respect Life March Begins At Saint Matthew Church

The 32nd Annual Respect Life March will be held at Noon on Sunday, January 13. The day will begin with a prayer service at Saint Matthew Church in Tyrone. The march will then proceed 1.25 miles to Oak Grove Cemetery to the grave of Baby Agnes Doe, when another short prayer service will be held. The walk is sponsored by the Saint Gregory Council #1218 of the Knights of Columbus. A luncheon will follow in the church hall.

For more information call Peter Kreckel at 814-935-5436 (cell) or e-mail: pharmanoe@aol.com. Those who are unable to walk can join march by driving in their cars at the end of the procession.

At Border, Communities Vent Anger Toward Washington

By Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS)

-- Trash was not picked up around some of the most famous of monuments in Washington, and the White House Visitor Center and other tourist spots in the nation's capital closed as the president and lawmakers refused to find common ground to end a partial government shutdown.

But Washingtonians, government workers and those visiting Washington during the most recent shutdown -- which began in late December over a political disagreement involving money to build a border wall with Mexico -- aren't the only ones venting anger at the country's political center.

Far from the seat of political power, Catholics working in border communities such as El Paso, Texas, think they, too, have been impacted by

Washington's squabbles, and they expressed anger about experiencing more than just daily inconveniences.

Since late December, many have been responding to what they say are chaotic scenes of migrants being randomly dropped off in their cities and towns near the U.S.-Mexico border by federal immigration officials. Typically, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, commonly referred to as ICE, gives community groups that work with migrants advance notice about the drop-offs.

The groups then provide or find them shelter, sometimes at facilities run by church organizations, where the migrants can be fed and oriented on a path toward family members or to another destination in the U.S. But the Christmas-time chaos mirrored a similar situation that took place just before Election Day in November, when no advance notice was given and groups were left to help hun-



(CNS photo/Jose Luis Gonzalez, Reuters)

WAIT FOR SHELTERS: Central American migrants who were dropped off at a bus station in El Paso, Texas, line up for food December 25 as they wait for transportation to emergency shelters.

dreds of hungry and tired migrants with little or no notice.

"I don't know if this is over the shutdown," said Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute in El Paso, Texas, who, along with other fellow El Pasoans, found himself on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day trying to organize food and shelter for hundreds of migrants. Corbett spoke with Catholic News Service Dec. 26 about the situation near the border.

"These games are unacceptable," said Corbett. "There is no crisis here at the border. We are capable of treating people humanely no matter what ICE does, what the White House does. To say there's crisis at the border ... there isn't a crisis, but there's one that's been manufactured, and it's been manufactured in Washington, D.C."

In a statement provided to Catholic News Service Dec. 27, El Paso Bishop Mark J. Seitz confirmed the account of the drop-off of migrants in and around the city.

"We here at the Catholic Diocese of El Paso are very concerned about the hundreds of people being put on the streets in El Paso, at the bus depot, at the airport and at a local park," Bishop Seitz wrote in the statement. "We understand that the

facilities of Homeland Security are overcrowded, but the decision of our government to simply put these children and families with no money, no tickets, no food, no access to phones, out on the street, is inhumane and unconscionable."

Places affiliated with the Catholic Church, such as Annunciation House in El Paso, have been accommodating between 300 to 400 migrants daily, "depending upon volunteer efforts and whatever resources we have," said Bishop Seitz, but the sudden unannounced release of hundreds of them without notice left little time to prepare. And yet, Corbett said, locals lined up to provide tamales, pizza, water, offers of shelter, anything they could get their hands on to feed the hungry and tired crowds. Catholic parishes have made available volunteers and facilities to help, said Bishop Seitz, but he believes the government also needs to own up to what happened.

"Our government has a responsibility, when it takes these refugees into custody, to provide for their basic needs," Bishop Seitz wrote. "We do as much for death-row inmates. With the recent deaths of two young children, the accounts of mistreatment in holding cells and the heartless expulsion of these

families, an undeniable picture is coming into focus and it is not one of which we Americans can be proud."

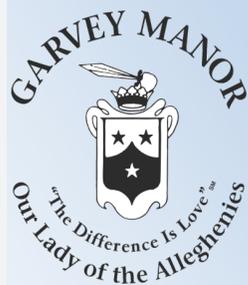
Families fleeing from Central America, particularly from countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, have been heading to the United States looking to escape the endemic violence and hunger they are facing, said Bishop Seitz.

"But instead of helping to improve the situation in their home country, a situation which our nation has contributed to in many ways, especially by our affection for illegal drugs, we mistreat those who seek refuge here so badly that it is hoped others will not come. The truth is they are running for their lives. They will take whatever risks necessary. Meanwhile, we, who are citizens of this most wealthy nation in the world, are going to have to deal with the consequences of our hardened hearts."

But there was little hope in sight for any compromise during what remained of the term of Congress ending Jan. 3. Some place the blame at the feet of a president bent on fulfilling a campaign promise to build a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico, a wall he said the U.S. neighbor to the south would pay for.

Garvey Manor and Our Lady of the Alleghenies

The ONLY CATHOLIC Continuing Care Community in the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese — Carmelite Sisters in Ministry



- Short Term Care for rehabilitation following a hospitalization
- Long Term Care for ongoing needs
- Special Care Dementia Units for persons with Alzheimer's or other related cognitive disorders
- Personal Care Residence- assisted daily living services
- Independent Living Apartments- community living with supportive services available

Amenities include St. Joseph's Chapel with Daily Mass and other devotional services. Pastoral Care. Café, Beauty/Barber Salon, Housekeeping, Laundry, Gift Shop. Modern, spacious, attractive, dignified campus with person-centered activities and professional care to promote an atmosphere of genuine caring, personal warmth, and wellness.

Persons of all faiths welcome.

1037 South Logan Blvd. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
814-695-5571 www.garveymanor.org



Extraordinary Relic

(Continued From Page 1.)

Photo And Text By
Tony DeGol

the Lord,” Father Reese noted.

The six-month national tour, which has already included stops in New Orleans, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C., is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

The organization was presented with the tour opportunity many months ago, and view the effort as a way of aiding in repentance, reform, and renewal of the Church.

“We now welcome as providential this opportunity to invoke the intercession of the patron saint of priests, whose holiness and integrity is a singular model for clergy,” Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight Carl Anderson commented.

“What a day of blessing that this can be for our diocese, which has been going through some tough times,” Bishop Mark said, adding that when the Saint John Vianney Relic Pilgrimage came to Ireland a couple years ago, tens of thousands of people personally experienced the event.

“We need to have a sense of hope instilled in us again – a sense of healing to begin again,” added Father Reese. “To have a reminder that sanctity is possible, and to have a pattern of how that sanctity was achieved by one soul in human history can inspire us to know that there is a chance to heal and a reason to have hope again.”

The Knights of Columbus is working with the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in preparation for the visit and will provide logistical support throughout the day. Other Catholic organizations, including the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Blue Army, Legion of Mary, Cursillo, and Perpetual Adoration Society, are also being encouraged to participate in this special day.

Bishop Mark is also encouraging Catholic schools and college campus ministry programs to come. Plans are underway to provide a brief



catechesis on the life and ministry of Saint John Vianney and to offer prayer times for such groups.

For more information about the “Heart of a Priest” tour, please visit the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown website and Facebook page.

Heart of a Priest Tour January 31

Cathedral of the Blessed
Sacrament, Altoona

Veneration of Relic:
7:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

Masses:
6:45 a.m.
8:00 a.m.
Noon

5:30 p.m. (Bishop Mark
L. Bartchak as celebrant;
priests of the diocese as
concelebrants)

Confessions:
Throughout the Day

About Saint John Vianney

Saint John Vianney, popularly known as the Curé of Ars, is revered as a model of priestly generosity, purity and prayerfulness. Born in France in 1786, he grew up in a time of open hostility to the Church in the wake of the French Revolution when the faith was attacked, churches destroyed, and the clergy martyred. Assigned to lead the parish in the small farming community of Ars, Father Vianney excelled at both prayer and work.

He was famous for hearing confessions for up to 18 hours a day as people from across Europe and beyond came to see him. His notoriety throughout the Catholic world grew even after his death in 1859 and he continues to inspire a quest for holiness by both priests and the laity. His incorrupt heart — a major relic — normally resides at the shrine named for him in Ars.

About Relics

In Catholic tradition, a relic is a physical object associated with a saint that may be offered to the faithful for veneration. Neither the relic nor the saint are to be worshipped, but are rather venerated as holy objects in recognition of the fact that God has worked through the saint. A major or first-class relic was part of the saint's body as opposed to something that the saint touched or wore. The term “incorrupt” refers to a human body that has avoided the normal process of decomposition after death. It is a sign — but not a proof — of the person's holiness, and is sometimes seen in Catholic saints and blessed.

Sponsored By K of C

The Knights of Columbus, the world's largest Catholic fraternal organization, is pleased to sponsor this major relic pilgrimage, through a generous loan from the Shrine at Ars, France. It is especially meaningful for the Knights to host the relic of the patron of parish priests, since the Order was founded in 1882 by a holy parish priest, Father Michael McGivney.

The heart relic of Saint Jean Vianney will be reverently displayed in cathedrals, churches, chapels, and seminaries throughout the United States, through early June 2019.

Since the Knights of Columbus is covering all costs of the U.S. pilgrimage, donations made by the faithful during stops of the relic pilgrimage will benefit the Shrine at Ars, France.

Prayer For Priests

We thank you, God our Father, for those who have responded to your call to priestly ministry. Accept this prayer we offer on their behalf: Fill them with the sure knowledge of your love. Open their hearts to the power and consolation of the Holy Spirit. Lead them to greater union with your Son. Increase their faith in the Sacraments they celebrate as they nourish, strengthen and heal us. Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercession of Saint Jean Vianney, grant that your priests will be inspired to strive for holiness by the power of his example. As men of prayer, may they ponder your word, follow your will and faithfully lead the flocks you have entrusted to their care. Saint Jean Vianney, obtain for the Church an abundance of vocations to the holy priesthood. Through your intercession, may many faithful men hear Christ's call, and respond with courage and generosity. Mary our Mother, guard with your maternal care these chosen ones. Intercede for our priests, so that by offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, they may be conformed more each day to the image of your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Saint Jean Vianney, patron of
priests, pray for us!*

The Church Must Recognize Its Failings, Says Pope Francis

By **Cindy Wooden**
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

-- Acknowledging the gravity of the clerical sexual abuse crisis, Pope Francis told members of the Roman Curia that the church's strength does not depend on its members' perfection, but on the willingness to recognize its failings and correct them.

"Let it be clear that before these abominations, the church will spare no effort to do all that is necessary to bring to justice whosoever has committed such crimes," the pope said December 21 during his annual pre-Christmas meeting with officials of the Curia.

And speaking directly to clerics who have abused children, Pope Francis said: "Convert and hand yourself over to human justice and prepare for divine justice."

While it is "undeniable" that in the past many allegations of abuse were not handled with the necessary "seriousness and promptness," the pope said, "that must never happen again."

"The church," he said, "will never seek to hush up or not take seriously any case."

Pope Francis' 35-minute speech to the Curia included



(CNS photo/Claudio Peri pool via Reuters)

PRE-CHRISTMAS MEETING: In this 2017 file photo, Pope Francis speaks during his annual pre-Christmas meeting with top officials of the Roman Curia and members of the College of Cardinals in Clementine Hall at the Vatican.

a review of the "joys and afflictions" of the church in the past year and a meditation on the message Christmas proclaims to the church and its members.

"Christmas gives us the certainty that God's light will continue to shine, despite our human misery," he said. "It gives us the certainty that the church will emerge from these tribulations all the more beautiful, purified and radiant."

The pope's list of "joys" in 2018 included the Synod of Bishops on young people, the ongoing reform of the Roman Curia and the many canonizations and beatifications that were celebrated; he specifically mentioned the beatification in December of 19 martyrs in Algeria, including the monks of Tibhirine.

The joys, he said, also include "the great number of faithful who each year receive baptism" or return to active church life, parents who pass on the faith to their children, young people who enter the priesthood or religious life and the "great number of consecrated men and women, bishops and priests, who daily live their calling in fidelity, silence, holiness and self-denial."

The "afflictions" of the church include the afflictions of the world, Pope Francis said, mentioning specifically growing anti-immigrant sentiment, war, religious persecution and famine.

But the bulk of his talk was devoted to the abuse crisis and the obligation to address it clearly and decisively.

Pope Francis has called the presidents of the world's bish-

ops' conferences, the heads of the Eastern Catholic churches and leaders of religious orders to a meeting at the Vatican Feb. 21-24 to discuss the scandal.

The meeting, he told the Curia officials, will reaffirm the church's "firm resolve to pursue unstintingly a path of purification" and, with the help of experts, will examine "how best to protect children, to avoid these tragedies, to bring healing and restoration to the victims, and to improve the training imparted in seminaries."

"An effort will be made to make past mistakes opportunities for eliminating this scourge, not only from the body of the church but also from that of society," he said, noting that sexual abuse is a problem not only within the church.

Many Catholics have accused the media of covering the abuse scandal in a way that gives "the false impression that this evil affects the Catholic Church alone," the pope said. But he added, "I myself would like to give heartfelt thanks to those media professionals who were honest and objective and sought to unmask these predators and to make their victims' voices heard."

"Even if it were to involve a single case of abuse -- something itself monstrous -- the church asks that people not be silent but bring it objectively to light, since the greater scandal in this matter is that of cloaking the truth," he said.

Without naming names, Pope Francis also referred in his speech to those who betray the church by hiding "behind good

intentions in order to stab their brothers and sisters in the back and to sow weeds, division and bewilderment. They always find excuses, including intellectual and spiritual excuses, to progress unperturbed on the path to perdition."

In this speech, Pope Francis said clerics sully each other's reputations "is nothing new in the church's history. St. Augustine, in speaking of the good seed and the weeds, says: 'Do you perhaps believe, brethren, that weeds cannot spring up even on the thrones of bishops? Do you perhaps think that this is found only lower down and not higher up?'"

Those entrusted with roles of leadership and responsibility in the church must be vigilant, he said.

"In effect, the strength of any institution does not depend on its being composed of men

and women who are perfect -- something impossible! -- but on its willingness to be constantly purified, on its capacity to acknowledge humbly its errors and correct them; and on its ability to get up after falling down."

Christmas, he told the officials, "gives us the certainty that the grave evils perpetrated by some will never be able to cloud all the good that the church freely accomplishes in the world."

"Christmas," he said, "gives the certainty that the true strength of the church and of our daily efforts, so often hidden, rests in the Holy Spirit, who guides and protects her in every age, turning even sins into opportunities for forgiveness, failures into opportunities for renewal, and evil into an opportunity for purification and triumph."

Bishop Says Criminal Justice System In Need Of Reform

WASHINGTON (CNS)

-- The nation's criminal justice system "is in need of reform" and the First Step Act "is a worthy 'first step' in the right direction," said Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

In a December 20 statement, he called the measure and support for it "a model of bipartisan collaboration and good policymaking."

Bishop Dewane praised the Senate for passing the bill 87-12 in a vote late Dec. 18 and urged the House "to do likewise."

"As we approach the Nativity of our Lord, we are reminded of the need to promote justice and mercy in our society," he added.

Bishop Dewane outlined some of the provisions of the First Step Act that he said would bring "much-needed reforms for the federal prison system."

Those include: sentencing reform for those incarcerated; strongly limiting the practice of shackling pregnant

women in prison; establishing a maximum geographical distance between prisoners and their families; enhancing compassionate release for terminally ill and elderly prisoners; assisting those returning to society with obtaining government identification documents; and fixing the "time credit" system, meaning credits prisoners receive for good behavior and/or time served.

The bill also reauthorizes the Second Chance Act to provide important resources for those re-entering society after their release from prison, the bishop noted.

It also does not exclude religious groups from being among the organizations that can provide recidivism-reducing programs for all federal prisoners.

The First Step Act has been criticized by its opponents for, among other things, failing to address sentencing reforms to reduce the number of people being sent to prison in the first place and only applying to the federal prison system. About 87 percent of all prisoners are held in state facilities.

ProximoTravel

Pilgrimages for Catholics and people of all faiths

Prices starting at \$2,499 ~ with
Airfare Included in this price
from anywhere
in the USA

Several trips to different
destinations: the Holy Land; Italy;
France, Portugal, & Spain; Poland;
Medjugorje, Lourdes, & Fatima;
Ireland & Scotland; England; Austria,
Germany, & Switzerland; Greece &
Turkey; Budapest; Prague; Our Lady
of Guadalupe; Colombia; Brazil;
Domestic Destinations; etc...

We also specialize in custom trips for
Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.
(Hablamos Español)

www.proximotravel.com
anthony@proximotravel.com
Call us 24/7
508-340-9370
855-842-8001

Bishops Conference Says We Are Called To Welcome Life Before and After Birth In Every Condition

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

ROME (CNS) -- Defending and protecting human life means rejecting abortion, caring for the sick, offering a decent welcome to immigrants, valuing the contributions of the elderly, encouraging families to have children and caring for the environment, the bishops of Italy said.

"We are called to welcome life before and after its birth, in every condition and circumstance in which it is weak, threatened and in need of what is essential," said the bishops' statement for their 2019 pro-life day.

The permanent council of the bishops' conference issued the statement in December in anticipation of the Day for Life, which will be marked Feb. 3.

"We are called to care for those who suffer because of illness, violence or margin-

alization with the respect that is due to every human being when he or she is fragile," the bishops said.

"One also cannot forget the risks caused by the indifference to and attacks on the integrity and health of our 'common home,' which is our planet," the bishops said. "True ecology is always holistic and protects life from its first moments."

In a country still recovering from the economic crisis, where the birthrate has plummeted, where the population is aging and where young adults struggle to find work, the bishops said the wisdom of the elderly and their experience in dealing with "earthquakes, both geological and of the soul," can help the country recover if there is "a solid alliance between generations, as Pope Francis reminds us with insistence."

"The lack of stable and dignified work extinguishes

the young's enthusiasm for the future and aggravates the demographic decline," which also is due to a widespread assumption that life is better with fewer or no children, the bishops said.

"Cultural and political forces" need to join together and institute programs to encourage Italians to have children and to "recognize the family as the generative womb of our country," the bishops said.

Of course, "the defense of the innocent who is not yet born must be clear, firm and passionate," the bishops said. While abortion has been legal in Italy since 1978, the bishops said that it "is not a lesser evil, but a crime."

And being truly committed to life, they said, Catholics must act to alleviate "the suffering of women, men and children whose lives depend on finding refuge in a safe land," but encounter increasingly stringent immigration and asylum policies.



(CNS photo/Attila Balazs, EPA)

PREMATURE: A premature baby in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary, is seen November 13 at Josa Andras Teaching Hospital.

Portland Catholic Vietnamese Carry On Despite Attack

PORTLAND, Ore. (CNS) -- Members of Our Lady of Lavang Parish in Portland did not let an attack stall their Christmas observances.

Volunteers at the Vietnamese Catholic community gathered Christmas Eve, tools in hand, to repair their church, which had been seriously damaged when a man intentionally drove his SUV into the worship space and repeatedly crashed through the pews. In addition to the pews, walls and doors were heavily damaged.

By late afternoon, neat walls of plywood covered most of the damage and replaced one set of doors, folding chairs had replaced the pews, and children and teens were rehearsing for their parts in the Christmas Eve Masses, reported the Catholic Sentinel, archdiocesan newspaper.

A crew of 100 parishioners responded to the call for help from Father Ansgar Pham, pastor.

Parishioners young and old expressed surprise at what happened but held no ill will toward the person responsible. Young people suggested that the man had been angry. One woman said he must have been hurting.

The Oregonian newspaper reported that Hieu John Phung, 35, drove into the church just after midnight Christmas Eve and then phoned 911 to admit to the deed.

Police said they were un-

sure of a motive, but charged Phung with criminal mischief. He was released to await court proceedings as police continued to investigate the incident.

Father Pham told KOIN-TV the driver drove into the church in at least two separate spots, shattering walls, windows and knocking down doors.

Christmas Masses took place as planned, with joyful singing and dance.

"Please pray for us during this difficult time," Father Pham told the television station.

"In about three hours a miracle of transformation happened," Portland Auxiliary Bishop Peter L. Smith said in a Facebook post.

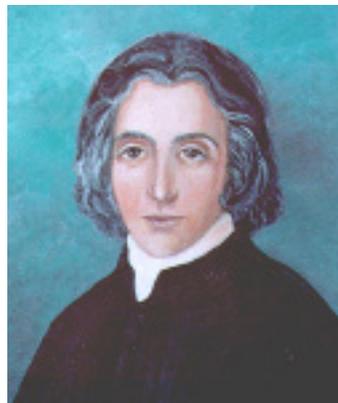
"Destroyed pews were removed, broken glass and destroyed entrances were cleaned up and temporary doors were installed to keep the cold out," he wrote.

Parishioners neatly lined up more than 1,000 folding chairs. Members of neighboring St. Rose of Lima Church, including Father Matt Libra, pastor, came to help.

One parishioner was heard saying, "My faith is stronger because of this."

"Christmas comes whether someone tries to deny us our joy," said a Facebook post from the Archdiocese of Portland. "Our Lord reigns!"

A Prince In The Service Of The Great King



Prayer For Father Gallitzin's Intercession

O God, light of the faithful and shepherd of souls, who sent Servant of God Demetrius Gallitzin to serve God's people in the Allegheny Mountains, feeding your sheep by his words and forming them by his example, pour out your Spirit to sow seeds of truth in people's hearts and to awaken in them obedience to the faith.

May the Gospel continue to be preached and the Sacraments bring power and grace to the faithful. By the example of this man of faith, Demetrius Gallitzin, may your people advance in the path of salvation and love.

Confident of your faithfulness to us, we humbly ask you, our God, to grant us the favor of (name your intention).

May Christ's saving work continue to the end of the ages, and may we feel a more urgent call to work for the salvation of every creature. We pray this, as did your priest Demetrius Gallitzin, through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

+ + +

Kindly send information about favors granted to:

**The Cause for the Servant of God
Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin
Diocese Of Altoona - Johnstown
927 South Logan Boulevard
Hollidaysburg PA 16648**

Saint Michael School Fosters Faith, Family And Future

“A Hidden Treasure Among the Alleghenies” exemplifies the long standing mission of Saint Michael School in Loretto a tradition in Catholic education since 1890. Generations of families have chosen to have their children educated in an environment that provides a solid education built upon a faith-based foundation.

Faith and family go hand in hand at Saint Michael School. We attend Mass weekly as a school family, inviting and encouraging our students’ families and community members to celebrate our gift of faith. Each week, students in third through eighth grade rotate participation in the Mass ministries serving as readers, altar servers, cantors, and gift bearers.

Students are active participants in the Living Rosary, attend Advent and Lenten Penance Services, participate in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, pray the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and participate in special liturgies to open the new school year, to honor our patron, Saint Michael the Archangel, and to kick off our Catholic Schools Week Celebration. Our kindergarten students are paired with eighth grade students, who serve as their mentors, at the beginning of the school year. These “Prayer Buddies” attend Mass and participate in special projects together throughout the school year.

This partnership withstands the test of time as recalled by Pastor Father John Byrnes. “These relationships really do endure and build up the Church. A former Saint Michael School Alumnus invited her prayer buddy, a recent graduate of Ebensburg Bishop Carroll Catholic High School, to serve at her wedding this past summer. This faith friendship that began 12 years ago.”

This year, as a diocesan initiative in our Catholic elementary schools to build a greater sense of family among our students and to nurture their faith, the Christ Is R.I.C.H. In Me program has been launched

and implemented. The students look forward to spending time with their “Faith Families,” participating in the monthly prayer services, special projects, lessons about featured saints, and activities. This program has proven to have such a positive impact on our students, faculty, and staff.

Along with tradition, Saint Michael School strives to be academically competitive by participating in outreach programs sponsored by community partners, in particular with Saint Francis University, to give our students opportunities to extend and enhance their learning while providing Saint Francis students’ first-hand experiences that they would not ordinarily obtain in the classroom.

Our students participate in STEM activities, presentations, and interactive lessons provided by the education, nursing, exercise physiology, and occupational therapy departments on a regular basis throughout the school year. This past semester, our third and fourth grade students travelled to the Curriculum Materials Center, located in the Saint Francis Library to participate in STEM-related activities conducted by the Saint Francis University Early Childhood pre-service teachers.

A new learning venture for our seventh and eighth grade students this fall was the creation of our very own “Escape

Room.” Our students engineered this innovative, modern form of entertainment as a fundraising project to benefit our eighth grade class and our future STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art and Math) Curriculum Endowment. Because of such a great response we are planning a new escape room venture in the spring of 2019!

Service learning is an important component of Catholic education as we teach our students to put the Corporal Works of Mercy into practice. As a school family, we conduct four food drives annually to benefit the Dorothy Day Outreach Center, make cards for Veterans and our active military, and assemble fruit baskets during Advent to be delivered by our eighth-grade students to the sick, needy, and homebound from our parish and surrounding communities.

Beginning in Advent and continuing through Catholic Schools Week, we have implemented an outreach program for our service men and women, entitled “Treats For Troops.” During the Advent and Christmas seasons, students are encouraged to make contributions to our “Love Tree.” With each monetary donation, students place their name on a special heart-shaped ornament and place it on the “Love Tree” demonstrating their support of our military personnel. All dona-



GIFTS: Father John Byrnes, rector of The Basilica of Saint Michael the Archangel, accepts gifts during the offertory. During a pre-Thanksgiving celebration, kindergarten Pilgrims and Native Americans presented the gifts.

tions are used to purchase treats and amenities that are packaged during Catholic Schools Week and shipped to our troops in time for Valentine’s Day.

Saint Michael School offers a wealth of academic and sport-related extra-curricular activities, something sure to appeal to all our students. Both our elementary

and junior high reading competition teams placed second in this year’s fall contest. Our Art program develops and nurtures the artistic talents of our students. Each spring selected pieces are displayed at The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art for their “Artists of the 21st Century” exhibit.



HELP HOMEBOUND: Eighth grade students assembled over 100 baskets for delivery to local homebound community members as part of their Advent Service project. Pictured left to right: Haley Gray, Michael Poorman, Jude Koehle, Nick Clark, Maya Baker and JoAnna Hoover.

Mission Statement

From 1890 to the present, the mission of Saint Michael’s School is to foster and maintain the fourfold purpose of Christian education: message, community, service, and worship.

We, as Catholic educators, accept the responsibility to effectively fulfill these goals through which each child’s personality and talents are nurtured while living out God’s kingdom and message.

Saint Michael School is an integral part of a Catholic, Christian community that was instituted to promote and nurture the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social development of each of its students. Attesting to the fundamental

belief that each student, although unique, is created in the image and likeness of God, we accept the challenge to proclaim the Good News, exemplifying the teachings of Jesus Christ while providing an educational environment that meets the demands of society today.

Current Enrollment: 102 Students in grades kindergarten through Grade 8

Leadership: Very Reverend John D. Byrnes, JCL, JV

Principal: Renee Phister

301 Saint Elizabeth Street
PO Box 67
Loretto, PA 15940

(814) 472-9117
www.st-michael-school.org

(Additional Photos On Page 15.)

Question Corner

By Father Kenneth Doyle

Become Catholic To Marry?



Q. I was browsing the internet today, ran across your column and have a question. I am in a long-term relationship with my partner, and we are planning on getting married next year. But we are having some conflict as to where (i.e., in what church) we are going to celebrate our wedding.

My family are all born-again Christians and actively participate in many church activities and ministries. My partner, though, is a devout Roman Catholic and wants me to become a Catholic. I am having a hard time deciding and it is causing communications problems in our relationship.

(My parents would never accept the fact that I could change my religion.) Please help me because I am confused. (City of origin withheld)

A. Your question presents several distinct issues, so I'll take them one by one. On the location of the wedding ceremony, that's the easy part. You can have the ceremony either in your own family's church or in the groom's Catholic parish.

More often, marriages are celebrated in the church of the bride; if you decide on that option (the born-again Christian setting), you and your partner would simply have to meet with a priest prior to the wedding and fill out some short paperwork to have the marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.

The issue of joining the Catholic Church is more difficult. You should not become Catholic just because your spouse-to-be wants you to -- or simply to "make things nice" for the wedding. You should only become a Catholic if you believe in the fundamental truths taught by the Catholic Church.

I choose to be a Catholic because I feel that the Catholic Church has a continuous and unbroken relationship

with the faith community that Jesus established, I see the logic of a central authority on doctrinal matters and I prefer to be strengthened by the frequent celebration of the Eucharist and the availability of the sacrament of confession.

I have sometimes counseled couples to separate the decision to marry from a decision to change denominations or religions -- to make sure that these are independent choices.

Finally, though, your question makes me a little bit nervous. I don't like that your husband-to-be seems to be pressuring you to become Catholic. I would recommend that, prior to any wedding, you should sort out the "communications problems" with a marriage counselor -- preferably one who can appreciate the importance of religious values.

Q. I love meditating on the luminous mysteries when I pray the rosary, and I am thankful that Pope John Paul II established them. The joyful mysteries highlight Jesus' early life, while the sorrowful mysteries focus on his suffering and death. The luminous mysteries highlight the "in-between time" -- Christ's public ministry as an adult -- which I have always felt was missing in the rosary.

My question is this: Would it not be more logical to pray the luminous mysteries on Tuesdays (in between the joyful and the sorrowful) instead of pushing them to Thursdays after the glorious mysteries? (Indiana)

A. The mysteries of light -- or the "luminous mysteries" -- were proposed by Pope John Paul II in 2002 in his apostolic letter "Rosarium Virginis Mariae." The reason these mysteries were added was exactly as you indicate: The rosary as it traditionally evolved -- with the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries -- was silent about the public ministry of Jesus.

The luminous mysteries are enumerated as follows: Christ's baptism in the Jordan, the mira-



By Effie Caldarola

For The Journey

Compost, Compost, Compost

At a recent volleyball game at Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart in Omaha, Nebraska, a spontaneous chant erupted: "Compost! Compost!"

Really? A bunch of high school girls cheering with gusto about garbage being coaxed into usable soil?

That's what a good educational background about Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," can engender in a receptive student body.

This all-girl school became the first school in the city -- public or private -- to launch a composting program as part of a large-scale sustainability effort. Duchesne's achievement is something we should all cheer about.

The enthusiasm it has gen-

erated among students, staff and parents has been "inspiring," said my friend, assistant principal Eric Krakowski, who spearheaded the program. It has proven so successful that parents are telling Krakowski they've begun composting at home, and students have eagerly volunteered to increase composting collection sites throughout campus.

How does this environmental commitment translate in practical terms? During one week in September, Duchesne collected 621 pounds of food waste and soiled paper products picked up by a composting company. They recycled 124 pounds of cardboard, 88 pounds of glass, 139 pounds of mixed recyclables, and sent 13 pounds of plastic bags and other plastics to Trex, which makes composite decking material.

Score: Landfill, 275 pounds. Diverted from the landfill, 985 pounds of waste. And that's just one week's effort.

Before the project was launched, a survey indicated 94 percent of students and staff felt sustainability was important to Duchesne -- clearly "a mandate," said Krakowski. In 2016, anonymous donors, also inspired by Pope Francis' landmark social teaching, paid for the Omaha sustainability firm the Verdis Group to assess goals for Duchesne.

One long-term goal is that by 2030, 100 percent of school waste can be diverted away from the landfill. The figures above show that Duchesne is already diverting over 70 percent.

The lunch program was an obvious target. Out went plastic cutlery and Styrofoam. Plates and utensils are now washed, and anything disposable should also be compostable. Locally sourced food became a priority.

Crakowski said another

ready achieved an Energy Star rating, hopes to launch a solar energy project this fall.

"This is probably the most fun I'm having in my job," said Krakowski, who said environmental issues are "a passion for me."

Duchesne's success raises the question: When will more Catholic institutions step up?

"Personally, I've been very disappointed that I don't hear 'Laudato Si'" talked about in our parishes and in homilies," Krakowski said. "We're not challenged to consume less as part of the Gospel message."

Duchesne Academy has a long, prestigious history in this Missouri River town. Founded in 1881 by Religious of the Sacred Heart, the stately old brick campus once housed a college, which closed in 1968.

Today, the school is part of a network of 24 Sacred Heart schools in the U.S. and Canada, which together espouse a goal of teaching "a social awareness which impels to action," which endeavors to teach "respect for creation and prepare students to be stewards of the earth's resources."

Clearly, these young women are embracing practices and attitudes toward consumption and respect for our earth that they'll carry through their lives.

How about us? I'm not the only person in my crowd who now carries her own fork to events where I fear plastic will be the only choice.

Can we encourage bigger changes at parish events and schools? Recycle, reuse, reduce. Inspired by "Laudato Si'," Catholic institutions can lead the way.

Crakowski said another

ready achieved an Energy Star rating, hopes to launch a solar energy project this fall.

"This is probably the most fun I'm having in my job," said Krakowski, who said environmental issues are "a passion for me."

Duchesne's success raises the question: When will more Catholic institutions step up?

"Personally, I've been very disappointed that I don't hear 'Laudato Si'" talked about in our parishes and in homilies," Krakowski said. "We're not challenged to consume less as part of the Gospel message."

Now Showing

'The Mule' Warner Bros.



(CNS photo/Warner Bros.)

This ambling, fact-based story of an octogenarian drug runner who becomes a success at it because no one, evidently, believes he's capable of such a dangerous task is more than a little morally tone deaf. Clint Eastwood, who directed from a script by Nick Schenk, plays an easygoing Illinois horticulturist who has neglected his estranged family for years while puttering around the country hawking prize-winning daylilies. He gets a second chance at life and sudden wealth when a young Latino man makes him an offer to be a drug mule, hauling cocaine from El Paso, Texas, back to the Midwest for astonishing and ever larger amounts of cash. The film doesn't address the question of doing an immoral job to achieve positive ends (the protagonist shows largesse toward his relatives and his local Veterans of Foreign Wars hall) and its willful ignorance of the downside of the narcotics trade makes it wholly unsuitable for young people. An implied nonmarital sexual encounter, fleeting upper female nudity, some gore-free gunplay, frequent rough language. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R -- restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

Sunday Mass

Broadcast Live From
The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Altoona

10:00 a.m. WFBG radio, 1290 AM

Sunday Mass

Broadcast Live From
The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Altoona

10:00 a.m. WFBG radio, 1290 AM

Election Day Mistake Leads To Some Real Evangelization In Baton Rouge

By Richard Meek
Catholic News Service

BATON ROUGE, La. (CNS) -- An Election Day mistake opened the door wide for some real evangelization.

It began as some voting locations November 6 ran out of "I Voted" stickers, which are traditionally provided by the Louisiana Secretary of State's office to people at the polls. The governmental faux pas created a deluge of complaints on social media, with voters asking why they were unable to get a sticker.

At one point, Father Michael Alello, pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, posted on his social media account, "Don't worry, you will get an 'I Prayed Today' sticker today when you come to Mass."

Even the personable Father Alello, who admitted his post was a "sarcastic joke," could not predict the impact his invitation would have not only in the Baton Rouge but also across the country. Soon after reading the post Todd Husers, who first met Father Alello when the young priest was serving as parochial vicar at St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville, Louisiana, called his friend and asked, "How many stickers do you want?"

"He told me I was crazy, which I probably am," Husers, who remains a St. John parishioner, told the Catholic Commentator, newspaper of the Baton Rouge Diocese.

"I had no intention of making stickers," said Father Alello, who maintains an active social media presence and utilizes the medium in his ministries. "It was simply a sarcastic joke to play on what was going on in the community at the time."

A week later St. Thomas More ministers were distributing 2,500 stickers at weekend Masses. They were joined by ministers at St. John. Additionally, Father Josh Johnson ordered stickers to be distributed at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, Louisiana.

"For me the church has to be present in the world," Father Alello said. "We encourage people to vote; we encourage them



(CNS photo/Richard Meek, The Catholic Commentator)

STICKER SHOCK: "I Prayed" stickers are seen November 6 in Baton Rouge, La.

"Don't worry, you will get an 'I Prayed Today' sticker today when you come to Mass."

--Father Alello

to participate in the life of the community. This was just a fun way to remind people our commitment is not just to the church on the weekends, but our commitment is to our faith and to our community."

Father Alello said stickers were a fun, quirky way to carry out the church's mission of the new evangelization. He told his parishioners to wear their stickers with pride, and "when you are asked where you got your sticker from, you can tell them your crazy pastor handed them out since you didn't get one for voting."

Husers said he and a friend designed the stickers, which are similar to the "I Voted" stickers but crosses replace the stars and includes the words "I Prayed Today."

"It was a fun project; our faith should be awesome and fun," Husers said. "I think we should have fun with our faith and be proud of it. Sometimes the misconception is we are just solemn and not having a lot of fun. But we do have fun."

Even weeks after the stickers were distributed, Father

Alello remains amazed at the project's popularity. He has heard from churches in Texas and Michigan asking how they can have similar stickers produced.

He recalled hearing about a lady at a nearby outlet mall who saw another lady wearing the sticker. When approached, the lady wearing the sticker, who was from Lake Charles, said she had attended Mass at St. Thomas More earlier that day, received the sticker and was proud to be wearing it in public.

"It's been fun, a fun way to engage the community, a fun way to be a proud Catholic in our community," Father Alello said. "The people loved it and thought it was a great idea. It's another way for the church to be present today."

"I think sometimes we take ourselves way too seriously," he added. "I think it was a great opportunity for us to be church and community together, just to laugh about something that happened in our community and also have an opportunity to be truly proud of who we are."

School Spotlight

(Continued From Page 12.)



R.I.C.H. PROGRAM: Saint Michael Elementary School in Loretto is part of a diocesan-wide initiative in our Catholic elementary schools to build a greater sense of family among our students, and to nurture their faith. (Pictured above and below) the students staged a rally to kick-off the program. The Christ Is In Me (Respect, Integrity, Courage, and Humility (R.I.C.H.) program provides a faith-filled learning atmosphere in the school.



R.I.C.H. KICKOFF: Community clergy members gather to share the message of the “Christ Is R.I.C.H In Me” diocesan initiative. Pictured left to right: Brother Rufino Corona, TOR, Brother Stephen Warszewski, TOR, Father John Byrnes, rector of the Basilica of Saint Michael, and Father Malachi Van Tassell, TOR, President of Saint Francis University.



HELP HOMEBOUND: Nick Clark of Saint Michael School in Loretto delivers a fruit basket to Dorothy Itle during the Christmas season. Eighth grade students assembled over 100 baskets for delivery to local homebound community members as part of their Advent Service project.

Keep the Faith Alive

Support our Future Priests with a Gift to the Knights of Columbus Seminary Endowment

Your tax-deductible contribution to this permanent endowment is restricted for the benefit of seminarians of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

Please make checks payable to:

Independent Catholic Foundation
3618 Fifth Avenue, Suite I
Altoona, PA 16602

(814) 201-2080 WWW.ICFDAJ.ORG
Helping create Catholic legacies since 1990

Weekly Liturgy Unifies Students At Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy

Photos And Text By
Tony DeGol

For Anna Aiello, it was just the spark she needed to be on fire with her Catholic faith.

The senior at Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy in Boalsburg is now more spiritually engaged since the SJCA student body gathers every Thursday for all-school Liturgies.

"What I like about coming together every week is that we now get to join together as a whole community and be in the Lord's presence," Aiello said. "It reminds us that we need to center ourselves and stay together as one body. I enjoy that."

Beyond the consistency of weekly Mass, another motivating factor for Aiello is the celebrant of those Liturgies.

Father Jonathan Dickson, parochial vicar at Our Lady of Victory Parish in State College, is also the SJCA chaplain.

He and Head of School Jennifer Mallett made it a priority to offer weekly Masses this academic year.

For Father Dickson, being present to students is critical.

"My role is spiritual more than anything – to hopefully inspire the kids that a life and relationship with Jesus Christ is absolutely worth it," he stated. "It's a life of excitement and a life that's full of meaning."

Years ago, priests and religious were fixtures in Catholic schools. Today, because of dwindling numbers, their daily



GOT JESUS?: Sporting a sweatshirt with the phrase "got Jesus?," Father Jonathan Dickson, chaplain at Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy in Boalsburg, spreads the message of Jesus through the celebration of weekly Mass at the school and being present to students.

presence is less visible.

Father Dickson hopes his role at SJCA sends a clear message to the teens.

"I think somehow the priest is still symbolic of Catholicism, and hopefully we're a symbol of a life dedicated to God," he

observed. "I've taken these vows to live a life dedicated to Christ and dedicated to the Church, and hopefully it's a symbol that a life lived for and in relationship with Jesus Christ is not a life wasted, it's a life worth living."

If reaction from students is

any indication, Father Dickson is having an impact.

"I really like Father Jonathan's homilies every week," mentioned 10th grader Nathan Cross. "He always has a great message for us, and he always tries to tie it in with something that's going on in our lives."

Piper Weldon agreed.

"A lot of his messages really connect with me," the 11th grader added. "I think they're very powerful, and every week all of my friends and I, whenever we get out of Mass, we talk about them at lunch – what do we take away from this? How can we improve our lives?"

Mitchell Ellero, a senior, likes the community weekly Mass offers.

"It brings us all together," he commented. "It shows we're all bounded together trying to enrich our faith."

Following Mass each Thursday, Father Dickson stays on campus for a while in case students want to talk with him. He also enjoys lunch with them, and tries to attend sporting events when his schedule permits.

Prayer and openness will help teens as they face struggles in their faith, he maintained, citing his first-hand experience.

"When I was in high school, my faith wasn't the greatest, but I wasn't open to it, so just be open to who Jesus Christ is and as long as you're open, He'll come in subtle ways and surprise you," he said.

That is a message with which Aiello cannot disagree.

"I have grown in my faith so much from coming here," she admitted.



HANDSHAKE: Father Jonathan Dickson greets Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy senior Mitchell Ellero after one of the weekly Liturgies at the school.

PERIODICAL RATE MAIL

The Catholic Register

ARISE
together in Christ

Official Publication of the
Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown