

The Catholic Register



Diocese Of Altoona-Johnstown

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An Easter Message From Bishop Mark

As Catholics we often assess the impact of the season of Lent by the level of success we had in giving up something during those 40 days. I heard about a young person who intended to give up social media, but that lasted less than a couple of days when she heard about “must know” info being shared by friends. This year, I had three experiences that made all the difference for me during Lent and my appreciation for Easter. They are concrete examples of what Pope Francis has in mind in the following:

“Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated the world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent evil, indifference, and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads...and human persons have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed.” (Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, n. 276).



One of my recent encounters was with someone who is a survivor of sexual abuse. There is much darkness in that person’s story, but there is a powerful sign of the resurrection when that person expressed how new life breaks through by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Another Lenten experience was an encounter with a young man in prison who told me how much he wants to be baptized; to receive the risen Lord Jesus into his heart. The third was an encounter with 50 teenagers for a holy hour which included Eucharistic adora-

tion, sacramental confession and prayer. When was the last time you were with 50 teens who literally surrounded the altar on their knees before the Blessed Sacrament and prayed silently with and for each other? All of these encounters are amazing signs of the power of the resurrection.

Pope Francis tells us, “Faith means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by his power and infinite creativity” (The Joy of the Gospel n. 278). God our Father brought his Son Jesus out of the tomb to show us that he truly loves us; that he is alive; that he can and will intervene in the best and the worst situations of our lives. I learned that in the most real and personal way from the three encounters. Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past. It is the most vital power that we celebrate especially at Easter. Share it with others!

With prayerful best wishes for a blessed Easter!

+Mark J. Bartelash

Bishop +Mark

BCCHS Students Are Pumped About Weight Room Transformation



READY FOR A FACELIFT: The current weight room at Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg is undergoing a major enhancement thanks to students wanting to give back to their alma mater.

By Tony DeGol

Oprah Winfrey once said, "To move forward, you have to give back."

As the clock ticks toward graduation, seniors at Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg are pumped about

providing future students the opportunity for better health and fitness.

Every year, students from the AP U.S. Government and Politics class launch a project to improve the quality of their school or community.

This year, the seniors are breaking a sweat by transforming

the BCCHS weight room into a more complete wellness center.

"Our class has been very active in sports, clubs, activities, and personal health," explained student Jarrett Grove.

"We want to pass on that legacy to the younger students and inspire them to get involved in their school and take a healthy approach to life."

Phase one of the project includes cleaning, painting, and reorganizing the facility, which should be finished by the end of the school year.

The TLC is long overdue since the space has not seen significant enhancements in more than two decades.

With assistance from physical education teachers and coach-

es, the next phase will involve adding new equipment and developing healthy workout and nutrition plans.

Local gym operators and nutrition experts are getting the students shaped up with advice, and the kids are hoping others will also spot them.

"Health is a community effort," reminded student Emily Cunningham. "For the success of this project, we rely on the support of many, including those who can donate towards the cause, specifically alumni and local businesses."

To help raise money for the project, students recently sold T-shirts featuring a Huskies Athletics logo.

"This is going to leave an impact on so many people," Cunningham added. "Every student who comes to Bishop Carroll in the future is going to use this weight room for every sports program, and even if you're not in a sport, it's important to stay fit and healthy."

Sports training and personal workouts begin in the weight room, explained senior Trevor Hogue.

"Providing our students with

a good facility and a good place for them to go and really work hard, it's definitely going to leave a mark on future seasons and sports at BC," he said.

Student Victoria Wirfel is getting in step with the project because she believes a healthy lifestyle leads to a better overall mindset.

"If you feel good, you will show that in your actions with your success in school and at work," she stated. "I think that's the ultimate package."

At a school that celebrates the motto "Spirit, Heart, Mind, and Body," this student-led effort is especially gratifying for the educators who helped shape these forward-thinking teens.

"I'm just so proud of this class," remarked Jonathan Nagy, BCCHS teacher and project moderator. "They have extreme dedication to this school. In the four years that they've been here, they love this school, and to see them as future graduates and alums who have the dedication to leave it in a better place than they found it, it's truly inspiring. I wish all students everywhere could learn a lesson from these children."

Saint Peter's 2nd Annual Golf Outing

May 5 At Somerset Country Club



Registration Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Shotgun Start at 1:00 p.m.

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Please contact Stacey Renna at (814) 242-1328 or mail information to Saint Peter's PTA, Attn.: GOLF, 433 W. Church Street., Somerset, PA 15501

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88 Students Compete In Diocesan Forensics Meet

Around The Diocese

Catholic Charities Uncorks Second Wine Sampling

On the heels of a wildly successful inaugural wine sampling, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown is raising a glass to another one.

The agency is hosting a second wine sampling on [Thursday, April 25](#) at 5:30 p.m. at the Ramada Inn in State College.

Wines of the Pacific Northwest will be featured. Delicious food pairings will accompany each wine.

The first sampling, featuring Italian wines, was held in early February and sold out.

Tickets for the State College event are \$50 per person. Contact the Altoona office of Catholic Charities at (814) 944-9388 for reservations.

All proceeds will once again benefit Catholic Charities' Emergency Financial Assistance program, which supports individuals and families struggling to meet basic expenses such as heating and utilities.

Discalced Carmelite Nuns to Offer Fourth Novena of 2019

The fourth Novena of 2019 to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Therese (the Little Flower) offered by the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Loretto will open on Monday, April 22 and end on Tuesday, April 30.

All intentions submitted to the nuns will be remembered with the special Novena prayers following the daily Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the nuns' beautiful chapel.

Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament is held every Sunday at 4:00 p.m. and every First Friday of the month. Everyone is welcome to attend the Benediction followed by the veneration of the relic of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face.

Those who desire to share in the graces and blessings of these nine days of prayer, and in the private prayers of the Carmelite nuns during the Novena, are requested to send their petitions to Mother Prioress, Discalced Carmelite Monastery, P.O. Box 57, Loretto, PA 15940.

CCW Annual Hands & Hearts Haiti Fet

The Carmelite Community of the Word will host its Annual Hands & Hearts Haiti Fèt (Paschal Festival) on May 5 at Our Lady of Loretto Hall, 279 St. Elizabeth Street, Loretto.

The afternoon will feature good food and enriching entertainment through Haiti stories and information on the CCW Hands & Hearts Ministry efforts. There will also be a silent auction and the opportunity to purchase Haitian Art and Craft items.

Doors open at 1:15 p.m.; Dinner and Program at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children under 13. In addition, each participant is asked to contribute an item of children's or teens new underwear or socks.

Contact the CCW Incarnation Center at (814) 886-4098 for tickets or for more information. Ticket deadline is April 29. All proceeds will benefit the CCW Hands & Hearts Haiti Ministry.

Young Adult Group Continues To Meet

The newly formed Saint John the Beloved Young Adult Group (ages 20 - 40) continues to meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month for Adoration, reflection, and friendship. Adoration will start at 7:00 p.m. with Benediction at 7:45pm. Pizza, fellowship, and faith formation will follow at 8:00 p.m. in the Saint John Paul II Center on the Saint Benedict Parish Campus. Additional members are invited to join at any time! For more information, please reach out to Father Peter Crowe (Phone: 814-266-9718 Ext. 507, Email: pcrowe@dioceseaj.org) or Patrick Roy (Phone: 814-270-4191, Email: proyjmj@gmail.com). Saint Benedict Parish is located on 2310 Bedford Street, Johnstown.



FABULOUS AT FORENSICS: Among the schools represented at the diocesan Junior High Forensics Tournament was Saint Michael in Loretto. Pictured (first row, left to right) are: Briette Hite, Brenna Phister, JoAnna Hoover, Haley Gray, and Alaina Toth. (Second row): Maya Baker, Colleen Barnett, and Gage Spielvogel.

Photo And Text By
Tony DeGol

If you give people the option of root canal or public speaking, most would probably go with root canal.

Be honest – which would you choose?

For Aidan Gittings, speaking or performing in front of a crowd is no sweat.

When he was in sixth grade, his father encouraged him to engage in public speaking to sharpen his skills for the future. Now in eighth grade at Holy Name School in Ebensburg, he is glad he followed his dad's advice.

Gittings was among dozens of students who competed in the recent diocesan Junior High Forensics Tournament on March 29 at Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg.

Gittings participated in the Persuasive category, presenting a speech against the death penalty.

"There's too much wrongful prosecution," he maintained. "It's unlawful. It's against the Constitution – no cruel and unusual punishment."

Other categories included

Impromptu, Informative, Prose, Poetry, Drama, and Duo.

Eighty-eight students from ten schools competed in the diocesan meet.

Eden Rapp, a seventh grade student at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy in Johnstown, presented a piece in the Drama category about a teacher who has a frustrating class.

"I like the competition, and I like being in front of an audience," Rapp stated. "I like being judged on what I can do and what I can do better."

The journey to the diocesan tournament began earlier in the academic year when students started choosing categories and preparing topics, according to Sue Nicoloff who steers the competition for the diocese. The youngsters competed in two regional meets and placed in the top four.

"They just benefit so much from this – being able to speak and present themselves," stressed Nicoloff, a former forensics coach. "I can't tell you how important I think it is."

Josh Hershbine competed in forensics in the past. It is fun and strengthens one's public speaking skills, he said, but there are other

key advantages.

"Some of the things you learn from other kids can be applied to your school work," he added. "I can't describe the amount of impact it can have doing it for three years and being able to apply it outside in your life."

Now a student at Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy in Boalsburg, Hershbine served as a judge this year.

"I feel like I can indirectly coach them through my judging comments, and that's a really good feeling to me," he noted.

All students have to communicate in life, reminded Andrea Brandimarte, a teacher and forensics coach at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in State College. She sees how forensics participants blossom.

"Whether they get a ribbon or not, they all just grow tremendously, and I do see it carry over to the classroom," Brandimarte continued. "It really means a lot for me to do this because of the growth, the excitement, and really the confidence it builds."

For a list of winners, please visit the *Proclaim!* e-news site at proclaim.dioceseaj.org.

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Bishop Mark Reminds Students To Keep Hearts Open To God

Photo And Text By
Tony DeGol

On the Second Sunday of Lent, the story of the Transfiguration – with Jesus, Peter, James, and John on the holy mountain – reminded us that the Lord’s suffering and death will end in glory.

Youth from throughout the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown were on their own physical and spiritual mountain of sorts that day.

“This has been a great day, but don’t let it stop here,” Bishop Mark L. Bartchak urged the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. “When you’re coming down off the mountain after we finish celebrating this Eucharist, take Jesus with you. He wants to be with you every day of your life.”

The students were gathered for the annual Junior High Youth Day on March 17. Sponsored by the diocesan Office of Youth Ministry and held at Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg, the theme was *Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God*.

“Just open your heart to him and say ‘Lord you helped me to create a clean heart, be with me always, and I’ll trust you with everything else,’” Bishop Mark suggested.

We are asking God to fill our heart and make it clean, reminded the keynote presenter Chris Rogers, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

“And then understanding

that the heart is what brings life to everything in our body,” he said. “The spiritual heart also brings life into everything we do. It feeds everything, so we want to make the connection that a clean heart not only affects us but all of our relationships and everything we do.”

One of many points Rogers stressed was the importance of separating one’s self from individuals who are negative influences.

That message was not lost on students such as Thomas Urbain.

“Sometimes you realize that people around you are doing things that they shouldn’t be doing, and if they’re trying to pressure you to do those things as well, they’re not your friends,” the eighth grader at All Saints Catholic School in Cresson stated. “You need to surround yourself with people who want the best for you and want you to succeed.”

Urbain said he was eager to share the message of the day with family and friends.

“Jesus wants the best for us, he wants our hearts to be clean, our minds to be clean,” he added.

Hailey Dzurko, a 7th grade student and member of Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in Windber, also came away with a powerful message.

“I think that it’s all about teaching us to go to Confession and confess our sins to God and start fresh every once in a while,” she noted. “I’m definitely going to take all of (Rogers’) words into consideration as I live my daily life.”

Sheila McAlkich said the



FUN AND GAMES: All Saints Catholic School, Cresson, students (left to right) Thomas Urbain, Abby Gottshall, and Richard Scholzen enjoy the games portion of Junior High Youth Day. The event also included keynote presentations from Chris Rogers of the Diocese of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and Mass with Bishop Mark L. Bartchak.

day inspired her to move beyond the past and focus on the present. She also loved coming together with other young people from around the diocese.

“It’s about meeting new friends and then coming together and communicating with them and trying to share that faith with them in the future,” observed the eighth grader and member of Saint Mark Parish in Altoona.

Junior High Youth Day is just one of many events throughout the year offered by the Office of Youth Ministry. Francine Swope coordinates all activities with assistance from planning teams.

A Senior High Youth Conference (SHYCON) happens in the fall. There are also summer camp opportunities and the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis.

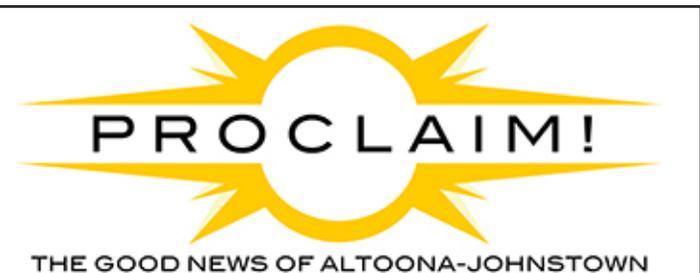
The key to all great youth

events is inspiring young people to take what they have experienced, apply it to their daily lives, and share it with others, as Bishop Mark encouraged in his homily.

By the end of Junior High Youth Day, Richard Scholzen, a seventh grader at All Saints Catholic School, seemed poised

to do just that.

“As soon as I leave I’m going to share the message with my little sister, so she can share it with her friends, so they can share it with their friends then everyone will get the message, not just us,” he said. “It’s everyone’s message to have.”



The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown’s new e-news site, *Proclaim! The Good News of Altoona-Johnstown* is up and running. Visit the site regularly for local news and commentary, as well as the latest from the Vatican and other Church headlines from around the world. Access the site at proclaim.dioceseaj.org and sign up for regular e-mail updates of diocesan news and information.

Around The Diocese

McCort to Sponsor 25/25/25 Scholarship Funding Day

On April 25, Bishop McCort Catholic High School will be challenging its alumni and friends for the fifth time to support a 24-hour Scholarship Funding Day event on April 25 by giving \$25 (or more) to raise money for financial aid for students at 25 Osborne Street. By holding a "crowdfunding" event like this, BMCHS joins many other schools, universities and nonprofit organizations that realize the power of participation from many members of the community adds up to make a great impact during a day-long concentrated giving campaign.

In 2018, 268 donors from 27 states and Canada contributed more than \$26,000 to the fourth annual Scholarship Funding Day. Following what has become a tradition, donors were challenged to meet three unique challenges. This year, McCort's supporters are challenged again to:

- Secure a \$10,000 matching grant from a generous alum by donating \$10,000.
- Have more members from their graduating class donate than any other class and be recognized on the Challenge Cup trophy.
- Send a donation from the furthest geographic point to 25 Osborne Street to earn a prize.

Starting at midnight on April 25, alumni, parents, and friends throughout the country are invited to donate \$25 (or more) to support Scholarship Funding Day. Proceeds from the day will be exclusively directed to student financial aid. BMCHS is reaching out to existing contributors and those who will be giving for the first time to donate on the internet at www.mccort.org by mail or by phone to (814) 248-3885. Organizers hope donors will then reach out to their friends via social media venues and encourage them to give as well.

"25/25/25 is an exciting way for the McCort community to come together and help our students," said BMCHS Principal/CAO, Thomas P. Fleming, Jr. "Last year, our donors contributed a record of more than \$26,000 to support the 65% of our students who need financial assistance to receive a quality Catholic preparatory education."

Parishes to Offer Precious Blood Beginning on Holy Thursday

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak has directed parishes in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown to once again offer the Precious Blood at Mass beginning on Holy Thursday, April 18.

Earlier this year, Bishop Mark directed parishes to not offer the Precious Blood due to the severity of the flu season. As always, those with contagious illnesses are asked to please refrain from receiving the Precious Blood until they are well.

Day of Prayer and Fellowship for Widows and Widowers

The Family Life Office of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown is once again sponsoring a day of prayer and fellowship for those who have lost a spouse on Wednesday, May 8.

Mass will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Parish, 1640 New Germany Road, Summerhill. All deceased spouses will be mentioned and remembered at the Liturgy. Guests are invited to provide the name of the deceased spouse when they register for the observance.

A luncheon will follow the Mass in Marian Hall at the parish. If reservations exceed the capacity of the hall, the luncheon will be held at The Grove Hall across from the church.

Reservations are required by May 1. Contact the Family Life Office by phone at (814) 886-5551 or by e-mail at familylife@dioceseaj.org.

A suggested \$5 donation can be offered on the day of the event.

COMING UP ON PROCLAIM!: Father Leo Arnone, Pastor of Saint Aloysius and Saint Francis Xavier Parishes in Cresson, joins Tony DeGol to discuss his recent year-long military deployment in Africa and his return to ministry in the Cresson faith community. Besides serving the Church, Father Arnone also serves his country as a member of the United States Naval Reserve. The segment will air on *Proclaim!* on April 28 at 10:30 a.m. on WATM ABC 23. All episodes of *Proclaim!* are also posted on the diocesan Facebook page.



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Rosary March

&

Celebration Of Mass

Sunday, May 5, 2019 Mass

Rosary March 3:00 PM

In the Expo I Building at the Clearfield Fairgrounds

Guest Speaker
Fr. Ronan Murphy

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Bishop Mark, Students Meet For Annual Quad High Day



GETTING TO KNOW YOU: Students from the four Catholic high schools participate in an icebreaker activity at the start of the annual Quad High Day.

*Photo And Text By
Tony DeGol*

On the day of Bishop Mark L. Bartchak's ordination as Bishop, it might have been one of the most profound exchanges the new shepherd had.

A group of young people greeted him at the reception

following the Mass and reminded him that most people acknowledge that youth are the future, but few seem to listen to them right now.

At that moment, the new bishop was, indeed, listening, and he continues to do so.

"It is very important for me to listen to you so that I can teach

others, especially those who are responsible for your education and formation, so that we can get this right," he assured the teens gathered for Quad High Day 2019. "Your input is valuable."

The annual event invites student representatives from the four Catholic high schools in the diocese to join Bishop Mark for a frank discussion about matters of faith and other things on their mind. It was held on March 15 at Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy in Boalsburg.

After snacks and icebreaker activities to get to know one another, it was down to business.

The Bishop asked the kids to break into small groups to discuss various topics that stemmed from the Vatican's 2018 Synod on Young People.

After the group meetings, the real conversation began.

Carmelite Community of the Word 17th ANNUAL HAITI FÈT

Sunday, May 5, 2019

Our Lady of Loretto Hall
279 St. Elizabeth St.
Loretto, PA 15940

Dinner and Silent Auction
Join us for an afternoon of good food, Haiti stories and information on the CCW Hands & Hearts Ministry.



Participants are asked to contribute an item of NEW underwear or socks for children or teens.

Doors open at 1:15 p.m.
Dinner, Silent Auction & Program at 2:00 p.m.
Adults \$35 Children under 13 \$15
Ticket Deadline April 29

For more information or to order tickets, Contact:
CCW Incarnation Center 814-886-4098.
Deadline for tickets is April 29

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One of the key discussion items centered on truly listening to God.

"What's a way that you can hear God any time you want to?," Bishop Mark asked.

Prayer is communication between us and God, he reminded.

"Any good communication involves speaking and listening," the Bishop continued. "You hear God through other people and at Mass, and one of the absolute sure ways you can hear God is if you develop a habit of every day reading at least one paragraph of the Bible. It's the Word of God."

Instead of reading, Bishop Mark also suggested using an app to hear someone recounting the Bible, which transitioned nicely into a discussion about the use of modern technology.

He spoke with the students about spiritual messages he could post on social media to engage more young people.

That is an idea welcomed by Matthew Steyers, a Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy senior.

Parish Marks 175th Anniversary



This year marks the 175th anniversary of Saint Mary Parish in Hollidaysburg.

Established by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Saint Mary was originally a mission parish to Saint Patrick Parish in Newry.

On March 17, 1844, the church was dedicated and consecrated to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at the parish on March 16 followed by a reception in the parish hall.

During the year, a commemorative item will be made available to each parish family with additional ones available for purchase.

As part of the celebra-

"Our generation is very media-based," he noted. "It's not going away anytime soon."

Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School seniors Rachel Meintel and Elizabeth Yahner loved being part of Quad High Day.

"I just feel the environment is a safe zone to say what you're thinking," Yahner said. "Everybody has the same ideals and perspective as you."

Added Meintel: "This day has allowed me to think more in-depth about my faith and how I can get closer to God."

John Paul O'Connor, a junior at Bishop McCort Catholic High School was thrilled that Bishop Mark embraced the chance to hear from young people.

"I think this opportunity allows us to talk to the Bishop about our perspective, and I think he can see that we are all eager to learn," O'Connor noted.

After the discussion, Bishop Mark celebrated Mass and enjoyed pizza with the students.

tion, an outdoor parish Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated on August 18 at 11:30 a.m. at Legion Park in Hollidaysburg followed by a picnic.

"I extend to each and everyone of you my sincere appreciate and heartfelt blessings as you continue to be a part of our spiritually rich faith community and remarkable history," said Father Anthony J. Legarski, Pastor, in a message to his parishioners. "I am profoundly grateful to Almighty God, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Spirit, and Mary our Mother and patroness for their continual presence and guidance in the past and for generations to come."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

April 22

Easter Monday; All diocesan offices closed

April 25

5:30 p.m. – Catholic Charities Wine Sampling; Ramada Inn in State College (Reservations required through Catholic Charities at (814) 944-9388)

April 27

5:00 p.m. – Neophyte Mass; Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona

MAY

May 5

2:00 p.m. - Haiti Fet; Our Lady of Loretto Community Hall (Register by April 29 through the C. C. W. Incarnation Center at (814) 886-4098)

May 8

11:00 a.m. – Day of Prayer and Fellowship for Widows and Widowers; Immaculate Conception Parish in New Germany (Register by May 1 through the Family Life Office at (814) 886-5551 or familylife@dioceseaj.org)

May 10

5:30 p.m. – Bishop’s Night for Vocations; Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg

May 16

7:00 p.m. – Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School Baccalaureate Mass; Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona

May 17

7:00 p.m. – Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School Commencement Exercises; Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona

May 18

9:30 a.m. – Saint Joseph’s Catholic Academy Baccalaureate Mass followed by Commencement Exercises; SJCA Student Life Center

May 20

5:30 p.m. – Bishop Carroll Catholic High School Baccalaureate Mass; Holy Name Parish in Ebensburg

May 21

7:00 p.m. – Bishop Carroll Catholic High School Commencement Exercises; Kennedy Center at Saint Francis University in Loretto

May 22

6:00 p.m. – Bishop McCort Catholic High School Baccalaureate Mass; Saint Benedict Parish in Johnstown

May 23

6:00 p.m. – Bishop McCort Catholic High School Commencement Exercises; Penn Highlands Community College

May 27

Memorial Day; All diocesan offices closed

May 30

Solemnity of the Ascension; All diocesan offices closed

Saint Catherine Will Host Divine Mercy Sunday

By Tony DeGol

When Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Duncansville began hosting a Divine Mercy Sunday observance three decades ago, it was hard to find an empty parking space in the lot.

In recent years, fewer people are turning out for the parish celebration, but there is a very good reason.

“Right now, there are probably 10 or 11 parishes in the diocese – in addition to Saint Catherine – that are observing Divine Mercy Sunday,” noted Deacon Gene Neral. “So the crowd may not be bigger here, but God has multiplied it two or three or four times since then.”

For that reason and others, the upcoming Divine Mercy observance at Saint Catherine of Siena will be extra special.

This year will mark the 30th anniversary of the parish celebration.

“If we continue to persevere in our devotion to the Divine Mercy, Jesus will bless that, and it will continue to grow,” Deacon Neral added.

The 2019 observance of Divine Mercy Sunday will be on April 28. The celebration always falls on the Second Sunday of Easter.

The solemnity is based on the devotion to the Divine Mercy that Saint Faustina Kowalska reported as part of her encounter with Jesus.

According to her diary, Jesus said that anyone who goes to Confession and receives Holy Communion on this day or the days around it shall be completely forgiven of all sins and the punishment that would accompany them.

The image associated with Divine Mercy is the portrait of Jesus with two rays pouring from His heart representing blood and water. At the bottom of the picture are the words “Jesus, I Trust in You.”

Indeed, Divine Mercy Sunday is an opportunity for all Catholics to celebrate the infinite mercy of God.

As Deacon Neral likes to explain, every time an individ-

ual takes a breath, he or she has done nothing to deserve it.

“It’s only your ability to take that breath because of God’s mercy,” he continued. “He loves you. You didn’t earn it, but it’s there because He loves you. What we have to do is realize that if He loves us that much that even if every breath we take is His, then we should be able to trust Him for all the other things that we see, and do, and say, and really trust everything we are and everything we have to the fact that He loves us.”

The events planned for April 28 at Saint Catherine of Siena include a video on the devotion to the Divine Mercy and the life of Saint Faustina Kowalska at 12:30 p.m.

A special prayer service is scheduled at 2:00 p.m. It will include a talk on Divine Mercy by Deacon Neral, the singing of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Following the service, all are invited to venerate the relics of Saint Faustina and Saint Therese of Lisieux.

Other Divine Mercy Observances

In addition to the 30th anniversary celebration at Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Duncansville, various parishes are offering Divine Mercy observances.

Among them are Saint Francis Xavier Parish in Cresson where a Novena to the Divine Mercy will be prayed from April 19-27 at 7:00 p.m. each night except on April 20 when it will be at 3:00 p.m.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Altoona will pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet on April 28 at 4:00 p.m. All are invited.



Photo By Justin Kirkland

Bishop Mark L. Barchak celebrated the Chrism Mass on Monday of Holy Week, April 15. The Chrism Mass celebrates the Bishop’s unity with the Church. During the Liturgy, the Bishop blessed the sacred oils (above) that will be used at parishes throughout the diocese in the coming year. The Holy Oils include: The Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens, and the Sacred Chrism. Representatives from parishes throughout the diocese received the oils to present to their faith communities. Also during the Mass, priests of the diocese renewed their commitment to priestly service. All five diocesan seminarians attended the Mass and were altar servers. Many students from Catholic schools from throughout the diocese were also in attendance including students from Saint Peter School in Somerset (below).



Photo By Tony DeGol