

The Catholic Register



Diocese Of Altoona-Johnstown

Official Publication
January 2020
Volume 93 No. 16

Diocese Celebrates Catholic Schools Week 2020



Catholic Schools
Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.

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On Proclaim! TV:

In celebration of Catholic Schools Week 2020, Tony DeGol will host the January 26 edition of *Proclaim!* from Saint Michael School in Loretto. The show will spotlight the excellence of Catholic education in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

January 26
10:30 a.m.
WATM ABC 23



MARYJANE MILLER



WESTON REDDINGTON

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown will celebrate Catholic Schools Week January 26-February 1. In the photos above, Kindergarten "kings" at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in State College searched for stars and decorated them as they learned about the Epiphany of our Lord earlier this month. These experiences — these life-shaping lessons in faith and academics — only happen in Catholic schools.

Much of this edition of *The Catholic Register* is dedicated to recognizing the blessing of Catholic education, including inspiring messages from successful alumni in our diocese. They can attest that Catholic schools are truly places to "Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed."

Enjoy this January edition of *The Catholic Register*, and here's to a great Catholic Schools Week 2020!

—Tony DeGol
Diocesan Director of Communications/Editor of *The Catholic Register*

Diocese Celebrates Catholic Schools Week 2020



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Do you know that Abraham Lincoln lost his first run for the presidency or that Albert Einstein could not speak fluently until he was nine? And are you aware that Walt Disney was once fired for not being creative enough?

Despite their early struggles, those men ended up accomplishing a lot. So what does it take to succeed? There are many factors that contribute to success in life, but a strong foundation rooted in Jesus Christ can surely lead anyone to achieve amazing things.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2020, it is a great time to recognize the solid foundation that only a Catholic education can provide our precious young people. When I visit Catholic schools throughout the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, I am always impressed by the faith of our students and families. They put that faith into action through compassionate and enthusiastic service to others. Our schools also have the highest academic standards and are constantly finding innovative teaching techniques to help children learn and grow. Indeed, our Catholic schools provide a complete education experience that reflects the theme of Catholic Schools Week 2020: **Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.**

I want to take this opportunity to salute our incredible students and assure them of my continued prayers. I am grateful to so many others who tirelessly support the mission of Catholic education including parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and pastors.

As part of our Catholic Schools Week observance, our diocesan media is spotlighting alumni of Catholic schools here in Altoona-Johnstown. They credit their Catholic school experience for the personal and professional success they enjoy today. I hope you are inspired by their witness. Any of those alums or any of our current students may end up rivaling the accomplishments of Lincoln, Einstein, or Disney. May God bless them along the way, and may God bless our outstanding Catholic schools.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. Mark L. Bartchak
Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown

A Message From the Director of Education

A few years ago I had the opportunity of a lifetime to travel to the land of my maternal ancestors. As I planned this adventure I could only imagine what I would encounter on “the other side of the ocean!” I had sat on my Nuna’s (grandmother’s) knee as a child as she told me stories about the old country and the family she had left behind to come to America and begin a new family here in the land of opportunity. Knowing very little about the lay of the land, I did my research. I spent many hours on social media sites, internet sites, and talking to friends and relatives who had already made the trip in prior years. I knew what I wanted to get out of the trip and had my priorities in line for what I wanted to see and experience. With research and determination to make this a trip of a lifetime I set about plotting the route I would take through the country, where my stops would be and what would be the best method to achieve all of my goals. My trip turned out to be fantastic and I achieved all of my goals. I give credit to my research for providing me with the right opportunities to make this trip so wonderful.

Your family is embarking on the same type of planning when you plot the path of your child’s education.

You are a savvy parent who obviously wants what is best for your child(ren). You know what you want to get out of your child’s educational experience planning that they will be self-assured, receive individual attention and that they will belong to a community that cares about them. You want to be sure that they have top-notch academics and service opportunities. You realize that you want your child to be kind and compassionate as well as passionate about their pursuits. So, you do the research. You compare websites, visit social media sites, talk to current families and friends and prepare to make an informed decision after asking for recommendations. Your take a tour of the school to get a feel for the overall climate and you check out the academic landscape to make sure your child will



Jo-Ann Semko

be ready to conquer whatever future profession they choose. You have done your homework and you have done it well.

Our children are the most valuable possession we each have in our lives and hold in our hearts. To have our children grow up with positive morals and values is so important to each of us which makes our school choice decision so important to our child(ren) and their future. Allow me to tell you about the Catholic schools across this great country of ours.

US Graduation Rates:
Catholic Schools 99.5%, Other Religious Schools 97.5%, Non-Sectarian Schools 93.9%, and Public Schools 84.1% with actual diplomas awarded.

Average Class Sizes of Catholic Schools: Elementary 12:1, Secondary 11:1

Percentage of high school graduates who attend a four-year college: Catholic Schools 86.5%, Other Religious Schools 63%, Non-sectarian Schools 56.8 %, and Public Schools 46%.

Based on the average public school per pupil cost of \$11,841, Catholic schools provide \$21 Billion in savings each year to our nation.

I would like to invite each of you to come and visit our schools. Each will welcome you with open arms into a relaxed atmosphere of caring and concerned individuals who will be working with your child(ren). Grandmas and Grandpas please feel free to come an experience our schools also to see the benefits they hold for your loved ones. All are welcome!

Follow the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown on social media

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Diocese Celebrates Catholic Schools Week 2020

Many alumni of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown recognize that a Catholic education gave them a solid foundation for the personal and professional success they enjoy today. Various alums shared their thoughts with Diocesan Director of Communications Tony DeGol.



Lisa Michelone

Senior Vice President/Marketing Director at Reliance Bank in Altoona

Attended Our Lady of Lourdes School in Altoona and Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School in Altoona

"My time at these schools was very memorable in so many ways. I made and kept friends to this day. My teachers left a lasting impact on me – from Sister Sophia in second grade to Miss Anderson and Sister Vianney in my Senior Year at BG. What I was taught was extremely important, however what I learned is that education, involvement, and relationships are what you need to succeed. Without that base and sense of belonging, I do not think I would be as successful as I am today."



Sister Celeste Ciesielka, CCW

Pastoral Minister at Holy Family Parish in Portage
Attended Saint Joseph School in Portage and Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg

"In addition to my family, my Catholic education has been the foundation for my life as well as my faith. It was here that I fell in love with God and decided to dedicate my life to serving Him and His people. The morals and values that I learned and witnessed through my teachers and classmates have been "the Christ light" guiding me through the choices of my life. I now have the privilege of reflecting that light to all those to whom I serve in His Name."

Attended West End Catholic School in Johnstown, Our Mother of Sorrows School in Johnstown, and Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown

"The morals and core values that I received throughout my education has immensely helped me in my career path and as I grow in my personal life. As someone who works with children and families on a daily basis, I believe that my dedication to working in social services has come from understanding the importance of true service work, which was exemplified for many years during my time in the Catholic School System."



Terry Tomassetti

Altoona Attorney and Retired Blair County Commissioner
Attended Saints Peter & Paul School in Altoona and Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School in Altoona

"Catholic education taught me that one of the primary goals of learning and life was service to and helping others. Personal achievement and financial reward mean little if your work and major interests benefit only yourself."



Jacqueline Martella, R.Ph.

Owner of Martella's Pharmacies
Attended Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary School in Johnstown and Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown

"My Catholic education has provided me a "moral compass" to live by. This high standard of faith in God, integrity, kindness, and love to self, family and community has been the foundation or the playbook for my success in life."



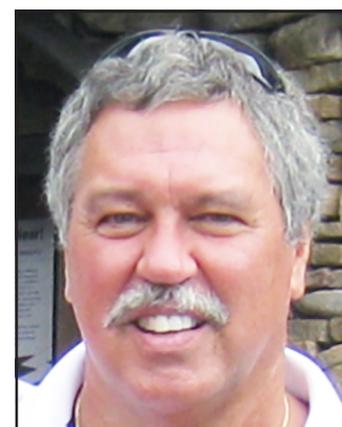
Kerri Golden

Assistant Dean, School of Health Sciences and Education
Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy
Saint Francis University
Attended Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg
"I try to approach every situation presented in my adult life first with grace, kindness, thoughtfulness, and understanding. These are not skills learned, but rather characteristics developed within the walls of a caring and compassionate environment, such as those found in our Catholic schools!"



Carrie Shearer

NCAA Postgraduate Intern – Marketing and Branding
Attended Our Lady of Victory School in State College and Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy in Boalsburg
"My Catholic school educa-



Frank Janakovic

Mayor of Johnstown
Attended Saint Rochus School in Johnstown and Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown

"My education at Bishop McCort taught me lifelong lessons and helped initiate long term friendships. The attributes attained at Bishop McCort of perseverance, respect for and helping others, and volunteerism have carried over in to my careers as Mayor and President/Executive Director of a multi-county mental & behavioral health agency. It has helped teach me to think with both my "head and heart" when dealing with others!"

tion provided me with a mindset of perseverance that has served me to this day. The rigor of the curriculum, starting in elementary education through my college career allowed me to test the waters of my interests while challenging my capabilities. I grew tremendously throughout the process. Catholic education has a substantial impact on me given the focus on developing the whole-person. That focus not only became a catalyst for my work in college athletics now as a leadership development professional, but a firm foundation for a lifelong career as someone looking to do meaningful work in an industry that centers around community and competition."



Tim Grose

Community School Director, Johnstown Elementary School at Communities in Schools of PA

Diocese Celebrates Catholic Schools Week 2020



All Saints Catholic School in Cresson

Year Established: 1989 - Grades Offered: PreK-8 - Current Enrollment: 135 Students



Our Lady of Victory School in State College

Year Established: 1963 - Grades Offered: K - 8
Current Enrollment: 135 Students



Holy Trinity Catholic School - Hollidaysburg Campus

Year Established: 2016 - Grades Offered: PreK-4 - Current Enrollment: 123 Students



Saint Peter School in Somerset

Year Established: 1961- Grades Offered: K-6
Current Enrollment: 98 Students



Saint Michael School in Loretto

Year Established: 1921 - Grades Offered: K-8
Current Enrollment: 97 Students



Divine Mercy Catholic Academy in Johnstown

Year Established: 2016 - Grades Offered: PreK-8 - Current Enrollment: 451 Students



Saint Patrick School in Newry

Year Established: 1921 - Grades Offered: PreK-8
Current Enrollment: 40 Students

Diocese Celebrates Catholic Schools Week 2020



Lock Haven Catholic School

Year Established: 1967 - Grades Offered: K-8 - Current Enrollment: 168 Students



Saint Benedict School in Carrolltown

Year Established: 1857 - Grades Offered: PreK3-8
Current Enrollment: 92 Students



Northern Cambria Catholic School in Nicktown

Year Established: 1967 - Grades Offered: PreK-8 - Current Enrollment: 89 Students



Saint Matthew School in Tyrone

Year Established: 1869 - Grades Offered: PreK3-6
Current Enrollment: 53 Students

SCHEDULE OF OPEN HOUSES

In celebration of Catholic Schools Week, various schools are hosting open houses. The following are some of the opportunities.

All Saints Catholic School in Cresson

January 26 – 12:00-1:30 p.m.

Lock Haven Catholic School

Contact the school at (570) 748-7252 to schedule a tour

Northern Cambria Catholic School in Nicktown

February 2 – 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in State College

Kindergarten: January 30 – 5:30 p.m.

Middle School: January 29 – 6:30 p.m.

Saint Benedict School in Carrolltown

January 25 – 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Saint John the Evangelist School in Bellefonte

January 26 – 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (following 10:15 a.m. Mass)

Saint Matthew School in Tyrone

January 26 – 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Saint Michael School in Loretto

January 25 – 5:00-6:00 p.m. (following 4:00 p.m. Mass)

Saint Patrick School in Newry

January 26 – 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Saint Peter School in Somerset

January 27 – 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg

January 29 – 6:00 p.m.

Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School in Altoona

Contact the school at (814) 944-4014 to schedule a tour.



Saint John the Evangelist School in Bellefonte

Year Established: 1890

Grades Offered: PreK-5 - Current Enrollment: 117 Students



Holy Trinity Catholic School - Middle School Campus

Year Established: 2016 - Grades Offered: 5-8
Enrollment: 144

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Convocation to Highlight Forgiveness, Returning to Church

By Tony DeGol
The Catholic Register



Who among us does not have family or friends who have strayed from the Catholic Church?

Season four of ARISE Together in Christ may be a step to drawing those individuals back.

The theme for the new season, occurring during Lent, will be *New Heart, New Spirit*.

“We will explore the themes of Reconciliation and the transforming power of forgiveness,” noted Sister Linda LaMagna, CCW, diocesan ARISE coordinator.

Participants will also be invited to reach out to those who have moved away from their faith and their Church communities, she added.

“Together we will be praying for wisdom to respond to the circumstances which the Lord places before us which can be instrumental in calling another to return to the Church and embrace their faith once again,” Sister Linda remarked.

In preparation for season four, all are invited to a diocesan convocation -- either on January 25 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at Our Lady of the Alleghenies Parish in Lilly or on January 26 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at Saint Matthew Parish in Tyrone.

Peter Ascosi of ChristLife, a Catholic ministry for evangelization in Baltimore, will be the presenter. The topic will be *Becoming Ambassadors of God's Mercy and Forgiveness*.

“The convocation will highlight the grace of forgiveness and mercy as well as seek help-

ful ways to draw others to return to the Church,” Sister Linda said.

There is no cost to attend either convocation, but donations will be accepted to help cover expenses.

Please register online by visiting the ARISE section of the diocesan website www.dioceseaj.org. Click on the ARISE logo in the upper right of the home page.

Distribution of Precious Blood Suspended

Bishop Mark L. Barchak has directed that the Precious Blood not be distributed in any form at Mass beginning the weekend of January 11 and 12, 2020, and continuing until further notice. The directive is due to the severity of the flu season.

It is the belief of the Catholic Church that the whole Body of Christ is present under either form of consecrated bread and wine. Reception of Holy Communion on the hand is encouraged during this flu season; however, reception on the tongue may not be denied.

During this time, the faithful are also asked to avoid shaking hands during the Sign of Peace.

Ecumenical Services

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown will host one of two annual ecumenical services this year in partnership with the Lutheran and Orthodox faith traditions. Each year, two services are held to pray for Christian unity. This year, local Lutheran leaders will host the first gathering on February 9 at 3:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church in State College. The second service will be held on February 16 at 2:00 p.m. at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral in Johnstown.

Beacon of Hope: Journey of Grace

By Jeanne Thompson



DREW BARKMAN AND SON, VANDER

Drew and Christine Barkman celebrated their entrance into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 20, 2019, at Saint Thomas More Parish in Roaring Spring. Reverend Leo Lynch, Pastor, had the privilege of baptizing their son, Vander, at the same Mass. The Barkman's developing faith, celebrated within the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in the Church, is a true inspiration and example.

For Drew and Christine, their relationship with God began when they were both very young. They each had beginnings in small denominational churches in the Everett area but they never felt like they belonged to a church community. Their families attended services very infrequently or not at all. Drew's parents divorced when he was young and they moved often.

Christine attended church as a teen when her sister was joining the Methodist Church. She was active in a college evangelical group at Penn State and when she moved home after graduation she “bounced back” to that church.

As we spoke, Drew recalled “God experiences” that began his steps to be a Catholic when he was eleven. The kindness of an older nun in a gift shop while on a trip to Mount St. Mary's, Emmitsburg, then the finding of a rosary in his quarters while he was a Marine stationed in Iraq and the relationship that grew with a devout, kind and patient Catholic priest who answered his many questions while performing his duties as Chaplain's assistant, and finally being “awakened” that the Apostles Creed was his too.

After Christine met Drew in their mid-20s, they married in 2007 and the combined leg of their faith journey began. After 10 years of discussion, prayer, scripture reading, and research, becoming parents, and still not making a formal decision about the Catholic Church, God made it for them.

Christine shared “I never considered being a Catholic, although I knew some Catholics in name only. After Vander was born, we knew we wanted to have him baptized, but still didn't know into which faith. We started to go to the little Catholic chapel just 10 minutes away (Saint Anne, Claysburg). Drew went first, then I did, then as a family when Vander was six months old. We attended pretty regularly and debated about actually becoming a part of the Catholic Church. In the summer of 2018 we made our decision after speaking with Father Leo and enrolled in RCIA.”

Then the formal instruction and religious formation time (the catechumenate) began. During these months their sponsors, Laurie Staub and Barb Leslie, and a dedicated Catechist at Saint Thomas More Parish, walked with, supported them and even helped with childcare. On the First Sunday of Lent at the Rite of Election at the Altoona Cathedral, the Barkmans knew they had made the right decision. At the Palm Sunday Retreat beginning Holy Week when Bishop Mark anointed Drew and Christine, Vander who was with them said “Hi Bishop” to his surprise. Even he was excited for the Easter sacraments!

Christine shared what she would tell others about RCIA: “I think if I had anything to say to those considering the Catholic Church, I would say to try it. Go to inquiry sessions. Do some independent research. Ask questions. The best thing that can happen is that you realize how amazingly beautiful and indescribable the Catholic faith is. From Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, to the communion of saints, to the freedom that comes with confession and penance, our beautiful Blessed Mother...It's the sacraments that make it what it is, the substance that keeps the Church alive. The moment I knelt down to receive my first Eucharist, I thought to myself, ‘Why hadn't I done this my whole life?’ It felt so natural. It felt like I was finally home.” Drew will tell everyone, “I am so proud to be Catholic and I never run out of a way to pray or what to pray for.”

As Neophytes (new members), the Barkman's journey continued through the Easter Season entering the period of Mystagogy. They will journey with the entire Catholic Church in this life-long unfolding period when the mysteries of the sacraments are revealed as their relationship with God grows even deeper.

Jeanne Thompson is the diocesan coordinator of Christian Initiation. For more information about the RCIA journey, contact her at jthompson@dioceseaj.org.

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“What a Pharmacy Was Meant To Be”

World-Renowned Musician to Bring Message of Hope to Diocese

By **Tony DeGol**
The Catholic Register

A man regarded as a global ambassador of hope is bringing his talent and inspiration to the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

Tony Melendez is a world-renowned musician, author, and motivational speaker with a unique story.

His mother took thalidomide when she was pregnant, which caused him to be born without arms.

Despite that challenge, Melendez learned to play the guitar using his feet.

His amazing skills have led him to perform around the world, including an unforgettable moment when he played guitar and sang for Pope John Paul II in 1987 in Los Angeles.

Father Brian Warchola, Pastor of Holy Name Parish in Ebensburg, first crossed paths with the musician in 2006 when Melendez played at a Mass at the March for Life in Washington, D.C.

“I remember being captivated by what he was doing,” Father Warchola said.

Recently, Father Warchola decided to reach out to Melendez and extend an invitation to perform at Holy Name.

The concert is scheduled for January 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the church.

“I think it’s something to lift up our hearts,” Father Warchola commented. “This will give us hope.”

The concert is free and open to everyone. A free-will offering

will be accepted.

Earlier in the day, Melendez will perform privately for Catholic school students in the Prince Gallitzin Quadrant.

No matter one’s age, Father Warchola believes everyone will be moved by seeing Melendez in person when he comes to Altoona-Johnstown.

“It’s something that can lift people’s spirits and make them joyful and give them the opportunity to see nothing is impossible for Almighty God,” he stated. “God works miracles, and He can take any individual and work many marvelous feats through them. Tony is a prime example of somebody who has taken that great gift from Almighty God and been able to inspire millions of people.”



CNS Photo

INSPIRATIONAL PERFORMER: Musician Tony Melendez performs during a Marian devotion at the “Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America” in 2017 in Orlando, FL.



BLESSING BAGS: Members of the Religious Education program at Saint Patrick Parish in Johnstown assemble Blessing Bags for the clients of the Women’s Help Center. It is the fourth year the program sponsored the project. This year the generosity of the parishioners and the community enabled the parish to give the Center filled tote bags for 60 adults and 30 children. Father Walter Moll is the pastor of Saint Patrick Parish.



BAMBINELLI SUNDAY: Parishioners at Transfiguration Parish in Conemaugh took part in a new tradition of blessing their Nativity set’s Baby Jesus or, in Italian, “Bambinelli.” This is a growing Catholic tradition that Pope Saint John Paul II began and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have continued. In Rome, the Holy Father blesses the Bambinelli every year after the Angelus address on the Third Sunday of Advent. Pictured are (left to right) Top: Lauren Stackhouse, Diana Sobecky, Father Robert C. Hall (Pastor), Larry Goetz, Monica Grata, Dianne O’Shea, Nick Reighard. Bottom: Dorothy Rosenbaum, Barbara Baughman, Pat Kowal, Ronnie Newill, Flo Olexo, Betty Heinlein.

Congratulations Students, Parents, Faculty & Staff!

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week




\$718,465 awarded this year to students in grades K - College from 111 Endowments for Scholarships, School Operations, STREAM Curriculum & Faculty Support.

\$5,415 awarded in Impact Grants.

- † Accepting charitable gifts in honor/memory of loved ones into existing endowments or one you establish.
- † Dedicated solely to Catholic ministries in the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese.
- † Your Catholic Legacy is our Mission.



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Parish Musician Able to Count Blessings in The Midst of Devastating Fire

By **Tony DeGol**
The Catholic Register

Even a disastrous fire just days before Christmas has not stopped Anastazia Hall from counting her many blessings.

In mid-December, a blaze ripped through the Hollidaysburg apartment complex that Hall called home.

A member of Saint John Gualbert Cathedral in Johnstown, where she plays the organ and trumpet, Hall had resided at the apartment building for the past several months. She moved there when she began her career as an elementary band director in the Altoona Area School District.

She was teaching on that fateful day when word of the fire spread. A friend offered to drive by the complex to see if Hall's apartment was affected.

When Hall learned that it was, she went to the scene not knowing what to expect.

"On the drive over, I was thinking I learned a really quick lesson that belongings don't matter," she recalled. "I thought about the things in my apartment, and I didn't care."

When Hall arrived, she felt at peace.

"In that situation, everyone was calling me and texting me and asking if I was okay," she said. "Honestly, I didn't feel like I needed anything, and I still really don't."

Her beloved cat, Lucy, was her primary concern. The feline's fate seemed in question, but Anastazia did not give up hope. Eventually, she received the great news that a firefighter found Lucy alive.

"She was cradled in his arms and looking at me with her big eyes and meowing at me," Hall added. "I'll never forget that moment."

An animal hospital checked out Lucy and kept her for a few days, but she is fine.

Hall's material possessions did not fare as well, however. A few personal items were recovered, but most of her belongings



FAITHFUL FRIENDS: Anastazia Hall, a musician at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral in Johnstown, and her cat, Lucy, were reunited after a devastating fire at Hall's apartment building in December. Despite losing her home and most of her belongings, Hall is grateful to God for being a guiding presence in her life and thankful for the support she is receiving from family and friends.

were damaged or destroyed.

Not surprisingly, Hall is not dwelling on the setback.

"I could be really sad and upset that I lost all those things that I worked so hard to build up here in Altoona as I moved into the area," she stated. "I see it more as a blessing the way God looked out for me, the way He has inspired me to share my story. I learned how many people love me and that in any situation, people love you, people care about you, they want to help you, they want to be there for you. It has really touched my life a lot."

Among those offering that love and support are Hall's friends from Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, including music director Evonne Yanzetich-Homway.

"Even with the tragedy of fire, Anastazia has been strongly rooted in her Catholic faith," Homway observed. "Never once

has she said 'why me?' She has great resolve that has always shone in her commitments to family, church, and community."

Homway calls Hall a humble young woman who is very grateful for the outpouring of generosity.

"From monetary donations, to furniture, clothes, and even donations for Lucy the cat, her local music and church families have all have pitched in to assist her in the aftermath of this devastating fire," Homway added. "We all respect and love her very much. There was never a question of 'if' we were going to help, but 'what' we could do to make things a little easier for her. The Holy Spirit works through us all so that no one should walk alone through life's tribulations."

Hall has found a new apartment for her and Lucy.

As she looks to the future, her faith and optimism are stronger than ever.

"God is with me now and He's been with me this whole time," she maintained. "For those people who are struggling with something, He's always there. Even if it seems like it's terrible, He's going to get you through it. He's gotten me through."

For someone who lost so much, Hall feels like she has everything.

"I feel full and I feel very satisfied just by my faith and by knowing that God is with me and just knowing the family I have and the friends I have, and I have realized that's what really matters in life," she continued. "I learned that belongings and material things can be taken away, and it can be upsetting, but in the end that's not what matters."

LOCAL EVENTS PLANNED TO PROMOTE LIFE

Several local observances are planned this month in celebration of the sanctity of human life.

The 33rd annual Respect Life March will be held on January 19 at Noon in Tyrone. All are welcome to gather for a prayer service at Saint Matthew Parish. Participants will then walk 1.25 miles to Oak Grove Cemetery to the grave of Baby Agnes Doe for another short prayer service. A hot lunch will be served in the parish hall after the march. The Respect Life March is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Saint Gregory Council #1218.

Saint Francis University will once again sponsor the March on the Mountain on January 22. The event begins with the praying of the Rosary at 10:30 a.m. in Immaculate Conception Chapel on campus followed by the march around the mall and the celebration of Mass inside the Chapel. Students from Catholic schools in the diocese will be invited to join the observance.

Local groups, including students, will travel to Washington, D.C. for the annual March for Life on January 24. As usual, Bishop Mark L. Bartchak will be among those making the trek to the nation's capital. Those interested in attending the March for Life may contact any parish group or the local chapter of Citizens Concerned for Human Life.

