



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Bishop Appoints New Director of Education Office

(HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA) – Bishop Mark L. Bartchak has announced the appointment of Ms. Jo-Ann Semko as Director of the Education Office of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. The appointment is effective July 1, 2018. Ms. Semko is currently the Assistant Director of Education for the Diocese – a position she has held since 2014. She succeeds Sister Donna Marie Leiden, S.C., who is retiring after her many years as teacher, school administrator, and Diocesan Director of Education.

Ms. Semko graduated from Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg and received a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Saint Francis University in Loretto and a Master's Degree with a concentration in Administration from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has completed all course work in her pursuit of a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership from Penn State University.

A resident of Ebensburg, Ms. Semko is a member of Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Altoona. She is a native of Colver, where she formerly attended Holy Family Parish. Ms. Semko is the Lay Director for the Cursillo Movement in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

Ms. Semko joined the Diocesan Education Office after a nearly 35 year career as an elementary teacher in the Central Cambria School District. She was President of the Central Cambria Education Association, which is affiliated with the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA). In that role, she handled administrative matters such as contract negotiation, personnel management, and grievance procedures and reconciliation.

She is the President of the Board of Appalachian Youth Services, an organization that deals with alternative education and housing for court-appointed youth. She is retiring as a member of the Bishop Carroll Catholic High School Board, but will serve as Bishop Bartchak's representative on the board (ex-officio) in her new position.

“Jo-Ann is deeply committed to the Catholic identity and mission of our schools, and she intends to assist school administrators and teachers in making sure that the truth of our Catholic faith and the values of our Catholic schools remain a priority,” noted Bishop Bartchak. “She has a deep appreciation for the dedicated teachers, administrators, and support staff of Catholic schools, not

to mention the extraordinary efforts made by the Catholic high school and regional elementary school boards in the Diocese.”

Among Ms. Semko’s goals as Director of the Education Office are building the Catholic community of Christ, upgrading curriculum to prepare students for careers that demand outcome over process, and enhancing the STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts, and Math) program, which is offered in all Diocesan elementary schools. She will also strive to create schools that are not only physically secure, but also an environment in which students feel mentally and socially secure.

“This is the goal I have been striving to achieve my entire life,” said Ms. Semko on her appointment. “It is a humbling experience. I look at myself as a servant-leader – one who serves not only God but all of the students in our schools, their families, and our faculty.”

There are 14 elementary schools and four independent Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. This academic year, 435 children are enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs, 2,414 students attend elementary school, and 966 students are enrolled in secondary schools.



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