

Independent Review Board Plays Key Role in Keeping Children Safe

By PAUL WIRTH
Diocesan Communications Staff

A group of lay people with special expertise plays a key role in preventing abuse and keeping children safe in the Diocese of Allentown.

Known as the Independent Review Board, this panel of medical and law enforcement professionals, along with one member of the clergy, reviews every child abuse accusation that is made against a priest.

A recent news article by the Associated Press quoted critics of such review boards as saying they operate in secrecy and are ineffective. That is not the case in the Diocese of Allentown.

The review board in the Diocese is independent and focused on a careful review of the facts. The board maintains confidentiality about cases, of course, but there is no secrecy: The Diocese is transparent about its membership, its process and its role. The Diocese lists members of the board on its website and has always listed their names in the diocesan directory. The board has been the subject of previous articles in The A.D. Times.

Victims who make an accusation against a priest have the option of speaking with the review board if they desire to do so.

The board deliberates in private, without the pres-

ence of Bishop Alfred Schlert or diocesan legal counsel. When it makes a decision, the board advises the Bishop on whether the accused priest is suitable for ministry.

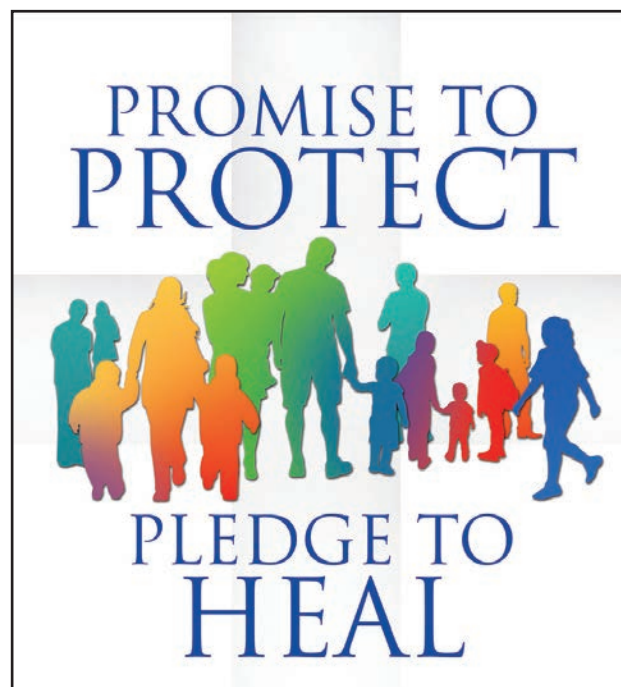
Dioceses across the nation created review boards after American bishops adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002. The Charter also included such reforms as Zero Tolerance for abuse, and policies and procedures designed to keep children safe.

The Diocese of Allentown board is chaired by Dr. Eugene Decker, a physician with expertise in examining children who have been sexually abused.

Other members include Gwen Millets, a children and youth caseworker; Christopher Moughan, a federal probation officer; Richard Podguski, of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections; and Father Michael Mullins, pastor of St. Paul Parish, Allentown.

Recently members of the board recommended adding a new member, retired Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent James Doolin. Bishop Schlert accepted the recommendation.

“The Independent Review Board is an extremely important part of the Diocese’s ongoing response to the abuse crisis,” said Bishop Schlert. “I am extremely grateful to have a group of people with the integrity, commitment and expertise to advise me in the event of an accusation.”



Bishop Starts Rome Pilgrimage

Bishop of Allentown Alfred Schlert arrived in Rome Sunday, Nov. 24 for his week-long pilgrimage with his brother Bishops from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Monday morning, Nov. 25 he entrusted all those of our Diocese to the Blessed Mother at Mass at the Basilica St. Mary Major, and posted this photo of the basilica on social media. This is Bishop Schlert’s first such visit as Bishop of Allentown. All Bishops make the pilgrimage and meet the Pope once every five to seven years for their “ad limina.” More on page 15 and in next issue, Dec. 19; and on Facebook @DioceseofAllentown; Twitter @BishopSchlert and @AllentownDioces; and Instagram @allentowndiocese.

The Joys of Daily Mass

By PAUL WIRTH
Diocesan Communications Staff

Have you ever craved 30 minutes of peace and quiet on a hectic day?

Does it sound tempting to put away the chirping phone and mute the droning news anchors and forget the demands of your job for a while, to have a chance to think, and to pray?

Try weekday Mass.

In the Diocese of Allentown, weekday Masses are offered from early morning through evening, depending on the parish and the day. If you like, you can find one in Spanish, or Latin, or even Vietnamese.

Many people who attend regular Mass on weekends report that when they try a weekday Mass, it’s a whole new experience. It’s often intimate, cozy and friendly. There’s usually a core group of people to get to know, if you like. Some folks have a regular breakfast or coffee date afterward.

Daily Mass can be a good way to show support for your priest, and perhaps have a quiet word with him afterward. It’s also a good opportunity to try out being an altar server or lector.

You might also like to try a weekday Mass at a neighboring parish. Take in the beauty of a different church or get to know another priest.

Attending a weekday Mass is also something terrific to do with your kids, when school schedules allow. Some homeschool parents use a weekday Mass to provide structure and a Christ-focused start to the day.

The most important part of daily Mass is receiving the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, as food for our journey and to give us strength for the day.

“I like to get there a little early, so I can sit in silence until Mass begins,” said one daily Mass attendee. “It’s my way of letting God speak to me.”

Advent is a terrific time to try adding a daily Mass or two to your weekly routine. Who knows? It might become a habit.



(CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

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Episcopal appointments

Bishop of Allentown Alfred Schlert has made the following appointment.
Father Christopher Butera from administrator pro tempore, Sacred Heart Parish, Bath to pastor, Sacred Heart Parish, Bath, effective Dec. 1.

Understanding Our Faith

The Advent Wreath: One Way to Remember the True Meaning of Christmas

By PAUL WIRTH
Diocesan Communications Staff

This time of year, the department stores are in full Christmas mode long before the Thanksgiving leftovers are gone.

The Advent Wreath is a wonderful way to slow down at this hectic time, and to focus on the real meaning of Christmas. It's a family tradition that helps make sure our spiritual preparations don't get lost among the frantic commercial rush.

Advent is a time of preparation, celebrated over four Sundays before Christmas. The first day of Advent, which is Nov. 30 this year, marks the beginning of the Church's Liturgical Year.

The Advent Wreath is rich with symbolism. It is made of evergreens to denote continuous life. Its circle shape, with no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternal nature of God.

The color of its candles match the color of the priest's vestments at Mass. Three are purple, the color of penance and preparation, and one is rose, for use on the third Sunday. Rose is the color of anticipation.

Light the first candle on the first Sunday of Advent, and add another one on each following Sunday. Many families light the candles each day at dinnertime, offering a special prayer before the meal.

Another fine family tradition, especially for young children, is to gather the greens for the wreath from the yard, or on a family walk, perhaps adding acorns or pine cones to the mix. Advent candles are readily available online and in stores.



Above, beautiful handmade Advent wreaths will decorate many tables this Christmas Season, created at the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC), Reading second annual Advent Wreath Fireside Chat Nov. 20. (Photos courtesy of MSC sisters)

Left, Carm Corallo Sosik with her finished creation.

Statement Regarding Father Kevin Lonergan

Following the Nov. 18 guilty plea by Father Kevin Lonergan, the Diocese of Allentown issued the following statement:

"The Diocese offers its heartfelt prayers to the victim, to her family and to everyone who was hurt as the result of Father Lonergan's actions.

"From the beginning of this case, the

Diocese followed its protocols to the letter, and will continue to do so. Bishop Alfred Schlert removed Father Lonergan from ministry and immediately notified law enforcement on the day the allegations were made.

"The Diocese considers itself a partner with law enforcement in preventing abuse and keeping children safe, and as

such, it thanks District Attorney Martin and all law enforcement officials who have been involved.

"As always, the Diocese urges anyone who has information about incidents of abuse to contact the State Child Line at 1-800-932-0313 or to call local law enforcement."

How to report abuse: If you know of incidents of abuse in the Church or elsewhere, please report it to the State Child Line at 1-800-932-0313 or to local law enforcement. To speak to the Diocese of Allentown's Victim Assistance Coordinator, please call her direct line: 1-800-791-9209. The Diocese treats victims of clergy abuse and their families with compassion and dignity. For more information visit allentowndiocese.org/youthprotection.

Cómo denunciar un abuso: Si conoce algún incidente de abuso en la Iglesia o en otro lugar, por favor repórtelo llamando a la línea de *State Child* al 1-800-932-0313 o a la policía local. Para hablar con el coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis de Allentown, llame a su línea directa: 1-800-791-9209. La Diócesis trata a las víctimas del abuso del clero y a sus familias con compasión y dignidad. Para obtener más información, visite la página web: allentowndiocese.org/youthprotection.

Advent and Christmas Vespers, Concerts, Shows, Special Events

Vespers

Sunday, Dec. 15

Advent Vespers, St. Benedict, 2020 Chestnut Hill Road, Mohnton, 6 p.m., parish choir joined by string quartet, refreshments provided by Women's Club, 610-856-1006.

Saturday, Dec. 21 and Sunday, Dec. 22

Christmas Vespers, St. Francis Center for Renewal, Bethlehem, White House Chapel, Saturday 7 p.m., Sunday 2 and 7 p.m., freewill offering, refreshments, 610-867-8890, www.stfranciscr.org.

Concerts and Shows

Sunday, Dec. 1

"God is With Us," Christmas concert, Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown, 3 p.m., free will offering for a family in need; featuring four adult choirs – Cathedral, Angelorum, Diocesan and Living Word; guest soloist Sister Josephine Wagner; carolers starting at 2:30 p.m.; 610-433-6461.

Saturday, Dec. 7

"Savior of the Nations, Come," Advent concert, Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, main chapel, 7 p.m., free, www.jesuitcenter.org/arts.

Sunday, Dec. 8

Christmas Concert, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Whitehall, 5 p.m., 610-266-0695.

"Constantia Concert" and Silent Auction, Choir from Philadelphia Korean Catholic Church, benefits Missionary Sisters, Precious Blood Chapel, 1094 Welsh Road, Reading, 3 p.m., 610-777-1624.

Sunday, Dec. 15

Christmas Cantata, featuring Youth, Handbell and Adult choirs, Holy Trinity, 4456 Main St., Whitehall, 4 p.m., 610-262-9315.

Christmas Lessons and Carols, with Blue Mountain Heritage Chorus and participation by clergy of Northern Berks Ministerium, St. Mary, Hamburg, 4 p.m., 610-562-7657.

Children's Christmas Pageant, St. Joseph, Frackville, parish hall, 6 p.m., free, light refreshments, 570-874-0610 ext. 4.

Lessons and Carols, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, 300 W. Babbitt Ave., Pen Argyl, 2 p.m., followed by light refreshments in Lower Social Hall.

Tuesday, Dec. 24

Classical Guitar Christmas Music, Our Lady Help of Christians, Allentown, 4 p.m., followed by 4:30 p.m. Mass, with Mark Reinhart from Three Pure Rivers Studio, 610-432-9384.

Live Nativities, Tableau

Friday, Dec. 13

Live Nativity, St. Francis Academy, Bally, at Most Blessed Sacrament, Bally, 7 p.m., 610-845-2460.

Saturday, Dec. 14

Live Nativity, by parish youth, St. Mary, Hamburg, Ave Maria Hall, 5:30 p.m., 610-562-7657.

Tuesday, Dec. 24

Christmas Tableau, St. Francis of Assisi, Allentown, 3:45 p.m. before the 4:30 p.m. Mass, featuring children of the parish, 610-433-6102.

Sunday, Jan. 5, 2020

Living Nativity Tableau on Feast of the Epiphany, Sacred Heart, Palmerton, at 9:30 a.m. Mass, 610-826-2335.

Special Events

Saturday, Nov. 30

Advent by Candlelight, for women, Sacred Heart, Palmerton, social hall, 6:30



(CNS photo/ Thaier Al-Sudani, Reuters)

p.m., 610-826-2335.

Saturday, Dec. 7

Breakfast with Santa, Immaculate Conception, Douglassville, social hall, seatings 8 and 10 a.m., advance \$8, at door \$10, children under 3 free, santa@icaknights.org.

Saturday, Dec. 14

"Bearers of Light," Advent day of reflection, for women of the Diocese of Allentown, offered by Diocesan Commission for Women, speakers Father Bernard Ezaki and seminarian Matthew Kuna, McGlinn Conference Center, Reading, adjacent to Alvernia University, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., \$20, register by Sunday, Dec. 1, <https://www.allentowndiocese.org/cfw-spirituality>.

Mass of Holiday Remembrance, St. Ann, Emmaus, 1 p.m., to pray together for our beloved deceased and focus on our own healing as we prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, call Annmarie at 610-965-9355 or register at www.churchstann.org.

"A Perfect Christmas," invitation for production with sign language interpreters, from the Greater Shiloh Church

Main Campus, 403 Pastor Fred Davis St., Easton, noon, 20 seats reserved in balcony for access to interpreters, free, 610-252-5640.

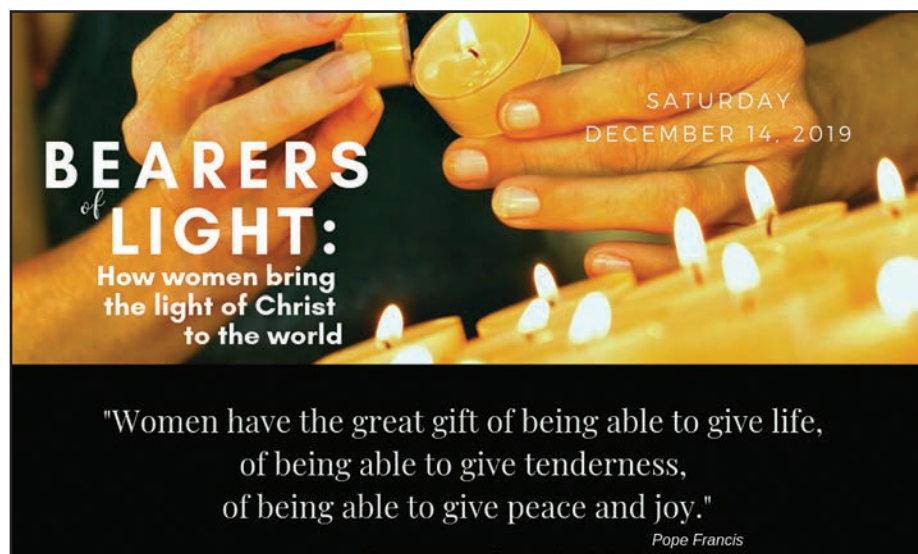
Sunday, Dec. 15

Christmas House Tour, Cathedral St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown, Women's Alliance, 1-5 p.m., featuring 10 decorated homes belonging to parishioners, including Cathedral Rectory, advance tickets only, \$20 per person, after Masses Nov. 30-Dec. 1, Dec 7-8 and Dec. 14-15; or send check payable to The Women's Alliance, c/o Cathedral Church of St. Catharine of Siena, 1825 W. Turner St., Allentown, PA 18104, with stamped self-addressed envelope; information 610-437-5933, thekovacs4@aol.com, or 336-408-6051, ckastrava@me.com.

Breakfast with Santa, Knights of Columbus, St. Ignatius Loyola, Sinking Spring, school hall, 8 a.m.-noon, adults \$8, children 6-12 \$4, under 6 free.

Monday, Dec. 16

Advent Communal Penance Service, Sacred Heart, Palmerton, 7 p.m., 610-826-2335.



Women's Evangelization and Discipleship Advent Day of Reflection

Women of the Diocese of Allentown are invited to join the Diocesan Commission for Women for an Advent Day of Reflection, Saturday, Dec. 14 at McGlinn Conference Center, Reading, adjacent to Alvernia University.

Theme for the day will be "Bearers of Light."

Speakers will be Father Bernard Ezaki, assistant pastor of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Easton, and Matthew Kuna, par-

ish-son of St. Thomas More, Allentown and seminarian for our diocese.

The day will begin with registration and continental breakfast at 9 a.m., followed by Mass, rosary, lunch and fellowship, ending at 2:30 p.m.

Cost is \$20 per person. Deadline to register is Sunday, Dec. 1.

For more information or to register: <https://www.allentowndiocese.org/cfw-spirituality>.

Next First Friday Adoration for Vocations Dec. 6

Everyone is invited to join the Diocese of Allentown Office for Vocations Promotion for First Friday Adoration, Holy Hour and Sacred Heart Devotion, every First Friday through May.

Upcoming First Friday events will be Dec. 6, Jan. 3, Feb. 7, March 6, April 3 and May 1, 7 to 8 p.m. at Holy Ghost Church, 417 Carlton Ave., Bethlehem.

Young adults, families and faithful of all ages are welcome to these monthly events for prayer and reflection.

"I believe that the young people and families in our Diocese are hungry for more time with the Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. And several commentators and leaders in our Church have spoken that where the Lord's presence is honored, revered and adored in Eucharistic adoration, the whole Church is lifted up and strengthened," said Father Mark Searles, director of the Office for Vocations Promotion, at the first event, Sept. 6.

"We also will pray for more laborers in the vineyard – especially to the priesthood – and for our own vocation in life."

For more information, contact Father Searles, msearles@allentowndiocese.org, 610-437-0755, or visit www.allentowndiocese.org/vocations.



Appeal Helps Religious Communities Care for Aging Members

The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held the weekend of Dec. 7-8 in the Diocese of Allentown.

The parish-based appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), and proceeds help hundreds of U.S. religious communities care for aging members. Some 30,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests benefit.

Last year the Diocese of Allentown donated \$26,984.57 to the collection.

In 2019, the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, Cistercian Fathers, Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart and the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood received a combined total of \$318,680.22 in financial support made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Additionally, the Diocese of Allentown, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Harrisburg, also distributes funding to local religious communities to support retirement needs.

This year's national Retirement Fund for Religious campaign features two members of the Bernardine Franciscans: Sister de Lourdes Okoniewski and Sister Florence Kruczek. Both have been members of the congregation for roughly 70 years.

The 2018 appeal raised \$27.7 million, and 360 religious congregations across the nation received funding. Distributions are sent to each eligible congregation's central house. Communities combine this assistance with their own income and savings, and apply it toward various retirement expenses.

"We are humbled and profoundly grateful for the countless Catholics who honor the service and witness of senior religious through their prayers and generosity," said Presentation Sister Stephanie Still, the NRRO's executive director.

Catholic bishops of the United States



"Live with good humor and just do the Lord's work," says Franciscan Sister de Lourdes Okoniewski (left), 87. She and Sister Florence Kruczek, 91, have been doing the Lord's work for some 70 years each. "My batteries are still running," says Sister Florence. "I get up each morning and say, 'O Lord, thank you for the gift of another day.'"

Retirement Fund for Religious

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

For Sisters de Lourdes and Florence—and 30,000 other senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious—service is a way of life. Most ministered in Catholic schools, hospitals, parishes, and social services, usually for little or no pay.

Today, hundreds of religious communities lack enough savings for retirement and eldercare. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious offers vital support for necessities, such as medications and nursing care. Please be generous.

Roughly 94 percent of donations directly aid senior religious.

Please give at your local parish.

To donate by mail:
National Religious Retirement Office
3211 4th Street NE
Washington DC 20017-1194
Make check payable to Retirement Fund for Religious.

retiredreligious.org

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initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious in 1988 to help address the pro-

found lack of retirement savings among U.S. religious communities. Since the

Two sisters from the Diocese of Allentown are featured in this year's national Retirement Fund for Religious campaign: Sister de Lourdes Okoniewski, left, and Sister Florence Kruczek, both members of the Bernardine Franciscans in Reading. They appear on printed campaign materials that are used by parishes across the United States to promote the RFR collection.

collection's launch, U.S. Catholics have donated \$872 million to the annual appeal.

Despite this generosity, many congregations still struggle to provide for aging members. Most older religious served for low wages that did not include retirement benefits.

Today numerous communities face a critical shortage in retirement savings. Moreover, retired religious now outnumber wage-earning members, resulting in declining income and a rising cost of care.

Proceeds from the annual collection allow NRRO to offer assessment tools, educational programming, services and resources that enable communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retirement needs.

NRRO also coordinates an extensive network of volunteer consultants, including experts in eldercare and financial planning, to help congregations lower costs while enhancing care.

"Donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious enable our office to provide financial assistance for an array of direct needs," said Sister Still. "They also underwrite education and resources that help religious communities stretch retirement dollars and plan for the future."

Visit www.retiredreligious.org to learn more.

About the Retirement Fund for Religious

Why We Ask

In 1988, Catholic bishops of the United States launched the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR) to address the significant lack of retirement funding for Catholic sisters, brothers, and priests in religious orders.

- For most of their lives, elder religious worked for little to no pay. There were no 401(k) plans or pensions.

- Religious communities are financially responsible for the support and care of all members. Income, earnings and expenses are managed separately from the parish and diocesan structures of the Catholic Church.

- The funding shortage is compounded by rising health care costs and decreased

income. And, as more religious reach retirement age and leave compensated ministry, income will further decline while care needs increase.

- By 2029, religious past age 70 are projected to outnumber religious under age 70 by more than three to one.

- There are 30,151 religious past age 70 living in the United States. In 2018, the average annual cost for their care was roughly \$47,000 per person; skilled care averaged \$69,000 per person.

- Since 2009, the annual cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded \$1 billion.

- In 2018, 72 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Of-

fice (NRRO) had a median age of 70 or higher.

- The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious is \$6,596.77, while the average U.S. beneficiary receives \$17,535.72.

How Donations Help

- Each year, hundreds of U.S. religious communities receive financial assistance made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious. Communities can use this funding for immediate retirement expenses or invest for future needs. Since the first collection, U.S. Catholics have donated \$872 million.

- Since 1989, almost \$737 million has been distributed to support the day-to-

day care of elderly sisters, brother, and religious order priests. An additional \$98 million has been allocated toward self-help projects initiated by religious communities, including collaborative health care facilities.

- In addition to direct financial assistance, proceeds from the annual appeal underwrite educational programming, services and resources that enable religious communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retirement needs.

- Support from the Retirement Fund for Religious helps religious communities care for senior members while continuing important ministries to the People of God.

Diocese to Host Webinar on Drawing Young People Back to the Faith

"How to Draw Young People Back to the Faith with Marcel Lejeune" will be the topic of a webinar hosted by the Diocese of Allentown Wednesday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

This seminar on the internet can be accessed on your own device at our own location.

LeJeune, president and founder of "Catholic Missionary Disciples," will offer some guidance on the best ways to draw the young people in your life back into the Church, especially newly fallen-away college students.

The webinar will be live, free to attend. Preregistration is required. It will not be recorded or rebroadcast.

As a Catholic evangelist, interna-

tional speaker, and award-winning author, LeJeune loves to share his greatest passion — helping others come to know the love of Jesus and how to share that love with others.

He served as associate director of campus ministry at St. Mary's Catholic Center at Texas A&M University for 11 years, the largest campus ministry in the country. Before that he was director of campus ministry



LeJeune

at St. Elizabeth's University Parish at Texas Tech University. He holds a master of theological studies, specializing in pastoral theology.

He is the author of three books and has contributed to several others. His articles have been published in many national Catholic magazines, newspapers and websites. He is a regular guest on EWTN radio and Relevant Radio. He has also been featured on EWTN Television.

His book "Cleansed: A Catholic Guide to Freedom from Porn" was a first place



winner in the Catholic Press Association's book awards.

The most important part of his life, and his vocation, is being a husband and father. LeJeune and his wife, Kristy, have five children.

To register for the webinar, go to www.allentowndiocese.org/webinars.

Cookies for Sale to Combat World Hunger

By TARA CONNOLLY
Staff writer

With the holiday season in full swing, diocesan parishes are engaging in a national ministry that is helping to feed the poor through simple cookie sales.

Last year, five parishes participated in the ministry, "The Cookie Sale to Combat World Hunger," and helped feed 4.2 million people through Cross International Hunger Relief Program in Haiti.

Raising more than \$16,000 were: Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown; Immaculate Conception BVM, Allentown; St. Thomas More, Allentown, along with Annunciation BVM (St. Mary's), Catasauqua; and St. Richard, Barnesville.

This year, more than a dozen more parishes are partaking in the effort that was started in 1997 by Jim and Jennifer Weber as a way to motivate their religious education class at St. Joseph, Lancaster.

Fast forward 22 years, the sale has transformed into one of the largest contributors to the Hunger Relief Program.

"We never imagined that it would evolve into such an enormous ministry that stretches out to those most in need," said Jim Weber.

Bishop of Allentown Alfred Schlert is calling on parishes and encouraging them to hold cookie sales this holiday season.

"The parishes in our Diocese that participated in the sale gave immensely to help feed the hungry. Often it's difficult to comprehend how far a few dollars go

in feeding the hungry in underdeveloped countries," said Bishop Schlert.

According to Weber, the people of Haiti are among the poorest in the world and struggle every day for a meal.

"We are looking for churches, youth groups, businesses or organizations. It's easy, fun, and you will make a difference in the lives of thousands of needy people," he said.

The cookies, which are made fresh, are delivered to parishes two weeks before Christmas.

The cookie trays sell for \$25 and are normally on sale after weekend Masses.

"Buying a cookie tray or selling cookie trays can make a difference," said Weber.

"They make great gifts to a host, business, employee or neighbor," he said.

In addition, Weber said, the ministry is in need of volunteers to help package the cookie trays in the Diocese of Harrisburg.

For more information on The Cookie Sale, call 1-866-COOKIE-9 (1-866-266-5439); email cookie@thecookiesale.com; or visit <https://www.thecookiesale.com/>.



The Cookie Sale's jar of candy fish presented to the Allentown Diocese as a symbol of the amount of people they helped feed last year. (Photo by John Simitz)



Immaculate Conception School, Pen Argyl Receives \$9,000 from Merchants Bank

Immaculate Conception School, Pen Argyl received a \$9,000 donation from Merchants Bank, supporting the Eastern Pennsylvania Scholarship Foundation (EPSF) and the Blue and White Scholarship Foundation, both of which follow the guidelines of Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC).

Each foundation assists in providing scholarships and tuition assistance to deserving Catholic school students. Specifically, Blue and White Scholastic Foundation is a nonprofit focused on scholarships, student financial aid services and awards.

"Merchants Bank has been a tremendous supporter of our school. We are honored to be among the awardees the bank has chosen," said Sister Maria Luz, principal of Immaculate Conception School.

"The funds go to support the scholarship program enabling children of deserving families with an enriched experience in the Catholic school family."



"We have had a long-standing relationship with Immaculate Conception," said Rocco Del Vecchio, CEO, Merchants Bank.

"The school and its community are blessed to have Sister Maria's devotion. She gives unyielding support to the children, the school and its program. We believe that the strength of our community rests in fostering its children, the foundation of the future.

For more information about the school, call 610-863-4816 or visit website www.immaculateconceptionschool.net.

Established in 1890, Merchants Bank is a locally owned and operated community bank. Headquartered in Bangor, Merchants has two branch offices in Bangor and additional offices throughout the Lehigh Valley, including Mount Bethel, Wind Gap, Nazareth, Forks Township, Martins Creek, Easton and Bethlehem.

In 2013 the bank was recognized for its community involvement and volunteerism through two awards: Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce's The Spirit of Forks Award and the Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley's Spirit of Volunteerism Award.

For more information, visit www.merchantsbangor.com.



Pictured with the students are, from left, Rocco Del Vecchio, Louise Communale, Sister Maria Luz and David Ceraul.

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Phone 610-437-5588

www.RichMarFlorist.com



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Catholic Grandparents on a Mission to Share Their Faith

By TARA CONNOLLY
Staff writer

Art and Jo Garcia, parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker, Orefield, love passing down family traditions, family stories and the Catholic faith to their grandchildren. Sharing family traditions and stories seemed effortless, so they set out to learn more about passing down the faith.

After coming across information about the International Catholic Grandparents Association, the couple immediately began implementing a group at the parish and marked its first anniversary June 18.

"The mission of the association is to help grandparents share the Catholic faith within their families, especially with their grandchildren. We do this with prayer, sharing and fellowship. The goal is to serve all the parishes in the Diocese," said Art.

The Catholic Grandparents Association is a global organization of the faithful.

An integral part of the Catholic Grandparents Association is setting up branches at the parish level. These act as prayer and support groups for grandparents.

The organization recognizes the unique vocations of grandparents that is fostered and cherished in the spirit of St. Joachim and St. Anne, the grandparents of Jesus and parents of Mary.

The group meets monthly to share ideas about fostering the faith, bringing children and grandchildren back to the faith, and supporting one another.

The diocesan association also initiated a children's prayer appeal, which invites children to compose prayers in their honor and celebrate the gifts of grandparents.

In addition, in June they invited members of Anno Domini, the young adult ministry program based at St. Joseph the



Above, members of the International Catholic Grandparents Association, located in the Allentown Diocese, meet with young adults and grandchildren to discuss the impact they had on their lives at their monthly meeting.

Right, a mural at St. Anne Church, Bethlehem, of St. Joachim and St. Anne pays tribute to the parents of the Blessed Mother and the grandparents of Jesus. (File photo)



Worker Parish, to share how their grandparents have influenced their lives.

"They especially shared how our witness planted the Catholic faith with them as they grew up. These amazing young adults are embracing the Catholic Church with vigor and are reigniting sparks that will light the fires of our faith," said Art.

"We as grandparents have a vital role in our families. We have been called to share the faith with our grandchildren and children to give them the joy and love of Jesus Christ to enrich their lives in this challenging society world," he said.

Representatives of the group were also invited to the Oct. 30 meeting of the Diocesan Commission for Young Adults. Bishop Schlert asked them there to discuss possible collaborations between young adults and the elderly.

It was a very fruitful discussion. The Bishop is very passionate about connecting the two age demographics, and it was evident at the meeting that the commission members were very excited by the potential of collaborating with the Catholic Grandparents Association.

The Catholic Grandparents Association was founded in 2002 in Ireland by Catherine Wiley. She wanted to honor the Blessed Virgin on her birthday which is Sept. 8. It began as a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock in Ireland, which was attended by 14,000 grandparents and grandchildren.

Wiley, a grandparent herself, wanted to remind grandparents that they have a vocation to pass on the Catholic faith to their grandchildren.

Grandparents, with the wisdom of their years and having grown in their faith, can help their children and grandchildren in many ways – emotionally, physically and spiritually. Grandparents have a vital role to play in the Church and in today's busy families.

The Catholic Grandparents Association meets at St. Joseph the Worker parish center, but the meetings are open to all parishioners of the Diocese of Allentown.

Catholic grandparents are invited to the meetings every third week of the month, alternating on Saturday morning after the 8:30 a.m. Mass or Tuesday evening after the 7 p.m. Mass.

For more information, email garcia1047@ptd.net or visit www.catholic-grandparentsassociation.org.



Participate in #GivingTuesday for Catholic Charities

#GivingTuesday is a global giving day following Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday. #GivingTuesday focuses on charitable giving in the spirit of Thanksgiving.

It is an opportunity for the faithful of the Diocese of Allentown to come together and raise money and awareness for Catholic Charities on Tuesday, Dec. 3.

Thanks to a generous donor, all #GivingTuesday gifts will be matched when we reach \$10,000.

As you begin to celebrate the holiday

season, please keep Catholic Charities' clients and those most in need in our community in your prayers.

A \$25 gift will provide 12 meals at one of our soup kitchens – with the gift matched, you're now providing 24 meals. Or two cases of diapers for families with younger children.

You don't even have to wait until Dec. 3.

For more information about or to make a gift to Catholic Charities, visit www.CatholicCharityAD.org.



Walnutport Knights Donate Five Cases of Coats

St. Nicholas Knights of Columbus Council 16656 of Walnutport recently donated five cases of new winter coats to support the Knights "Coats for Kids" program. This shipment was headed for local elementary schools in the Northampton Area School District and St. John Neumann Regional School, Palmerton-Slatington. Families struggling to make ends meet use their scarce resources for basic needs and cannot always afford a new winter coat. The goal of the Coats for Kids program is to ensure that no child in North America goes without a coat during the winter. Knights councils across the county have distributed hundreds of thousands of new winter coats to children since the program's inception.

St. Ignatius Loyola Regional School Launches New STREAM Curriculum

By TARA CONNOLLY
Staff writer

Thanks to supporters of St. Ignatius Loyola Regional School, Sinking Spring, the elementary school broadened the popular STEM (acronym for science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum and instead launched an innovative curriculum called STREAM – science technology, religion, engineering, arts and math.

School staff, faculty and board members hosted STREAM night Oct. 17 to introduce and explore the many new acquisitions for the school's STREAM Program with students, family, friends and members of the community.

STEM is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines in an interdisciplinary and applied approach. Rather than teach the four disciplines as separate and discrete subjects, STEM integrates them into a cohesive learning paradigm based on real-world applications. At St. Ignatius the disciplines of religion and art were incorporated into the paradigm.

Kelly Berry, science teacher, said STREAM is the result of the school community's yearlong study to determine ways to fortify and continue the legacy of academic excellence, heighten the level of academic function and reach a wider number of students.

"We began to consider some ways in which we could truly enhance our school's academics and bring 21st century learning skills into the forefront of what we are doing, under the scope of a strong and comprehensive Christ-centered education," said Berry.

The school community and board decided STREAM would be the focus of its annual fundraiser – The Inspire Dinner and Auction.

"We were met with generosity and overwhelming support from our school and parish community. Through the magnanimity of the event's attendees, a strong supportive community and the tireless work of the event's organizers, we were

blessed to receive over \$35,000."

With funding from the dinner and auction, said Berry, the school acquired many items to establish STREAM, including Keva Planks, Blocksmith License, Cubelets Modular Robotics Kits, Dash Robots and accessories, and Cue Robots and accessories.

The popular Dash Robots and accessories, according to Berry, are smart enough to respond to voices and sounds. It has the capability to entertain and teach while singing and dancing, which makes for a fun and interactive learning experience for kids.

In addition, the school purchased MakeCode platform; Pre-Algebra Learning Center Kit, infrared thermometer; digital velocity speed gun; K'nex Renewable Energy Kits; handheld camera microscopes; Happy Atoms Complete Set; Punnett Square Set; Genetics Set; Fish and Onion Mitosis Slides; and BrickLAB Zoology.

Piquing the interest of most students is the digital velocity speed gun – which when pointed and shot at an object in motion accurately measures speed, and of objects in motion.

The extensive list also includes a Digital Video Lab; Science Discover Dynamics; Discover Engineer; Lego Mindstorm Robots; collaborative dry erase tables; Green Screen Technology; Augmented Reality Headsets; and Bee Bot Robot.

After spending months making STREAM a reality, Berry said the curriculum has sparked an increase in learning among the student body and a deepening of the faith.

"We brought our Catholic identity to STEM. We cannot be any prouder," she said.

"We cannot emphasize the generosity of our donors," said Berry.

"Without them, we would not be able to create such a successful, strong and comprehensive STREAM program within our school. We are truly blessed by our school, community, church and donors that they saw the value in our vision and helped to bring it to fruition."



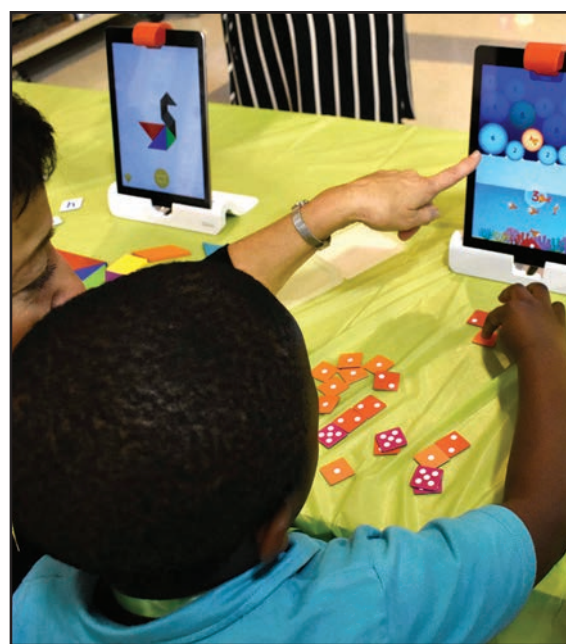
Carolyn Wood, principal of St. Ignatius Loyola Regional School, Sinking Spring, cuts a ribbon to officially open the new collaboration. (Photos by John Simitz)



Above, Maribeth Johns, left, first grade teacher, shows Jackson Pemrick how to operate one of the new robots.

Right, Zelle Zudie plays an educational game on one of the newly acquired iPads.

Left, Students enjoy learning while using the Cubelet Modular Robotics Kits.



More photos
on the diocesan website
www.allentowndiocese.org
under "Latest News"
on the homepage.



Institute for Catechesis and Formation Course

The Institute for Catechesis and Formation is offering the following courses. ICF courses are meant for any adult Catholic looking to grow deeper and learn more about the faith. There are no prerequisites for these courses.

Live courses cost \$30 per course; on-line courses \$35. Register at www.allentowndiocese.org/icf.

CAT I – The Creed

An overview of fundamental Catholic teachings based on the founding symbol

of our faith. This course provides catechists with a foundation in the basic tenets of the Catholic Faith, and is a good starting point leading to further study. The course is highly recommended for catechists; but everyone is invited to learn more about what it means to say, I believe....

Presented online by Cassie Boccardi, Monday, Jan. 6 to Sunday, Feb. 2, 2020.



Polar Plunge to Benefit Marian High School

The Seventh Annual "Be Cool for Our School" Polar Plunge to benefit Marian High School, Tamaqua will take place Saturday, Jan. 25 at Mauch Chunk Lake in Jim Thorpe.

Registration is \$35 and is open from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The first plungers will hit the water at noon.

Registration is not limited to plungers. Participants may register as a "chicken" to show their support but stay dry.

A commemorative T-shirt will be included with a plunger or chicken regis-

tration. With the exception of Marian students, all plungers must be 18 or older.

The event is family-friendly and will feature a DJ. Food and beverage will be available for purchase. There is no fee for spectators.

To preregister or for more information, email mchspolarplunge@gmail.com; call Kathy Goff, 610-704-8037; or Facebook "MCHS Polar Plunge."

It is Good to Give Thanks

The readings that can be used in the United States for Thanksgiving Day all focus on the theme of giving thanks. The Book of Sirach calls us to "Bless the God of all, who has done wondrous things on the earth."

The Responsorial Psalm is "Lord, I thank you for your faithfulness and love."

The New Testament reading is the beginning of Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he says, "I give thanks to my God always on your account, for the grace of God bestowed on you in Jesus Christ."

And finally, the Gospel passage is from Luke about the 10 lepers that were cleansed, but only one, the foreigner, returns to give thanks to God.

There is so much to be thankful for and yet, I think the gospel has the statistics pretty close to what we probably experience today; only 10% of those who have received something to be thankful for will actually express it. Why do you think that is so?

Perhaps it's because the things we should be thankful for are the ordinary things that we have come to expect and take for granted. Maybe we assume that the person we should express our gratitude to (and that includes God), knows that we are grateful so why belabor the obvious?

Or maybe it's because we have fallen into the trap of finding the negative aspect of a situation and complain rather than see the goodness and give thanks.

When we celebrate Thanksgiving, do we take time to be thankful? Do we reflect on our blessings and give thanks, or are we stressed about the preparations for the day or the extra traffic in getting to our destination, or eating food, or watching

football, or getting a jump on our Christmas shopping? How much time do we spend on really giving thanks?

I have a family member who has gone through three bouts of chemo for cancer and is now in remission again. One day, in the course of our conversation, she told me that, although it may seem strange, she views the cancer she has had in her life as a blessing.

The reason for that is until then, she had really taken for granted how important the little things in her life, the people in her life and her faith in God are. She appreciates every day and all it brings, which she never fully did before the cancer.

To go along with that thought, a number of years ago I found a poem that I included in my Thanksgiving homily. It was written by Nancy Carboy and first appeared in Family Circle Magazine 20 years ago and goes like this:

"I am thankful for the mess to clean up after a party, because it means I have been surrounded by friends.

"I am thankful for the taxes I pay, because it means I am employed.

"I am thankful for the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.

"I am thankful for my shadow that watches me work, because it means I am out in the sunshine.

"I am thankful for a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.

"I am thankful for the spot I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking.

"I am thankful for my big heating bill, because it

By Father Stan Moczydlowski,
pastor of St. Anthony of Padua,
Easton.



means I am warm.

"I am thankful for the lady behind me in church that sings off key, because it means I can hear.

"I am thankful for the piles of laundry and ironing, because it means my loved-ones are nearby.

"I am thankful for weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day, because it means I have been productive.

"I am thankful for that alarm that goes off early in the morning, because it means I am alive."

All this is food for thought, but remember the greatest gift we have is the Eucharist (which is Greek for Thanksgiving). The Eucharist is God himself, coming to us in such an intimate and personal way.

When we receive this great gift of God himself, do we even take the time to reflect on the gift we have received and God's importance in our lives?

As a people created in the image of God, we are created to give thanks. When we give thanks to God in the midst of our troubles, we force ourselves to stare at the answer.

Throughout today and each day, look for opportunities to thank God for small things at work, at home or just as you go about your day.

Remember that having a thankful heart doesn't change God, it changes us. Give thanks for a change.

4 Reasons to Buy Life Insurance

► You don't want to gamble with your family's financial future. As great as you might feel today, everything can change in an instant. Ask yourself this question, "Would my loved ones suffer financially if I died tomorrow?" If the answer is "yes," you need life insurance. It's that simple.

► The longer you wait, the more expensive it will be. Premiums rise as you get older. The longer you wait, the greater the chance you may encounter an illness or

accident that could severely limit or even eliminate the possibility of buying life insurance.

► If you put it off, you may never get to it. Face it, we all procrastinate. Especially when it comes to dealing with uncomfortable subjects like your death or declining health. It's best to confront these topics now, while you still can. Life is uncertain. Tomorrow may be too late.

► It's never been more affordable. We offer a number of products, and one is sure to fit your needs and budget.

Don't let these 5 excuses stop you from getting the life insurance you need

Excuses. Think about this...

It's too expensive.

Not having adequate coverage could be more costly to your family.

I haven't gotten around to it.

There are no guarantees in life, so don't procrastinate.

I prefer to put my money elsewhere.

Might work if you're sure you're going to live a nice long life.

I worry about making the wrong decision.

A qualified insurance professional can answer all your questions and guide you through the buying process.

The coverage I have through my employer is sufficient.

Typically, employers provide a modest amount of coverage, and you can't take it with you if you leave your job.

- Rates "lock-in" at the age you enroll – never go up again!
- Proceeds paid directly to your beneficiary.
- Builds cash value.
- Policy cannot be canceled because of changes in health
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- Payment options include monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual
- Payments can be automatically deducted from your checking/savings account

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Cristo Vuelve

Por DIÁCONO JOSÉ SANTOS

Jesucristo viene en el momento oportuno, no se atrasa en su llegada, Él está a la puerta. En la biblia leemos la historia de la primera venida de Jesús, nacido de la Santísima Virgen María, y mantenemos viva nuestra esperanza en su segunda venida. Al final del año litúrgico recordamos las promesas de Jesús. La palabra de Dios nos invita a estar preparados, en cualquier momento sucederá el cumplimiento de las promesas proféticas.

“Dicho esto, mientras ellos lo estaban mirando, Jesús fue levantado, y una nube lo envolvió y no lo volvieron a ver. Y mientras miraban fijamente al cielo, viendo cómo Jesús se alejaba, dos hombres vestidos de blanco se aparecieron junto a ellos y les dijeron: —Galileos, ¿por qué se han quedado mirando al cielo? Este mismo Jesús que estuvo entre ustedes y que ha sido llevado al cielo, vendrá otra vez de la misma manera que lo han visto irse allá” (Hc 1, 9-11).

“Al celebrar anualmente la liturgia de Adviento, la Iglesia actualiza esta espera



del Mesías: participando en la larga preparación de la primera venida del Salvador, **los fieles renuevan el ardiente deseo de su segunda Venida.** Celebrando la natividad y el martirio del Precursor, la Iglesia se une al deseo de éste: ‘Es preciso que él crezca y que yo disminuya’”. (CIC 524). Antes del advenimiento de Cristo, la Iglesia deberá pasar por una prueba final que sacudirá la fe de numerosos creyentes” (CIC 675).

Hoy debemos estar muy atentos a los signos de los tiempos, tanto las profecías bíblicas como como las enseñanzas de la Iglesia citadas en los numerales del Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica. No hay que alarmarse por los acontecimientos que ya se van cumpliendo en los tiempos actuales, pero si tomar como aviso para nuestra conversión personal y ocuparnos cada vez más de que todos entren al Reino de

los cielos.

En lo personal, estoy convencido que los ataques contra los cristianos generalizados alrededor del mundo, son una muestra del cumplimiento de las profecías, me ayudan a despertar, me mueven a evangelizar cada vez más a los que vienen atrás, descuidados de la búsqueda de Dios en el momento presente.

Creo firmemente, que no hay tiempo que perder, el mismo Señor por medio del apóstol Pablo nos invita a permanecer en constante oración, para vencer los dardos incendiados del enemigo de las almas con el combate espiritual del cristiano.

“Y ahora, hermanos, busquen su fuerza en el Señor, en su poder irresistible. Protéjanse con toda la armadura que Dios les ha dado, para que puedan estar firmes contra los engaños del diablo. Porque no estamos luchando contra

poderes humanos, sino contra malignas fuerzas espirituales del cielo, las cuales tienen mando, autoridad y dominio sobre el mundo de tinieblas que nos rodea. Por eso, tomen toda la armadura que Dios les ha dado, para puedan resistir en el día malo y, después de haberse preparado bien, mantenerse firmes.

“Así que manténganse firmes, revestidos de la verdad y protegidos por la rectitud. Estén siempre listos para salir a anunciar el mensaje de la paz. Sobre todo, que su fe sea el escudo que los libre de las flechas encendidas del maligno. Que la salvación sea el casco que proteja su cabeza, y que la palabra de Dios sea la espada que les da el Espíritu Santo. No dejen ustedes de orar: rueguen y pidan a Dios siempre, guiados por el Espíritu. Manténganse alerta, sin desanimarse, y oren por todo el pueblo santo” (Ef 6, 10-18).

Con estos consejos, si nos mantenemos firmes en la fe, si nuestra vida es de mucha y sincera oración, no hay fuerza maligna que pueda desviarnos del Amor de Cristo, quien venció a su enemigo. Jesús está contigo y María santísima también, sus ángeles te protegen, sigue hasta el final, “Al fin mi corazón inmaculado triunfará”. Gloria a Jesucristo.

St. Ann Plans Holiday Mass of Remembrance

For many, Christmas can be a difficult time of year without loved ones, no matter how recently or long ago they passed.

The Grief Support Committee at St. Ann Church in Emmaus invites everyone to take a short respite from the holiday hustle and bustle to pray together for our beloved deceased at the Annual Holiday Mass of Remembrance, Saturday, Dec. 14 at 1 p.m.

In addition to remembering our de-

parted loved ones, the Mass will focus on our own healing as we prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

All are invited to add loved ones' name/s in the special Remembrance Book in the main vestibule of the church from 12:15 to 12:50 p.m., and to place a flower in the Memorial Bouquet in commemoration of your Mass intentions (one flower per family will be provided).

Names of those remembered will be read during Mass, which will be celebrated by St. Ann's Pastor Father Edward Coyle.

A light reception and fellowship will follow in the school cafeteria.

For more information, call Annmarie at 610-965-9355.

Registration forms (although not re-



quired) may be found on the St. Ann Parish website at www.churchstann.org.

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Rosary Rally in Roseto

Over 30 people joined together Oct. 12 at noon at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Roseto to pray the rosary. The Rosary Rally was in conjunction with parishes all over the United States as part of America Needs Fatima. The month of October each year is dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary. This is primarily because the liturgical feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is celebrated annually Oct. 7.



Death

Religious Sister

Sister M. Colleen Birmingham, 82, a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, died Nov. 14 in Philadelphia.

Sister taught in various schools in the Diocese of Allentown in Northampton and Coplay, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Palos Heights, Ill. She served in parish ministry in West Virginia, New York and Florida. Sister also was assigned to foreign missions in Namibia, Africa.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Nov. 21 in the chapel of Sacred Heart Villa, Reading, followed by burial in the convent cemetery.

Upcoming Issues of The A.D. Times

Publication Date

Dec. 19

2020

Jan. 9

Jan. 23

Feb. 6

Feb. 20

March 5

March 19

April 2

April 16

April 30

Ad Deadline

Dec. 9

Dec. 30

Jan. 13

Jan. 27

Feb. 10

Feb. 24

March 9

March 23

April 6

April 20

News Deadline

Dec. 12

Jan. 2

Jan. 16

Jan. 30

Feb. 13

Feb. 27

March 12

March 26

April 9

April 23

BENEFIT CONCERT

FOR THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

CONSTANTIA
(Choir from the Philadelphia Korean Catholic Church)

2019. 12. 08(Sun) at 3 PM

Silent Auction after the concert

Precious Blood Chapel
1094 Welsh Rd. Reading, PA 19607

St. Benedict Parish

9th Annual Advent Vespers

Festival of Carols and Lessons

When: Sunday, December 15, 2019

Time: 6:00PM

Where: St. Benedict Parish
2020 Chestnut Hill Road
Mohnton (Plowville) PA, 19560

Please join our Parish Choir, under the direction of Andrew Angstadt, as we prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus Christ. During this season of running around let us take a moment and reflect on the true meaning of the season. Join us for scripture and music that will fill your spirits!

Our Parish Choir will be joined with a professional String Quartet and our Women's Club will be providing free refreshments for all who attend.

O Come All Ye Faithful!!!

Local Director of Missionary Childhood Association Steps into Blogging

By TARA CONNOLLY
Staff writer

Holly Benner, mission education director for the Diocese of Allentown and national coordinator for Missionary Childhood Association (MCA), believes the glory of the Catholic faith and her journey to conversion needs to be shared, and has entered the blogging world to share her passion.

After being named mission education director in 2016, Benner was also appointed the national coordinator in 2019. As national coordinator and MCA being part of the Pontifical Mission Societies that operates in New York City, part of Benner's responsibilities was to launch a blog.

The monthly blog, "Hol(l)y Headlines," which she began authoring last March, looks at extraordinary priests she has encountered, stories of martyrs and answering God's call to serve the poor.

"It is a way for me to tell my story of my conversion, calling and experiences of serving the poor in the missions," said Benner.

With a deep passion for the missions and experience in making mission real at the diocesan level, Benner has traveled frequently to Africa as president of a faith-based nonprofit organization that she founded, focused on developing sustainable water resources among poor communities.

By blogging about her experiences, she has catapulted her stories to the national level.

"There is a lot of good news about our

Catholic faith, and it is time to start sharing it," said Benner.

Her most recent blog, "An Extraordinary Missionary Priest," shares the story of Father Thomas Kevin Kraft, a native of the Allentown Diocese, whom she encountered during an RCIA class while seeking to become a full member of the Catholic Church.

"Father Kevin made a sacrifice to leave the comfort of his home here in the United States. He had felt called to serve the poor in mission countries, spending most of his ministerial life (30-plus years) in missionary work," wrote Benner.

"Father Kevin faced some dangerous challenges throughout his mission work. While living in Lima for a couple of years, he was surrounded by car bombings and electrical lines toppling to black out the city, along with being robbed for material items and money.

"In 1991 he lived in Chimbote, where he had worked for five years. The 'Shining Path' movement began threatening foreign priests and tried to blackmail the bishop into resigning while Father Kevin was living there."

Another blog entry recounts her 20th anniversary of being baptized in the Catholic Church on the Easter Vigil and a reflection on the needs of people in Third World countries:

"Unfortunately, we know that many children in developing countries live a far different reality, not only during the Easter Season but also during the hours of each day – a reality filled more with the suffering and sacrifice of Good Friday



Holly Benner, front third from right, mission education director and national coordinator of Missionary Childhood Association, joins priests and women religious during National Mission Day in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

and less with the joy and hope of Easter Sunday.

"Throughout my mission travels, I have witnessed many missionaries who have been called to serve the poor by working toward providing everyday necessities for children."

Benner's November blog is expected

to coincide with the Thanksgiving holiday with a focus on gratitude.

To access or subscribe to the blog, visit <https://www.missio.org/#1> under Holly Headlines.

To contact Benner, email holly@stmchurchallentown.org or call 610-433-7413.

Talent to 'Spare' at Inaugural Priest Bowling Tournament



Above, Father Christopher Zelonis, left, pastor of SS. Peter and Paul, Lehigh-ton, was the first place finisher in the inaugural Priest Bowling Tournament Nov. 12 at the Rose Bowl in Allentown. Second place went to Father Mark Searles, right, chaplain of Allentown Central Catholic High School and director of vocations promotion; and third to Father John Gibbons, center, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Conception BVM churches, Allentown.

Right, the tournament was organized by Father George Winne, second from left, assistant pastor of Sacred Heart and Immaculate Conception BVM, Allentown, along with Jim Krupka, principal of Sacred Heart School, not pictured. Other participants are, from left: Father Anthony Mongiello, pastor of St. Anne, Bethlehem; Father Frans Berkhout, in residence at St. Anne; Father Gibbons; Father Stephan Isaac, assistant pastor of St. Ignatius Loyola, Sinking Spring; Father Zelonis; and Father Searles. Not pictured is participant Father Thomas Bortz, pastor of St. Ignatius. The priest participants enjoyed great fraternity and competition, followed by a meal and celebration dinner. Thankfully no injuries were sustained, and a great time was had by all.



Holy Sepulchre Investiture in New York City

Bishop of Allentown Alfred Schlert was invested in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem as a Knight Chaplain Commander With Star Oct. 5 at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City by Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, the order's grand master in Rome.

Dame Linda Lapos was invested as a Dame Commander With Star.

Other members of the order from the Diocese of Allentown were in attendance for this Mass.

There are 12 knights and two dames of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as two Bishop knight chaplains, five priest knight chaplains and two deacon knight chaplains among the clergy in the Diocese.

The lay institution is charged with providing for the needs of the Latin Pa-

triarchate of Jerusalem and for all the activities and initiatives to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land and Jordan.

Pictured are, from left: front, Monsignor William Bayer, KCHS (Knight Chaplain Commander); Sir Michael McGovern, KHS (Knight); Dame Linda Lapos, DC*HS (newly invested Dame Commander With Star); Bishop Alfred Schlert, KC*HS (newly invested Knight Chaplain Commander With Star); Sir Louis James, KHS; Sir Robert Miller, KHS; Sir Eugenio Melendez, KCHS (Knight Commander); back, Sir Arnold Traupman, KHS; Sir Michael Toohey, KHS; and Sir John Spirk, KHS.



Among the participants are, from left, Kathy Dalton, Sister Mary Veronica Kulzar, Sister Marie Pauline Demek, Maryann Sheerin, Jack Yanity, Anne Tredici, Karen Yanity, Sister Marie Colette Martelli, Elizabeth Kajajain, Louise Sarfas, Elaine Thornberry and Sister Ann Marie Paul.

Companions of Pauline Celebrate Blessed Pauline 'In Legacy and in Glory'

Seventy Companions of Pauline of the Sisters of Christian Charity and the moderators recently held their annual retreat at the Motherhouse in Mendham, New Jersey. Theme for the day was "Mother Pauline in Legacy and in Glory."

Sister Ann Marie Paul, director of the Neighborhood Center for Women in Passaic, New Jersey spoke at the morning session focusing on our legacy titled "In Response to God's Call: New Wine in New Wineskins."

Sister presented the results of the Eastern Provincial Chapter in Mendham and the 24th General Chapter in Paderborn, Germany. The celebration of the liturgy and dinner together with all the sisters of the motherhouse followed.

Sister Marie Pauline Demek, provin-

cial councilor and director of Villa Pauline Retreat and Spiritual Center, Mendham, gave the afternoon presentation, "Enjoying Life in the Communion of Saints."

She shared a deeper understanding of the Communion of Saints through the lens of Scripture, Vatican Council II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Church history. She provided ideas to celebrate and reimagine All Saints Day and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed.

After consideration of one's own call to holiness in today's world, the day ended with the Companions of Pauline praying a litany of the Church's most recent saints.

Christmas Anthology for Teens Debuts

Seeing a dearth in Christmas literature for Catholic teens, eight authors from the burgeoning group Catholic Teen Books have compiled their original gift-themed short stories into a collection to appear beneath the tree in the homes of Catholic families.

"Gifts: Visible and Invisible" includes stories by Catholic Press Association award-winning authors Corinna Turner ("A Very Jurassic Christmas Eve"), Leslea Wahl ("Christmas Angel") and Cynthia Toney ("Signs of Christmas").

Each story stands alone, but some include characters tied to the authors' full-length novels, as in the case of Theresa Linden's "Operation Gift Drop."

In the foreword by Cathy Gilmore, founder and executive director of Virtue Works Media, she writes, "I'm confident that you'll be surprised by how much you enjoy these stories that portray an array of genres, from warm family calamity to action-packed futuristic friendship."

Among the stories, you'll find beloved saint novelist Susan Peek's "The Outlaw's Gift," Pauline Books author Katy Huth Jones' "In the Steps of a Saint," T.M. Gaouette's examination of the meaning of Christmas "Just Jesus," and Carolyn Astfalk's family tale "A Perfect Christmas."

"These eight stories entertain and edify the young-adult reader and satisfy that Christmas craving for something more, which can only be filled by Jesus," according to Today's Catholic Teacher managing editor and CatholicMom.com

editor, Barb Szyszkiewicz.

"Gifts: Visible and Invisible" is the second anthology published by Catholic Teen Books authors. The first, "Secrets: Visible and Invisible" (2018), took third place in the 2019 Catholic Press Association's Book Awards in the Teen and Young Adults category (behind Corinna Turner's "Elfling" and Leslea Wahl's "Where You Lead").

Catholic Teen Books was created in 2017 by a core group of authors seeking to fill a need for well-written, entertaining novels that support, rather than undermine the faith or values of Catholic teen readers and their families, unlike many that currently fill the young adult market.

For more information, including a catalog, book links, and teacher resources, visit CatholicTeenBooks.com.

Carolyn Astfalk, a native of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, resides in the Diocese of Harrisburg, where she and her family are members of Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Middletown.

She is vice president of the Catholic Writers Guild, and in addition to her own contemporary Catholic romances, writes regularly for CatholicMom.com and Today's Catholic Teacher magazine. She formerly served as communications director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference 1995-2005.

"Gifts: Visible and Invisible" is available in both ebook and paperback formats wherever books are sold.

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Calendar

Editor's note: E-mail, fax or mail Church-affiliated items for the Calendar page (Calendar, Retreats, Socials, Festivals, Bazaars, Trips) to: email, adtimes@allentowndiocese.org; fax, 610-439-7694; The A.D. Times, P.O. Box F, Allentown, PA 18105-1538.

Items must be received by Thursday of the week before publication. Please type or print. Please notify The A.D. Times if bingos and other regularly listed events are cancelled for the summer or other holiday periods, and again when they resume. Please do not send items again after they are published.

For more information, e-mail adtimes@allentowndiocese.org or call 610-871-5200, ext. 2264.

Tuesday, Dec. 3

#GivingTuesday, largest global giving day of the year, including Catholic Charities, www.allentowndiocese.org/catholic-charities/about.

Thursday, Dec. 5

Homeschool Families First Friday Gathering, St. Anne, 450 E. Washington Ave., Bethlehem, 6 p.m., followed by adoration and confessions until 7 p.m., and informal social, 610-866-0791 ext. 332 or kbobbin@allentowndiocese.org.

Friday, Dec. 6

"Catholic Questions and Answers," Dunkin' Donuts, Pottsville, First Fridays evangelization effort by Monsignor Edward O'Connor and Father Barnabas Shayo of St. Patrick Church, Pottsville, 6 p.m., 570-622-1802.

Eucharistic Adoration, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Easton, after 8:15 a.m. Mass until 10 p.m. with benediction, Divine Mercy Chaplet 3 p.m., rosary 7:30 for more vocations to priesthood and religious life.

Saturday, Dec. 7

Holiday Hop Dance, St. John the Baptist, Allentown, social hall, 7-10 p.m., \$5, BYOB, doors and kitchen open 6:30 p.m., 610-432-3505.

Coal Region Ethnic Dinner, St. Clare of Assisi, St. Clair, church hall, 5-7 p.m., advance tickets only \$12, kids meal \$6, 570-622-6600 or 570-429-0370; inclement weather date Sunday, Dec. 8.

National Appeal for Retired Religious, also Sunday, Dec. 8.

Saturday, Dec. 7 – Sunday, Dec. 15

Simbang Gabi, Filipino Community, nine night Masses, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Easton, 7:30 p.m. each night, Bishop Schlert celebrant Sunday, Dec. 15, followed by fellowship with refreshments.

Sunday, Dec. 8

Spaghetti Dinner, St. Patrick, 319 Mahantongo St., Pottsville, parish center, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., adults \$8, children \$3.50, 570-622-1802.

Wednesday, Dec. 11

Hoagie Sale, First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association, pickup at St. Teresa of Calcutta, Mahanoy City, 6-9 a.m., \$5, order by Wednesday, Dec. 4, 570-773-2771.

Saturday, Dec. 14

Christmas Luncheon and Meeting, Catholic Woman's Club of Berks County, Chef Alan's, West Reading, 12:30 p.m., 610-621-8699.

Saturday, Dec. 28

Mass of the Holy Innocents, Tridentine Mass, St. Stephen of Hungary, 510 W. Union St., Allentown, 7 p.m.; veneration of relics of St. Gianna, patron saint of mothers, unborn children and physicians; child's blanket blessing, bring your child's or another's blanked to be blessed tonight; followed by Respect-Life Reception; 267-261-2122 or bsalantri@gmail.com.

Tuesday, Dec. 31

New Year's Eve Eucharistic Adoration, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Easton, after 7 p.m. Mass until midnight, ending with benediction.

Retreats

Wednesday, Dec. 4

"Anticipation: The Challenges and Blessings of Waiting," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/

AdventDayofPrayer.

Friday, Dec. 6 – Sunday Dec. 8

"Advent Weekend Directed Retreat," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/directedretreats_bylength.

Friday, Dec. 13 – Thursday, Dec. 19

"Five-Day Advent Directed Retreat," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/directedretreats_bylength.

"Love Beyond All Telling: Advent Journey of Faith," St. Francis Center for Renewal, Bethlehem, \$165, stfranciscenter@gmail.com, www.franciscctr.org, 610-867-8890.

Monday, Dec. 16

"Franciscan Christmas," St. Francis Retreat House, Easton, 6 p.m., \$30, register by Monday, Dec. 9, www.stfrancisretreathouse.org, 610-258-3053, ext. 10.

Thursday, Jan. 2 – Monday, Feb. 3

"The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius," 30-day silent retreat, Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/spiritual_exercises.

Wednesday, Jan. 8

"Take Nothing for the Journey: Packing for the Year Ahead," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/NewYearDayofPrayer.

Friday, Jan. 10 – Saturday, Jan. 18

"Seven-Day Directed Retreat," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/directedretreats_bylength.

Friday, Jan. 24 – Sunday, Jan. 26

"Weekend Directed Retreat," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/directedretreats_bylength.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

"Rend Your Hearts." Ash Wednesday day of prayer, Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/AshWednesdayDayofPrayer.

Friday, March 6 – Sunday, March 8

"Lenten Weekend Directed Retreat," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/directedretreats_bylength.

Saturday, March 28

"Lenten Day of Prayer on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.," Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org, www.jesuitcenter.org/LentenDayPrayer.

Bazaars/Festivals

Saturday, Dec. 7

Christmas Bazaar and Flea Market, St. Joseph, 1018 N. Eighth St., Reading, 8 a.m.-6 p.m., 610-376-2976.

Christmas Craft Bazaar, Holy Guardian Angels, 3125 Kutztown Road, Reading, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., 610-929-3544.

Saturday, Dec. 7 – Sunday, Dec. 8

Christmas Festival, SS. Peter and Paul, Lehighton, parish hall, Saturday 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m.-noon, 570-500-2276.

Christmas Crafts and Food Festival, St. Columbkil, Boyertown, Quinn Hall, Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m.-1 p.m., 484-529-5423.

Sunday, Dec. 8

Cookies and Crafts for Christmas, St. Nicholas, 4412 Mountain View Drive, Route 946, Walnutport, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., 610-360-4708 or 610-703-4943.

Saturday, Dec. 14

Holiday Artisan Showcase and Sale, St. Catharine of Siena, 4975 Boyertown Pike, Reading, social hall, 5:30-8:30 p.m., aimpellizzeri@scsreading.org.

Sundays

Bingo, St. Joseph, Summit Hill, 6:30 p.m.
Bingo, Immaculate Conception School, Pen Argyl, 1

Advent and Christmas Vespers, Concerts, Shows, Special Events See Page 3

p.m., doors open 11 a.m., 610-863-4816.

Third Sundays

Bingo, Most Blessed Sacrament, Bally, 12:30 p.m., doors open 11 a.m., 610-987-8851.

Thursdays

Bingo, St. Joseph, Summit Hill, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 7 – Sunday, Dec. 8

Tricky Tray, Sacred Heart, Bethlehem, Father King Hall, Saturday 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m.-1:45 p.m., 610-330-0761.

Sunday, Dec. 8

Bingo, Knights of Columbus Council 618, St. Stephen Hall, Shenandoah, 2 p.m., doors open noon, 570-590-3270 or 570-590-1188.

Thursdays, Dec. 12; Jan. 9, 2020; Feb. 13; April 30; and Wednesday, May 13

Bingo, Knights of Columbus Council 4397, St. Thomas More, Allentown, Family Center, doors open 5:30 p.m., 610-391-8991.

Sunday, Dec. 15

Meat Bingo, St. John the Baptist, Allentown, social hall, 1 p.m., doors and kitchen open noon, 610-432-3505.

Trips

Editor's note: The A.D. Times publishes newly announced, Church-affiliated trips in every issue. The entire previously announced list is repeated as space permits.

Send Church-affiliated trips to adtimes@allentowndiocese.org by Thursday of the week before publication. Please notify The A.D. Times when seats are filled for a trip so it can be removed from the repeating list.

Trip listings include sponsoring group, destination, cost and contact information. Contact the sponsor for other details, such as times, dining location, itineraries and what is included in the cost.

Newly announced

Thursday, May 14

Holy Trinity, Whitehall, Seniors in Action to "I Left My Dignity in My Other Purse," Hunterdon Hills Playhouse, \$85, 610-262-6058.

Wednesday, May 20

St. Ann, Emmaus, Primetimers to "Queen Esther," Sight and Sound Theater, Lancaster, \$115, 610-530-8186.

Tuesday, June 30

Holy Trinity, Whitehall, Seniors in Action to "Queen Esther," Sight and Sound Theater, Lancaster, \$92, 610-262-6058.

Previously announced

Wednesday, Dec. 4

Holy Family, Nazareth, Golden Agers to Christmas Show, American Theater, Lancaster, \$96, 610-759-0576.

St. Joseph the Worker, Orefield to Christmas Show, Bird-in-Hand Dinner Theater, Lancaster, \$90, 610-392-2957, suemuel45@gmail.com.

Thursday, Dec. 5

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Hellertown, Seniors to Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, \$55, 610-360-3738.

Tuesday, Dec. 10

St. Ignatius Loyola, Sinking Spring, Seniors to "The Three Stooges," Hunterdon Hills Playhouse, Hampton, New Jersey, \$97, 610-670-2328.

Thursday, Dec. 12

St. Thomas More, Allentown to Radio City Christmas Show, New York City, \$125, 484-951-0440.

Sunday Scripture

Sunday, Dec. 1

First Sunday of Advent

First Reading
Responsorial Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel

Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalms 122:1-9
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44

Sunday, Dec. 8

Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading
Responsorial Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

Sunday, Dec. 15

Third Sunday of Advent

First Reading
Responsorial Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel

Isaiah 35:1-6a
Psalms 146:6-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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Recommended to Your Prayers by Pope Francis

Apostleship of Prayer Intention for December

Universal: That every country determine to take the necessary measures to make the future of the very young, especially those who suffer, a priority.

The monthly intentions are also available on video, with a reflection, or download the app at www.apostleshipofprayer.org.

Prayers for Priests, Deacons, Vocations

Please kindly remember in your prayers all of the living and deceased priests and deacons of our Diocese. Please also pray for our seminarians and for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Prayer for the Perseverance of Vocations

O God, you have constituted your only-begotten Son supreme and eternal priest for the glory of your majesty and the salvation of mankind: grant that those whom he has chosen ministers and dispensers of his mysteries may be found faithful in fulfilling the ministry they have received. We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Serran Prayer for Vocations

O God, who wills not the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, St. Joseph her spouse, St. Junipero Serra and all the saints, an increase of laborers for your Church, fellow laborers with Christ, to spend and consume themselves for souls through the same Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

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Pittsburgh Bishop to Colleagues in Rome: Give Everything for the Flock

ROME (CNS) – The Gospel accounts of Jesus' care for the poor and the down-trodden serves as a reminder for bishops of their responsibility to give their lives for their flock, said Bishop David Zubik of Pittsburgh.

In his homily during Mass at the Rome Basilica of St. Mary Major Nov. 25, Bishop Zubik said the day's Gospel reading of Jesus' observation of the widow who gave all that she had reveals Christ's sensitivity "in his own heart" for the least of these.

"Her very example was Jesus' charge to those who saw what happened that day – and all who would read this story in the course of now two millennia – to see its impact. What motivated the woman, the widow, was to give absolutely everything she had because of her deep love for the Lord," he said.

Bishop Zubik was the principal celebrant and homilist at the first Mass the Bishops of New Jersey and Pennsylvania celebrated during their visits "ad limina apostolorum" – to the threshold of the apostles – to report on the status of their dioceses.

The U.S. Bishops' last "ad limina" visits were eight years ago, in 2011-12.

At St. Mary Major, the Bishops celebrated Mass in the chapel that houses the Marian icon "Salus Populi Romani" (health of the Roman people).

After the Mass, the Bishops walked down the stairs under the basilica's main altar to pray before the silver reliquary

that houses what tradition holds is a relic of the manger where Christ was born.

In his homily, Bishop Zubik noted the timeliness of Jesus' message at the start of their pilgrimage.

"It seems to me that it's most appropriate that, as you and I begin this 'ad limina apostolorum,' we spend a little bit of time reflecting on the action of the widow but especially on the teaching of Jesus," he said.

In Jesus' time, he explained, the condition of widows was "mighty precarious; they didn't have the kind of insurance plans we have today."

Nevertheless, the Gospel reading is one of many scriptural accounts in which Jesus shows his affection for widows and others rejected by society, and a reminder for his followers "of the necessity to somehow respond" to their care, said Bishop Zubik.

He also recalled that, years ago, he received a coffee table book of artwork by Dutch artist Rien Poortvliet that depicted moments in Jesus' life, including the scene of the day's Gospel reading, which "moved" him.

Bishop Zubik said he keeps the book opened to that specific artistic depiction to remind him "of the two realities of Jesus' teaching."

"First of all, that I (may) always strive to give everything in my heart for the sake of God's people" and "that I never forget the important privilege and responsibility to care our mother, the Church," he said.



U.S. Bishops from New Jersey and Pennsylvania concelebrate Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome Nov. 25. (CNS photo/Junno Arocho Esteves)



After Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome Nov. 25, the Bishops walked down the stairs under the basilica's main altar to pray before the silver reliquary that houses what tradition holds is a relic of the manger where Christ was born. (CNS photo/Junno Arocho Esteves)



Bishop Schlerf walks into the Mass with the other Bishops from Region III. (Photo courtesy of Anne-Marie Welsh, director of communications, Diocese of Erie)



The Bishops celebrate Mass Tuesday morning, Nov. 26 at the Basilica of St. John Lateran (Photo by Paul Wirth)

Left, Bishop Schlerf on Nov. 26 in Rome, in the Basilica of St. John Lateran. (Photo by Paul Wirth)

Knights Still Honor Kennedy as Order's 'Most Distinguished' Member

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (CNS) – The date was Nov. 22, 1963. That day, the seemingly peaceful world of 1950s America was torn apart.

President John F. Kennedy – the first Catholic to be elected commander in chief – had been assassinated.

Grief was immediate among Catholics, including the Knights of Columbus. Knights were “overwhelmed with grief,” noted then-Supreme Knight Luke Hart, after the death of their “most distinguished” member.

Kennedy had been a member of Knights’ Columbus Bunker Hill Council 62 in Charlestown, Massachusetts, joining on St. Patrick’s Day in 1946. He became a fourth-degree Knight in 1954.

In a letter to their Supreme Convention in July 1961, Kennedy praised the Knights’ charity and service, writing that their “countless allied activities all unselfishly offered in the name of our common humanity have served to strengthen and solidify their hold on the public heart.”

But this man – who, according to Hart, “our country has never known his equal” – was now dead. Hart attended the funeral. In fact, he was the only layman seated in the sanctuary at the funeral Mass at St. Matthew’s Cathedral in Washington.

The late president adorned the January 1964 cover of *Columbia*, a magazine distributed to every member of the Knights of Columbus around the world. Hart praised Kennedy, writing:

“He had faith, education, intelligence, culture, personal charm, wisdom, breadth



U.S. President John F. Kennedy is seen at the White House Oct. 11, 1961, with Supreme Knight Luke Hart of the Knights of Columbus. Kennedy was a member of the Knights’ Bunker Hill Council 62 in Charlestown, Massachusetts, joining on St. Patrick’s Day in 1946. He became a fourth-degree Knight in 1954. (CNS photo/courtesy Knights of Columbus)

of vision, human understanding, courage and loyalty to his country and to his

God.... But he had not lived in vain. He demonstrated a truth which Catholics

have asserted since the founding of the Republic, i.e., that a Catholic might be president of the United States and that a Catholic president would prove to be worthy of that high honor.”

In February 1964 the Knights of Columbus passed a resolution extending their “most heartfelt sympathy” to Kennedy’s family and made a “firm promise” to pray for his soul. Knights continue to this day to fulfill this promise at St. Mary’s Church in New Haven – where the organization was founded – during a daily Mass offered for all deceased members.

The sympathies expressed by the executives at the Knights of Columbus at the time also were expressed by Knights throughout the fraternal order. Knights in British Columbia held living rosary devotions in memory of the late president.

Bishop Clement Smith Council 838 in Iowa held a Holy Hour for him. Every council in Maine offered a Mass for their brother Knight, while Knights in California, Kansas and parts of Canada held memorial services for him.

Other Knights of Columbus councils, more than 25 of them, named themselves after John F. Kennedy.

As noted at their Supreme Convention in 1964 held in New Orleans, the Knights of Columbus saw Kennedy as a “Knight who was never a traitor to his conscience, who never abandoned the principles in which he believed nor the people who believed in them.”

Movie Review – ‘A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood’

NEW YORK (CNS) – Last year, “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” – filmmaker Morgan Neville’s documentary about iconic public television children’s show host Fred Rogers (1928-2003) – achieved both critical acclaim and remarkable success at the box office.

With the advent of the fact-based dramatization “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” (Sony), lightning, it would seem, has struck twice.

Assigned, much against his will, to profile Rogers (Tom Hanks) for an edition of *Esquire* magazine devoted to heroes, troubled, cynical reporter Lloyd Vogel (Matthew Rhys) sets out to tarnish his subject’s halo. Instead, he finds his life transformed by the friendship into which his gentle, wise and unflappable new acquaintance gradually draws him.

In particular, Rogers helps to alter Lloyd’s embittered attitude toward his estranged father, Jerry (Chris Cooper). Though Jerry has reached out in hopes of a reconciliation, Lloyd initially remains resolute in his refusal to forget his dad’s past transgressions, especially his abandonment of the family at a moment of crisis during which he was too busy womanizing to live up to his responsibilities.

Rogers also has a positive influence on Lloyd’s marriage since the latter’s compassionate wife, Andrea (Susan Kelechi Watson), believes her husband should accept Jerry’s repentance.

In adapting a 1998 article by Lloyd’s real-life counterpart, Tom Junod, direc-

tor Marielle Heller takes interesting artistic risks with powerful emotional results. Significantly, she makes room for the thoughtful silences and quiet speech by which Rogers’ subdued manner was marked.

Visually, Heller makes her own the interplay between reality and imagination that was a trademark of “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood” throughout its long run from 1968 to 2001. A dream sequence even finds a miniaturized Lloyd dwelling temporarily in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, the realm, as many will recall, of King Friday XIII.

The movie is at its best when the mesmerizing Hanks is on screen. But the treatment of topics like forgiveness, the need to prioritize family life over professional advancement and the power of prayer (Rogers was a Presbyterian minister) are consistently handled with skill.

What emerges is the portrait of a man whose childlike delicacy and vulnerability were precisely his sources of strength – and the products of relentless discipline and hard work.

Although the script, by Micah Fitzerman-Blue and Noah Harpster, doesn’t mention the fact, Rogers had a close friendship with Benedictine Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, the leader of a monastery in Rogers’ hometown of Latrobe, Pennsylvania. That Rogers, with his high moral and spiritual aims, should have been drawn to the monastic life of Arch-



Tom Hanks stars in a scene from the movie “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.” The Catholic News Service classification is A-II – adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG – parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children. (CNS photo/Sony)

abbot Nowicki’s community, St. Vincent Archabbey, hardly seems accidental.

While Lloyd’s struggles are too dark for little kids, teens and grown-ups will profit from this explicitly humane, implicitly religious movie. The spell Rogers

cast, which could even inspire a subway car full of hard-bitten New Yorkers to join a group of schoolchildren in honoring him by joyously singing his program’s theme song, continues to exercise its magic from beyond the grave.

In Brief

New youth advisory body

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life announced it is setting up a specialized team of young Catholic leaders as advisers.

The new international advisory body was established following a proposal in the final document of the 2018 Synod of

Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment. The Vatican made the announcement Nov. 24, the feast of Christ the King.

The Youth Advisory Body consists of 20 young leaders who participated in the various phases of the synodal process, including the international youth forum in June, and who are active in Catholic lay movements, associations, communities or their respective dioceses.

“The group will have an important consultative and proposal-making role to play. They will assist the dicastery with issues related to youth ministry and other topics of more general interest,” the dicastery said on its website, www.laityfamilylife.va.

Archbishop Sheen to be beatified

PEORIA, ILL. (CNS) – Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen will be beatified Satur-

day, Dec. 21, Bishop Daniel Jenky of Peoria announced late Nov. 18. He said the Vatican had just notified him of the beatification and he was announcing the news “with great joy and thanksgiving.”

The ceremony will be at 10 a.m. local time at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria.

This is the same cathedral where (Archbishop) Sheen was ordained a priest 100 years ago on Sept. 20, 1919.