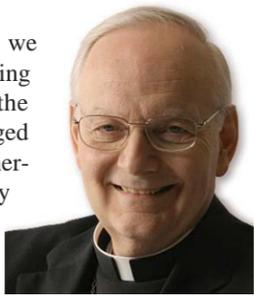


# A savior to rescue us

Dear sisters and brothers of Christ,  
During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we witnessed on television individuals risking their lives to rescue people from the rooftops of flooded homes and submerged cars. We saw National Guardsmen, emergency workers and neighbors heroically rescuing people trapped in life and death situations. Television cameras caught the expressions of joy and relief on the faces of those brought to safety.



**Bishop Donald Trautman**

Christians know the importance of being rescued. In Jesus, we have our own personal savior. "A savior has been born for you." That was the startling message of the angel to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. On that first Christmas, God the Father sent his only son to rescue us. Sin had plunged our world into spiritual decay, darkness and death. We were all stranded, unable to save ourselves; we needed to be rescued. Scripture tells us: "God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).

In the silence of a Bethlehem night, God stepped out of glory and Jesus, the son of God, became flesh and dwelt among us. He was born in the humblest maternity room in Bethlehem, a stable for animals, with a feeding trough as a crib. God who created the heavens and the earth became one of us in order to save us and to teach us how to love. He is Emmanuel – God with us – and we meet him in the Scriptures and in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. By his death on the cross he has saved us for all eternity. Now as the risen Lord he is at work in our midst restoring a broken world.

Christmas is the assurance of God's love for us. Sin and sinful habits can be strong, but God's love is stronger. Sadness and sorrow can consume our strength, but God's love is stronger. Trials and tragedies can sap our spirit, but God's love is stronger. Terrorists can attack and cause fear, but God's love is stronger.

This Christmas we need to imitate the love of God and mend our quarrels, forgive an enemy, seek out a forgotten friend, keep our promises to God, extend a helping hand and make a new beginning, a new commitment to Christ. As baptized followers of Christ, let us be proud of our identity and live new lives of discipleship.

The savior came as the light of the world and "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). What made this light so bright that no one, no earthly power, no army, no ideology, no sin, no scandal has ever been able to extinguish it? On Calvary we tried to snuff it out, but on Easter morning the light was brighter than ever. We have but one life from God. Let us seek the Lord while he may be found. Let us accept the divine rescue by accepting Jesus – the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

To those who are ill, to the aging and the lonely, to those who find this Christmas without the support of family or friends, to those in our armed forces, I ask you to focus on the gift of God's overwhelming love for you – the gift of the savior. To those who are unemployed and suffering divorce or the breakup of the family or friendship, I ask you to focus on the gift of God's great love for you – the gift of eternal salvation. Nothing else really matters, nothing else really counts. Our savior himself endured loneliness, weariness, disappointment, ridicule, hurt, betrayal and even death. Be faithful to him and you will rise to an endless day of happiness in heaven.

This Christmas there is no one without a gift. Did not the angel tell the shepherds: "A savior has been born for you." We are all recipients of this divine gift – the gift of Jesus our savior. Let us rejoice and give thanks. Let us be gifts of love to others. Let us live new lives.

*Donald W. Trautman*

Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL  
Bishop of Erie

# FaithLife

Bi-weekly news bulletin of the Catholic Diocese of Erie December 18, 2005 www.ErieRCD.org

## Living out Advent, Christmas

### Service projects at schools benefit community, help students live out virtues

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

As part of many Advent and Christmas service projects conducted at schools throughout the Erie Diocese, students are living out virtues such as service and cooperation. By collaborating with fellow students, they are feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. The following listing provides a glimpse at the many good works being done by the students at the schools in our diocese:

■ **Kennedy Catholic High School, Hermitage**

The Action Club, headed by Sr. Margaret Pellerite, SSJ, is holding its annual Christmas party for 80 children. The party, held in the school's cafeteria, will help provide Christmas for children who might not otherwise have it. Students in the Action Club each received the name of a child along with a wish list then held a drive for toys, clothing and other gifts.

■ **Elk County Catholic High School, St. Marys**

Students have been collecting gloves and other clothing items for the Red Glove Project, which benefits the homeless. They are also contributing to the Letters From Home Program based in Johnsonburg. The volunteer-based program supports military personnel through letters and calling cards. With the help of students and other volunteers, the program's recent Christmas card mailing totaled more than 30,000. The school also put on a live nativity performance involving all grades.

■ **Villa Maria Academy, Erie**

Through Adopt-A-Family, the school is sponsoring a family of 11 children this year. Students collected money in homerooms each morning to buy gifts for the children and also volunteered to buy and wrap gifts for each child. The family was introduced to the student body at the end of the Advent paraliturgy on Dec. 1.

■ **St. Bernard School, Bradford**

Students have continued a canned-goods food drive they started in November. They also raised money for the Nicolazzo family of Kane, which lost its Papa Nick's restaurant and home to a fire. Instead of conducting a gift exchange, the school's

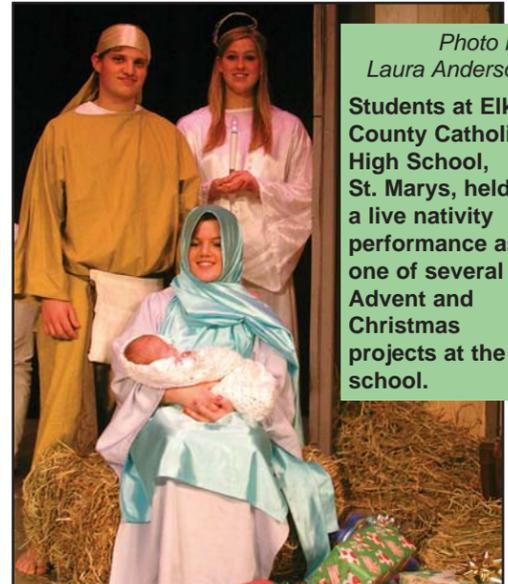


Photo by Laura Anderson

Students at Elk County Catholic High School, St. Marys, held a live nativity performance as one of several Advent and Christmas projects at the school.

staff made and delivered gift baskets for a local nursing home.

■ **St. Joseph School, Lucinda**

The school has been involved with the local Pennies From Heaven project for a number of years and is continuing this year. The project puts needy families on a gift list for Christmas. Gifts donated by students, including many toys, filled several large boxes.

■ **Our Lady's Christian School, Erie**

Each class is providing Christmas gifts for a family listed on a tree at St. Jude Parish. Students are giving gifts of clothing, toys and household items.

■ **Sacred Heart School, Erie**

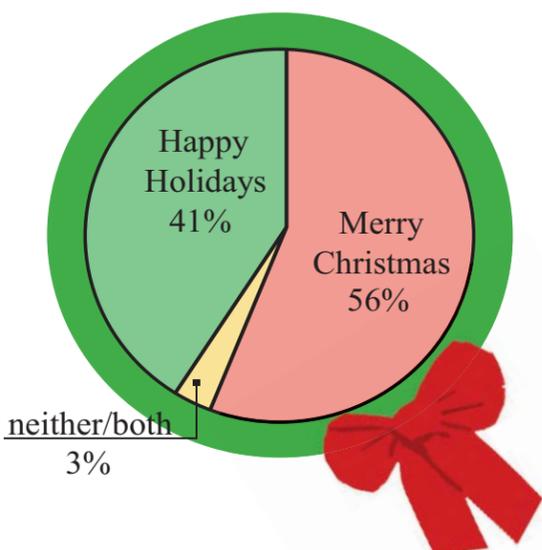
Students are collecting new gloves and mittens for needy children. Through the Catholic Charities Office, they are working on bringing in donations for infants such as diapers and other baby items. Children also donated money for the "Charger Cheer" box in the music room. The money will be used to buy presents to give to the elderly when students visit local nursing homes for performances.

■ **St. Stephen School, Oil City**

This year's Advent prayer services are being planned and presented by the middle school students with a living Advent wreath at each service. Third- and eighth-grade students sponsored a food drive throughout November and December to benefit St. Elizabeth Food Pantry. Their goal was to collect 500 canned good and non-perishable food items; they doubled that.

## Christmas Greetings

During the holiday season, which greeting would you be more likely to give to someone you just met?



Source:2004 Gallup Poll

©2005 CNS

Merry Christmas from FaithLife

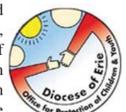
At the feet of the Word Incarnate let us place our joys and fears, our tears and hopes. Only in Christ, the new man, is true light shed upon the mystery of human existence.

-- Homily of Pope John Paul II - Christmas Midnight Mass 1999

## Audit finds diocese in full compliance

For the third year in a row, the Diocese of Erie has been found to be in full compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The charter, a key component of the Office of Child and Youth Protection established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), calls for annual audits to ensure that dioceses across the nation are in compliance with the charter's provisions.

This is the first year the Erie Diocese has done a self audit



rather than an audit conducted by an independent team, although the process was still under the direction of the Gavin Group, Inc. of Boston. The self audit was allowed due to the successful findings conducted by the independent group during the past two years.

This year's audit revealed that 23,947 children and youth of the diocese were in-serviced on safe environment practices. Also, 930 educators, 3,639 volunteers, 916 employees, 18,289 parents and 229 priests and deacons were in-serviced regarding creating a safe environment and safe environment practices when working with children and

youth.

The diocese received its official notice of compliance from William A. Gavin of the Gavin Group, Inc., in a letter dated Nov. 21, 2005.

The Office of Child and Youth Protection has three central tasks: to assist dioceses in implementing safe environment programs by training employees, parents, volunteers and children; to measure how effectively each diocese adheres to the charter and to prepare an annual progress report for the USCCB, the Catholic faithful and the general public as to the status of diocesan compliance with the charter's provisions.

## Our Lady of Peace praise band releases CD

Selah, the contemporary praise band at Our Lady of Peace Parish, Erie, has just released a CD titled *We Are One Body*. The collection features the musical talent of Selah's 19 vocalists and musicians.

The CD is comprised of 14 songs selected by group members, ranging from prayerful tunes like *Isn't He* to contemporary creations such as *Go Make a Difference*.

Selah provides music ministry during the 9 a.m. Sunday Mass throughout the year. In addition, the group has shared its music at weddings, diocesan music ministry celebrations and

most recently at a Concert in the Park as part of the City of Erie's Music Everywhere series.



"The Selah praise band has both a mission and a message with their music," says Fr. Tom Brooks, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish. "Their message defines discipleship, and their mission is to help you raise your mind, heart and voice to God."

CDs are available for purchase for \$15 at the parish office, located at 2401 W. 38th St.

For more information, contact Selah director Debby Holmes at 814.838.6306 or visit [www.selahpraiseband.com](http://www.selahpraiseband.com).

### ON THE COVER

Students at St. Marys Catholic Elementary School, St. Marys, rehearse the nativity scene for the school's Christmas play. Pictured are Marisa Cunningham (Mary), Brock McCullough (Joseph), Kali Quagliani (Angel), Dylan Gerg (Shepherd).

— Photo by Art Becker

### FaithLife

The official news bulletin of the Catholic Diocese of Erie

Volume 1, Issue 22

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## By the Way...



Jason Koshinski

For the 11th straight year, WJET-TV will broadcast **Midnight Mass** on Christmas Eve live from St. Peter Cathedral.

The project is special to both **Bishop Donald Trautman** and **Mike Gallagher**, special projects producer for WJET-TV and host for Midnight Mass.

At the beginning of his homily, Bishop Trautman has developed a tradition of a special mention and prayer for inmates watching from area prisons. Despite strict prison regulations, inmates are allowed to stay up late and watch the televised Mass in their cell blocks.

"When I visit the prisons at times other than Christmas, they bring that up and mention it," Bishop Trautman says. "And they thank me for having a televised Midnight Mass that they're able to watch. That impresses me very, very much, that they remember that Mass throughout the year. They ask for it, and they watch it. We will continue to keep the tradition alive by greeting them and making them feel they are part of that Eucharist, as well."

The connection is also special for Gallagher, a cradle Catholic who grew up as an altar boy serving at St. Paul Cathedral in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

"For me, it's a personal thing," he says. "It's probably the single biggest project for me. What's amazing is the response we get from Canada and from the prisons."

The former sports anchor says he has gone from being known as "the sports guy" to "the Midnight Mass guy," which is fine with him. And through his role of hosting the program, he has been invited to speak at the GED commencement ceremony at Cambridge Springs based on prisoners watching the broadcast.

He adds that WJET receives an overwhelming response for the program, and while no official ratings are available, the broadcast attracts one of the station's biggest audiences of the year for a single televised event.

"From what I've been told by many viewers, we've become part of the Christmas tradition for a lot of people," he says, "from people who can't make it to church to moms and dads staying up late wrapping presents."

The broadcast will begin at 11:30 p.m. on Dec. 24. The half-hour segment prior to Mass will include an interview conducted by Gallagher with Bishop Trautman.

The next issue of *FaithLife* will be published **Jan. 8** and include a look at the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II. We wish you peace and joy at Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

Jason Koshinski is editor of *FaithLife*. Contact him at [JKoshinski@erieRCD.org](mailto:JKoshinski@erieRCD.org) or 814.824.1171.

### Clergy appointments

The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, S.T.D., S.S.L., Bishop of Erie, announces the following clergy appointments:

■ **Fr. Brian E. Vossler**, appointed campus minister at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and weekend sacramental assistant at Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edinboro, with residence at St. Agatha Parish, Meadville for a term of five years. Effective Jan. 16, 2006.

■ **Fr. Mark A. Nowak**, approved sabbatical to participate in the Resident Assistance Program in spiritual direction offered by the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville, Pa. Effective Jan. 14, 2006 and concluding June 7, 2006.

■ **Fr. William M. Calabrese**, appointed pastor of St. Bibiana Parish, Galeton, and Sacred Heart Mission, Genesee, for a term of six years ending June 30, 2012. Effective Jan. 16, 2006.

### Briefly

#### VMA offers home school initiative

Villa Maria Academy will open its doors to home-schooled students through its home school initiative.

Beginning in mid-January, home-schooled students can choose to take classes at VMA and earn credits toward their home school education.

The program was designed to offer students in the home-schooling program access to educational resources and programs that otherwise may not be available in the home environment, such as chemistry labs and theater programs.

For more information on the home school initiative, call Villa Maria Academy at 814.838.2061.

## Seminary, religious communities to hold open houses

Open houses scheduled on Sundays Jan. 8 through Feb. 5

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

St. Mark Seminary and the religious communities of the Erie Diocese are opening their doors.

On several Sundays Jan. 8 through Feb. 5, the seminary and religious communities will hold open houses to celebrate vocations to priestly and religious life.

The open house events are also tied closely to two events on the calendar of the American and universal church. National Vocations Awareness Week is celebrated Jan. 8-14, and World Day for Consecrated Life is celebrated Feb. 5.

Each community will structure its open house in a unique way.

The seminary is the first in the series of open houses on Jan. 8, the feast of the Epiphany.

"For us in the seminary, we welcome the general public," says Fr. Edward Lohse, Vocations Office director and vice chancellor of the diocese. "A lot of people find it interesting to see what a seminary actually looks like. It's interesting for people to see if their imagination corresponds to the reality. We're happy to explain our program to them and give them a tour."

The seminary welcomes not only potential applicants but any interested persons. Visitors usually include friends of the seminary and longtime neighbors who are curious as to what the seminary looks like inside. Sometimes whole families come, Fr. Lohse

## For I have seen the Face of Christ OPEN HOUSE to Celebrate Vocations to Priestly and Religious Life

### Saint Mark Seminary January 8

Time: 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Place: St. Mark Catholic Center  
429 East Grandview Blvd.  
Erie, PA 16504

The public is invited.  
For more information call Fr. Edward M. Lohse, Vocation Director 814.824.1200  
No reservations needed.  
e-mail: [vocations@eriercd.org](mailto:vocations@eriercd.org)

### Sisters of Mercy January 15

Time: 10:30 a.m.  
Place: Mercy Motherhouse  
444 East Grandview Blvd.  
Erie, PA 16504

Guests are invited to Liturgy, brunch and a tour. For more information or to make a reservation call Sr. Teresa

Okonski 814.824.3931  
e-mail: [srteresa@mpslakers.com](mailto:srteresa@mpslakers.com)

### Sisters of St. Joseph January 22

Time: 10:30 a.m.  
Place: Villa Maria Living Center  
5031 West Ridge Road  
Erie, PA 16506

Guests are invited to Liturgy, a tour and dinner. For more information or to make a reservation call Sr. Claire Marie 814.836.4212  
email: [formation@ssjerie.org](mailto:formation@ssjerie.org)

### Benedictine Sisters of Elk County February 5

Time: 2 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
Place: St. Joseph Monastery  
303 Church Street  
St. Marys, PA 15857

For more information or to make a reservation call Sr. Ann Hoffman 814.899.0614 ext. 216  
e-mail: [vocations@mtst-benedict.org](mailto:vocations@mtst-benedict.org)

Guests are invited to a presentation, a tour and to Vespers.  
For more information or to make a reservation call Sr. Victoria 814.834.2267  
e-mail: [svallmont@hotmail.com](mailto:svallmont@hotmail.com)

### Benedictine Sisters of Erie February 5

Time: 9 a.m. Morning Prayer,  
10 a.m. Liturgy  
12 p.m. Dinner  
Place: Mount St. Benedict  
Monastery  
6101 East Lake Road  
Erie, PA 16511

For more information or to make a reservation call Sr. Ann Hoffman 814.899.0614 ext. 216  
e-mail: [vocations@mtst-benedict.org](mailto:vocations@mtst-benedict.org)

says. "Many people have ideas, imaginations about what a seminary would look like, what it feels like," he says. "Very often people come here and are very surprised because it doesn't look at all what they thought it would look like or feel like they thought it would feel like."

Ultimately, the open house helps give people a much more realistic understanding of what's involved with somebody coming

to St. Mark's to discern whether or not they have a vocation.

"This is what we're all about. This is our home," Fr. Lohse says. "It is an attempt on our part really to be of service to the greater church."

The open houses for the religious communities are usually tailored by the hosting order, says Sr. Mary Rita Kuhn, S.S.J., vicar for religious.

"Usually it's a liturgy or prayer time followed by a tour," Sr. Mary

Rita says. "This is a moment where they would pray with the sisters, take a tour, introduce them to more about the community and have a meal. It's very hospitable."

One of the good things about the series, Sr. Mary Rita says, is that all of the open houses for the religious communities are scheduled on different days.

"It's a very welcoming open house for people to get acquainted with the different communities," she says.

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Bobby served as the spokesperson for the Schindler family during their efforts to save Terri's life, even traveling to Washington to speak personally with each member of the U.S. Congress. He is now traveling widely to tell his sister's story. Bobby's busy speaking schedule has recently included stops in Canada, Germany, Ireland, and New Zealand.

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### Sr. Mary Regina Flanagan, 91

Sr. Mary Regina Flanagan, OSB, died Nov. 23, 2005 at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie. A native of Oil City, she was born Feb. 28, 1914, a daughter of the late William S. and Catherine Hynes Flanagan. She received her early education at St. Joseph Elementary and High School in Oil City. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie on July 2, 1935. Sr. Mary Regina made her final monastic profession on Aug. 19, 1939, and has celebrated her silver, golden and 60th anniversaries of profession.

She was a graduate of Villa Maria College, Erie, and earned a master of arts in mathematics at Villanova University, Radnor, Pa. She continued her study of mathematics at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind., and of chemistry at Xavier University, Cincinnati.

She began her ministry in education as an elementary teacher and continued as a high school teacher and administrator. She served in several schools in the Diocese

of Erie: Sacred Heart and St. Joseph, Sharon; St. Joseph and St. Stephen, Oil City; St. Gregory, North East; Immaculate Conception, Clarion; and Venango Catholic High School, Oil City. She was recognized as an outstanding science teacher by Gannon University, Erie, and by the Buhl Planetarium of the Carnegie Science Center, Pittsburgh. She was co-author of algebra and geometry texts and developed an innovative program for ungraded mathematics instruction. In later years, Sr. Mary Regina ministered in social services in the Oil City area.



**Sr. Mary Regina Flanagan, OSB**

### Deacon Norbert Smith, 73

Deacon Norbert J. Smith, 73, of 1517 W. 43rd St., died Nov. 21, 2005, at the Pa. Soldiers' & Sailors' Home in Erie. A native of Erie, he was born May 27, 1932, a son of the late George and Josephine (Rahmer) Smith. He served in the U.S. Navy as a gunner's mate during the Korean War on the U. S. S. Salem. A former police officer for the Millcreek Police Department from 1956 to 1960, he also was employed as a general foreman at Erie Malleable and a general manager at Zurn Industries.

He was ordained to the permanent diaconate on June

4, 1999. He served at St. George Parish, Erie, the Pa. Soldiers' & Sailors' Home and the Erie County Prison. He was active in the Erie community and an active member of St. George Parish, where he served on the men's council and was involved in the football program as a coach. He was also active with Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts as a scout leader.



**Deacon Norbert J. Smith**

# FaithLife

Bi-weekly news bulletin of the Catholic Diocese of Erie

December 18, 2005



*"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."*



*Sr. Mary Josephina...*  
I was a critical care nurse, struggling with the idea that God was calling me. Finally, after much prayer, I had the courage to visit the Hawthorne Dominicans. I liked caring for patients with incurable cancer. And the love and joy of the Sisters touched me. I knew - this is where I belong.



*"God surely loves the countless poor better than he loves us, unless we love them."*  
Mother Mary Alphonsa

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