



## Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

### Feast days



Holy Family



Epiphany of the Lord

- Dec. 25 Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
- Dec. 26 St. Stephen
- Dec. 27 Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
- Dec. 28 Holy Innocents
- Jan. 1 Mary, Mother of God
- Jan. 3 Epiphany of the Lord
- Jan. 10 Baptism of the Lord

### Midnight Mass from St. Peter Cathedral on JET-TV



For the 14th straight year, JET-TV will broadcast Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve live from St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. The broadcast will begin at 11:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 24.

### Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God – Jan. 1 (holly day of obligation)

“Called in the Gospels ‘the mother of Jesus,’ Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as ‘the mother of my Lord.’ In fact, the one whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the church confesses that Mary is truly ‘mother of God.’” – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 495



### National Vocation Awareness Week – Jan. 10-16

The Catholic Church in the United States will celebrate National Vocation Awareness Week, January 10-16, which begins with the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. At baptism, we are all called to become saints. This year’s theme, “Baptized in the Spirit,” reminds us to go forth in courage to proclaim to all the Good News of Jesus Christ. Follow Jesus without fear and do not be afraid to “walk in the light.”

National Vocation Awareness Week is a time for reflection. All Catholics are encouraged to:

- Take time to pray for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.
- Reflect on our own vocation and strengthen our personal relationship with Christ.
- Educate our young people about the importance of silent prayer and taking the time to truly listen to God’s voice in our hearts.



## Nativity scene teaches us to trust in God’s love

### A Christmas message from Bishop Donald Trautman

In the year 1223, the Italian town of Greccio became a new Bethlehem. Francis of Assisi chose this Italian village as the place where he would dramatize the birth of Jesus. St. Francis set up a manger and put hay in this feeding box for animals. He brought in an ox and donkey. He wanted to make the scene of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem vivid and real for the townspeople of Greccio. He arranged for a Midnight Mass and as a deacon, he preached about the simplicity and poverty of Jesus’ birth. Francis pointed to the hay in the manger saying with Scripture: “This is where Mary laid her newborn Son.” No germ-free, sanitized hospital room, but a stable for ani-

mals became the birthplace for the Son of God.

Francis of Assisi’s sermon with all of its real life props made a lasting impression on the people. They could see before their very eyes what the Gospel writers were saying about the birth of Jesus. They could smell the animals and the hay. Now they understood the reality “there was no room for them in the inn” but only in this animal shelter. The townspeople of Greccio finally grasped the humble, impoverished, miserable surroundings for the Savior’s birth.

Today every church and most homes follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi and erect a crèche, a Nativity scene, to recall the actual circumstances of Jesus’ birth.

More than ever we need to learn  
See CHRISTMAS, page 3



A depiction of St. Francis of Assisi and the first Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy, by Benozzo Gozzoli.

## CSA tops \$6 million in pledges

### 2009 Catholic Services Appeal is largest in diocesan history

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

The people of the Erie Diocese have made the 2009 Catholic Services Appeal a record-breaking success.

For the first time, the annual CSA has exceeded \$6 million in pledges, making it the largest annual appeal in diocesan history. The amount surpasses the 2008 CSA when donors pledged \$5.8 million.

“As the shepherd of the 13 counties of the diocese, I’m overjoyed on hearing of the generous contributions of our people to the Catholic Services Appeal,” said Most

### 2009 CSA results (through Dec. 14)

Compares 2009 results with 2008 at the same point last year

	2009 CSA	2008 CSA
Pledges/gifts to date	22,500	21,439
Total \$ pledged to date	\$6,000,000	\$5,813,563
Final pledges/gifts	To be determined	21,551
Final \$ pledged	To be determined	\$5,887,631



Rev. Donald W. Trautman, bishop of the Erie Diocese. “The generosity of our people has truly helped make this a record-breaking appeal. Coupled with the fact that we are living in difficult economic times, these gifts are doubly appreciated.”

Parishes also benefit from the appeal. Each parish is assessed a financial goal. Once a parish reaches its goal, every dollar pledged over that

amount stays within the parish for local projects.

This year to date, parishes have collectively raised more than \$2.3 million over goal to be used for parish projects, which is also a new record.

In recent years, the appeal has gradually increased each year, said Joseph Hoag, direc-

tor of Stewardship and Annual Appeals for the diocese. And the level of giving has also gone up.

“More people gave this year than last year, and we are certainly grateful,” Hoag said.

He added that the record figure represents gifts pledged. Of the \$6 million pledged, more than \$5 million has already been collected.

“There is still time for people to fulfill their 2009 CSA pledges and we encouraged them to do so,” Hoag said. “The more that’s collected, the more that will stay in parishes for local projects.”

To make a pledge or gift to the 2009 CSA, contact your parish office or the Erie Diocese’s Stewardship and Development Office at 814.824.1192 or e-mail JHoag@ErieRCD.org.

## Top stories in the Diocese of Erie for 2009

In a year when President Barack Obama addressing graduates at Notre Dame and Pope Benedict XVI declaring a Year for Priests grabbed national and international headlines, respectively, the church in northwestern Pennsylvania also had its share of news and happenings. After poring over a year’s worth of *FaithLife* headlines, here they are: The top stories and newsmakers in the Erie Diocese for 2009:

- St. Mary of Grace Parish, Meadville – 100 years
- St. Bartholomew Parish, Sharpsville – 135 years
- Catholic Rural Ministry, McKean and Potter counties – 10 years
- St. Mark Seminary, Erie – 50 years

### New vocations

In 2009, the diocese celebrated new vocations to the church.

Bishop Donald Trautman ordained Daniel Hoffman and John Miller to the priesthood in front of a gathering of family, friends, diocesan priests and guests on June 12 at St. Peter Cathedral.

Father Hoffman is assigned as parochial vicar at St. Michael Parish in Greenville, and Father Miller is assigned as parochial vicar at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie.

Four men were ordained as permanent deacons during a Mass and ceremony May 29 at St. Peter Cathedral. The new deacons include: Joseph Cicero (St. John the Evangelist, Girard), Ron Fronzaglia (St. Francis Xavier, McKean), James Kaschalk (St. Mark the Evangelist, Lawrence Park) and Kevin Kunik (Blessed Sacrament, Erie).

Sister Pia Terese, OCD, made her solemn profession March 21 at Carmel of the Holy Family Monastery in Erie. Sister Pia Terese became the newest member of the Carmelite Sisters, a cloistered contemplative community in Erie.



Father John Miller



Father Daniel Hoffman



Sister Pia Terese

### Villa, Prep unite as one school under co-institutional model

In January, the diocese announced that Villa Maria Academy and Cathedral Preparatory School in Erie would combine to become a new educational entity with two separate campuses. The move officially took effect at the beginning of the 2009-10 school year.

As a result, Villa Maria Academy will return to its roots as an all-girls high school. Boys currently enrolled will be allowed to finish their education at Villa, however new male admissions were not accepted this fall.



### CSA and Catholic Charities Ball break records

The generosity of the people throughout the Erie Diocese was clearly shown in 2009. The annual Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) netted more than \$6 million in pledges, making it the largest annual appeal in the history of the diocese.

The 14th annual Catholic Charities Ball, held April 17 at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie, raised more than \$53,000, also a record. All proceeds went to families in need.

### Anniversaries and milestones

A number of parishes, organizations and agencies celebrated anniversaries in 2009.

- Sisters of Charity – 200 years
- St. Mary’s Home, Erie – 125 years
- St. Martin Center, Erie – 40 years
- St. Philip Parish, Linesville – 50 years
- St. George Parish, Erie – 50 years

demec year.

Approximately \$500,000 in additional funding became available to help parents enroll or keep their children in Catholic schools. The amount included a special \$200 incentive for families enrolling students in kindergarten at all but a handful of schools where subsidies were already in place.

### Hope & Power Tour reaches out to teens

Youth and Young Adult Ministry unveiled Hope & Power, a year-long tour for teens that will make 13 stops throughout the diocese before it’s finished.

Evenings include talks on conversion, an examination of conscience and confession, exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, skits and dramas performed by local youth, praise and worship, Mass and fellowship.

Tour stops included Grove City, Titusville, Eldred, St. Marys, West Middlesex, Frenchtown, Erie and Clearfield. Hope & Power will continue in 2010 with stops in Erie, Albion and Brockway.



### Doing parish differently

The Erie Diocese and Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Harborcreek hosted the annual conference of the National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities July 23-25. More than 300 people attended the conference, themed “New Wine in New Wineskins: Bringing Vision to the Church,” including 100 involved in the ministry of small church communities throughout the country and 200 from the diocese. Bill Huebsch, a nationally recognized speaker and author focusing on whole community catechesis programs, was the keynote speaker.

### Parish mergers

Holy Trinity Parish in Farrell merged with St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Sharon in to form St. Stanislaus Kostka-Holy Trinity Parish. Immaculate Conception Parish in Erie merged with St. Mary Parish in Erie and became St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish. Both mergers officially took place in September.

### Diocese doubles elementary school tuition assistance

In light of the difficult economic situation affecting so many families, the diocese announced in March it would double the amount of financial aid dollars available to parents enrolling their children in Catholic elementary schools for the 2009-10 ac-



## IN THE U.S.

■ **The U.S. Senate's rejection of a bipartisan abortion amendment** to its version of health care reform legislation was "a grave mistake and a serious blow to genuine health reform," according to the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago and three USCCB committee chairmen commented on the Dec. 8 vote in separate statements Dec. 9. Following several hours of debate on the Senate floor, senators voted 54-45 to table the amendment sponsored by Sens. Ben Nelson, D-Neb.; Orrin Hatch, R-Utah; Robert Casey, D-Pa.; and at least five others. Cardinal George said he remained "hopeful that the protections overwhelmingly passed by the House will be incorporated into needed reform legislation." He added, "Failure to exclude abortion funding will turn allies into adversaries and require us and others to oppose this bill because it abandons both principle and precedent."

■ **Pax Christi USA is calling upon Catholics to reflect on ways to integrate peacemaking and embrace nonviolence** in their everyday lives. The call follows a wide-ranging six-year endeavor that the Catholic peace organization calls a People's Peace Initiative. The effort involved dozens of discussions nationwide to express the challenges of peace in the 21st century. "How we define nonviolence and peace is really critical to all of us in the church in order to fulfill our requirements as Catholics and peace advocates," said David Robinson, Pax Christi USA executive director. To engage Catholics in the pews across the country, Pax Christi released a 48-page document, "Called to be Peacemakers: The Challenge and Promise of Peace in the 21st Century." The document outlines numerous ways that violence is expressed in the world — including war, racism, unrelenting poverty and environmental degradation — and invites Catholics to begin to take steps to reduce the influence of violence throughout society.



## AROUND THE WORLD

■ **The presence of Christians in the Holy Land is a force for peace and harmony in the region**, particularly because of the education and health care they offer to all, said U.S. Cardinal John Foley, grandmaster of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. But Christians are leaving the Middle East in record numbers, he said during a conference Dec. 4 in Oslo. Cardinal Foley said that "60 years ago 20 percent of the population of the Holy Land was Christian. Now it is said that less than 2 percent of the population in the same area is Christian." The Knights of the Holy Sepulcher support the church in the region and the Christians who remain. Since 2000, the cardinal said, the order has given more than \$50 million in assistance to Catholic, ecumenical and interreligious initiatives, but mainly to Catholic-run schools, hospitals and clinics. Because the Catholic health, education and welfare agencies help all people — not just Catholics — and bring Christians, Muslims and Jews together, he said the Christian presence in the region is a "source of hope for understanding, peace and reconciliation."



Catholics receive Communion at the Church of St. Catherine in the West Bank town of Bethlehem Nov. 29.

■ **Catholics in northern Pakistan are preparing for quiet, scaled-back Christmas celebrations** as militant attacks continue to terrorize the country. "Most of the scheduled programs are canceled due to this situation," said Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha of Lahore. The celebrations will be more of a family affair with little "pomp and display outside," he added. He spoke

Dec. 7, before two bomb blasts that evening ripped through a busy market in the center of Lahore, capital of Punjab province, killing at least 36 people. A wave of deadly bombings



has rocked the country since the Pakistani army launched an operation in mid-October against Taliban militants in neighboring North-West Frontier province, which borders Afghanistan. A Dec. 7 blast outside a district courthouse in that province's capital, Peshawar, killed at least 11 people and injured 44 others. A catechist who did not wish to be named said that two Catholic churches in Peshawar, the city worst hit by militant attacks in Pakistan, have canceled Christmas celebrations.

■ **The divisions and dissent that marked Brazil's Catholic community in the 1980s** because of differences over liberation theology continue to sap some of the church's energy, Pope Benedict XVI said. "I beg those who still feel in some way attracted by, involved in or deeply touched by certain deceptive principles of liberation theology" to study again the documents issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the 1980s, the pope told a group of Brazilian bishops Dec. 5. As preface of the doctrinal congregation at the time, the future pope issued two documents praising liberation theology's concern for the poor and for justice, but condemning a tendency to mix Marxist social analysis and concepts such as "class struggle" with religious commitments to end poverty and injustice. Liberation theology originated in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s and started with the concrete situation of the poor and their understanding of the Scriptures as they related to the struggle for freedom from sin and from unjust social structures.

## By the Way...

Father Jay Schultz, pastor of St. Boniface Parish in Erie, has been appointed to the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators' (NACPA) board of directors. Father Schultz is an NACPA member and recently attended his first board meeting in Nashville, Tenn.



Jason Koshinski

NACPA is a membership organization dedicated to the development and promotion of just personnel practices rooted in Gospel values. Members include clergy, religious and lay men and women from across America and the world who share this dedication.

Speaking of St. Boniface, the parish will celebrate the first Mass in its newly renovated church on Christmas Eve. Since renovations began, Mass has been celebrated in the parish's Coleman Center.

Work to finish the project has come down to the wire. Pews and windows started going in last week. Rather than build a new church, the parish opted to expand the current building.

We mistakenly left our listing Claron University among the groups that attended Bishop Donald Trautman's annual dinner and discussion with college students in our last issue. Actually, Msgr. Jan Olowin's group from Claron traveled the farthest to come to the dinner at Our Lady of the Lake in Edinboro.

What's also impressive is that the 80 students who attended gave up their Friday night to enrich their faith lives. The same can be said for the 150 youth at the Hope & Power tour stop Dec. 4 at Blessed Sacrament in Erie.

Bishop Donald Trautman will lead 19 seminarians and 15 diocesan priests on a spiritual pilgrimage to Ars, France, Dec. 29 through Jan. 8 in observance of the Year for Priests. Ars of course is where St. John Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, ministered. St. John Vianney is the patron saint of priests.

After 25 years doing the English-language commentary for the pope's Christmas midnight Mass, U.S. Cardinal John Foley is stepping away from the microphone and hanging up the headphones. "I guess I'm truly the Ghost of Christmas Past now," he said. The cardinal, grandmaster of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, was first asked by the U.S. television network NBC to do the broadcast in 1984. He continued guiding U.S. audiences through the service and, eventually, other media outlets began getting his commentary as well.

Cardinal Foley noted that his absence is not the biggest change broadcasters and viewers will notice with Pope Benedict's Christmas Eve Mass this year. The Vatican announced in late November that the pope would begin his "midnight" Mass at 10 p.m. Rome time.

FaithLife will be taking a break for the holidays. Our next issue arrives in parishes the weekend of Jan. 16-17.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and peace in the new year!

Jason Koshinski is editor of FaithLife. Contact him at JKoshinski@ErieRCD.org or 814.824.1171.

# Health reform, Pope Benedict XVI named top story, newsmaker of 2009

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The debate over health care reform topped the religious news stories of 2009, and Pope Benedict XVI and President Barack Obama were again the top newsmakers, according to the annual poll conducted by Catholic News Service.

The continued effects of the recession on the U.S. and global economy took second place among the 30 news stories on the ballot. The controversy over Obama's commencement address at the University of Notre Dame in May and the decision to award the president with an honorary degree came in third.

Most first-place votes on the newsmakers list went to either Obama or Pope Benedict, although the pope was the clear winner this year. The late Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts was a distant third.

The poll was the 48th annual survey conducted by CNS. This year's ballots were distributed Dec. 4 and the deadline for returns was Dec. 10.

Rounding out the top five for religious news stories were the papal encyclical "Caritas in Veritate" ("Charity in Truth") and the Vatican-ordered visitation of U.S. women religious, which was to continue into 2010.

Pope Benedict took first place in the CNS poll for his travels to the Middle East and Africa, his outreach to Anglicans and traditionalist Catholics and his proclamation of a Year for Priests. Obama, whose first year as presi-



dent included the Notre Dame controversy, his reception of the Nobel Peace Prize and a fight over abortion funding in health reform legislation, was second.

The next three top newsmakers were separated by only one vote each. The late Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts was third, new Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor fourth and Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, named to head the New York Archdiocese in February, was fifth.

Here are the choices for top 10 stories and top five newsmakers of 2009:

### Top STORIES of 2009

1. Health reform
2. Recession/economy
3. Notre Dame controversy
4. Encyclical "Caritas in Veritate"
5. Visitation of U.S. women religious
6. President Obama's first year
7. Year for Priests
8. H1N1 flu outbreak
9. Africa
10. Anglicans

### Top NEWSMAKERS of 2009

1. Pope Benedict XVI
2. President Barack Obama
3. Sen. Ted Kennedy
4. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor
5. Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan

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**FaithLife**  
The official news bulletin of the Catholic Diocese of Erie  
Volume 5, Issue 22  
General Information: (814) 824-1161  
Fax: (814) 824-1170  
E-Mail: FaithLife@ErieRCD.org  
Editorial: (814) 824-1171  
Advertising: (814) 824-1168

Member of the Catholic Press Association. Published bi-weekly. Owned and operated by the Bishop of Erie. Subscription \$10/year. For more information, call (814) 824-1161.

The Office of Communications has been serving Catholics in the Diocese of Erie since 1874. Offices are located at St. Mark Catholic Center 429 East Grandview Blvd., Erie, Pa. Periodical postage paid at Erie, Pa. Postmaster: Send address changes to FaithLife at St. Mark Catholic Center.

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## Advent-Christmas Events

### St. George anniversary concert

ERIE – St. George Parish in Erie will present a special Christmas concert concluding its 50th anniversary celebration with Daniel Cabanillas Dec. 29 from 7-9 p.m. in the church, 5145 Peach St.

Cabanillas, a tenor who is the music minister at the parish and Mercyhurst College, has composed a special concert piece for the evening's finale as a tribute to St. George.

A wine and cheese reception will follow. Tickets are \$25 and are available at the church office or by calling 814.864.0622.

## People in the News

### Mercyhurst Prep names board members

ERIE – Mercyhurst Prep High School in Erie has named Amy Danzer, Marilyn Renkes and Sister Michele Marie Schroeck, RSM, new members of the school's board of trustees.

Danzer is the academic coordinator for Institutional Research/Assessment at Mercyhurst College. She currently serves on the board of the Mercyhurst Child Learning Center, Erie County Human Relations Commission, Barber National Institute, the Elizabeth Lee Black School Advisory Board and is a grant writer for Mercy Terrace Apartments.

Renkes is a Certified Public Accountant with K2S, Knowledge to Solutions CPA firm. She has more than 30 years of experience as a CPA.

Sister Michele Marie has been the director of Service Learning at Mercyhurst College, currently on leave for study. She is a board member of Mercy Center for Women.

### Bishop appoints two as censors librorum

Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, bishop of Erie, has appointed Father Casimir Wozniak and Sister Kathleen Dietz, FSO, each as censor librorum for the diocese for a term of five years, effective Nov. 9.

The censor librorum is an ecclesiastical authority charged with reviewing texts and granting the nihil obstat, an approval that the work contains nothing contrary to faith or morals.

## Briefly

### March for Life bus trip to Washington

ERIE – A prayer vigil celebrating the gift of life will be held at St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 E. Grandview Blvd. in Erie, beginning at 9 p.m. on January 21, 2010. Buses will depart at 11 p.m. for those 8th grade and older who are interested in traveling to the annual March for Life in Washington (cost is \$50).

Please note that all are invited to attend the prayer vigil (travel to the March is not required). Additional information, itinerary and release forms can be found at the youth ministry Web site [www.onthevine.us](http://www.onthevine.us).

Contact Linda Lecce, program coordinator for the Department of Religious Education, at 814.824.1218 or e-mail [llece@eried.org](mailto:llece@eried.org).

### Diocese sponsors intercollegiate gathering

ERIE – The Diocese of Erie is sponsoring an intercollegiate gathering Saturday, Jan. 30 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Gannon University in Erie for all college students in the diocese.

The keynote speaker will be Matthew Kelly, a New York Times bestselling author and nationally recognized presenter.

With a theme of "Who am I?" Kelly will explore such questions as "What does God want for me?" and "What is God's dream for me?"

Register with your campus minister by Jan. 15. Registration fee is \$5.

For more information about Matthew Kelly, visit [www.matthewkelly.org](http://www.matthewkelly.org).

### Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast

ERIE – The annual Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast, sponsored by People for Life, will be held January 16, 2010 at the Ambassador Banquet and Conference Center, 7792 Peach St. in Erie, beginning at 9 a.m.

The guest speaker will be Serrin Foster, president of Feminists for Life of America. Foster visited the Erie Diocese in 2008 when she presented "The Feminist Case Against Abortion" at Clarion University, an event co-sponsored by Clarion's Catholic Campus Ministry and the Newman Association.

Reservations are \$12.50 per person, \$6.50 for children ages 3 to 12; children under 3 are admitted free. Reservation deadline is Jan. 11.

Tickets can be purchased online at [www.peopleforlife.org](http://www.peopleforlife.org), through the mail or at either of People for Life's two offices, 1625 W. 26th St. or 1611 Peach St. in Erie.

For more information, call 814.882.1333 or 814.459.1333.

### March & Motorcade for Life

ERIE – The annual March & Motorcade for Life will take place January 9, 2010 at Perry Square in downtown Erie beginning at 11 a.m.

The March & Motorcade will mark the 37th anniversary (January 22) of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

The event will conclude with a memorial service conducted by community religious leaders. The memorial service will remember the more than 50 million lives lost to abortion in the United States since 1973.

The service is expected to conclude by 12:30 p.m.

## St. John-Holy Rosary wins diocesan football championship

ERIE – The Knights of St. John-Holy Rosary School rallied from a second-half deficit to defeat Our Lady's Christian School 8-6 in the Parochial League championship football game recently at Veterans Stadium in Erie.

Quarterback DeAngelo Malone helped lead the Knights on a 70-yard touchdown drive then threw a two-point conversion pass to Maurice House to take the lead with just minutes to play.

Brett Carter ran for a touchdown just before halftime to give the Raiders of OLC an early 6-0 lead.

St. John-Holy Rosary came into the playoffs as underdogs. The fourth-seeded Knights knocked off No. 1 seed Our Lady of Peace 8-6 in the opening round while No. 2 seed Our Lady's Christian beat No. 3 St. George 28-26 in overtime.

St. John-Holy Rosary finished the season 7-3-1, while OLC closed at 8-3.



The 2009 Parochial League champion St. John-Holy Rosary Knights

### Seven accepted as candidates for ordination to permanent diaconate



ERIE – Seven men were installed as candidates for the permanent diaconate during a Mass and ceremony Dec. 5 at St. Mark Seminary Chapel in Erie. The candidates are fourth-year students in the diocese's permanent diaconate formation program and are scheduled to be ordained deacons in May.

Pictured are: (front row) Dick

Brogdon (St. Jude the Apostle, Erie), Fred Keck (Holy Rosary, Erie), Bishop Donald Trautman, Rick Ruebecker (St. Anthony, Sharon) and Dennis Sosash (St. Peter and Paul, Hawk Run). Back row: Doug Konzel (St. Joseph/Bread of Life, Erie), Dick O'Polka (St. Patrick, Franklin) and Jim Owens (Blessed Sacrament, Erie).

### Mass for deceased religious, clergy



ERIE – The Sisters of Mercy in Erie hosted the annual memorial Mass in their chapel on Nov. 12 for deceased women religious, clergy and others who supported the work of vocations in the Erie Diocese.

The Diocese of Erie sponsored the Mass with the help of the Serra Club. Serrans support vocations to the religious life and priesthood.

Pictured following the Mass, from left to right, are: Sister Mary Rita Kuhn, SSI, diocesan vicar for religious; Sister Domenica DeLeo, Mercy local leader in Erie; Bishop Donald Trautman; Sister Christine Vladimiroff, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie; and Sister Mary Ellen Dwyer, president, Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

## Nativity scene teaches us to trust in God's love

CHRISTMAS, from page 1

the lessons of simplicity and peace and love that come from that Nativity scene. We live with a lingering recession, a raging war, tarnished role models, unethical business practices, compromised family values and a secular culture that chokes our spiritual life. We may be sick or sorrowing, out of work, lonely, aged, heartbroken, troubled. The Nativity scene teaches us to hope in God. See Mary and Joseph at the manger with the newborn Jesus. How did they handle the poverty and the harshness of that stable? Mary and Joseph show great faith in handling these circumstances. They trust in God. They carry out God's will with love and perseverance. Were they concerned about the future? By all means, but they hoped in God. They persevered in faith. They accepted the poverty of the stable and trusted in God's love — and that is the lesson for us.

Our God is a humble God. God chooses these impoverished circumstances to identify with us and to show his great love for us. When things go wrong in our lives we need to imitate the faith and trust and perseverance of Mary and Joseph. We need to imitate their humility and love in doing God's will.

The Nativity scene is the assurance of God's great love for us. The Savior gives us new life, new hope. 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. Sin and sinful habits can be strong, but God's love is stronger.

If a newspaper reporter or television camera crew covered that first Christmas they would have reported who was there — Mary, Joseph, the shepherds. The media people would have described the stable, the humblest maternity room in all of Judah. They would have told the "when" and the "where" of the child's birth, but they would never, never have been able to guess about the "why." Why did the Son of God give up the glory and bliss of heaven to come to earth? Why did the all-powerful Lord become poor in a stable? Scripture answers: "God so loved the world that God gave his only Son" (John 3:16). Christmas is a joyful reminder that in spite of our unfaithfulness, in spite of all the darkness in our lives, God has not abandoned us. God shares our every fate. A Savior has been born for us. Jesus, Son of God, is in our midst. We have good reason to hope and persevere.

This Christmas there is no one without a gift. Did not the angel

"This Christmas there is no one without a gift."

— Bishop Donald Trautman



timeliness, more than emotion. Christmas is the reality that God loves us so much that he sent his only Son to save us and bring us to new life and lead us to heaven. He is truly the way, the truth and the life. With Francis of Assisi let us tell the story of Christmas over and over again — it is the story of God's extravagant love for us. With Francis of Assisi let us point to the Nativity scene and say, "See the source of our happiness, the source of our hope; see the source of our eternal life; see how much God loves us."

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

## Join us this January!

### Erie March for Life January 9, 2010 • 11 AM

Set aside an hour that you'll feel good about and march for life. Gather at the Perry Square Gazebo by 10:50 am. The March begins at 11 am and concludes with a brief Memorial Service at the Gazebo.

Be a voice for the voiceless and a witness for the sanctity of human life!

### Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast January 16, 2010 • 9 AM

Ambassador Banquet and Conference Center

Guest Speaker

**SERRIN FOSTER**

President of Feminists for Life of America

Serrin has appeared on C-SPAN, CNN International, FOX News, and ABC World News tonight. She testified before the House Judiciary Committee in support of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, also known as "Lacy and Conner's Law."

Reservations due by January 11

Adults: \$12.50 • Ages 3-12: \$6.50 • Under 3: Free  
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### Washington, DC March for Life January 22, 2010

37th Annual March for Life Bus Trip

Last January, 220 people took our bus trip. This January, you can too!

Leave Erie at 11 pm on January 21. March with hundreds of thousands to mark the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. Visit members of Congress. Return to Erie about 1 am on January 23.

\$40.00 a seat; inquire about sponsorships.

Seating is limited, so make reservations as soon as possible.

Call, e-mail, or visit our website for more information.  
For breakfast and bus trip reservations, mail payments to:

**PEOPLE FOR LIFE**  
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To make reservations on-line, visit  
[www.peopleforlife.org](http://www.peopleforlife.org)



All parishes, missions, schools and groups are encouraged to choose a correspondent who can regularly e-mail news items to "Around the Erie Diocese" at FaithLife@ErieRCD.org

Visit [ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp](http://ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp) to download quick and easy photo tips on a wallet-size card.



### Recreating first Thanksgiving in Franklin

FRANKLIN - On Nov. 19, the first grade class at St. Patrick School in Franklin presented a Thanksgiving play. Pictured are Connor Nightingale as Governor Bradford, Mai Findlan as a pilgrim, Hayden Adams as Samoset and Alexander Guth as Captain John Smith.



### Thanksgiving fun at DACS

DUBOIS - Students at DuBois Area Catholic Elementary School donated cans of food to the local food banks at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in DuBois and St. Mary Parish in Reynoldsville. The children presented their cans at a mid-November prayer service at the school.

Afterward, students were paired up for a morning of Thanksgiving activities including pilgrim games officiated by Father Rick Tomason, school president, calculating the cost of a Thanksgiving dinner, learning a Native American drum sequence and voyaging aboard a makeshift Mayflower.

Pictured left to right are: (front row) Jacob Snyder, Egan Peck, Antonio Willar (middle) Courtney DeHaven, Ashley Mayes, Carley Semancik, Justin Manduley, Zach Vandervort, Megan Martin, Abbey Pettenati, (standing) Tyler McIntosh, Haley Pettenati, Makenzie Park, Andre Hanes, Hunter Benton and Emma Cooper.



### Priest-author holds book signing in Smethport

SMETHPORT - Father David Prenatt returned to St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Smethport Oct. 24 to celebrate Mass and sign copies of his book, "The Archivist," at a reception in the parish hall.

Father Prenatt served as pastor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Joseph Parish in Mt. Jewett from 2003-05 before he became pastor of St. Gregory Parish in North East.

Set in the apocalyptic period, "The Archivist" is a fictional work that addresses two questions: Can a person of peace live in a violent world? and What does it mean to be truly human?

tin Manduley, Zach Vandervort, Megan Martin, Abbey Pettenati, (standing) Tyler McIntosh, Haley Pettenati, Makenzie Park, Andre Hanes, Hunter Benton and Emma Cooper.



### St. Elizabeth of Hungary donates, volunteers at food pantry

SMETHPORT - Amy Sage, facilitator of religious education at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Smethport (right) presents checks for \$1,288 to Ruth Covert, a volunteer at Christian Community Services, also in Smethport. CCS, supported by the Smethport Area Ministerium, operates a food pantry for those in need in the Smethport area.

Sage presented a \$1,000 check, which represented the proceeds from the sixth annual St. Elizabeth community dinner, held on Nov. 15 in honor of the parish's patron.

A second check for \$288 came from the religious education classes' homemade birdhouses, which were awarded in a raffle.

In mid-November, the same day as the check presentations,



students in grades 1-4 in the parish's religious education classes delivered donations such as personal care items, canned

pumpkin, boxed stuffing mix and non-perishables to the CCS and assisted volunteers by placing the goods on the shelves.

[www.erieRCD.org](http://www.erieRCD.org)  
The website of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie

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**First Annual Fundraiser to benefit GOOD SAMARITAN CENTER**  
A shelter for temporarily homeless men in Clearfield, PA  
Friday, January 29, 2010 from 8:00 pm - 11:00 pm  
Knights of Columbus Hall, 5. 6th St. & Arnold Ave., Clearfield, PA  
Music by the "Moore Brothers"  
Tickets for the dance are \$19 and can be purchased at the door, from any committee member, or by calling (814) 761-1734 or (814) 592-2431  
[www.clearfieldhomeless.com](http://www.clearfieldhomeless.com)  
\$1500 Cash Giveaway; Chances are \$2 each, 3 for \$5, 7 for \$10  
For chances, mail a check to "Good Samaritan," P.O. BOX 633, Hyde, PA 16843

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