

'Charity covers a multitude of sins'  
Part II of Pope Benedict XVI's message for Lent, page 2.



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BI-WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

February 24, 2008

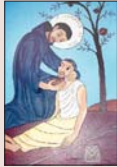
## Church Calendar

Events of the local, American and universal church

### Feast days



St. Katharine Drexel



St. John of God

- March 3 St. Katharine Drexel
- March 4 St. Casimir
- March 7 Ss. Perpetua and Felicity
- March 8 St. John of God

Lenten calendar available at  
www.ErieRCD.org

For a printable Lenten calendar, visit the Erie Diocese's official Web site at [www.ErieRCD.org](http://www.ErieRCD.org). Sponsored by Catholic Charities' Office of Parish Social Ministry/Respect Life, the calendar provides a Scripture verse, reflection and activity suggestion for each day of Lent.



The official Lenten regulations from Bishop Donald Trautman are available on the Web site, as well.

### Clergy appointments



The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL, Bishop of Erie, announces the following diocesan appointments:

Father John Barwin, appointed temporary administrator of St. Mark Parish, Emporium.

Father John Lynch, accepted letter requesting retirement from active ministry.

Father Charles Schmitt, appointed temporary administrator of St. Mark Parish, Emporium.

Father Paul Siebert, granted a sabbatical study leave for three months beginning January 4, 2008 and concluding on April 4, 2008.

## Fasting

### Emptying ourselves and filling up with God

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

The Scriptures are rich with the concept of fasting. Who was the first person recorded fasting in the Bible? What was the longest fast? Who completed it? (The answers appear at the end of this column).

Lent is a popular time to look at and practice the idea. But what exactly are we doing when we fast?

"I think fasting is really meant to be an exercise in awareness of God's presence," said Sister Rita Panciera, director of the House of Prayer in Erie. "When we deprive ourselves of something, it has a whole new meaning. If you look at the reading from Joel on Ash Wednesday, 'Render your hearts, not your garments,' we have to be aware that God is present and has a stake in our lives."

The tradition of fasting goes back to the Old Testament as a way for people to identify with the poor, the stranger and the alien, said Father Jerry Simmons, a spiritual director with Ecclesia Center, located at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Erie. But he said fasting can be abstaining from things other than food.

"The challenge for modern adults would be to fast from negative thinking," Father



CNS photo illustration

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are penitential days of fast in the Latin Church. While the U.S. bishops no longer require the faithful to abstain from meat on all the other Fridays of the year, they are still warmly suggested as days of penance and self-denial.

Jerry said. "God wants us to be at peace in our hearts. We're trying to live with our spirit in tune with God's spirit. For some people, we need to turn the TV off because our mind needs to settle down."

That's precisely what Pope Benedict XVI told priests from the Diocese of Rome on Feb. 7 during their annual meeting with

the Holy Father. The pope said fasting from words and images is needed just as much as fasting from food and abstaining from meat.

"We need a little bit of silence," he said. "We need a space without the constant bombardment of images" in order "to fill our hearts with the true image

and the true word."

By abstaining from a meal or activity, that act of piety can put us in solidarity with the poor and needy, Sister Rita said.

"We live in such a time of abundance in this country," she said. "Fasting really puts us in union with people who don't need to fast because their lives don't require it. It's a union with our brothers and sisters who are suffering and whose lives are bound up with ours by the fact that we share a common humanity."

Some might say, "What does it matter if I fast? What's the big deal?"

"But the notion is that what I do, because I'm a member of the body of Christ, affects the whole body of Christ," said Father Jerry. "It's the spiritual component of dying to ourselves that's part of the paschal mystery."

But whether we fast from food or saying biting things about one another, the intention is important.

"It really needs to come from love," Sister Rita said. "We need to be really caring about the persons we're praying for."

Adds Father Jerry, "We need to empty ourselves from whatever keeps us from being at peace with ourselves. By doing that, then we get to know Christ."

And if you answered Moses; 40 days; and Moses, Elijah and Jesus, you are correct.

## Rite of Election

### Church to welcome candidates, catechumens at Easter Vigil

The Diocese of Erie will welcome 210 people preparing to be baptized or to enter into full communion with the church this spring.

Sixty catechumens and 150 candidates, along with their sponsors, family and friends, packed St. Peter Cathedral, Erie, and St. Tobias Parish, Brockway, for the Rite of Election ceremony Feb. 10. About 1,000 people participated in both locations.

Bishop Donald W. Trautman presided over services at the cathedral. Msgr. Robert Smith, vicar general of the Erie Diocese, presided at St. Tobias.

The Rite of Election, celebrated annually in cathedrals and churches around the world on the first Sunday of Lent, formally acknowledges the readiness of those preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation — baptism, confirmation and the Eucha-

rist — at the Easter Vigil, this year on March 22.

During the ceremony, candidates are called and come forth to greet the bishop. Catechumens are called and, accompanied by their godparents, come forth to sign the Book of the Elect. The godparent places his or her right hand on the shoulder of the catechumen as the book is signed.

For catechumens, people not yet baptized, the final part of the journey began with a Rite of Election on or near the first Sunday of Lent.

For candidates, who are already baptized Chris-



tians, the start of Lent means participating in a Call to Continuing Conversion. Many candidates were raised in a different faith. Some were baptized Catholic but never received first Communion as children or were not confirmed.

Catechumens will receive baptism, confirmation and first Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. Candidates will enter full communion with the church by receiving confirmation and first Eucharist.

## Confessions at the MALL

### Mall chapel well received

By Jason Koshinski  
FaithLife editor

Early results show that the Erie Diocese's chapel at the Millcreek Mall, which is open for confessions, has been well received.

"I think I would call it a spiritual success story based on what I've heard from priests who have heard a significant number of penitents," said Bishop Donald Trautman.

The Erie Diocese became the Erie mall's newest tenant, opening a chapel on Ash Wednesday Feb. 6 primarily for hearing confessions.

The chapel, located just outside the concourse entrance to Bon Ton, is open daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Priests hear confessions on Wednesdays from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Both traditional and face-to-face confession is available.

Signs in English, Spanish and Polish welcome visitors and inform them of the hours priests are available for confession or conversation.

"The feedback I have received is very positive," Bishop Trautman said. "I've received a couple negative letters, two or three. But overall, people view it as bringing the sacrament closer to them."

"The one comment that I heard from people was that this was meeting them on



Top, Father Ed Lohse distributes ashes at the diocese's Millcreek Mall chapel. The chapel is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday for prayer. Confessions are heard Wednesdays and Saturdays.

neutral territory. Most people who can't get to church on Saturday afternoon for confession are not about to ring the rectory doorbell."

Business has also been brisk. On

Ash Wednesday, the bishop heard more than 60 confessions himself while distributing ashes in between. Priests have reported a steady stream of penitents during confession hours.

## Bishops' survey looks at U.S. Catholics' practices, views on marriage

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Although nearly three-quarters of American Catholics say they are somewhat or very familiar

with church teachings on marriage, many mistakenly believe that a non-Catholic spouse must promise to raise the couple's children as Catholic and that church teaching accepts divorce in cases of marital infidelity.

Those were among the results of a nationwide survey commissioned in April 2007 by the U.S. bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family Life on U.S. Catholic attitudes and practices regarding marriage. The survey was carried out in June 2007 by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University via the Internet polling firm Knowledge Networks and was made public Feb. 11.

"This is the first time that such a varied and comprehensive body of data about Catholic patterns in marriage has been collected and analyzed," said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky. He is chairman of what is now the bishops' Subcommittee on Marriage and Family Life of the newly renamed Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

"The study establishes a needed baseline of demographic information about

the marital status and related characteristics of adult Catholics across a generational timeline," he added in a statement released with the 250-page survey report.

The margin of error for the survey



of 1,008 self-identified Catholics 18 or older was plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

The report said marriage patterns among U.S. Catholics were similar to those for all Americans, with 53 percent of Catholics married, 25 percent never married, 12 percent divorced, 5 percent widowed, 4 percent living with a partner and 1 percent separated. Including those who have remarried, 23 percent of American Catholics have been divorced



## IN THE U.S.

■ When President George W. Bush gave his State of the Union address Jan. 28, he briefly mentioned something Catholics know all too well: Their inner-city schools are closing. Although the president did not specifically name Catholic schools, the reference to "faith-based schools" that are "disappearing at an alarming rate in many of America's inner cities," clearly described what has been happening to the nation's inner-city Catholic schools. According to the National Catholic Educational Association, enrollment in Catholic elementary schools has dropped 15 percent nationwide since 2001-02, and more than 212 U.S. Catholic schools were closed or consolidated during the 2006-07 school year. In response to the steady decline of inner-city "faith-based schools," the president said this spring he would "convene a White House summit aimed at strengthening these lifelines of learning."



■ Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen was called "the kind of saint America needs today" during Feb. 3 ceremonies closing the diocesan phase of the famed media evangelist's sainthood cause. At the cathedral where he was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria nearly nine decades ago, more than 1,000 people gathered for a Mass of thanksgiving marking the end of five years of preliminary research into Archbishop Sheen's life and virtues. A prolific writer and gifted orator born in nearby El Paso, Ill.,



Archbishop Sheen eventually left his central Illinois roots and became known nationwide as the host of pioneering radio and television programs, including "The Catholic Hour" and "Life Is Worth Living." The latter was a television series that aired from 1951 to 1957 and attracted an estimated 30 million weekly viewers.

## AROUND THE WORLD

■ A Vatican cardinal defended Pope Benedict XVI's reformulation of a prayer for the conversion of Jews and said he hopes it will not become an obstacle in Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Cardinal Walter Kasper, who heads the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews, said the Catholic Church cannot hide its belief that Jesus Christ is the savior of all peoples, including the Jews. But that does not mean the church is launching a missionary effort among the Jewish people, he told Vatican Radio Feb. 7. Cardinal Kasper was responding to Jewish criticism of the pope's new Good Friday prayer for Jews in the 1962 Roman Missal, known as the Tridentine rite, which can be used with greater freedom under new norms issued last year. The pope removed language that spoke of the "blindness" of the Jews, which Cardinal Kasper said was "a little offensive."

■ Lent is a time to return to God's loving embrace and to remember that true happiness can only come from being a friend of Jesus, Pope Benedict XVI said. The Lenten journey is a time of conversion which means "letting oneself be overcome by Jesus and with him return to the Father," the pope said during his weekly general audience Feb. 6, Ash Wednesday. "When modern man declares his total independence from God, he becomes a slave to himself, and often he finds himself inconsolably lonely," Pope Benedict said. "In reality, the only joy that makes the human heart overflow is that which comes from God" because humanity thirsts for a joy

that is infinite and resistant to being quashed by daily worries, he said.

■ Marking the feast of the Presentation of the Lord and the annual celebration of the World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope Benedict XVI asked members of religious orders to help laypeople draw closer to the Bible. The pope said that, as the Catholic Church prepares for the October World Synod of Bishops on the Bible, consecrated men and women should help other members of the church learn to pray with the Bible and to draw direction for their lives from the Scriptures.



## PEOPLE OF FAITH

■ Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, will host a meeting with Muslim representatives in early March to plan a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI. Sohail Nakhoda, editor in chief of *Islamic Magazine* in Jordan, said the meeting with Cardinal Tauran was scheduled for March 3-4. Nakhoda was one of the 138 Muslim scholars who wrote to Pope Benedict and other Christian leaders in October proposing new efforts at Christian-Muslim dialogue based on the shared belief in the existence of one God, in God's love for humanity and in people's obligation to love one another. Pope Benedict responded in November by inviting a group of the Muslim scholars to meet with him and to hold a broader working session with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and with representatives of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies and the Pontifical Gregorian University.

## By the Way...

A short film about the Sisters of Mercy has just been completed. "Meeting of the Waters" is about the women religious who made a commitment and why they did it. "It's a very human approach," says Gary Loncki, communications director for the congregation.



Jason Koshinski

The film was made by IDGenesys and Greg Schlueter. The title is taken from the recent founding of a new community by the Sisters of Mercy in Erie, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Rochester and the Philippines—the New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West community.

The film will be screened for the sisters first, then for the general public. We'll keep you posted on the time, day and place. It is expected to be in mid-March.

Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Edinboro is getting new Stations of the Cross for Lent. Mimi Weiss, the parish's liturgy committee chair, has been working with Bill Mathie, art professor at Edinboro University on the commissioned pieces, which are close-up mosaics of Jesus and various aspects of his passion. The artist is Dean Vrobel of Cambridge Springs.

Ursuline Sister Kathleen Finnerty, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, knows the limitations of Catholic theology as well as anyone. So when she mailed a small medal of Our Lady of Prompt Succor to the New York Giants president, John Mara, before Super Bowl XLII, she knew there was no way she could "guarantee" his team a victory over the heavily favored New England Patriots.

"I never guaranteed him anything, but I wrote in the note that I thought he could use a little extra divine intervention," Sister Kathleen said. "I sent it off and completely forgot about it."

Miraculous or not, the Giants, 11-point underdogs, shocked the previously unbeaten Patriots 17-14 on the strength of a memorable touchdown drive in the final two minutes engineered by New Orleans native Eli Manning.

During the game-winning drive, Mara was caught on TV pacing in the owner's suite of the University of Phoenix Stadium and reaching into his shirt pocket. It turns out he was praying silently and touching the religious medal sent to him by the former principal of Resurrection Grammar School in Rye, N.Y., where Sister Kathleen got to know the Maras and their three young children from 1984 to 1991.

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

## 'Charity covers a multitude of SINS'

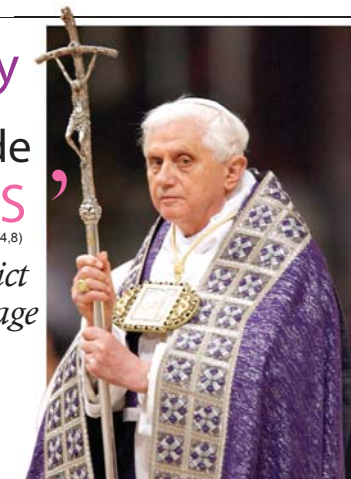
(1 Pt 4,8)

### Pope Benedict XVI's message for Lent

Editor's note: Here is part two of three of the Vatican text of Pope Benedict XVI's message for Lent. Look for part three in the March 9 issue of FaithLife.

Dear brothers and sisters!

The Gospel highlights a typical feature of Christian almsgiving: it must be hidden: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," Jesus asserts, "so that your alms may be done in secret" (Mt 6,3-4). Just a short while before, he said not to boast of one's own good works so as not to risk being deprived of the heavenly reward (cf. Mt 6,1-2). The disciple is to be concerned with God's greater glory. Jesus warns: "In this way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt 5,16). Everything, then, must be done for God's glory and not our own. This understanding, dear brothers and sisters, must accompany every gesture of help to our neighbor, avoiding that it becomes a means to make ourselves the center of attention. If, in accomplishing a good deed, we do not have as our goal God's glory and the real well being of our brothers and sisters, looking rather for a return of personal interest or simply of applause, we place ourselves outside of the Gospel vision. In today's world of images, attentive



vigilance is required, since this temptation is great. Almsgiving, according to the Gospel, is not mere philanthropy; rather it is a concrete expression of charity, a theological virtue that demands interior conversion to love of God and neighbor, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who, dying on the cross, gave his entire self for us. How could we not thank God for the many people who silently, far from the gaze of the media world, fulfill, with this spirit, generous actions in support of one's neighbor in difficulty? There is little use in giving one's personal goods to others if it leads to a heart puffed up in vainglory: for this reason, the one who knows that God "sees in secret" and in secret will reward, does not seek human recognition for works of mercy. In inviting us to consider almsgiving with a more profound gaze that transcends the purely material dimension, Scripture teaches us that there is more joy in giving than in receiving (cf. Act 20,35). When we do things out of love, we express the truth of our being; indeed, we have been created

not for ourselves but for God and our brothers and sisters (cf. 2 Cor 5,15). Every time when, for love of God, we share our goods with our neighbor in need, we discover that the fullness of life comes from love and all is returned to us as a blessing in the form of peace, inner satisfaction and joy. Our Father in heaven rewards our almsgiving with his joy. What is more: Saint Peter includes among the spiritual fruits of almsgiving the forgiveness of sins: "Charity," he writes, "covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pt 4,8). As the Lenten liturgy frequently repeats, God offers to us sinners the possibility of being forgiven. The fact of sharing with the poor what we possess disposes us to receive such a gift. In this moment, my thought turns to those who realize the weight of the evil they have committed and, precisely for this reason, feel far from God, fearful and almost incapable of turning to him. By drawing close to others through almsgiving, we draw close to God; it can become an instrument for authentic conversion and reconciliation with him and our brothers.

## Evolution and creation: A recurring papal theme, often misunderstood

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican newspaper ran an illustration of a chimpanzee in late January.

The odd thing about this chimp was that he was urbanely dressed in a sweater, tie and straw hat and looked as if he might be striding across the lawn at Oxford.

The image was a grabber, though it didn't have much to do with the accompanying article, a lengthy exposition of how evolution can be considered a means of divine creation.

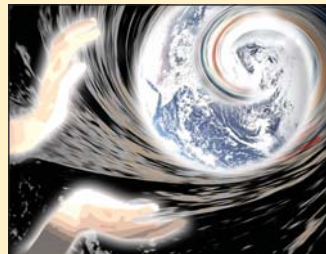
"Evolution and creation cannot be in opposition. God can have created a world with the capacity to change and evolve through natural causes," it said.

The article, by Italian biologist Fiorenzo Facchini, was another element of a debate that has kept percolating to the surface under Pope Benedict XVI. In commentaries, papal speeches, scientific conferences and philosophical exchanges, the Vatican has been focusing more and more on the relationship between God and evolution.

From the outside, this may seem a reaction to the U.S. debate over creationism versus evolution, but it really has as much or more to do with the pope's interest in defining the legitimate spheres of science and faith.

Pope Benedict has weighed in several times on evolution, essentially endorsing it as the "how" of creation but cautioning that evolutionary theory cannot exclude a divine cause.

And yet, many people are



In his recent encyclical on Christian hope, the pope said that a personal God — not the laws of matter or evolution — ultimately governs the world. (CNS illustration)

under the vague impression that this pope has rejected evolution, or is getting ready to, or has serious objections to the science involved.

When a group of professors protested the pope's planned — and ultimately canceled — visit to Rome's Sapienza University, some said it was because they viewed the pope as a critic of Darwinian theory.

It probably doesn't help that the pope has shown a fondness for the phrase "intelligent design." He uses it to describe the idea that, whatever the biological processes involved, the natural world as a whole appears to witness to a divine creator.

That's not the same as the concept of a designer God intervening at particular points in natural development, however. A correct understanding of evolution seemed to be on the pope's mind from the beginning of his pontificate. At his inaugural Mass in 2005, he said the

existence of man can never be fully explained by a scientific process.

"We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God," he said.

In his recent encyclical on Christian hope, the pope returned to that theme, saying a personal God ultimately governs the world and "not the laws of matter or evolution."

In 2006, the pope made evolution the topic of his formal encounter with his former graduate students. That fueled even more speculation that the pontiff was planning a shift in the church's position on evolution; nothing of the sort happened.

This year, the Vatican is preparing its most systematic look yet at the question, in an Oct. 31-Nov. 4 conference sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on the theme: "Scientific Insights Into the Evolution of the Universe and of Life."

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## Briefly

### Marriage amendment introduced in Pa. Senate

State Senator Mike Brubaker (R-Lancaster) and 16 co-sponsors have introduced the 2008 Marriage Protection Amendment to the Pennsylvania legislature as Senate Bill 1250. Co-sponsors include Sen. Robert Robbins (R-Mercer) and Sen. Joseph Scarnati (R-Jefferson), both of whom represent voters in the Erie Diocese.

Although the commonwealth already has a Defense of Marriage Act in place, advocates have called for a constitutional amendment to prevent having the act ruled unconstitutional by a judge. A recent survey indicated that 72 percent of Pennsylvanians want voters—not the courts—to have the final say on whether or not marriage remains defined as one man and one woman in Pennsylvania.

Nationwide, 27 states have amended their constitutions to define marriage as between one man and one woman. The goal of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC)—the public affairs arm of the Catholic bishops and 10 Catholic dioceses in the commonwealth—is to bring the amendment before citizens for a statewide vote. That process includes securing approval of the bill in both the Senate and the House of Representatives in two, consecutive legislative sessions prior to placing it before voters as a statewide referendum.

The PCC is urging people to contact state legislators to encourage support of SB 1250. Visits, calls and letters are recommended; e-mails can also be sent to legislators (by punching in a zip code) through the PCC's Web site at [www.pacatholic.org](http://www.pacatholic.org).

### Kennedy Catholic prom fashion show March 2

HERMITAGE — The Students for Charity organization at Kennedy Catholic High School in Hermitage will host the Sixth Annual Kennedy Catholic Prom Show on Sunday, March 2 at 3 p.m. in the school gymnasium.

The fashion show will feature the Kennedy Supermodels. Dancing with the Stars and the Tuxedo Dancers—all Kennedy Catholic students. The event will also feature fashions from area shops.

Tickets are available at the door for \$7. Students for Charity will be donating all proceeds to Water for People, which helps people in developing countries improve their quality of life by supporting the development of locally sustainable drinking water resources, sanitation facilities and health and hygiene education programs.

For more information on the fashion show, call 724.346.5531.

### Middle School Youth Rally – April 5

The annual diocesan Middle School Youth Rally will be on Saturday, April 5 at DuBois Central Catholic High School from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Youth in grades 6, 7 and 8 will be offered a unique chance to gather with other young Catholics from around the diocese.

The theme for this event is "Love ... for the World to See" with emcee Steve Angrisano, who is recognized as a dynamic and effective communicator with youth.

The youth who attend will have many opportunities to be inspired and have fun—there will be games, drama, a service project, keynote presentations, a concert and Mass.

Registration forms, available at [www.ErieRCDD.org](http://www.ErieRCDD.org), are due to your parish/school office by March 14. For additional information, contact your parish youth leader or Linda Leccc, program coordinator for the Department of Religious Education at 814.824.1218 or 1.800.374.3723 or e-mail [lleccc@eriercd.org](mailto:lleccc@eriercd.org).

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## Bishops' survey looks at U.S. Catholics' views on marriage

SURVEY from page 1

at some time.

Among those currently married, nearly a third (30 percent) had not been married in the church or had their marriage "comvalidated," or formally blessed by the church. For those who were separated or divorced at the time of the survey, more than half (51 percent) said they had not been married in the church or had their marriage comvalidated.

Of those who were divorced, 85 percent had not sought an annulment and another 8 percent had asked for an annulment but it was not granted. An annulment had been granted to only 7 percent of the divorced Catholics surveyed.

Asked whether they had heard a variety of statements presented as a teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage, a majority of all respondents said they had heard that marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament, that openness to children is essential to marriage, that the church does not consider a second marriage after civil divorce to be valid and that marriage is good for the community as well as for the individual couple.

But nearly six in 10 (59 percent) also had heard that a non-Catholic spouse must promise that the couple's children will be raised Catholic, an inaccurate statement; 80 percent of those who had heard the statement believed it to be accurate.

Similar percentages of those who had heard that a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Christian is a sacrament and that church teaching "is accepting of divorce in cases of mari-

tal infidelity" believed that those false statements were true church teachings.

Asked for their views on the general acceptability of divorce, more than three-quarters of U.S. Catholics (76 percent) said it was "acceptable in some cases" and another 17 percent said it was "acceptable in all cases." Only 7 percent said divorce was "not acceptable in any case."

When they were asked about whether divorce was acceptable in specific circumstances, 96 percent said it was in cases of physical abuse, 92 percent said yes when there was emotional abuse and 85 percent said it was acceptable when there was infidelity.

The survey report divided respondents into four generational groups: the pre-Second Vatican Council generation, ages 65 and over in 2007, who made up 19 percent of the respondents; the Vatican II generation, ages 47-64, 31 percent; the post-Vatican II generation, ages 26-46, 40 percent; and the millennial generation, ages 18-25, 10 percent.

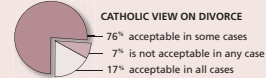
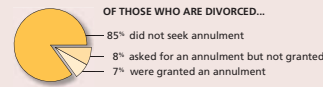
"Agreement with church teachings is ... often relatively high among the oldest Catholics. ... To a lesser extent this is also true of the millennial generation," the report said. "Agreement with church teaching is sometimes lowest among the generation of Catholics who came of age during the changes associated with Vatican II and among post-Vatican II-generation Catholics."

The report also found that frequency of Mass attendance served as "a strong indicator of the general importance of Catholicism in a person's life and his or her level of commitment to living out the faith."

"Those who attend Mass ev-

### Divorce and U.S. Catholics

Twelve percent of U.S. Catholics are currently divorced.



Source: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

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ery week are six times as likely as those who rarely or never attend to report that their view of marriage has been "very" informed by their Catholic faith," the report said. "They are also more than two and a half times as likely to describe themselves as 'very' familiar with church teaching on marriage."

The survey also explored such topics as what kind of marriage preparation couples received and how valuable they found it, whether couples contemplating divorce requested or received assistance from anyone in the church, what kind of information couples would like to receive about marriage and its challenges, and what values they think help sustain a marriage.

"Not surprisingly, the study paints a mixed picture," Archbishop Kurtz said. "It gives us reasons to be grateful and hopeful. It also raises concerns and presents us with challenges."

Although many couples find value in marriage preparation courses, "it is sobering to note that

relatively few Catholics seem willing to seek church-sponsored help for difficulties once they are married," he added. "We must find ways to offer couples more integrated, continuous and varied ministry that will help them grow in happiness and holiness through the entire life cycle of a marriage."

The archbishop also expressed concern that 41 percent of younger Catholics were choosing to marry outside the church and that "more than half of unmarried young Catholic adults do not consider it important to be married in the church."

"These data may indicate an increasing number of Catholics who are unlikely to experience the full value and graces of the sacrament in the future," he said.

The survey was commissioned as part of the bishops' National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage, which the bishops launched in 2004 to call attention to the value of married life.

## It's not too late: \$8 million still available for Educational Improvement Tax Credits

By A. B. Hill  
Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

"How'd you like to save money on your business's tax bill while at the same time help kids in your neighborhood get the best education they deserve?"

That is the question the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) and other education advocates are asking qualified businesses around Pennsylvania. To date, approximately \$8 million is still available in the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program.

The EITC program provides a tax credit of up to 90 percent for companies that donate to non-profit scholarship and educational improvement organizations—many of which help students at Catholic schools. During the 2006-07 school year, more than 33,000 children received EITC scholarships. Since the program's inception in 2001, more than 2,300 Pennsylvania companies have participated in the EITC program, donating over \$260 million to participating organizations.

More than \$67 million in tax credits have already been awarded, but \$8 million in total tax credits remain available to

businesses that want to contribute to scholarship programs.

"Tax credits are not deductions," said Dr. Robert J. O'Hara, executive director of PCC. "A tax credit is an actual reduction in the amount of tax a business will pay. In essence, a business can pay its taxes directly to the commonwealth, or, by making a donation, substantially reduce its tax liability while helping families and building community good will."

To be eligible for a tax credit, a business must pay at least one of the following taxes: Corporate Net Income Tax; Capital Stock and Franchise Tax; Bank and Trust Company Shares Tax; Title Insurance Companies Shares Tax; Insurance Premiums Tax; and the Mutual Thrift Institutions Tax.

To receive its tax credit, the business simply needs to submit its one-page application to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). After approval by DCED, businesses must make their contribution(s) within 60 days.

The EITC program is a great benefit to Catholic schools. Each diocese in Pennsylvania has its own scholarship organization and there are scholarship organizations associated with

## The STAR Foundation

is a scholarship program in the Erie Diocese that is funded through business contributions. Companies may elect to have part of their state business tax go to this scholarship fund. When companies contribute to the STAR Foundation, they may limit the use of the money to a specific school or make the donation eligible for all Catholic schools.

The income eligibility limits for families are set by the state. The STAR Foundation then distributes the funds directly to financially eligible families as tuition scholarships. Because of the limited availability of funding, a family that meets the income guidelines may not receive an award.

STAR Foundation 2007-08 scholarships distributed		
Number of scholarships	Total amount	Average scholarship
179 (Pre-K)	\$92,703	\$518
733 (K-8)	\$576,297	\$786
140 (9-12)	\$198,236	\$1,416

other private or religious schools all across the commonwealth.

"This is a unique government program where everybody wins," added O'Hara. "Businesses can direct their tax dollars to go toward something good right in their backyard and families are empowered to make choices when it comes to educating their children. It's a good deal!"

To learn how your business can take part in this program

and create educational opportunities for local students, please contact the scholarship organization in your diocese or log on to the REACH Foundation Web site at [www.reachschoolchoice.org](http://www.reachschoolchoice.org) for more details.

A. B. Hill is communications director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference—the public affairs arm of Pennsylvania's Catholic bishops and the Catholic dioceses of Pennsylvania.

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## Sacred Heart 55th Annual Spaghetti Dinner

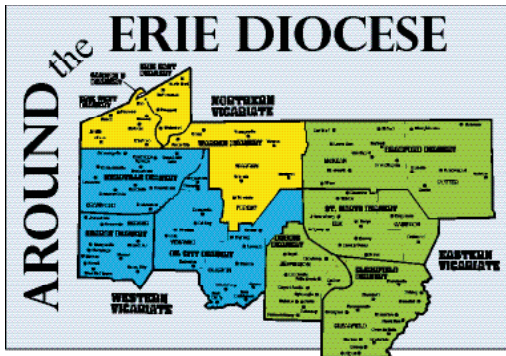
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Visit [ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp](http://ErieRCD.org/faithlife.asp) to download quick and easy photo tips on a wallet-size card.



### DCC student awarded rank of Eagle Scout

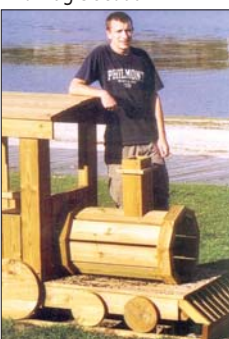
DUBOIS — Aaron Carpin of DuBois was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout on Jan. 27 at St. Michael the Archangel Parish. Aaron, the son of Melinda and Dennis Carpin, is a member of Boy Scout Troop 27.

His Eagle Scout project involved fundraising at a concession stand during the Treasure Lake Ski Lodge's Music Fest and George Thorogood concert. He then rebuilt the train play area at the New Providence Beach in Treasure Lake.

Carpin is a student at DuBois Central Catholic High School where he is involved with drama and the senior class play and will graduate in 2008. He has also participated and assisted in various performances at the local community Reitz Theater.

His future plans are to attend Gannon University at a seminary with a dual major in English and history. He is a member of St. Michael the Archangel in DuBois.

Aaron Carpin, a senior at DuBois Area Catholic Schools, rebuilt the train play area at New Providence Beach in Treasure Lake as part of his Eagle Scout project.



CURWENSVILLE—HymnSpeak, the youth band from St. Timothy Parish in Curwensville, recently performed for the Fuel Aid concert along with local soloist Brenda Weber, United Methodist group In His Image and popular southern gospel recording artists Crossover.

The event benefits the Curwensville Ministerium, a multi-denominational organization made up of local churches including St. Timothy. The concert raised more than \$5,000 to benefit the ministerium's fund to help local families in need of help heating their homes.

The young people in our area are not only multi-talented, but are always willing to give their time to benefit others," said Mark Sopic, event organizer and a leader of HymnSpeak. "I'm extremely proud of them and their performance."

HymnSpeak was formed in the spring of 2007. They have provided music for several Masses, including a combined effort with the St. Timothy choir for a Christmas Eve service. The music combines traditional hymns, modern music and gospel.

### Faith in action at St. Luke, Youngsville

YOUNGSVILLE — The ministries of St. Luke Parish in Youngsville have partnered together to help raise funds for the Youngsville Marching Band making a trip to Ireland in March to perform in the St. Patrick's Day parade.

Pictured from left to right are Doris Labowski, president of the Women of St. Luke; Betty Ingols, treasurer; Tom Yucha, president of the Pastoral Council; and Rick Hurley, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus in Youngsville presenting a check for \$2,500 to Charlene Fohrd representing the Youngsville Marching Band Boosters.

While the marching band has 42 members, six belong to St. Luke.

"What's interesting is that the money raised didn't even go to those six kids," said Father John Neff, pastor of St. Luke. "Each



student had to raise \$1,000 for the trip, and there were five who were having trouble raising the money. So we helped them as a community outreach. Because of the efforts

here at St. Luke, they can go." Those five students worked the parish's Feb. 5 pancake supper, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

### Coudersport music minister recognized by Catholic Daughters

COUDERSPORT — Gloria Richardson, a member of Court Doyle #932 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas and St. Eulalia Parish in Coudersport, was a second-place winner in the CDA's annual National Education Contest.

Richardson's entry was in the music division and had previously won in the local contest and placed first in the state contest. She received a certificate and \$50 monetary award for her entry. Other categories included essay, poetry, art, poster, computer art and photography. The contest is for students and adult CDA members.

She had written the music for St. Stephen Mass, as a tribute to her brother, Stephen Sevinsky, who is the postmaster of the Coudersport Post Office. Her piece includes Mass parts for the Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen and Lamb of God.



Originally from St. Eulalia, Richardson and her husband both recently retired and moved back to the area after having lived away for 40 years.

"I wanted to introduce new Eucharistic acclamations to the parish," she said. "At a liturgy committee meeting, I just played them; I didn't tell them that I composed it. The parts came up as a preference and we chose to introduce it to our parish."

Her St. Stephen Mass parts were used at St. Eulalia last year during ordinary time and this year for Lent.

Pictured from left to right are Mary McCaigue, Court Doyle regent, Gloria Richardson with her certificate and Judy Castano, state education chair, all of Coudersport.

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