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BI-WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ERIE

February 9, 2014

Benedictine monastery in St. Marys set to close

Town saddened by sisters leaving oldest Benedictine convent in U.S.

Mary Solberg
FaithLife

ST MARYS—Ten-year-old Eric Vogt played "King of the Mountain" on a snow-covered hill behind Queen of the World School in St. Marys. It was near Christmas, 1960. Spirits were high and not many of the fifth-grade boys were thinking about books... that is, until they saw their teacher, Benedictine Sister Benigna Bauer, walking toward them.

To the amazement and amusement of the rambunctious kids, Sister Benigna's feet slipped out from under her long black dress. The strict, no-nonsense teacher fell to the powdery white ground.

"When we got back in the classroom, Sister Benigna had her head down on her desk. Her body was shaking so much that we all thought she was crying or injured," Vogt recalls now more than 50 years later. "Then, suddenly, she lifted her head and we saw that she was laughing at herself. That was the day I learned that nuns can be real people."

Now a Benedictine priest and pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in his native St. Marys, Father Vogt remembers that snowy day with bittersweet emotions. The Benedictine Sisters of Elk County, the oldest Benedictine community in the United States, is closing its monastery.

"I think it caught a lot of people by surprise. Many parishioners wanted to know what they could do to keep them here, but that was the sisters' choice," says Father Vogt, 63.



Members of the Benedictine Sisters of Elk County are pictured above in 1952 outside St. Joseph Monastery. At right, sisters lay the cornerstone of a new convent and chapel adjacent to the former Andrew Kaul Memorial Hospital in St. Marys.

It was a difficult choice made clear over several years of introspection. Fewer women had been entering the 162-year-old religious community and the average age of its sisters had begun to climb. Today, St. Joseph Monastery—founded in 1852—has 17 members, their ages ranging from 58 to 91.

"These kinds of processes are never easy," says Benedictine Sister Rita Brink, a member of St. Walburga Monastery in Covington, Ky., who became administrator of the St. Marys community last fall.

All of the sisters at St. Joseph Monastery, she explains, are in the process of relocating to other Benedictine residences.

The timetable for the actual closing of the monastery and the sisters' final departure is not yet known. It's a reality that has weighed heavily on the hearts of people in this tight-knit, rural community.

"The Benedictines had such a great impact on us. With them leaving, it's like losing part of your family," says Georgia Wagner, a longtime director of religious education at the town's three Catholic parishes.

News of the sisters' decision to leave spread quickly and cut deep. People in all walks of life throughout the region began

discussing ways to honor the women who essentially raised them in the Catholic faith and encouraged many religious vocations.

"Everybody in town started talking about what we could do for the sisters," says Mary Meyer, advancement director for Elk County Catholic High School. "I think it shows how much we all loved the sisters and really want to honor them and pay tribute to them and say thank you."

Meyer has taken the reins of a committee organizing a prayer service and reception to recognize the good works and longevity of the Benedictine sisters. The event—scheduled at Queen of the World Parish Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.—will include a prayer service, speeches and a social.

One has only to look at the committee members to realize how deep and wide the sisters' influence has been. The committee includes parishioners of the three parishes in St. Marys, the Chamber of Commerce, the Elk Regional Health Center and even Mayor Bob Howard. Parishioners from four other nearby parishes—in Kersey, Kane, Warren and Lucinda—have been invited to participate in the celebration.

"The sisters were very much a part of our lives," Meyer adds.

For Father Vogt, Sister Benigna was the



first person to whom he confided his desire to become a priest. For Georgia Wagner, the sisters instilled the Benedictine spirit of hospitality and frugality in generations of young people.

"Their roots go really deep in this town," says Wagner, who attended all Catholic schools in St. Marys and sent her own four children to the parochial schools taught by the Benedictines.

The Benedictines served Elk County as educators and health care providers, having taught in various schools and having served in various capacities at the former Andrew Kaul Memorial Hospital, now Elk Regional. When fire destroyed the hospital in 1934, the Benedictines offered what was their academy as a temporary location. The religious community of women was instrumental in raising funds to rebuild the health center.

Much of the property on which St. Joseph Monastery sits

is owned by the Benedictine sisters, but a portion of it is held by Latrobe-based St. Vincent Archabbey in trust for the adjacent St. Mary Parish. The monastery includes several buildings, some agricultural land and a gift shop. The remaining members work as art and piano teachers and several assist at area parishes.

Bishop Lawrence Persico, in a statement, called the monastery closing a great loss to the diocese and to the St. Marys community. He recognized what he called the "fidelity and dedication" of the sisters.

"I trust they will move into the future with faith," the bishop stated.

In 1852, three Benedictine women came to St. Marys from the Abbey of Saint Walburga in Eichstätt, Germany. They established St. Joseph Monastery in a clearing in the midst of a great forest.

Sister Kathleen Dietz named vice chancellor

Taught theology at Gannon before joining Chancery staff

FaithLife

Sister Kathleen Dietz, FSO, easily handles the frigid cold temperatures of northwestern Pennsylvania winters. A native of Vermont, she also knows all about sprawling dioceses like Erie, which she now calls home.

"I'm from Vermont and the whole state is one diocese," Sister Kathleen says, matter-of-factly.

Her New England sensibility and humor have held her in good stead since coming to work full-time last fall in the 13-county Diocese of Erie. For six months, she served as special assistant to the Chancery Office and then was named this January to her new position as vice chancellor, replacing the retiring Sister Catherine Manning, SSJ.

"I love it. I really do," Sister Kathleen says. "What I like first and foremost is that the work is so necessary."

As vice chancellor, she directly assists Bishop Lawrence Persico and Father Christopher Singer, chancellor, in the administration of the diocese. The Chancery supports the bishop's office as well as provides legal and sacramental consultation to parishes.

"There's such a variety of work to do. I try to relieve Father Singer of all the things that he doesn't have to do, so that he can concentrate on the things only he can do," she says.

Sister Kathleen comes to her post with serious credentials and a strong devotion to her community, The Spiritual Family The Work



Sister Kathleen Dietz, FSO

(also known simply as The Work), a new form of consecrated life that was given papal approval in 2001. She was the first American to join the international religious community, whose motherhouse is in Austria.

"Our community includes sisters, priests, deacons and brothers who form the nucleus of the community, as well as married couples, diocesan priests, deacons and single persons who belong to our community in a wider sense," Sister Kathleen, 53, says. "The

greatest difficulty of our time is the breakdown of the family. As a spiritual family, we look to the Holy Family as the true model of unity and complementarity."

Sister Kathleen first came to know about the Diocese of Erie in Rome, where she lived for 13 years, serving her community in various capacities. During that time, she earned her licentiate and doctorate in dogmatic theology. It was while studying at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) that she met Father Nicholas Rouch, a priest of the Diocese of Erie and currently the vicar for Education, who also was studying for his doctorate.

Upon the invitation of Father Rouch, Sister Kathleen visited the Diocese of Erie in 2004, 2005 and 2007.

In 2008, upon the invitation of then-Bishop Donald Trautman, she came to Erie to open a house of The Work with Sister Josephine Vuodi, SFO. Sister Kathleen taught part-time in the theology department at Gannon University before working in the Chancery. She continues to teach in the diocesan diaconate formation program.

"Sister Kathleen brings a wealth of experience about the church in the United States and Europe. Her theology training brings great insight into the Gospel," Father Singer says. "Most importantly, though, Sister Kathleen has a genuine love for religious life, the priesthood and the laity. The Chancery exists to serve those three groups of people."



Photo by Mary Solberg

Moms and babies turned out in full force at the 36th Annual Pro-Life Breakfast at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie Jan. 18. Pictured is Emily Moore, of Erie, with her young son, Abram.

Rice Bowl fights hunger locally, globally

RICE BOWL - March 5-April 20

Thank-you notes have been pouring into Bill Grant's office at St. Mark Catholic Center in Erie. Many food pantries and community shelters in the 13-county Diocese of Erie have been sending their appreciation for funds collected last year by the diocese through the Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl Collection.

"Everyone is so grateful for the help," said Grant, director of stewardship and annual giving.

One letter from the Corry Area Food Pantry reads, in part: "During the past year, the Food Pantry assisted an average of 370 families each month. Thanks to generosity such as you have provided,

we will continue to be able to address the needs of these families in the current challenging economic times."

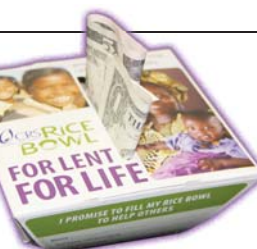
Of the estimated \$78,000 collected last year from parishioners in the Diocese of Erie, about \$32,000 stayed in the diocese. The vicars of each of the vicariates decided which charity they would like their portion of the funds to go.

In 2013, the Corry Area Food Pantry, for example, received \$350. St. Elizabeth Center in Oil City received \$650, and the Meadville Soup Kitchen was given more than \$400. Among the many others were St. Michael Foodbank in Fryburg and St. James Haven in Meadville.

Grant and his assistant, Amanda Phanco, are

gearing up for this year's Rice Bowl Collection, which will be held during the six weeks of Lent, from March 5 through Easter Sunday, April 20. Many religious education programs and Catholic schools in the diocese—along with all parishes—will ask for Rice Bowl donations to help people in their own communities and around the globe.

Catholic Relief Services, which fights poverty and hunger in 100 countries, keeps 60 percent of what a diocese collects. Some of its outreach includes providing mother-child nutrition services, bringing potable water to communities, and micro-financing projects to provide a living income to needy people.



"Lent is a time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving and the Rice Bowl is a perfect opportunity to think about our global family, too," Phanco said.

For more information about CRS Rice Bowl, go to www.ErieRCD.org/ricebowl.asp.



Annual day of prayer celebrates African-American, African families

NEW YORK (CNS)—The 25th anniversary of the National Day of Prayer for the African-American and African Family was celebrated Feb. 2, the first Sunday of Black History Month. This year's theme is a quote from St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the Catholic Church's black saints: "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you."

Visitors to the website of Solid Ground will find a brochure, a prayer and further information about African-American ministries. Solid Ground is a Franciscan outreach for African-American families headed by Franciscan Father James E. Goode, its pastoral director. Father Goode, one of the nation's leading African-American Catholic evangelists, is also the founder and president of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life.

Learn more about the Franciscans' ministry to African-American families at www.solidgroundministry.com

Stuebenville grad starts pro-life coffee business

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (CNS)—John Lillis, a graduate of the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, has launched Lifeabout Coffee Co., which contracts with affiliate pro-life groups nationwide to exchange sales of coffee, tea and related merchandise for commission to put toward their causes. For every bag of coffee and tea sold, a pro-life group of the buyer's choice gets \$1 of sales.

"My basic philosophy is that as Americans, we must defend life at all stages—our fundamental right is life and without it, there is nothing else, literally," he said in a telephone interview from Omaha, Neb., where the company is based. "Who cares about taxes, welfare, war, unemployment—or even coffee—without life?"



CNS photo
Coffee entrepreneur John Lillis

Pope names new Harrisburg bishop

WASHINGTON (USCCB)—Pope Francis has named Bishop Ronald W. Gainer of the Diocese of Lexington, Ky., bishop of the Diocese of Harrisburg.

Bishop Gainer was born Aug. 24, 1947, in Pottsville, Pa., and studied at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, Pa., where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1969 and master of divinity degree in 1973. He received a licentiate degree in canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1986. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Allentown on May 19, 1973.

Additionally, Bishop Gainer was named second bishop of Lexington on Dec. 13, 2002, and was ordained bishop on Feb. 22, 2003. In Harrisburg, he succeeds the late Bishop Joseph P. McFadden, who died May 2, 2013.

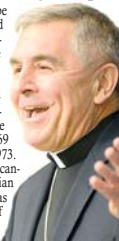


Photo by Chris Heisey, The Catholic Witness
Harrisburg Bishop-Elect Ronald W. Gainer

Quebec to vote on euthanasia bill

OTTAWA, Ontario (CNS)—Quebec's euthanasia Bill 52 will come to a vote in February, and the province's bishops say it "goes against the most basic human values and contradicts the very purpose of medicine."

"Bringing about a patient's death is not a medical act," the bishops said in a Jan. 23 statement. "To cause death to a sick person is not to care for him. A lethal injection is not a treatment. Euthanasia is not a form of care."

The vote could come soon after the Quebec National Assembly reconvenes Feb. 11.

The commission tasked with a detailed study of the bill "rushed through going through the articles to finish the amendments," in January, said Nicolas Steinhout, executive director of Living With Dignity, a coalition of people and groups opposed to euthanasia in Quebec.

Although dozens of amendments have been proposed, Steinhout said, the bill would still allow euthanasia, or the deliberate killing of patients.

The bishops said that if the legislation passes as is, "the act of causing death would be considered a form of 'care' that could be offered and 'administered' to the terminally ill."



Editor's Notes
Mary SOLBERG

Payoffs, kickbacks, terrorism. Much has been written in the international press about problems with this year's Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. But we only have to look to Pope Francis for direction on how to dismiss the negative and hold fast to the highest principles of sport.

Last November, Pope Francis met with members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) who presented him with the Olympic Order in Gold.

In his address to the IOC, Pope Francis said, "I wish to encourage institutions such as yours, which promote sports—especially to the younger generations—as a way of training for peace, mutual sharing and harmonious coexistence of people. Sports tend to unite rather than divide!"

It's fitting that many Catholic school students are involved in the Snowflakes for Sochi promotional campaign on WICU-TV this month. It's definitely a bright spot in these 22nd Olympic Games.

Catholic Schools Week was a resounding success this year, even though the frigid temperatures forced the cancellation of some events. One of the highlights of the week was when Bishop Lawrence Persico met with inquisitive kindergartners at Blessed John Paul II Elementary School in Hermitage.

As reported in the *Sharon Herald*, Katie Tiefenthal's class asked the bishop some tough questions: "How do you become a bishop?" "What is the Erie Diocese?" "Do you grade the papers?"

Bishop Persico started the week by celebrating Mass with the three schools that make up the Kennedy Catholic Family of Schools.

DEATH NOTICE

Msgr. Homer DeWalt dies at age 94

Former administrator at Villa Maria College, Gannon University

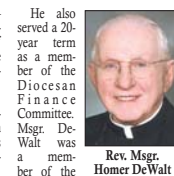
NORTH CANTON, Ohio—The Rev. Msgr. Homer C. DeWalt, former superintendent of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie and a former administrator at two Erie colleges, died Jan. 15 in North Canton, Ohio.

A native of Titusville, he graduated from Canisius College in Buffalo, N.Y., in 1941. He was employed in Detroit until he entered the military in 1942.

He entered Saint Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore and was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Erie by Archbishop John Mark Gannon in 1950. He began his priestly ministry by teaching at Cathedral Preparatory School and then at Gannon College, now Gannon University.

After earning a master's degree from John Carroll University, he was appointed superintendent of schools in the Diocese of Erie from 1962-82. He was director of the diocesan CCD Office from 1962-64. In 1965, he obtained a doctorate from the University of Minnesota.

During these years, he served as chaplain to the Sisters of Villa Maria College. In 1982, he became associate dean of education at Villa Maria College and shortly afterward was appointed assistant to the president for diocesan affairs at Gannon University, having served in that position from 1983-87.



Rev. Msgr. Homer DeWalt

He also served a 20-year term as a member of the Diocesan Finance Committee. Msgr. DeWalt was a member of the Education Department of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, a member of the Status and Functions Committee of the Superintendent's Department of the National Catholic Education Association, a member of the Erie Rotary Club and a member of the Sons of the American Revolution.

From 1983-90, he served as administrator of St. Cyrian Parish in Waterford. In 1990, he was assigned as chaplain at John XXIII Home in Hermitage, a post he held until 1997. In 1993, he participated in an audience with Pope John Paul II in Rome.

Msgr. DeWalt retired in September 1997, living in Erie until 2002 when he moved to the House of Loreto in Canton. A funeral Mass was held at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie, with Bishop Lawrence T. Persico presiding. Another Mass was held at St. Titus Church in Titusville. Burial was at St. Catherine Cemetery in Titusville.

Athletes happy returning to renovated Hammermill Center

Mary Solberg
FaithLife

Morgan Neighbors and Kelley Sundberg, both starting varsity players on Gannon University's women's basketball team, are happy to have home-court advantage again at the Hammermill Center in downtown Erie.

Two days before Christmas, an electrical fire erupted and caused widespread heavy smoke and electrical damage in four attached buildings, including the 2,800-seat basketball arena. Athletic competitions and practices were moved to other universities as repairs continued around-the-clock. The space was formally reopened on Jan. 15 with men's and women's basketball contests between nationally ranked Gannon and Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

"It looks better than it ever has and the new sound system is awesome," Neighbors, a sophomore, told *FaithLife*.

During an official blessing of the renovated arena on Jan. 16, Neighbors read a passage from St. Paul. Sundberg, her senior teammate, took holy water provided by Father Michael Kesicki, asso-

ciate vice president for mission and ministry at Gannon, and blessed both nets.

"We didn't know when we'd get back in here, so I'm really thankful for the renovations," Sundberg said.

Fortunately, the main arena floor sustained nearly zero damage in the fire and subsequent cleanup by Erie firefighters. According to Gannon President Keith Taylor, who attended the blessing ceremony with about 50 other administrators, staff and athletes, water was contained on the periphery of the actual court and in a trough below.

The fact that no one was in the building when the fire erupted also was fortuitous.

"The whole thing has been a miracle. God was certainly looking down on us," Taylor said, standing on center court.

"This floor is sacred ground."

Melanie Whaley, director for marketing and communications, said that the community has a special attachment to the arena, formerly called "The Audi."

"The question from every-



Photo by Mary Solberg

Gannon women's basketball starters Morgan Neighbors, left, and Kelley Sundberg are happy to be back at the Hammermill Center.

one was, 'Is the floor OK?'" Whaley said.

Construction crews worked nonstop for three weeks renovating the structure. Interior walls were repainted a glossy burgundy and white and a new sound system and basketball nets were installed.

All of it is completed in time for the NCAA Women's Division II Elite Eight National Championship March 25-28 at the Erie Insurance Arena. Gannon's Hammermill Center will be used by many of the teams for practice.

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NFP directors take message to Papua New Guinea

Mary Solberg
FaithLife

In the cities of Papua New Guinea, a small island nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, it's commonplace to see billboards about AIDS prevention. HIV/AIDS rates are high due to polygamy and prostitution.

So it isn't surprising to learn that while many married couples there are monogamous and have large families, a man can still readily leave his wife if she hasn't borne any children. Oftentimes, the woman is considered at fault. "It's a male-dominated culture,

a tribal culture," explains Barb Burkett, co-director with her husband, Ed, of the Natural Family Planning and Chastity Education Office of the Diocese of Erie.

They spent two months last fall living in Papua New Guinea, spreading the message of Natural Family Planning and its Christ-centered view of marriage. They taught NFP charting strategies and shared the spiritual aspects of married life during their visits to three major cities and 10 villages, many of which were accessible only by boat.

According to Ed Burkett, "The people understand their physical



NFP Co-Director Barb Burkett, center, stands with several nursing students at St. Mary's Hospital in the Archdiocese of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea.

bodies, but I'm not so sure they're concerned about spacing children. We tried to impress on them that children take energy and time and that we need to focus on their spiritual lives, too."

less than 100 years, Papua New Guinea still retains its tribal roots. The Burketts noticed how women carry much of the weight—literally—as they nurture their families and do much of the physical labor in their communities.

"It's so complicated socially," Ed Burkett adds. "How can someone be open to life—have children and be responsible for children—when you don't have many options in life?" Both the Burketts lost weight

on their mission trip, acclimating themselves to the hot and humid climate and keeping a busy schedule. They talked to 950 high school and college-age students and 750 adults in various parishes. They taught the basics of NFP to 226 people, including nursing students at St. Mary's Hospital in the Archdiocese of Rabaul.

Also during their trip, they were guests on Radio Maria, the Catholic radio station in Papua New Guinea.

Says Barb: "It broadened my appreciation for life and the struggle for life that many people face in the world. It made me aware that we in the First World need to be aware of the needs of the people in the Third World."

At 68 years of age, both Burketts hope that their trip will inspire young people and other adults to consider doing mission work. Even in the 21st century, the needs are great in many parts of the world.

The Burketts were invited to Papua New Guinea by their friend, Capuchin Bishop William Fey of the Kimberley Diocese of Papua New Guinea. The church there has recognized the inroads being made by such contraceptive providers as Planned Parenthood.

Briefly

Headmaster dismissed from DuBois system

DuBOIS—DuBois Area Catholic School System on Jan. 24 dismissed its new headmaster, Frank "Mario" Bella, after discovering that he did not disclose information that he worked at and was fired from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in the Archdiocese of New York.

According to the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Erie, Bella also did not disclose that he had legally changed his name from Frank Borzellieri. He was removed from his position at DuBois because he did not provide the diocese with complete or accurate information about his past employment.

Msgr. Charles Kaza will continue to serve as the school's president while the search for a new headmaster is underway.

STAR Foundation and Bishop's Tuition Assistance applications are now available

ERIE—Applications are now available for STAR Foundation and Bishop's Tuition Assistance scholarships for those planning to attend Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie.

To obtain an application, go to a local Catholic school or online at www.ErieRCD.org/pdf/schools/tuition14-15.pdf. The due dates are March 1 for Erie high schools and March 31 for all other schools.

Applications should be mailed directly to the address on the bottom of the last page of the application form. Applications cannot be accepted at St. Mark Catholic Center in Erie.

Worldwide Marriage Encounters scheduled

STATE COLLEGE—For Valentine's Day, give the gift of yourself for 44 hours at a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend Feb. 14-16.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter of Western Pennsylvania will host the weekend at Tofrees Resort in State College. Another weekend is planned this spring, March 21-23, at Quality Inn and Suites in Erie. A non-refundable \$75 application fee saves a space and a free-will offering can be made at the end of the weekend. Space is limited. Learn about WWME by calling 814-823-4600 or 412-635-7775. To apply, visit www.yourmarriageisworthit.org.

Sharon parish offers Bible study program

SHARON—A Bible study will be held every Tuesday evening at St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Sharon, from Feb. 25 through April 15. This Lenten opportunity journeys through the Bible in a program titled, *The Bible Timeline* with Jeff Cavins, on Tuesdays from 7 to 8:30 pm.

Cavins facilitates the program on a DVD. Everyone is welcome. Call the parish rectory to register at 724-342-7391. There is a \$20 fee to cover the cost of materials. The program is a joint effort of St. Anthony and St. Adalbert Parish, Farrell.

Nearly 1,000 take part in pro-life activities

Mary Solberg
FaithLife

Temperatures below zero didn't stop nearly 1,000 people in the Diocese of Erie from participating in various pro-life activities during the past month.

"There were more modest numbers this year, whether it was the cold temperatures or not, but people have certainly been on fire," said Tim Broderick, president and director of People for Life in Erie.

In January, about 300 people participated in Erie's March for Life and another 500 attended the 36th Annual Pro-life Breakfast at the Bayfront Convention Center.

Capping off the month of pro-life events was the 41st annual March for Life rally, held in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 21. An estimated 300 people from the diocese—including Catholic school students from Villa Maria Academy, Cathedral Preparatory School and St. George School, all in Erie—traveled to the nation's capital to mark the anniversary of the United States Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

Besides the three busloads from People for Life and the single bus carrying Villa/Prep students, Catholics representing various churches in Meadville as well as St. Philip Parish in Linesville also attended the national rally.

"When we got to Washington, it was below zero, but the sun was bright all day long and it made a huge difference," Broderick said.

At the Pro-life Breakfast at the Bayfront Convention Center on Jan. 18, Bishop Lawrence Persico and Congressman Mike Kelly of Pennsylvania's 3rd District took turns speaking to the 500 gathered in the grand ballroom. The guest speaker this year was Angela Franks, Ph.D., author of *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy*. Sanger was an American birth control activist, sex edu-



Catholics from the Meadville area join thousands of pro-life marchers on Jan. 21 in Washington, D.C. Braving frigid temperatures, they are seen holding their sign at left.

cator and nurse who popularized the term birth control, opened the first birth control clinic in the United States and established organizations that evolved into the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

According to Franks, Sanger was a long-time supporter of the sterilization of people with mental or physical disabilities. From 1927 to the 1960s, Franks said, 67,000 people were sterilized in America.

"It is a really brutal, sad story," Franks said. "Sanger is the author of the idea that having children is bad for women."

Franks, who brought her infant daughter to the event, said the number of Planned Parenthood abortion clinics has declined in the United States since the 1990s. Currently,

there are 750 operating today. She encouraged those attending to "give your time, talent and treasure to the pro-life movement" by providing life-giving alternatives to women considering abortion.

Bishop Persico also recommended that Catholics become more educated about abortion-related legislation.

"For a nation so concerned about human rights, it is interesting how we ignore the most basic human right, which is the right to life," Bishop Persico said.

Visit the Catholic Advocacy Network at www.pacatholic.org to send notices to your legislators about life issues.

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Grant amounts vary and will be provided only while LIHEAP funding remains available. Additional assistance may be available for those with a heating emergency.

Sisters of St. Joseph share gifts from dinner

ERIE—The annual Peter Lyons' Thanksgiving Giving Back gift of \$500 was recently presented to St. Patrick's Haven in Erie.

The gift was established to recognize Lyons for his role in starting the dinner with Sister Theresa Marie Bohren 25 years ago.

Pictured with Lyons are Nancy Donnelly, SSJ Associate, left, and Sister Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, in cooperation with Gannon University, hosted the 25th Annual SSJ Thanksgiving Dinner at Gannon University last fall. More than 700 donors supported the effort through financial gifts and food donations. This year's



fund surpassed \$45,000 in donations. Funds were shared with area social service agencies.

4th-grader says 'no' to birthday gifts



ERIE—Conor Russell, a fourth-grader at St. George School in Erie, recently presented a \$335 donation to Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey, left, executive vice president of the Barber National Institute in Erie. When Conor celebrated his 10th birthday in December, he asked family and friends to not give him gifts, but to make a

donation to the Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Foundation or purchase copies of his favorite book, *The Giving Tree*. Conor and his mother, Alyson Amendola, right, also presented six copies of the book for students at the Barber National Institute. With the donation, Conor became one of the youngest donors in the history of the Barber Foundation.

DuBois Central Catholic competes at business competition

DuBOIS—Thirty-eight students of DuBois Central Catholic's Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter attended a regional FBLA competition at Bellefonte Area High School in December. Twenty students advanced to the state level of competition to be held this spring. Nine high schools from the region participated in the competition, with several hundred students competing in various business categories. Eight DCC students took first-place honors, and Trisha Gupta, a freshman, was elected region president.

Pictured in the first row, left to right, are Kiki Blakley, Caitlyn Manduley, Charlotte Way, Trisha Gupta, Brianna Clyde and Alex Huckestein. In the second row, left to right, are: Alex Micknis, Rosemary Gillespie, Maria



Ginther, Madeline Robison, Sabrena Starr, Autumn Carlson, Natalie Curtis, and FBLA adviser Lisa Blasdel. In the third row, left to right, are: Jacob Aravich, Timothy Kentoski, Craig Lindenuth, Thomas Vasbinder and Alex McKillop. Missing from photo are AJ Zelenky and Katie Ellenberger.

Retreat at Olmsted Manor Center attracts 50



LUDLOW—Fifty adults representing most of the 19 parishes/mission churches in the Oil City Deanery retreated recently at Olmsted Manor Center in Ludlow. Sister Marian Wehler, OSB, and

Sister Tina Geiger, RSM, (co-directors of Catholic Rural Ministry) and guest presenter Sister Anne McCarthy, OSB, gave reflections and guided the group in prayer.

Grandparents gather for event at St. Michael School

GREENVILLE—St. Michael School in Greenville hosted the annual Grandparents' Breakfast in December. Grandparents of students were treated to a buffet breakfast prepared and served by many volunteer parents.

Pictured are members of the Leonard family, Autumn (pre-K), Katie (grade 8), Hannah (grade 6), Ben (grade 3), and their grandfather, Robert Leonard of Greenville, who has been attending the breakfasts for more than 20 years.



Immigration reform pushed at vigils

ERIE—Several people gathered in the frigid January air at 2nd and State streets in Erie to call for reforms to the U.S. immigration law. The Benedictines for Peace host the Justice for Immigrants vigils the first Friday of every month. Among those pictured holding placards is Ann Brown, center, of Fairview.

The half-hour vigils are open to the public, beginning at 5:15 p.m.



St. Michael team wins second place in Scullin Invitational

GREENVILLE—The 14th Annual Erin Scullin Invitational was held recently at St. Michael School in Greenville. The three-day, eight-team bracket ended with Reynolds' sixth-graders winning first place.

The St. Michael team, consisting of fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders, came in second. Pictured in the front row, left to right, are: Rachel Varga, Mackenzie Hause, Julianne Johnson, Jillian McElhinny, Halle Murcko, Sage Shannon, Madison Murphy, Alaina Harpst, Nicole Lacey and Katie Addison. In the back row, left to right, are: Andrea Suhar, head coach; third-grade teacher and alumna, Katie Clanci; and fourth-grade teacher, Mary Pat McParland.



Diversity Day at Clarion Free Public Library

CLARION—Second- and third-graders at Immaculate Conception School in Clarion visited the Clarion Free Library for the Martin Luther King Jr. Diversity Day Program.

Dr. Brenda Sanders Dede, pictured reading a story, led the program. Dede talked to the children about equal rights and the importance of the legacy of Dr. King's dream.



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