Pope Benedict Announces Resignation

While the announcement of Pope Benedict XVI’s resignation initially draws forth a sense of sadness for Catholics throughout the Diocese of Harrisburg, this is not to the exclusion of profound gratitude for all that he has done and continues to do for the Church.

From the very beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has been committed to calling all men and women in the world to an authentic encounter with the Living Lord, Jesus Christ. Through his preaching and his teaching, particularly in the three volumes of Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy Father has never tired of proclaiming the true face of Jesus Christ. And so, our hearts are grateful for his unwavering commitment to the Gospel.

That this comes during this Year of Faith, which Pope Benedict called the Church to celebrate, we can see his decision as a sign of his own deep faith that the Church is cared for by Christ himself. His humble decision invites every Catholic to have the same faith that Christ will continue to watch over us by sending a new faithful and holy Shepherd to guide the Church as its Pope and to care for God’s People on our pilgrim journey here on earth.

By Carol Glatz and Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Saying he no longer has the strength to exercise ministry over the universal church, Pope Benedict XVI announced Feb. 11 that he would be resigning at the end of the month after an eight-year pontificate.

"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," the pope told cardinals gathered for an ordinary public consistory to approve the canonization of new saints.

Pope Benedict, who was elected in April 2005, will be the first pope to resign in more than 600 years.

He told the cardinals, "In today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of St. Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."

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Statement by Bishop Joseph P. McFadden on the Resignation of Pope Benedict XVI

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Bishop McFadden addresses the media at a press conference in Bishop Daley Hall in Harrisburg, after the Holy Father announced his resignation. A recording of the press conference can be viewed at www.hbgdiocese.org.

The pope has increasingly had trouble walking in the past year, often using a cane and always being assisted getting up and down steps. However, the Vatican has never released medical information that would make it appear the pope suffers from anything other than joint pain, perhaps reflecting his age.

The option of a pope to resign is explicitly written into the Code of Canon Law. It says a pope may step down, but stipulates that the decision must be made freely and "duly manifested." No one needs to formally accept a pope’s resignation for it to be valid.

The last pope to resign was Pope Gregory XII in 1415. Pope Benedict had long said it would be inappropriate for a pope to fully resign for the good of the church if the pontiff felt he was unable to physically bear the burden of the papacy.

In his book-length interview, “The Light of the World,” with German journalist Peter Seewald, the pope said, “If a pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign.”

The pope told the author that it was important, however, that the pope “must not run away” and “must stand fast and endure” any difficult situations that are facing the church. For that reason, he was not thinking of resigning in 2010 — the year the interviews were conducted. “One can resign at a peaceful moment or when one simply cannot go on,” the pope had said.

Before ending his remarks during the consistory, Pope Benedict told the cardinals: “I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry and I ask pardon for all my defects. And now, let us entrust the holy church to the care of our supreme pastor, our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his holy Mother Mary, so that she may assist the cardinal fathers with her maternal solicitude, in electing a new supreme pontiff.”

The pope said, “I wish to also devot- edly serve the holy church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer.”

Father Lombardi said he felt "great admiration" for the pope’s "great courage" and "freedom of spirit" in making this decision. The spokesman said it shows the pope is not only fully aware of the great responsibilities involved in leading the universal church, but his hopes that "the ministry of the church be carried out the best way" possible.
LARC Day Focuses on Vatican II

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

This year’s LARC Day of Dialogue featured keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Martin Marty, an ecumenical observer at the Second Vatican Council. The Day of Dialogue is an annual event of the LARC (Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic) community, hosted by the Diocese of Harrisburg’s Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

An internationally known speaker and author, Dr. Marty addressed this year’s gathering on the day’s theme, “Engaging the World Ecumenically,” and spoke about the effects of the Council day’s theme, “Engaging the World Ecumenically,” and spoke about the effects of the Council document Dei Verbum, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Dei Verbum said that the Church depends on Scripture and tradition as the one deposit of God’s word, and encouraged the faithful to nourish their faith through the Scriptures.

The LARC Day of Dialogue is just one of the programs of the Diocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, noted Father Paul Fisher, director.

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“We have a very active ecumenical life here in the Diocese of Harrisburg. “And for this, the credit goes to Deacon Charles Clark,” who served as Director of Office for 15 years, until his death last April.

“The goal of the ecumenical movement always has been that we desire, as the Lord does, the restoration of a full communion of faith and worship among all Christians, for all Christians to speak with one voice,” Father Fisher said. “To do that clearly and faithfully based upon the Scriptures and the lived tradition of the Church is the ultimate goal.”

Legal path uncertain for for-profits fighting HHS mandate

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The latest round of proposed federal rules covering religious institutions that want an exemption from the requirement to provide contraceptive coverage in health insurance make it clear that there’s no inclination at the Department of Health and Human Services to accommodate for-profit secular corporations the same way as nonprofit religious institutions.

For-profit secular entities that object to this requirement on moral grounds may find their only option is to push their case in court, where the history of accommodating a business owner’s religious interests diverts significantly from how a church’s religious rights have been treated.

An updated version of the HHS rules published Feb. 1 redeemed the criteria by which nonprofit religious institutions may be either “exempt” or “accommodated” in opting out of providing to coverage that goes against the teachings of the faith.

The Affordable Care Act requires all health care insurance plans to include coverage -- at no cost to the employees -- of contraception, sterilization and drugs some consider to be abortifacients.

The new proposal is the latest HHS effort to define who qualifies to opt out of that requirement on religious grounds. More than 30 law suits challenging the previous round of the rules have been filed by nonprofits including Catholic dioceses, universities and the Eternal Word Television Network.

The courts have granted injunctions allowing 11 companies to side-step the mandate while their cases proceed in court. Three companies have been told they must comply with providing contraceptive insurance while their cases proceed.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement Feb. 7 saying the new proposed rules show improvement but fall short of addressing all the church’s concerns. Among the concerns cited by New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, president of the USCCB, is that the update leaves some entities “with no conscience protection at all.”

The Becket Fund, which represents both for-profit and nonprofit plaintiffs against the government, raised several objections and blasted the rules for not covering “family businesses like Hobby Lobby.”

The proposed rules state that no exemption will be given to “for-profit, secular employers.”

HHS is accepting comment until April. Final rules are expected by summer.

The clear distinction between for-profit entities and nonprofits by the HHS warrants a look at how for-profit institutions have been treated in the courts when making religion-based claims.

Among the cases that may have implications are those dealing with religious claims for exemption from Social Security contributions and labor standards. The 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission also might come into play.

In Citizens United, the court found that corporations and unions have a First Amendment right to protection from government limits on political expenditures.

The majority opinion in the 5-4 ruling said: “If the First Amendment has any force, it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech.”

Mark Chopko, an attorney with Bradley Ronon Stevens & Young, who specializes in religious rights issues, told Catholic News Service that “Citizens United at least raises the question of whether organizations have other kinds of First Amendment rights besides ‘speech,’ adding that “there’s not much” by way of First Amendment law protecting private business.

The First Amendment to the Constitution protects free exercise of religion as well as freedom of speech, the press, assembly and petition.

Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Valparaiso University law professor, said people trying to argue that corporations can have other First Amendment rights “need to think about the differences between NARAL, the NAACP, the UAW and the Catholic Church, and if all those are the same kind of protected First Amendment interests.”

To suggest that there are no important constitutional differences among those kinds of institutions is “gambling with big, high-stakes poker,” Gaffney said.

In United States v. Lee in 1982, the court ruled that an Amish employer was not entitled to an exemption from paying into Social Security for his carpentry shop on the basis it would violate his religious beliefs.

“Not all burdens on religion are unconstitutional,” the court said.
Bishop of Harrisburg

Lenten Pastoral Letter 2013

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

“We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us, God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.” (1 John 4:16)

Once again we begin our Lenten journey. It is a familiar path, yet this Year of Faith brings new intensity to this grace-filled season as we strive to walk the narrow road of a renewed and purified interiority. It is important that we begin this journey knowing firmly that we are deeply loved by God who created us and redeems us in Christ Jesus. As believers, we hold firm to the truth that charity - love - is the reason for our existence. Love is, as Saint John so powerfully writes, “God is love.”

This love draws each of us into His Heart. Therefore, to live in love is to live in God. To act in love is to act with the very power of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To love is to share in the very essence of Divine life.

Since Lent prepares each of us to renew our baptismal promises, it is good to note that through the grace of the Sacrament of Baptism, “The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification: enabling them to believe in God, to hope in Him, and to love Him through the theological virtues (CCC 1266).” As God’s adopted sons and daughters, the Lord pours out upon each of us the grace to believe, to hope, to love and as we are called. This calling to love, animated by the theological virtue of charity, directs our minds and hearts to love “God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (CCC 1827). For this reason, we must never stop striving to remove those barriers which prevent us from loving aright, because these barriers keep us from God Himself.

To this end, we must approach the spiritual life during this Lenten time with a new sense of purpose and direction. I propose that in our private prayer, we are called to reflect more deeply on the great mystery that God loves each of us personally and uniquely. Coming to know and to believe this truly has the power to change our lives for the good. Such awareness fills our hearts with gratitude and imbues us with a sense of humility which opens us up to share the gift of love with our neighbors and, as the demands of Christian love urge, even with our enemies. For knowledge of love pushes us beyond an activity of the mind into the actions of the heart manifested in our daily lives. Saint John reminds us that our love of God is revealed in our love of one another (cf. John 4:20).

Our spiritual journey necessarily includes an active living out of the love poured into our hearts by the Heavenly Father.

Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that love is to be the defining characteristic of our Christian lives. In his encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, he writes, “In the Church’s Liturgy, in her prayer, in the living community of believers, we experience the love of God, we perceive his presence, and we thus learn to recognize that presence in our daily lives (1, 17).” The Holy Father reminds us that the source of charity is readily available to each of us in the Church’s Liturgy. The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of Charity, for through its celebration we stand at the foot of the Cross where the greatest act of love is re-presented for us anew. Therefore, the worthy and reverent celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which joins together the great assembly of believers in heaven and on earth, fills us with the grace to live out our calling to love.

Yet, we must never tire of opening ourselves up to this grace poured forth through the Church. Certainly, there are times when we must be more deliberate and rigorous in uprooting the barriers to love in our life, particularly when we have committed serious sin. To this end, once again the Church’s Liturgy provides for us the opportunity to experience the love of God in the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. The door to the confessional is open to you! The light is on for you! There is perhaps no greater experience of the personal gift of Christ’s sacrifice than when we approach the Lord to confess our sins and hear Christ speaking through the priest, “I absolve you from your sins.” In this moment, Christ speaks to us, heart to heart. Hearing these words, how could any of us doubt that God loves us? This experience was captured well by the cost of our sins as we gazed upon the mystery of the Cross and were washed clean of our sins by the water and blood flowing from the Lord’s wounded side. In this great Sacrament, the Divine life given to us in Baptism is concretely preserved and restored. Here, we encounter the consolations and encouragement of Jesus Christ emerging gloriously alive from the tomb. We are restored and lifted up by His love.

In our parishes throughout the Diocese, the opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance are plentiful. The good priests of our Diocese stand ready with an open door to welcome you into the forgiving embrace of God the Father. I assure you that the confessional light is turned on for all. Whether the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Penance is at your home parish or at one of the deanery communal celebrations of the Sacrament, I ask you to rediscover the power of this Sacrament in your life and experience again the love of God.

With a doubt, the experience of God’s love urges each of us to look beyond our own needs and wants in order to respond to the needs of others. This is a much

A part of our Lenten journey as it is a part of our life’s journey. For many of us, the sacrifices of love are part of our ordinary way of life: husbands and wives set aside their selflessness for the good of their spouse; mothers and fathers constantly pour out their very lives to provide for the spiritual and corporal needs of their children; many of us care for sick relatives or friends; and, our parishes are filled with shining examples of gentle and quiet acts of kindness. Yet, we must never tire of doing good; never tire of sharing love.

Therefore, during this Lent, I invite you to find new ways of giving of your time, talent, and treasure. The needs in our parishes and the needs in our local communities increase each day. Let us put our love into action even further, reaching out to those who warrant special care and attention. The gifts given to you by the Lord may be the gifts our world needs today more than ever. Before we say our daily prayers, let us remember and picture to ourselves those who we support in our prayers, whether near or far. The Lord may provide to us the strength to confront and bear those challenges.

Please be assured that you are in my daily prayers as we walk together this Lenten journey. May the Lord, whose love is steadfast and ever-present, hold you and your loved ones in the embrace of peace and joy. And, may He fill us all with new strength and courage to continue bearing the truth that sets us free today. Although we are separated by almost two millennia from Saint Ignatius, the sometimes hostile world continues to challenge our faith. We are called to proclaim the truth, not to proclaim it boldly and with charity, because we believe that the end, our destiny, is love.

Blessed John Paul II reminds the Church that justice and charity, truth and love, are inseparable: “In every sphere of interpersonal relationships, justice must, so to speak, be ‘corrected’ to a considerable extent by charity. Saint Paul proclaims, ‘is patient and kind’ and, in other words, possess the characteristics of a merciful love which is infinitely gentle. ‘It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails’ (1 Corinthians 13:7-8).” Do not be afraid of speaking the truth in love, even when members of our human family do not grasp the power of the truth or the motive of love. In this way, even when it is difficult, we share with them the love of God that has been given to us.

For this reason, the community of believers, the Church, will continue to proclaim what is true and right, motivated by love. This Lent gives us the impetus to proclaim anew the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception to the natural end.

Bishop of Harrisburg

Most Reverend Joseph P. McFadden

February 24, 2013

Bishop’s Annual Lenten Appeal

Wonderful indeed is the mystery of our faith, it is a gift our world needs today more than ever. Be sure to make use of such instruments as Operation Rice Bowl to set aside funds for the hungry. As a family, you may consider fasting from a meal or taking a smaller meal so that the funds you save could be given to those in need through Catholic Relief Services or other charitable organizations. The small sacrifices we make have the potential to bear large consequences for the good. This is the time to help with community soup kitchens, to collect clothing for the needy, to put our hands and hearts into loving action. I invite you to contact your parish and visit those who are sick or homeless, and, to find out where the particular needs lie in your area. The opportunities for charity abound.

As Christians, we are called to proclaim and to share the love of God with every word and action of our lives. At times, the calling to love invites us to challenge others, to correct others, and to teach others. The Church’s gift of faith and moral direction, of saving truth and uncompromising integrity, is given to each of us to live and to share. Ours is the responsibility to bring God’s justice to society, even when such justice is misunderstood or, even, utterly rejected.

Upon hearing the gospel for the first time through the priest, “I absolve you from your sins.” In this moment, Christ speaks to us, heart to heart. Hearing these words, how could any of us doubt that God loves us? This experience was captured well by the cost of our sins as we gazed upon the mystery of the Cross and were washed clean of our sins by the water and blood flowing from the Lord’s wounded side. In this great Sacrament, the Divine life given to us in Baptism is concretely preserved and restored. Here, we encounter the consolations and encouragement of Jesus Christ emerging gloriously alive from the tomb. We are restored and lifted up by His love.

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During Lent, Focus on Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving

The traditional Lenten practices of piety, fasting, almsgiving and other forms of self-denial are recommended by the Church.

The faithful observance of Lent should manifest itself especially in the imitation of Christ in daily life and in the readiness to sacrifice time and talents. Meals are also permitted according to one’s needs. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids, including milk and fruit juices, are allowed. When health or ability to work is seriously affected, the law does not oblige. All Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence from meat for those 14 years of age and older.

Fridays of the year outside Lent remain days of penance. The traditional abstinence from meat is highly recommended, together with fasting, by the Bishops of the United States, for the cause of peace in the world (see the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response, May 3, 1983, paragraph 298.) However, some other practice of voluntary self-denial or personal penance may be substituted.

Plenary Indulgence for the Year of Faith

Throughout the Year of Faith—established from Oct. 11, 2012, to Nov. 24, 2013—individual members of the faithful who are truly repentant, have duly received the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion and who pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff may receive the Plenary Indulgence in remission of the temporal punishment for their sins, imparted through God’s mercy and applicable in suffrage to the souls of the deceased:

• every time they take part in at least three homilies preached or attend at least three lectures on the Proceedings of the Second Vatican Council and on the Articles of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in any church or suitable place;
• every time they go as pilgrims to a Papal Basilica, a Christian catacomb, a cathedral church, a sacred place designated by Bishop Joseph P. McFadden for the Year of Faith as listed below, and take part there in some sacred function or at least pause in recollection for a suitable length of time with devout meditation, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary or, depending on the case, to the Holy Apostles or Patrons;
• every time they take, on the days determined by Bishop McFadden for the Year of Faith, as listed below, in any sacred place, they take part in a solemn Eucharistic celebration or in the Liturgy of the Hours, the concluding prayer.
• a day freely chosen during the Year of Faith on which to make a devout visit to the baptistery or other place in which they received the Sacrament of Baptism, if they renew their baptismal promises in any legitimate form.

The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response, May 3, 1983, paragraph 298.) However, some other practice of voluntary self-denial or personal penance may be substituted.

The Tribunal of the Diocese of Harrisburg will offer presentations concerning divorce and annulments from the Catholic perspective in the coming months. These presentations will be helpful for divorced Catholics, divorced people who wish to marry Catholics, parish leaders involved in the RCIA process, and those who have a vested interest because of family or friends.

Presentations will include a question-and-answer session and an opportunity for private conversation with Tribunal staff and representatives. For more information, call 717-657-4804 or send an e-mail to tribunal@hbgdiocese.org.
The Renewal of Religious Life: Imitating Christ in Perfect Charity

By Father Joshua Brommer, STL

Special to The Witness

In the early Church, Christians sought to imitate Christ perfectly by offering their lives to His honor in martyrdom. The ready opportunity for such a sacrifice came at the hands of those who demanded a variety of faith-denying acts from the Christians, such as withstanding false gods, public denial of Christ, or other immoral activities. The martyrs became a living sign of the transforming power of following Christ and imitating Him radically through the shedding of blood. Not a few of the accounts of these early Christians place on their lips the last words they gave to Christ, such as Saint Stephen, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (Acts 7:59).” Whether by words or suffering, such implies an imitation of the divine.

When the constant threat of martyrdom subsided in ancient times, new ways of “dying” for Christ and radically living the faith began to develop. We acknowledge these as part of the rich root system that would blossom into Consecrated Life in the Church. Men and women would increasingly find themselves fasting, praying, battling with the devil at times, in the desert of Egypt. There was a flight from the world and its allurements, so to speak, towards a new kind of Christ. Others formed communities of brothers and sisters, developing into monastic ways of living following a prescribed way of life as laid out in a community’s “Rule.” Over time, the Holy Spirit would give inspiration to chosen men and women who would respond to particular needs in the Church, whether it was the education of women, the care of orphans, or the formation of the person so that every dimension of their religious life necessarily includes the context of a relationship with Christ and with the Church. Failure to see that consecrated life is more than the pursuit of personal fulfillment is ultimately a failure to see the radical call of the Gospel is to live completely for Christ and His Church.

What is that to be given to someone who desires to enter this religious way of life? Throughout Perfectae Caritatis the answer is repeated: the beauty of holiness. A life of perfect imitation of Christ brings about the transformation of the person so that every dimension of their personality and life reflects Christ. The decretal speaks of religious “constituting a power of contemplation, such as cloistered nuns and monks, as ‘an ornament to the Church and a font of heavenly graces’ (PC 7).” The gift received for total sacrifice is the gift of sanctity. In the context of the Gospel, in the context of the Christian life, there is nothing greater. Yet, to the world and to those who do not have faith, a life lived for Christ is a life dissonant and, at times, even causes discomfort. Fortunately, even this discomfort is part of the gift of religious life to humanity.

The manuscripts of the new ecclesial community were between living totally for Christ yet living in the midst of the world, plays itself out not only in the decree on religious life but also in many of the Council’s documents. One of the great confusions following the Council is the presumption that Vatican II broke down any distinction between the world and the Church. In his 1985 interview recorded in The Ratzinger Report, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), articulates the exact opposite. He states that it was his intention to revise the relations between the Church and the world. There are in fact, values, which, even though they originated external to the Church, are spiritual gold provided they are clarified and corrected – in her perspective. This task has been accomplished in these years. But whoever thinks that these two realities can meet each other without conflict or even be identical would betray that he understands neither the Church nor the world.” Cardinal Ratzinger goes on to explain that this is not proposing the return to an old spirit of opposition of the world stating, “It is not Christians who oppose the world, but rather the world which opposes itself to them when the truth about God, about Christ and about man is proclaimed.” While every Christian deals with this tension, those in consecrated life encounter it to a greater degree.

Thus, in proposing the renewal of religious life, the Council documents do not propose casting off the very marks of the people to whom religious life was provided, they are distinct signs in the midst of the world. Pope John Paul II popularized the phrase, “signs of contradiction,” while Pope Benedict XVI speaks of a “spirit of nonconformity.” Thus, it should come as no surprise that in the decree on its renewal, religious life is called to hold true to the fundamental principles, “a constant return to the sources of the whole of Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes (PC 2).” That is, renewal consists of (1) following Christ and His Gospel as “the supreme rule;” (2) examining anew the Teachings of the founders of the various communities, faithfully holding on to “sound traditions” that “constitute the patrimony of an institute;” (3) being open to the men and women they are called to live as part of the Church; (4) finding ways to better serve human- ity through a deeper understanding of what is truly human; and, (5) slaying at the center of all things, even religious service, the spiritual renewal grounded upon the evangelical counsels (cf. PC 2).

A statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the grounds of the Carmel of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Ellysburg, The Discalled Carmelites nuns who live here are one of three contemplative communities in the Diocese of Harrisburg dedicated to a life of prayer. It was the education of women, the care of orphans, or the formation of the person so that every dimension of their religious life necessarily includes the context of a relationship with Christ and with the Church. Failure to see that consecrated life is more than the pursuit of personal fulfillment is ultimately a failure to see the radical call of the Gospel is to live completely for Christ and His Church. Rather it was the education of women, the care of orphans, or the formation of the person so that every dimension of their religious life necessarily includes the context of a relationship with Christ and with the Church. Failure to see that consecrated life is more than the pursuit of personal fulfillment is ultimately a failure to see the radical call of the Gospel is to live completely for Christ and His Church. Rather it was the education of women, the care of orphans, or the formation of the person so that every dimension of their religious life necessarily includes the context of a relationship with Christ and with the Church. Failure to see that consecrated life is more than the pursuit of personal fulfillment is ultimately a failure to see the radical call of the Gospel is to live completely for Christ and His Church.
Cloistered Communities: Devoted to Prayer for the Salvation of the World

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

Sister Angela Pikus, a Discalced Carmelite Nun, remembers the exact moment when she first entertained the thought of a life dedicated to prayer. She was six years old, walking home with her family from Mass at a Byzantine Catholic Church in their hometown of Johnstown, Pa.

Her aunt was talking about the busy schedule of a priest, wondering aloud how he found time to pray. And just then, the child was taken by the idea of living a life of prayer.

“I was inspired. I said, ‘I’d like to do that.’ I remember it so clearly, even the spot in the road where we were when I said it,” Sister Angela recalls.

Her discernment had taken root by the time she completed high school. She visited several religious communities, and soon found herself drawn to the Discalced Carmelites. She entered Carmel in Wheeling, West Va., in 1959 at the age of 21.

Sister Angela, now 75, is the prioress of the Discalced Carmelite community that lives at Maria Hall in Danville. Another community of Discalced Carmelites is established at the Carmel of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Elysburg. The third contemplative community of nuns in the Diocese of Harrisburg is the Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary in Lancaster.

Contemplative life focuses on communion with God through prayer and self denial. The religious sisters devote their days to prayer, contemplation and solitude for the salvation of the world. They live a strictly cloistered life, set apart from the world in order to dedicate themselves to God.

“For the contemplative vocation in particular, withdrawal from the world goes back to the desert fathers and mothers who retreated to be alone with God,” noted Sister Mary Albert, prioress of the Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary. “Withdrawal is very important in that it keeps outside influence to a minimum.”

The Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary were founded by Dominican Father Damien Marie Saintourens in Calais, France, in 1880, and are an offshoot of the Dominican Nuns founded by St. Dominic in 1206.

As their name indicates, they are committed to perpetual recitation of the rosary. At the Monastery of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Lititz Pike in Lancaster, they devote their lives to prayer from the moment they rise at 5:25 a.m. until they retire after night prayer. A schedule of Mass, prayers, meditation, the Liturgy of the Hours and recitation of the rosary fills their days. There are prescribed times for meals, light duties and recreation, with the sisters’ hearts and minds always turned to God.

When Sister Michael Marie entered the community 70 years ago, it was located in Enola. She was just 16 years old when she first walked into the chapel there.

“I entered a pew and knelt down, and I heard the voice as clear as could be: “This is where I want you,” Sister Michael Marie recalls.

Sister Veronica and Sister Maria Joseph were also teens when they entered the community, which moved to its current monastery in 1952.

Sister Veronica had always had an interest in the cloistered life. When she told her brother, Msgr. Mercurio Fregapane, about her desire to become a cloistered nun, the priest, who was stationed in Lancaster at the time, told her about the Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary, “and that took care of my search,” Sister Veronica said with a laugh.

From the moment she entered, she felt at home; her family had great devotion to the rosary. For some cloistered nuns, telling the family — especially Dad — about the decision to enter a monastery wasn’t always easy.

Sister Maria Joseph, a Dominican Nun of the Perpetual Rosary, prays in the chapel at Maria Hall. She says she was six years old when she first thought of dedicating her life to prayer.
Communities

Continued from 7

petual Rosary, surmised that her family had suspect-
ed she would become a religious sister, but her call to be a cloistered nun took them by surprise.
She was 16 when she handed her mother a bro-

The morning I left, at age 21, I kissed Pikus. “But my family sacrificed. My father didn’t

Sister Therese of Merciful Love says she recogniz-
ed the sisters several times at the monastery, and Channing feels this will help her family prepare for the day when she enters the community.

Channing, the youngest of three children, has found great support from her family. They have vis-

Sister Therese of Merciful Love says she recogniz-
ed that people might find it difficult to understand how the sisters could enclose themselves in a monastery. She offers this anal-

Sister Therese of Merciful Love points out the significance of recreation.

“Even when I was as young as 16, I wanted to be a therapist and work to help people. Then I realized how I could help the whole world through the power of prayer.”

~ Sister Maria Joseph, a Dominican Nun of the Perpetual Rosary

Sister Mary Albert, prioress of the Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary, entered the community at age 24 in 1977, from her hometown of Hershey.

Sister Rose Mary, a Dominican Nun of the Perpetual Rosary, entered the community in 1952 at the age of 26.
honoring the saint.

Fifty-nine years later, Sister Anne continues to expand her prayer life.

“When I go to prayer, I listen in silence and I let the Lord teach me how to live, how to love, and how to please him at every moment,” she said.

Maria Hall, which overlooks the Basilica of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Danville, is home to three religious communities: the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Dominican Sisters, and the Discalced Carmelites, who lived at the monastery in Elysburg from 1961-2008.

With their own living quarters in Maria Hall, the Carmelites maintain their schedule of prayer, spiritual reading, work and community life.

Like the other two contemplative communities in the diocese, they accept prayer requests that are sent by mail, phoned in or brought to their door. They tell those seeking prayers that they will pray with them and for them.

“People have an understanding of the power of prayer,” said Sister Joan Lundy. “They’re finding that it does satisfy the hunger they have.”

More COMMUNITIES, page 10

During the Christmas season, Channing Dale, who plans to enter the Discalced Carmelite community in Elysburg this summer, kneels in prayer in the chapel at the Carmel of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
The Discalced Carmelites in Danville come from a wide range of backgrounds, including Italian, Polish, Irish and French. Sister Regina Park is of Korean descent.

Communities

Continued from 9

for God. Even though it’s a secular so-
ciety, people still know that they need
a higher power to help them. They’re
starting to understand that prayer isn’t
about reciting words, but rather a rela-
tionship with God.”

The ten Carmelites in this commu-
nity are living examples of the univer-
sality of the Church. They come from
various ethnic backgrounds – Irish,
Polish, Lithuanian, Korean,
Italian, French, Welsh and Ruthenian.

They share the chapel and the main
dining area with the Sisters of Sts.
Cyril and Methodius and the Domini-
can Sisters in this house of prayer.

“There are grace-filled moments
here, living with 50 other sisters,” said
Sister Anne. “Being here, I’ve learned
a lot about the work of the sisters and
what they have given to the Lord.”

Sister Joan entered the community
in 1961, at the age of 31 and three
years after she joined the Catholic
Church. Originally from Reno, Nev.,
she was living with a Catholic family
in Canonsburg, Pa., when she entered
the Church and soon discerned a reli-
gious vocation.

“What drew me to this particular
community were the people in it and
the life they were living,” she said. “As
a Protestant, I had wanted to be a mis-
sionary, and even applied and was ac-
cepted to teach nursery school in Asia.

But I chose the contemplative life be-
cause I felt I could reach more people
with the universality of prayer.”

Prayer sustained Sister Joan as she
left her family in Reno to enter Car-
mel, and through the community’s
transition from Elysburg to Danville.

“Prayer is a time when you process
all that is going on in your life. You
turn everything over to God,” she said.

The community’s decision to move
from the monastery in Elysburg to
Maria Hall in 2008 followed years of
prayer and discernment, noted Sister
Angela Pikus, prioress.

“When you discern with prayer and
come to a decision, you know that it
is God’s will,” she said. “The adjust-
ment moving here, trying to grasp
silence and solitude in a house with
three communities, trying to maintain
a spiritual prayer life with diminishing
strength – all those things are part of
God’s providence in our lives, and his
grace is here.”

Though their lives are lived mostly
unseen by the rest of the world, the
prayers of the contemplative nuns
in Lancaster, Elysburg and Danville
reach far and wide.

Their days are filled with prayer, si-
lence and solitude, and yet they radiate
a Christian joy that is almost tangible.

“I left home when I was 19 and en-
tered an active order of sisters, but this
desire for more prayer and contem-
plation grew in my heart, so I entered
Carmel,” said Mother Stella Marie of
Jesus, from behind the grille in the
Elysburg monastery. “I’ve been happy
ever since. I’ve really found my home,
and I’m very delighted with my voca-
tion.”

Sister Faustina, a Dominican Nun of
the Perpetual Rosary, finds joy in of-
fering prayers for those in need.

“People say they are so thankful that
we’re here, because without us, they
say they wouldn’t know how to get
through their problems. It just touches
your heart to know how much they ap-
preciate us,” she said.

“Where God is present, you’ll find
joy and peace,” said Sister Angela, the
prioress in Danville. “It’s a possession
of a good, but that good is not for us,
it’s meant to be spread. We’re not to
become holy just for ourselves, but for
the world.”

Contemplative Communities of Nuns in the Diocese of Harrisburg

Discalced Carmelites Sister Marg-
aret Kob prays in the
chapel at
Maria Hall in
Danville.

Discalced Carmelite
Nuns in Danville
1 Maria Hall Drive,
Danville PA 17821
570-275-4682
Sister Angela Pikus, Prioress

Discalced Carmelites in Elysburg
430 Monastery Road,
Elysburg PA 17824
570-672-2122
Mother Stella Marie
of Jesus, Prioress

Discalced Carmelites in Lancaster
1834 Lititz Pike,
Lancaster PA 17601
717-569-2104
www.opnuns lancaster.org
Sister Mary Albert, Prioress

Discalced Carmelites in Danville
1 Maria Hall Drive,
Danville PA 17821
570-275-4682
Sister Angela Pikus, Prioress
Family Life
By Father Paul CB Schenck
Special to The Witness

The U.S. Catholic Bishops recently stated, “Marriage, understood as the union of one man and one woman, is not an historical relic, but a vital and foundational institution of civil society to be protected by law.” No agency or other institution joins together persons with the natural ability to have children, to assure that those children are properly cared for. No other institution ensures that children will at least have the opportunity of being raised by the person who conceived them, their mother and father together.”

They said this, not in a catechetical publication, but in a legal brief submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court! Furthermore, they warn, “Social ills which flow from the dissolution of marriage and family would not be addressed—indeed, they would only be aggravated—were the government to fail to reinforce the union of love of husbands and wives; the community with the unique encouragement which the church is.”

The family as it has been known throughout human history, as a man joined with a woman, open to children, is in trouble. The number of couples living together without marriage and those that marry end in divorce and those rejecting children is steadily rising. The Bishops have said, “We are troubled by the fact that far too many people do not understand what it means to say that marriage—both as a natural institution and a Christian sacrament—is a blessing and gift from God.” And that “We are alarmed that a couple’s responsibility to serve life by being open to children is being denied and abandoned more frequently today.” They “note a disturbing trend today to view marriage as a mostly private matter, and view it as a project related to the common good, but oriented mostly to achieving personal satisfaction.”

The suffering that ensues includes poverty-stricken, one-parent households, psychological and emotional disturbances rooted in feelings of abandonment and alienation, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, and a tendency to criminal behaviors. These are proven to result from a culture that has widely rejected the ideal of the life-long, monogamous union of a man and woman open to children; in a phrase, the natural family.

The Catholic Church has a deep, broad and rich tradition of catechesis on the family. She has the example of the married saints to both inspire and demonstrate faithful family life. And, above all, she has the exemplar of the Holy Family to emulate. Christians see in these models the ideal of love, commitment, fidelity and generosity. It is a life defined by loving union of a man and woman who freely choose one another for life and together bring forth, or adopt, the new life God gives them as a gift from God.” And that “We are alarmed that a couple’s responsibility to serve life by being open to children is being denied and abandoned more frequently today.” They “note a disturbing trend today to view marriage as a mostly private matter, and view it as a project related to the common good, but oriented mostly to achieving personal satisfaction.”

Over the past century, the literate age has rapidly given way to the media age. This age integrates (the oral age as well as the age of the written word). Through media, sensorial experiences have again come to play a major role in how we acquire knowledge. We still learn through reading, but we also learn through watching, listening to, and interacting with media. … But as media has become an increasingly important part of our culture, people have to come to expect and depend upon more than the printed word to aid them in the learning process.

In Instrumentum Laboris (2012) we read: “The Church is facing social and cultural changes that are profoundly affecting a person’s perception of self and the world, and consequently, a person’s way of believing in God.”

Over again and again, one can find quote upon quote from the writings of the representatives of the Church that illustrate the need for evangelization to flame into fire the passionate call to holiness of all humanity in the language of today’s society.

During this Year of Faith which began in October 2012 and ends in November, 2013, the Church is focused on the “new evangelization” that can begin at the place where we personally experience an encounter with Jesus Christ. This personal meeting cuts to the core of our soul as we begin to understand not only with our minds but also with our hearts that Christ’s love for each of us is beyond our wildest dreams; he died for us in order for our relationship with God to be mended. This is the foundation for an individual to proclaim by words and deeds in order to live out the virtue of hope.

In Hebrews 6 we read, “Hope is the confident expectation of good things to come.” In short, this virtue offers us a new way of existence, a new way of communication with others that leads to a unique sense of courage and perseverance. Hope is the foundational experience and belief that God is in charge no matter what happens. Lived hope expresses itself tangibly as joy and this can be experienced by others.

Joy, as defined by Wikipedia is: the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; keen pleasure or elation. But, this is not the only form of happiness. Joy is the foundation for an individual to proclaim by words and deeds in order to live out the virtue of hope.

We are called into this relationship during our baptism and deepen it through the sacraments and our personal and communal prayer along with scripture study. In order for all of this to be relevant in today’s world, our personal religious practices must and should flavor our conversations and influence our actions. The attitude we take as we believe and put flesh and bone to it. Such an attitude is indeed significant and related to today’s world because it is directly counter-cultural to the way society expresses itself. In a hopeless and joyless world that is fixated on instant gratification and “Me! Me! Me!” modern day evangelizers should use Facebook, tweeter, texts, IMs, produce video and audio files, blogs and communicate with their hearts and minds in heaven and their feet and fingers in this world attached to technology!

(Sister of Christian Charity, Geralyn Schmidt, is the Area Wide Network Coordinator at the Diocese of Harrisburg. She is a member of the IT Department. An educator for 28 years, she is responsible for Professional Development Programs for every age learner. In addition, Sister blogs for Powerful Learning Practices, a company providing in-service opportunities for educators. Through her presentations, she challenges her audiences to be the individual God has called them to be.)
The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parish:

ABOTTSTOWN – Immaculate Heart of Mary: Jerome Hanson.

BERWICK – Immaculate Conception BVM: Nancy Petry, Patricia “Crisi” Smith.

BLOOMSBURG – St. Columbia: Lucille H. Peabody, Mary M. Ringes.

CAMP HILL – Good Shepherd: Mabel H. Peabody, Mary M. Ringes.

CARLISLE – St. Peter: Joel Miller, Jean Oyler, Lisa Setta.

CHAMBERSBURG – Corpus Christi: Clifford Miller.


HANOVER – St. Vincent de Paul: David Ann Nance.

HARRISBURG – St. Catherine Laboure: Mary Danu, Jantoni Johnson, Agnes Kedoksky; St. Francis of Assisi: George Washington.


LANCASTER – St. Anne: Samuel Messina.


LEWISTOWN – St. Mary: Joane L. Hiltiberbrick, Stewart N. Long.

MCHESSYNY – Annunciation BVM: Eva R. Krabler, Kathleen Parr, Dorothy Sierd."=


MIDDLETOWN – Seven Sorrows BVM: Annette Barnwell, Vita Mata.

MILLERSBURG - Queen of Peace: Anna Woodside.


NEW CUMBERLAND – St. Theresa: Ruth Allwine, Stanley, Margaret Autens, John Tuma.

NEW FREEDOM – St. John the Baptist: William G. Brannock, Mary J. Kaelin, Mabel Mattes, George D. Weinhold.

ROHRERSTOWN – St. Leo the Great: Adelia L. Peretti.

SELINSGROVE – St. Pius X: Charles Krapiec.

STEELTON – Prince of Peace: Marie Beck, Sophia Griffith.


Sister Marie Albert Kumberner
Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Marie Albert Kumberner died in Paoli Memorial Hospital Jan. 20 at the age of 82.

Born Elizabeth Kumberner in Philadelphia, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1953. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Immaculata University and a Master of Science in home economics from Drexel University.

Sister Marie Albert taught in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and at Lancaster Catholic High School from 1961-1966. In 1966, she was assigned to Immaculata University, where she was an associate professor in the Foods/Fashion/Nutrition department. After being given the status of Professor Emeritus in 2003, she gave service in the Office of Relations.

The funeral Mass was celebrated in Immaculata Hall, Immaculata, Pa., on Jan. 25. Burial was in Camilla Hall Cemetery.

Sister Mary Kelly
Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Mary Kelly, formerly Sister Maria Veritas, died in Immaculata Hall, Immaculata, Pa., Jan. 19. She was 84.

Born in Stratford, Pa., she entered the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1946. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Immaculata University and a Master of Arts degree from Fordham University.

Sister Mary taught at elementary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and in the dioceses of Harrisburg and Metuchen, N.J. In the Diocese of Harrisburg, she taught French at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Coal Township from 1966-1972. While serving in the diocese, she was elected the first president of the new faculty for the Sisters of St. Dominic.

From 1981-2000, she was principal of Villa Maria Academy High School in Malvern, Pa. In 2001, she was assigned to Immaculata Hall where she served in the Business Office.

Sister Mary is survived by two sisters, Sister Joan Dolores, L.H.M., and Sister Margaret John Kelly, D.C.

The funeral Mass was celebrated at Camilla Hall on Jan. 23. Burial was in the Immaculata Cemetery.

Sister Ann Louise Allwine
Annunciation BVM Sister Ann Louise Allwine died at St. Anne’s Home on Columbia on Jan. 26. She was 89.

A native of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, she entered the Congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ in 1944. She served as sacristan at the Motherhouse before being missioned to Raleigh, N.C. From 1955-1965, she taught at schools in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Ohio. In Ohio, she earned a degree from Youngstown State University, where she was an associate professor.

Sister Ann Louise served as Provincial Secretary from 1966-1965, and began that ministry in Columbus in 1966.

Sister Ann Louise also served as Provincial Secretary from 1966-1983, and then as Provincial from 1983-1989. She also served as Spiritual Director to the Provincial Council and as the Ombudsman for the Order.

She was preceded in death by her parents, six brothers and a sister, St. Joseph Mary Edsras. She is survived by two sisters and a brother. The funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 2 at St. Anne’s in Columbia. Burial was in the convent cemetery.

Affirming Life
By Christopher Meehan
Special to The Witness

On Jan. 25, I had the opportunity to attend the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. The bus trip was coordinated by my parish, and I was fortunate to participate in this important event – along with more than 500,000 other individuals who walked in solidarity past the Supreme Court to show their opposition to 40 years of legalized abortion in America.

This was my first time attending the March for Life. There were numerous events that stood out for me that day, but the most memorable moment came when we walked past a small group of people who had personal experience dealing with the pain of abortion. This group included women holding signs indicating that they “regretted their abortion” and men with signs mentioning their sorrow about their decision not to have an abortion. The funeral Mass was celebrated in Camilla Hall, Immaculata, Pa., on Jan. 25. Burial was in the Immaculata Cemetery.

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Bishop D’Arcy Dies at Age 80; Was ‘Good Shepherd after Heart of Christ’

By Tim Johnson
Catholic News Service

Retired Bishop John M. D’Arcy, who served as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend from May 1, 1985, through Jan. 13, 2010, died at his home in Fort Wayne the morning of Feb. 3. He was diagnosed with lung and brain cancer in late December while visiting his family in the Boston area. He returned to Fort Wayne in January for care.

In retirement, Bishop D’Arcy had assisted at parishes, conferred the sacrament of confirmation, and enjoyed providing retreats and missions and assisting as chaplain of Bishop Luers High School.

“I am filled with deep sadness at the death of a dear friend and brother bishop,” said Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, who was installed in January 2010 to succeed Bishop D’Arcy. “We mourn the death of a good shepherd after the heart of Christ, a bishop who loved the Lord and his people with all his heart.”

The son of Irish immigrants, John Michael D’Arcy was born Aug. 18, 1932, in Brighton, Mass. He began preparation for the priesthood in September 1949 at St. John’s Seminary in Brighton. He was ordained to the priesthood on Feb. 2, 1957, for the Archdiocese of Boston.

He studied in Rome at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, known as the Angelicum, from 1965 to 1968 and received his doctorate in spiritual theology in 1968. He served as spiritual director and professor of spiritual theology at St. John’s Seminary from 1968 to 1985. Bishop D’Arcy was ordained an auxiliary bishop of Boston Feb. 11, 1975, and was appointed vicar for spiritual development for the archdiocese at the same time. He continued to serve as a spiritual director at St John’s Seminary. Bishop D’Arcy directed the Office of Spiritual Development, which was established by the late Boston Cardinal Humberto Medeiros in 1975.

On July 21, 1981, Bishop D’Arcy was appointed regional bishop for the northern area of the Archdiocese of Boston. He continued as vicar for spiritual development and continued to direct the archdiocesan Office of Spiritual Development.

On Feb. 26, 1985, Bishop D’Arcy was appointed eighth bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend and was installed May 1, 1985. During his tenure, Bishop D’Arcy established many significant initiatives in areas such as adult faith formation, ecumenism, education, ecumenism and social services outreach – including establishing the Women’s Care Center and Vincent House for the homeless; undertaking ecumenical dialogues with Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran and Jewish leaders; initiating live Sunday television Masses; and starting a Eucharistic congress at the University of Notre Dame.

Parish Activities Offer Ways to Observe Year of Faith

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

In declaring the Year of Faith, which commenced on Oct. 11, Pope Benedict called the observance a “summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world” (Porta fidei 6).

The year gives Catholics a prime opportunity to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus and to further their understanding about the Church and her teachings.

In a sense, the Year of Faith invites us to go on and re-dedicate ourselves to “the most fundamental and important relationship in our lives – our relationship with Christ Jesus,” says Ryan Bolster, Director of Adult Education and Catechetical Formation.

“I often invite folks to consider their relationship with Christ in light of other relationships in their lives, especially those most personal relationships with family members and close friends,” he said.

“We know, and sometimes learn the hard way, that our relationships suffer when we fail to nurture and cultivate them, when we fail to make them a priority and fail to commit ourselves entirely to them.”

“So it is with our relationship with Jesus,” he pointed out. “It’s so easy to say we love the Lord, but do our actions reflect that this relationship is primary in our lives? Do the priorities we set for ourselves demonstrate our commitment to our relationship with him?”

In the Year of Faith, the Holy Father gives us a meaningful opportunity to reflect upon such questions, Mr. Bolster said.

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, there are a multitude of ways in which parishes and the faithful are taking advantage of occasions to strengthen their relationship with Christ and their knowledge of his Church. People are delving into online faith formation courses, Catholic books, Bible studies, workshops and retreats. They’re also enrolling in classes offered through the Diocesan Institute for Catechetical and Pastoral Formation, which, during this Year of Faith, includes offerings on the Second Vatican Council, the Apostles’ Creed and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. And, parishes and parishioners alike are checking out the resources and suggestions offered through the diocese’s Web site, www.hbgdiocese.org/yearoffaith.

“There is never a point in our lives when our relationship with God ends, and so it follows that our formation in the Catholic faith – formation which nourishes that relationship with God – is necessarily lifelong,” said Mr. Bolster.

Across the diocese, parishes have undertaken special programs and activities this year to support parishioners in strengthening their faith. For example, at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Waynesboro, a full slate of opportunities offers something for everyone during the Year of Faith.

There’s the “Saint of the Week” program, which is shared across the parish in its elementary school, its religious education program, and in the weekly bulletin. A perpetual rosary – in which people sign up to pray one decade daily – gets homebound parishioners involved in the Year of Faith activities. And a parish family directory, a Twelfth Night celebration and participation the diocesan pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Washington, D.C., this past September have also given life to the Year of Faith.

Father John Bateman, pastor of St. Andrew Parish, introduced the year during an opening Mass, and with a letter that was mailed with a schedule of events to every household.

Peg Wagaman, Coordinator of Religious Education, noted the parish’s goal of “providing opportunities for the parishioners to learn more about their faith and the teachings of the Church, and to gather together more often for prayer and worship.”

“We want people to be more aware of the different aspects of the faith,” she said. “Offerings like Eucharistic Adoration, worship and liturgies and the educational components all come together to help meet the goals of celebrating the Year of Faith.”

At Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Berwick, parishioners are taking advantage of the popular “Catholicism” series by Father Robert Barron. The program helps to enhance and support the Church’s mission of evangelization. The video program explains Church teaching and illustrates, with breathtaking visuals, the richness of the universality of the Church.

The parish began the program in November, and will continue the program through the Year of Faith, which concludes on Nov. 24, the Feast of Christ the King.

The response to the program has been overwhelming, said Sabatini Monatesti, the parish’s Director of Religious Education. The first two sessions drew some 150 people to each outing.

“Everybody raves about the series,” he said. “It appeals to younger families and to our older parishioners. They like the fact that Father Barron communicates to them in a way they can understand.”

The series is helping the parish meet its goals for the Year of Faith, Mr. Monatesti pointed out. “Father [Francis] Tammaro is our pastor, wanted to ensure that we would have something that would focus on the Sacraments, and something that would also align with the liturgical year.”

The program is also fostering camaraderie and community in the parish, as different groups – such as the Knights of Columbus, the Ladies Council and the local Maria Assunta Society – “sponsor” the evenings by offering fellowship in the parish hall. And, parishioners banded together to get the program off the ground: one engineered a large projection screen to be set up in the church, and one family donated a computer and another purchased a projector to show the series. The outreach has been an added blessing to the parish during the Year of Faith, Mr. Monatesti said.

As the Year of Faith invites us to recommit to our conversion to Christ, it’s essential that we learn more about him in order to love him more, Mr. Bolster points out.

“Our faith as Catholics is not only in the Person of Christ, but also in his message, in everything that he came to reveal. In terms of human relationships, our love for another is inseparable from our knowledge of the beloved. The more we know about the beloved, the more we love, and in turn, the more we wish to know,” he said.

“So it is with Christ in light of other relationships in their lives,” he pointed out. “The more we know about Christ, but also in his message, in everything that he came to reveal, the more we fall in love with him,” he continued. “And when we commit ourselves to Christ, our commitment extends to all that he has come to reveal about God in his inestimable love for us.”
Spiritual Offerings

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for children of all ages and abilities will take place on the Tuesdays of Lent from 4:30-6 p.m. in the St. John Neumann Chapel. Contact John Stever at 717-396-0635 for prayer, praise, singing, Stations of the Cross. For information, call 717-257-3581, ext. 110, or smriscich@gmail.com.

A Lenten Scripture Series for the Year of Faith is offered at St. Joseph Parish in Lebanon. The first meeting is on Monday, Feb. 18, and March 18 and 11 from 7 p.m. Series is presented by Sr. Josephine Vargo at 6800 Hoglund Rd. For information, call 717-396-0635 or write to Sr. Josephine at vargolivestream@gmail.com.

A Lenten Day of Prayer will be held Feb. 19 from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. The day will begin with a visit to the Holy Land Prayer Garden and an introduction to the Traditional and Scriptural Way of the Cross—we acknowledge our dependence on the prayers of the saints. Geographically, we will experience what it would be like to have us as we carry our crosses. “Contemplating the Holy Shroud” — we reflect on Christ’s sufferings. Sister Marie DeMonte, OP, will be the presenter. Sister Mary Alma formed the Contemplative Retreats at the Dominican Monastery in Lebanon. Presently she ministers as a spiritual director at the monastery. Suggested donation: $40. For information, call 717-257-3581 or visit www.somcn.org.

Catholics in the Białystok region of Poland will mark the 16th session of the 10 session series “Catholicit” by Father Barron. It will begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by Stations of the Cross in the church. For more information, call 717-396-0635 or visit www.stpeteretown.org or call 717-367-1255.

Parish Lenten Series at St. Benedict the Abbot in Lebanon – Lenten dinners featuring broiled fish and Perohi will be available Wednesday evenings from 4-6:30 p.m. at 36 E. Main St. Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. The menu will also be sold for $5.50 per person every Wednesday during Lent, Saturday in the parish hall, and Sundays in the parish hall from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for $5.50. For information, call 717-653-1415 or visit www.stbarnabas.org.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Cornwall will serve Lenten Fish Fry every Friday from 6-9 p.m. in the church hall. The menu will include fish fry and other items. Announcements will be made when orders are being served. For information, call 717-862-5845.

Lenten Dinners

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Lenten Dinners in Millennium will serve its annual Lenten Fish Dinners in the church hall on Fridays from March 22 through April 17 from 4-7 p.m. All-you-can-eat. Adults $10, ages 6-12 $5, children 5 and under free. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Lykens will sponsor its weekly Friday Fish Fry by Fridays from March 22 through 4-7 p.m. in the social hall. Call 717-453-5176 or fax 717-453-5177.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Enola is serving Lenten Baked Fish Dinners in the social hall on Fridays from March 22 through 4-7 p.m. Adults $10, children 5-12 $6, children 4 and under free. Call 717-929-7780 for more information.

Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Ebensburg will serve Lenten pastas dinners on Fridays, March 15 and March 22 from 4-7 p.m. Adults $10, children 12 and under $5. For information, call 717-567-3616.

The Knights of Columbus of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Ebensburg will host their annual Lenten Fish Dinners in the church hall on Fridays from March 22 through April 17 from 4-7 p.m. All-you-can-eat. Adults $10, ages 6-12 $5, children 5 and under free. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Lykens will sponsor its weekly Friday Fish Fry by Fridays from March 22 through 4-7 p.m. in the social hall. Call 717-453-5176 or fax 717-453-5177.

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Bishop McFadden Celebrates World Day of Prayer for the Sick at Holy Spirit Hospital

By Chris Heisey

On the World Day of Prayer for the Sick, Bishop Joseph P. McFadden celebrated the Solemn Holy Mass of Our Lady of Lourdes at Holy Spirit Hospital, Camp Hill, on Feb. 11. More than 200 faithful filled the hospital’s beautifully illuminated chapel. After celebrating Mass, Bishop McFadden visited several hospital patients in their rooms where he anointed and prayed with them and their families.

In his homily, Bishop McFadden poignantly told of his and fellow diocesan pilgrims’ experiences while visiting Lourdes, France, the summer before last prior to attending World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain. The bishop related what a “wonderful peace that completely surrounds you” at the healing waters in Lourdes. “A calm comes over you, and you realize how much God loves you and cares for you,” Bishop McFadden said. “All are cured by God’s great love that surrounds us all…. All of us are healed. God is with us. When we die, we live.”

Bishop McFadden also thanked all the healthcare workers at Holy Spirit for their continued loving care to patients. Holy Spirit Hospital will celebrate its 50th anniversary on March 2, and is operated by the Sisters of Christian Charity.

“Holy Spirit Hospital is a wonderful place of loving care. It is exactly what the Lord asks us to do,” the bishop said.
In Catholic school, we teach our students the importance of service,” said Father John McLoughlin, CSSR, pastor of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Ephrata. "Today we are happy to give thanks to those who serve around us.”

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week, the faculty, students and community of Our Mother of Perpetual Help School held a Red, White and Blue Day that ended with an assembly especially for first responders and those in the military. Kindergarten through eighth grade celebrated with those in attendance by sharing songs and performances and a recognition of the men and women in uniform.

"Assemblies like this teach our children to show respect," commented Leonard Graczwk. Mr. Graczwk served in the Air Force from 1962-1966. He is a proud grandfather of a first and fourth grader at Our Mother of Perpetual Help and his son is a policeman in the Lancaster area. "It is important to keep the tradition going; Catholic education is very good for them," he commented. Mr. Graczwk attended Central Catholic when he was growing up.

Catholic Schools Week is remembered fondly by those who have attended Catholic school and participated in the annual celebration. Current student, Nathan Dell Isola said, “It’s a lot of fun, a good chance for those who don’t know about Catholic education to learn about it. We can show our faith and share with others about our school.” He continued to talk about the assembly, saying, "Today was important because we wouldn’t be here without those who stand up and protect us.”

By Emily M. Albert
The Catholic Witness