Prayers for Paris

The community of St. Catherine Labouré Parish in Harrisburg is sending signatures and messages of support to the community of the Sisters of Charity at Rue du Bac in Paris, France, to express their love, prayers and solidarity as they recover from the recent terrorist attacks on their city. This community of the Sisters of Charity is the same community of which St. Catherine Labouré, for whom the parish was named, was a member.

St. Catherine Labouré Parish has a unique and close relationship with this community because of its status as the first parish in the world named for St. Catherine. The parish is blessed to have one of the 10 original surviving Miraculous Medals that were struck under the direction of St. Catherine herself and was one of the medals that she personally carried with her.

Two large scrolls were available for signatures beginning with the parish’s Miraculous Medal novena service Nov. 17 through the weekend Masses Nov. 21 and 22 before being sent to the Sisters of Charity in Paris.

Politics Statements Take Center Stage at Bishops’ Meeting

The U.S. bishops approved a formal statement on pornography and additions to their quadrennial statement on political responsibility at their Nov. 16-19 fall general meeting in Baltimore.

The votes were made during the public portion of the meeting, which ran Nov. 16-17. The bishops met in executive session Nov. 18-19.

The 2015 version of political responsibility document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” passed 210-21 with five abstentions, and a separate vote on the statement’s introductory note passed 217-16 with two abstentions; two-thirds of diocesan bishops, or 181 votes, were needed for passage.

Additions to the document were made to reflect the teachings of Pope Francis and the later encyclicals of Pope Benedict XVI. But some bishops said the document does not adequately address poverty, as Pope Francis has asked the Church to do.

The most vocal critic was Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego, who said he was concerned that because poverty and the environment did not receive the same priority as abortion and euthanasia, that some people “outside of this room” would “misuse” the document and claim other issues did not carry the same moral weight.

The pornography statement, “Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography,” says that “producing

Trinity Wins Back-to-Back Soccer Titles

The Trinity High School girls’ soccer team celebrates back-to-back state championships after their gold-medal win at Hersheypark Stadium Nov. 20. See page 16 for coverage.
Catechists Called to Share Encounter with Christ

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

In his keynote address during the annual Diocesan Catechetical Conference, Bishop Ronald Gainer told the several hundred catechists gathered that, in their ministry, they share their relationship with Christ and Truth that has changed their lives.

“Whoever is called to teach Christ must first know Christ Jesus and the power of his Resurrection,” the bishop remarked. “How can we bring others into communion with Jesus unless we ourselves are striving, by God’s grace, to live in that communion and to foster that communion within ourselves?”

The conference was held Nov. 14 at the Cardinal Keefer Center in Harrisburg, with the theme, “Jesus, Incarnate Mercy.”

In his address, Bishop Gainer examined statistics from Pew Foundation surveys regarding Catholics, and reflected on the work of catechesis as outlined by the Church.

Recent surveys by the Pew Foundation show the following statistics when it comes to adults who were raised Catholic:

- 15 percent have joined the Protestant church
- 14 percent consider themselves “unaffiliated” or “nones”
- 3 percent have abandoned their Christian faith altogether
- 17 percent have joined another religious community
- 38 percent seldom or never practice the faith
- 42 percent have lost their faith
- 58 percent have remained faithful

Other statistics indicate that 20.8 percent of adults in the United States identify themselves as Catholic, and 12.9 percent identify as former Catholics. Half of Millennials (those born after 1980) who were raised Catholic have left the Church.

“Whoever is called to teach Christ must first know Christ Jesus and the power of his Resurrection,” the bishop remarked. “How can we bring others into communion with Jesus unless we ourselves are striving, by God’s grace, to live in that communion and to foster that communion within ourselves?”

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“When the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father…who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. To catechize is to ‘reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him. Catechesis aims at putting people…in communion…with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity. In catechesis Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God…is taught — everything else is taught with reference to him — and it is Christ alone who teaches — anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips…. Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.’ You enable Christ to come to your students and, through your lips, the words of Christ are imparted. This is our Church’s understanding of what you do. It’s Christ using your lips, your mind, your heart to convey the truth of who he is to those that we teach,” Bishop Gainer said.

He urged them to note that catechesis is not about imparting information.

“The very first thing we convey is the person of love, a commitment, a fidelity to the person of Christ,” the bishop said. “We want to put people in communion with Jesus. Only he can lead us to the love of Father in the Spirit and share in the life of the Holy Trinity.

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The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held Dec. 12-13 in the Diocese of Harrisburg. Now in its 28th year, the appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and offers support for senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests whose communities lack sufficient retirement funding. Some 33,000 women and men religious past age 70 benefit.

The Diocese of Harrisburg contributed $60,713.43 to the last collection. In 2015, the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius received financial assistance made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious. Additionally, the Diocese of Harrisburg, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Allentown, also distributes funding to local religious communities to support care for senior religious.

From 2010-2015, the Diocese of Harrisburg provided $25 million in monetary support to 395 religious communities. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated for communities with the greatest needs and for comment planning and educational resources. Ninety-three cents of every dollar directly aids elderly religious; the remainder is used to support administration and promotion of the appeal.

“We are overwhelmed by the ongoing generosity shown this appeal,” said Precious Blood Sister Janice Bader, the NRRO’s executive director. “Since the fund was launched in 1988, Catholics have donated $755 million to assist religious communities in caring for their elder members.”

The U.S. bishops initiated the collection to address the significant lack of retirement funding among U.S. religious communities. Proceeds are distributed to eligible communities to help underwrite retirement and health-care expenses.

While the response to the collection is unprecedented, so is the need. The total cost of care for senior women and men religious has exceeded $1 billion for each of the last six years. At the same time, the number of religious needing care is on the rise. In 2014, 66 percent of the religious communities providing data to the NRRO had a median age of 70 or older. Accompanying the higher median age is a decrease in the number of religious able to serve in compensated ministry, which further reduces the income available for elderscare.

Hundreds of religious communities also lack sufficient retirement savings, due in part to historically low compensation. “Most senior religious worked for years for small stipends and did not receive retirement benefits,” said Sister Bader. Religious communities are financially autonomous and thus responsible for the support and care of all members. Annual distributions from the Retirement Fund for Religious provide supplemental assistance to help meet such day-to-day needs as prescription medications and nursing care.

In addition to providing financial assistance, the NRRO offers education and resources that help religious communities stretch retirement dollars and plan for future needs. Strategic partnerships with various organizations further these efforts. For example, support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is additional for the effective management and diversion of outdated congregational properties.

“We remain committed to ensuring the adequacy and most beneficial use of donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious,” said Sister Bader. Visit www.retiredreligious.org to learn more.

Pope Francis announced an extraordinary jubilee, a Holy Year of Mercy, to be celebrated from December 8, 2015, to November 20, 2016. The special year will highlight the Catholic Church’s mission to be a witness of mercy. “No one can be excluded from God’s mercy,” the pope said in announcing the year.

The biblical theme of the year is “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Traditionally, every 25 years the popes proclaim a holy year, which features special celebrations, pilgrimages, strong calls for conversion and repentance, and the offer of special opportunities to experience God’s grace through the sacraments, especially confession.

The Diocese of Harrisburg will hold two special gatherings in conjunction with the opening of this special year:

Opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy Tuesday, December 8 at 6 p.m. St. Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg

With the Universal Church, Bishop Ronald Gainer will celebrate the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy on Tuesday, December 8, 2015 on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist at 6 p.m. at St. Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg. All faithful of the diocese are invited to attend. The prescription for the solemn ritual involves gathering at a stational church with a procession to the Door of Mercy: we will gather at St. Lawrence Chapel, State Street, and process together to the Cathedral where Bishop Gainer will solemnly open the Door of Mercy and lead us through this year of grace. Participants able to make the small pilgrimage are asked to gather at St. Lawrence Chapel by 5:30 p.m. Those unable to walk the procession are invited to go immediately to the Cathedral. The South Street Parking Garage is available free of charge to all participants.

Opening of the Diocesan Door of Mercy Sunday, December 13 at 4 p.m. St. Lawrence Chapel to St. Patrick Cathedral Bishop Gainer will solemnly open the principal Diocesan Door of Mercy at St. Patrick Cathedral on Sunday, December 13, 2015 at 4 p.m. in the context of Solemn Vespers for the Third Sunday of Advent. All the faithful of the diocese are invited to attend. The prescription for the solemn ritual involves gathering at a stational church with a procession to the Door of Mercy: we will gather at St. Lawrence Chapel, State Street, and process together to the Cathedral where Bishop Gainer will solemnly open the Door of Mercy and lead us through this year of grace.

Do You Feel Lost, Alone or Bored in Your Marriage? 
Retrouvaille Provides Marriage Help!

Are you frustrated, hurt or angry with your spouse? Are you constantly fighting? Or, do you simply shut down? Have you thought about separation or divorce? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille (pronounced retro-vi) is a weekend program that offers married couples the tools and techniques they need to help heal and renew their relationship. Retrouvaille is not a retreat, nor is it counseling or therapy. The entire weekend is confidential. There is no group interaction or group sharing; rather, the interaction is solely between husband and wife.

Retrouvaille is a program under the auspices of the Diocesan Office of Family Ministries. The next Retrouvaille weekend is scheduled for January 15-17, 2016. For more information and to register, please visit www.retiredreligious.org or call 717-938-8229.

Immediate Full Time Vacancy

Project Support Technician

The Diocese of Harrisburg is looking for a technician with strong analytical skills and a desire to provide excellent customer service to support the mission of the diocese. This position provides assistance to end-users, technical staff and management for application and hardware implementation, integration, troubleshooting and support. This position also acts as point of contact for various technical projects and systems.

Useful experience would include exposure to both shared and outsourced solutions, as well as strong skills in application design and management, virtualization technologies, Windows server and clients, MS Office, and infrastructure technologies.

Please send résumé and cover letter to employment@hbgdiocese.org. Closing date is Thursday, December 10.
Terrorist Attacks, Pope Says

Nothing Can Justify Terrorist Attacks, Pope Says

Using God’s name to try to justify violence and murder is “blasphemy,” Pope Francis said Nov. 15, speaking about the terrorist attacks on Paris.

“Such barbarity leaves us dismayed, and we ask ourselves how the human heart can plan and carry out such horrible events,” the pope said after reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter’s Square.

The attacks in Paris Nov. 13 – attacks the French government said were carried out by three teams of Islamic State terrorists – caused the deaths of at least 129 people and left more than 350 injured, many of them critically. A suicide bomber blew himself up outside a soccer stadium, gunmen attacked customers at cafes and restaurants and a team of terrorists gunned down dozens of people at a concert.

The attacks, Pope Francis said, were an “unspeakable affront to the dignity of the human person.”

“The path of violence and hatred cannot resolve the problems of humanity, and using the name of God to justify this path is blasphemy,” he said.

Pope Francis asked the thousands of people who gathered at St. Peter’s for the Sunday midday prayer to observe a moment of silence and to join him in reciting a Hail Mary.

“May the Virgin Mary, mother of mercy, give rise in the hearts of everyone thoughts of wisdom and proposals for peace,” he said. “Ask her to protect and watch over the dear French nation, the first daughter of the Church, over Europe and the whole world.”

“Let us entrust to the mercy of God the innocent victims of this tragedy,” the pope said.

Speaking Nov. 14, the day after the terrorist attacks, Pope Francis had told the television station of the Italian bishops’ conference, “I am shaken and pained.”

“I don’t understand, but these things are difficult to understand, how human beings can do this,” the pope said. “That is why I am shaken, pained and am praying.”

The director of the television station recalled how the pope has spoken many times about a “third world war being fought in pieces.”

“This is a piece,” the pope responded. “There are no justifications for these things.”

On social media, Islamic State militants claimed responsibility, but Pope Francis said there can be no “religious or human” excuse for killing innocent people and sowing terror. “This is not human.”

Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois of Paris issued a statement calling for calm and for prayers, not only for the Paris victims, but also for the victims of recent terrorist attacks in Lebanon and in Africa.

“May no one allow himself to be defeated by panic and hatred,” the cardinal said. “Let us ask for the grace of being peacemakers. We must never lose our hope for peace if we work for justice.”

With some 1,500 inside Paris’ Notre Dame Cathedral and hundreds more gathered outside Nov. 15, Cardinal Vingt-Trois celebrated a special Mass in memory of the victims. As the cathedral bells tolled a death knell, police patrolled the square in front of the cathedral and checked people as they entered the Paris landmark for Mass.

The cardinal told the assembly – which included government officials and ambassadors from a variety of nations – that the Mass was intended as a sign of sharing the pain of the victims and of praying for them, their families, for Paris and for France.

“The savage killings this black Friday plunged entire families into despair, and this despair is all the more profound because there can be no rational explanation that would justify the indiscriminate execution of dozens of anonymous people,” the cardinal said.

The only Christian response, he said, is to be “messengers of hope in the heart of human suffering.”

The terrorists succeed if their actions shake Christians’ hope founded on faith in Christ and on a belief that all of history, including moments of suffering, is in God’s hands, he said.

The appropriate response to the “barbaric savagery” of the terrorists, he said, is “to demonstrate additional trust in our fellowmen and their dignity.”

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by Chaz Muth

Pennslyvania Priest Builds Ministry One Lego at a Time

Bob Simon fell in love with two things at the age of 5 - the Catholic Church and building with Legos.

Now, as a 51-year-old priest, Father Si-

who asked to show it during their special

A woman visiting the Franklin Institute Science Museum in Philadelphia Oct. 23 takes a close look at a Lego rendition of the Vatican's St. Peter's Basilica, crafted by Father Bob Simon, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Moscow, Pa.

The 10 months it took him to build his Lego Vatican offered him ample time for contemplation about his faith and minis-

feeding the Faith

Theresa Dybach
Sacred Heart Church, Lewistown, PA

Candied Walnuts or Pecans

Ingredients:

1 cup sugar
6 tbsp milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 sp. cinnamon
1 bag of nuts

Mix on low heat until all nuts are coated and liquid syrup dissolves. Place on waxpaper and separate until dry.

before pouring onto waxpapered cookie sheet for drying.

Place in Christmas or fancy containers as delicious homemade gifts for any occasion.

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Meeting

Continued from 1

or using pornography is gravely wrong” and is a “particularly sinister instance of consumption” because “one is the owner and the other is the consumer.”

At the Conference of Catholic Bishops met in the shadow of the Nov. 13 terror attacks in Paris. Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo of Seattle, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration, issued a statement Nov. 17 from the floor of the meeting.

He added, “Moreover, refugees to this country must pass security checks and undergo interviews before entering the United States – more than any arrival to the United States. It can take up to two years for a refugee to enter through the legal process. We can look at strengthening the already stringent screening program, but we should continue to welcome those in desperate need.”

Dominican Sister Donna Markham, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, told the bishops Nov. 17 that Catholic Charities has been sent “disrupting mail from people angry that we are trying to help these people. It’s tragic.” She added of the Syrian refugees, “We’re ready to help – if we can get them here.”

He told Catholic News Service that prison reform and religious freedom also were discussed with Obama.

The archbishop said that he planned to meet with House and Senate leaders.

“One of the areas we’ll be looking at is bipartisanship efforts to reach out in a manner that takes into account the security of the families and our capacity to reach out to people of all faiths,” Archbishop Kurtz said.

Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, chair of the bishops’ Committee on Communications, discussed how the U.S. Catholic Church can move forward in response to the Supreme Court’s ruling on same-sex marriage this year. To that end, the bishops are planning to develop a pastoral plan for marriage and family life. The pastoral plan, according to Bishop Malone, will seek the bishops’ input.

A 2017 convocation for Catholic leaders represents “a new way of reaching and teaching our people,” Bishop Malone said in a presentation to his fellow bishops. The national convocation, planned for July 1-4, 2017, in Orlando, Florida, will have the theme “The Joy of the Gospel in America.”

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio painted a dire picture of “a pastoral problem that afflicts all of us” in a report to his fellow bishops about the “desperate” shortage of Catholic priests serving as military chaplains.

The head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services said there were only 217 Catholic priests serving the 1.8 million Catholics in the U.S. armed forces around the world, and the numbers would soon decline due to retirements and medical leaves.

Bishops who voice opposition to same-sex marriage are “keeping the door open to any negotiations,” he added.

The bishops approved a budget for the work of their national conference in 2016, but their vote was inconclusive on a proposed 3 percent increase in 2017 to the assessment on dioceses that funds the conference.

The budget was approved by the bishops by voice vote Nov. 17. But a separate written ballot on the diocesan assessment failed to gain the required two-thirds majority of bishops who head dioceses or eparchies. The vote was 123-49 in favor of the 3 percent increase, and 132 votes were needed to reach the two-thirds majority. Heads of dioceses who were not present at the Baltimore meeting will be polled by mail on the matter.

Bishop Richard J. Malone of Buffalo, New York, chair of the USCCB Committee on Liturgy, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, described pornography as a “dark shadow in our world today,” and noted that “pornography is a particularly sinister instance of consumption” where men, women and children are “consumed for the pleasure of others.”

The bishops approved a pastoral plan for 2017-20 in a 233-4 vote Nov. 16 during a midday break at the bishops’ annual fall general assembly.

“We met at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, told reporters Nov. 16 during a midday break at the bishops’ annual fall general assembly. “We met at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, told reporters Nov. 16 during a midday break at the bishops’ annual fall general assembly. “We have that tradition of doing it and we’re going to continue,” Archbishop Kurtz explained that any assistance provided to refugees and immigrants is carried out under government contracts and that the vetting of newcomers will have been completed by government agencies long before Church become involved.

“Our effort is going to be to reach out to people and to serve them,” the archbishop said.

“My hope would be that the Church would continue to be the ‘catholic’ church, to help those families.”

Questions about U.S. practices in the resettlement of refugees were renewed in the wake of the Nov. 13 attacks by extremist groups in Paris. French authorities coordinated attacks left at least 129 people dead and more than 300 wounded. Police raids in France and Belgium have led to the detention of several suspected extremists.

The archbishop said he and other USCCB representatives met with President Barack Obama at the White House Nov. 13 to discuss immigration.

Archbishop Kurtz was quoted in his comments about details of the Obama meeting, saying it was initiated by the White House and that he did not want to violate the president’s request for privacy about it.

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“Witnesses to Freedom” will be the theme of the 2016 observance of the Fortnight for Freedom, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, told the assembly. The two-week event will include a national wide tour of first class relics of Sts. Thomas More and St. John Fisher. Archbishop Lori declined to say what would be included. But he said that the tour have yet to be arranged.
The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parish, family, or friends in your prayers the happy repose of these recently departed souls and the consolation of their loved ones.

BLUE RIDGE SUMMIT – St. Rita: Betty J. Sanders.
BUCHANAN VALLEY – St. Ignatius: John Hall, Mary Schlosser.
CAMP HILL – Good Shepherd: Donald Giannelli, Edward Kennedy, Mary Monti.
COAL TOWNSHIP – Our Lady of Hope: Joseph T. Sewalk.
COLUMBIA – Holy Trinity: Amos Culp, Albert Fairhurst, Dorothy Fairhurst, Dolores May, Edmond Steffan.
CONEWAGO – Sacred Heart of Jesus: Dorothy H. Matthews.
GETTYSBURG – St. Francis Xavier: Maryann “Kelly” Gates, Gregory, Barbara McDannell.
HERSHEY – Holy Angels: Anna Marrero.
HANOVER – St. Vincent de Paul: Raymond Kuhn, Betty Martz.
HARRISBURG – St. Catherine Labouré: Thomas Dougherty, St. Francis of Assisi: Jim Morrison; St. Margaret Mary: Patricia Bensinger, John C. Donahue, Jr., Raymond Ravida, Sr.
KULPMONT – Holy Angels: Anna Bao, Josephine Misiewicz, Dora Politzka, Stanley Schabowicz.
LANCASTER – Assumption BVM: Richard Ruhl.
LEWISTOWN – Sacred Heart of Jesus: Joseph Olimick.
LYKENS – Our Lady Help of Christians: Patricia Doyle.
McSHERRYSTOWN – Annunciation BVM: Marion Munren.
MIDDLETOWN – Seven Sorrows BVM: Muriel Woodhead.
MOUNT JOY – Mary Mother of the Church: Joseph Hofflister.
PALMYRA – Holy Spirit: Lisa Thomas.
QUARRYVILLE – St. Catherine of Sienna: Claire Burns.
Rohrerstown – St. Leo the Great: Fred McCaffrey.
SHAMOKIN – Mother Cabrini: Leonard Bourinski, Adam Deroba, Marie Katalens, Timothy Piper, Daniel Smink.
TREVORTON – St. Patrick: Hubert Clifford.
WAYNESBORO – St. Andrew: Marianne Blakely, Hazel Bourien, Ernest “Buck” Wagaman.

Resurrection Catholic School Seeks Accreditation

Resurrection Catholic School in Lancaster moved one step closer to re-accreditation when an evaluation team found the school met the 12 criteria set by the Middle States Association. A three-person team spent Nov. 3-6 at Resurrection talking to parents, students, staff, the school board and pastors about the school. The team also evaluated the K-8 curriculum and analyzed a self-study prepared by Resurrection staff over the course of the past year. Frank Mokriski, accreditation team member and principal of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Southport, Pa., said the self-study tells what the school does, and the team was able to make sure it’s actually doing it. He observed fire drills, dismissals and other school aspects from governance to food service.

Team members and administrators of St. Maranatha in southwest Philadelphia Catherine Callinan said, “The school is very proud, from the principal right down to the students. Everyone feels happy here, like a family, that permeated every conversation. They celebrate diversity, support one another and want this to be the best school ever.”

The team, which also included Mary Catherine Sweeney, a third grade teacher at St. John the Baptist in New Freedom, Pa., will submit its report to the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools which will reach a decision on accreditation in the spring.

“The Catholic identity is prominent throughout the entire building and learning is taking place in a Catholic, safe environment,” Ms. Mokriski said. “That’s what Catholic education is all about.”

Parents, the team said, believe that being at Resurrection makes their children better people. “Manners, politeness, mutual respect for one another,” Ms. Callinan said. “As long as this place is teaching their children to be good Christians who are well-educated, that’s what they want.”

(Article submitted by Donna Walker, Resurrection Catholic School.)

Joyce Scott Named Philadelphia Province Director of the Council of Catholic Women

In September, the National Council of Catholic Women celebrated their 95th anniversary at their convention in Orlando, Florida. This is the annual gathering of women leaders, some Catholic women’s organizations in parishes and dioceses throughout the United States, including the President of the Diocesan Council.

The opening liturgy was celebrated at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe to kick off the festivities and training. As the convention came to a close, New Providence Directors from various areas throughout the United States were installed. The Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women would like to congratulate Mrs. Joyce Scott, the new Philadelphia Province Director. The Philadelphia Province encompasses the dioceses of Harrisburg, Greensburg, Scranton and Pittsburgh.

Mrs. Scott is a member of St. Katherine Drexel Parish in Mechanicsburg, having been a member there since its founding in 1988. She is very active in her parish; she served on the Pastoral Council and in various ministries throughout the parish. She has taken an active role in her Parish Council of Catholic Women, where she has served as secretary and president. She has been a leader at the District and Diocesan levels as well, she is a Diocesan Past President and has served on various boards and commissions.

Shippensburg University Catholic Campus Ministry Holds Raffle

The Catholic Campus Ministry of Shippensburg University and Honduras Mission is conducting a winter raffle. Tickets are $5 each, or three for $10, and prizes will be drawn on December 6 (need not be present to win). First prize is original artwork (shown here) “The Crucifix” by Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC, a watercolor and India Ink. Second prize is $50 in cash. Third prize is a $50 gift card to Knute’s Pub & Grill in Shippensburg. Fourth prize is a Hand-Carved Cedar Cross by Richard Dennis. Fifth prize is $25 cash. Sixth prize is a $25 gift card to D’lish Bakery in Shippsenburg.

To purchase raffle tickets, please send your name, address, phone number, amount of tickets you are requesting and your payment (made payable to Catholic Campus Ministry) to: Catholic Campus Ministry of Shippensburg, PA 17257. You will be sent tickets when we receive your request. You may also contact the S.U. Catholic Campus Ministry office at 717-477-1244 or jmreinsfelder@ship.edu if you have any questions.

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Thank you for your support!
By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

James Heller answered the phone at 4 a.m. and heard the voice of an angel.

It was a call for which he had long been hoping and praying – the news that the Penn Transplant Institute had a matching liver for him.

“As far as I’m concerned, it was a miracle, because I was very sick and my body was starting to shut down,” Mr. Heller told The Catholic Witness.

The liver transplant took place at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia on Sept. 19, 2013. The organ was from a deceased 36-year-old man.

Mr. Heller was 66 at the time.

“I felt like I was reborn,” Mr. Heller said of the transplant. “I’m doing really well today, and everything is looking good. Mr. Heller and his wife are members of Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Middletown – former parishioners of the late Father Louis P. Ogden.

So there was no question why the Hellers found themselves at St. Joseph Parish in Mechanicsburg on a rainy November night. They were there in support of the parish’s evening of organ donation awareness and education, held in memory of Father Ogden, who died on Feb. 20 of this year from a chronic liver condition that was the result of a defective gene.

Pastor of Seven Sorrows from 1997-2012, and then of St. Joseph Parish from 2012-2015, Father Ogden died before receiving the gift of a liver transplant. And so, St. Joseph’s honored their late pastor and the beloved diocesan priest of 30 years with a life-affirming event on Nov. 10.

More than 122,000 people in the United States are on a waiting list for organ donation, and 21 people die each day while waiting for this gift of life, according to figures provided by the Gift of Life Organ Donation Program. In Pennsylvania today, 8,200 people are waiting for an organ.

“The sobering statistic is that there are not enough deceased donors to meet the needs of all the people on the transplant list,” said Linda Wood, Living Donor Coordinator for the Liver Transplant Program at the Penn Transplant Institute, where Father Ogden had sought assistance. Ms. Wood was one of the panelists to speak at St. Joseph’s program.

Across the country, more than 17,000 people are in need of a liver, and 102,000 await a kidney, she pointed out.

“It’s incumbent upon all of us to look to the living and say, ‘Please help. People are dying for your gift of life,’” she said.

Organ and tissue donation can be made by living or deceased donors. The Gift of Life Donor Program, the nonprofit organization serving Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, is responsible for recovering and distributing organs and tissues used in life-saving and life-enhancing transplants.

It is one of the oldest and largest of 58 organ procurement organizations in the United States.

John McCumber, transplant coordinator with the Gift of Life Donor Program, spoke of the care and respect shown to the deceased and their families in determining whether donation is possible, and in procuring organs and tissues.

In 2014, a total of 447 deceased donors gave the gift the life with tissues – heart valves, corneas, bone, skin and

More ORGAN DONATION, page 14
St. Joseph School in Mechanicsburg Earns National Blue Ribbon Status

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

For eighth-grader Carly Koppenhaver, there’s no better school than St. Joseph’s in Mechanicsburg.

“We have not only a great environment for the students, but also good academic opportunities, and ways that we can excel outside of class in enrichment programs,” said the Student Service Council President.

“St. Joseph’s has contributed to my spiritual health, too. Here, I’m able to go to Mass every week and take religion classes. It has really helped me learn about Jesus and about how a Catholic is supposed to live. I love the environment—the smaller class sizes enable me to be focused. I feel it’s the best school I could go to,” she told The Catholic Witness.

She has attended St. Joseph’s since kindergarten, and is prepared to transition to high school next year, thanks to her education there.

“I’ve learned so much, not just academically, but also how to live my life as a Catholic and be the person I’m called to be,” Carly said.

Carly has always considered her school to be worthy of a blue ribbon; the United States Department of Education made it official on Sept. 29 of this year, naming St. Joseph School in Mechanicsburg as one of 335 National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2015.

Established in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on their overall academic excellence—as in the case of St. Joseph’s—or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

The prestigious award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.

St. Joseph School, which educates more than 400 students in grades PreK-8, earned the honor following an application process that involved test scores, essays and evidence of living its mission of developing the God-given spiritual, intellectual and physical gifts of students with dignity, respect, care and love.

Principal John Cominsky and Assistant Principal Mary Earnest received the Blue Ribbon award in Washington, D.C., during a recognition ceremony Nov. 9 and 10.

“To me, the National Blue Ribbon means that people outside of the school who understand education recognize that we live our mission,” Mr. Cominsky said. “In the case of academics, those are results you can measure, but more important is the spiritual formation of the children that will last a lifetime.”

Sandra Grasser, an eighth-grade teacher and the lead teacher on the Blue Ribbon application process, said that the faculty, students, administration and parents together make St. Joseph’s a Blue Ribbon school.

“Everybody here works as a family. We want our children to succeed, whether they’re our own children or the children we have in our classrooms,” she said.

When parents send their children to St. Joseph School, “they can expect them to receive an excellent education filled with opportunities to develop their gifts,” Mr. Cominsky remarked. “Ultimately, what they can expect is that their children are going to learn that gifts and talents come from God, and that we develop those in order to build the Kingdom.”

St. Joseph School presents a number of liturgical and community-service offerings, including weekly Masses, Advent and Lenten Penance services, a May crowning and a living Rosary, as well as regular food and monetary collections.

Produce from the school’s garden is given to the students, educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.

The school is also working on new initiatives: preparing for re-accreditation from the Middle States Association, and establishing five iPads in every classroom by spring.

Administrators see the Blue Ribbon recognition as a call to continue to set high standards and strive for excellence.

“We’re thrilled and honored to have received the Blue Ribbon award,” Mrs. Earnest said. “We are grateful to the students, the staff and the families for their support. Our job isn’t over now that we have received this honor. We have to work to continue to show that we deserve the Blue Ribbon status.”

(Find more about St. Joseph School by visiting http://www.stjmsch.org/. Read about the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/ncrblrs/index.html.)

Aubriyanna Tayman, a senior at Delone Catholic High School, serves as cantor during the Mass for the St. Joseph School community.

Father William Sullivan baptizes James Francis Cominsky during a school-wide liturgy at St. Joseph Church in Mechanicsburg Nov. 19. John Cominsky, principal of St. Joseph School, and his wife, Katelyn Phelan, who teaches at Delone Catholic High School in McSherrystown, elected to have their son baptized before the student body because they consider the St. Joseph community as their family. Pictured during the baptism of baby James are, from left, Father Sullivan, Ms. Phelan, Mr. Cominsky, and godparents Mary Earnest, Assistant Principal at St. Joseph School, and Drew Sigafoos from St. John Neumann Parish in Lancaster.
Living Will and Health Care Power of Attorney

What You Should Know about Advance Health Care Directives

The Catholic Bishops of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference presented a combined living will and health care power of attorney form in 2007. The material includes a combined living will and health care power of attorney, a letter from the bishops, and a series of answers to frequently asked questions about the topic. The material was produced in booklet form, and is available in hard copy or downloadable online at http://www.pacatholic.org/bishops-statements/living-will-and-health-care-power-of-attorney-2007/lwformweb/

Presented here are the answers to commonly asked questions about advance health care directives, nutrition and hydration, and the role of a health care power of attorney.

What is an advance health care directive?
In Pennsylvania, a health care directive can be a living will, a health care power of attorney or a written combination of the two.

A living will is a written document which sets forth a person’s wishes and gives instructions about health care when the person has an end-stage medical condition, or is permanently unconscious.

A health care power of attorney is a written document which designates someone to make health care decisions for you.

Why does the Catholic Church care about advance directives?
The Church supports Pennsylvania law which allows individuals to name an agent to make health care decisions for them if they lose the capacity to make or express their own choices. For Catholics, health care decisions should be made in the light of our faith. Morally correct decisions about medical care are followed if you are unable to understand, make or communicate for yourself, your wishes about health care may not be known to others. If this is the case, Pennsylvania law says decisions about your care can be made by a family member, or some other individual who may or may not know your specific preferences. The person the law chooses (who would be called a health care representative) may not be the one you prefer. For example, you might prefer someone other than a family member. You may have a close friend who really knows you better and would be better able to make decisions on your behalf. But, to appoint that person you must take steps to formally name him or her as your health care agent.

Why would I want a health care directive?
By completing a health care directive, you can ensure that your wishes concerning decisions about medical care are followed if you are unable to understand, make, or communicate those decisions for yourself. Decisions which might be made under a directive include the selection or discharge of a health care provider; or the approval or disapproval of a diagnostic test, surgical procedure, program of medication, or other extraordinary means of medical treatment. An advance directive provides an opportunity for you to make it clear that you embrace Catholic values and would rely upon the authoritative teachings of the Church to guide your own decisions. Advance directives can also provide Catholics with an opportunity to provide directions regarding pastoral and sacramental care.

Living Will and Health Care Power of Attorney

What happens if I don’t have a health care directive?
If you do not appoint a health care agent and you are unable to understand, make or communicate for yourself, your wishes about health care may not be known to others. If this is the case, Pennsylvania law says decisions about your care can be made by a family member, or some other individual who may or may not know your specific preferences. The person the law chooses (who would be called a health care representative) may not be the one you prefer. For example, you might prefer someone other than a family member. You may have a close friend who really knows you better and would be better able to make decisions on your behalf. But, to appoint that person you must take steps to formally name him or her as your health care agent.

Your health care agent or representative must make health care decisions in accordance with your instructions based upon authoritative Catholic moral teaching; but, if you do not leave instructions, the agent will have to assess the situation using whatever knowledge he or she has of your preferences and values, including your religious and moral beliefs. If your health care agent or representative does not know enough about what you would want, he or she will have to be guided by what he or she knows of your values and use his or her own judgment to deem what is in your best interest.

Can my agent authorize the discontinuation of nutrition and hydration?

Pennsylvania law presumes that an incapacitated person would not want assisted nutrition or hydration to be withheld or withdrawn unless the person indicated a preference to the contrary specifically in writing. This presumption created in Pennsylvania law can also be overcome if the designated health care agent knows of the person’s previously clearly expressed wishes to the contrary about assisted nutrition or hydration.

What does the Church say about medically assisted nutrition and hydration?

It is important to note that as Catholics, we believe that God is the author of all life. We believe that we (and our health care agents) have a responsibility to preserve life. In their statement, Nutrition and Hydration: Moral Considerations, the Bishops of Pennsylvania said, “There are instances in which it is relatively easy to apply moral principles to the decision to withhold or withdraw nutrition. In the case of a terminal cancer patient whose death is imminent, for instance, the decision to begin intravenous feeding or feeding by nasogastric tube or gastrostomy, may also mean that the patient is going to endure greater suffering for a somewhat longer period of time – without hope of recovery or even appreciable lengthening of life. Weighing the balance of benefits versus burdens makes it relatively easy to decide that this could fall into the category of extraordinary means and that such feeding procedures need not be initiated or may be discontinued.”

But these sorts of cases must be distinguished from those in which a patient is severely or chronically incapacitated but not dying. According to the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church, a patient should not refuse or discontinue medically assisted nutrition and hydration that are capable of sustaining life simply because he or she has been diagnosed to be permanently unconscious or in a chronic, non-terminal condition.
Important guidance has been provided by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its responses to questions posed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops concerning medically assisted nutrition and hydration for a patient in a vegetative state. The questions posed and the responses provided are directly quoted below.

First question: Is the administration of food and water even by artificial means is, in principle, an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life? It is therefore obligatory to the extent to which, and for as long as, it is shown to accomplish its proper finality, which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient. In this way suffering and death by starvation and dehydration are prevented.

Response: Yes. The administration of food and water even by artificial means is, in principle, an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life. Nor is the possibility excluded that, due to emerging poverty, the artificial provision of food and water even by artificial means may be discontinuated when competent physicians judge with moral certainty that the patient will never recover consciousness.

Second question: When nutrition and hydration are being supplied by artificial means to a patient in a “vegetative state” morally obligatory except when they cannot be assimilated by the patient’s body or cannot be administered to the patient without causing significant physical discomfort?

Response: Yes. The administration of food and water even by artificial means is, in principle, an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life. It is therefore obligatory to the extent to which, and for as long as, it is shown to accomplish its proper finality, which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient. In this way suffering and death by starvation and dehydration are prevented.

Can’t I just trust a family member or friend to make a good health care decision?

Most of us would naturally be inclined to trust our loved ones with these decisions. However, you provide a service to your family and friends by letting them know how you want to be treated. An advance directive shows that you have thought carefully about the issues and that you have specific preferences that should guide decisions with regard to the provision of medical care. If you use the form approved by the Bishops of Pennsylvania, you clearly indicate that your faith and the authoritative teachings of the Church are to be considered of the utmost importance when decisions about your care are being made on your behalf.

Do I need to use a special form?

You do not need a special form in Pennsylvania. The advance directives statute provides an optional form, but many other forms meet Pennsylvania legal requirements. In fact, it is not necessary to use a pre-printed document at all; any written form that explains your wishes and complies with statutory signing requirements can be used.

Where can I obtain this approved form?


Do I need an attorney? Does this document need to be notarized? Will this cost me anything?

No. It is not necessary to have an attorney to complete a form. However, you should contact an attorney if you have legal questions regarding advance health care planning. This form does not need to be notarized under Pennsylvania law, but notarizing this form may make it more likely to be accepted under laws in other states. Advance directive forms are available from a number of sources for no charge, including the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference. The form and this question and answer booklet are not intended to take the place of specific legal or medical advice.

Should I appoint a health care agent or just write down my wishes?

By appointing a health care agent, you can make sure that someone who cares about you will apply your wishes and personal beliefs to health care choices—just as you would. Even if you appoint a health care agent, you can still give written health care instructions to direct, guide, and even limit the actions of your agent and, in this way, you can express the importance of your Catholic faith and how it applies to your health care decisions. Having both a health care agent as well as a written document is preferable to a written document alone because the agent you designate will interpret and apply your directions to your particular health care situation. A written document alone may have to be subject to another individual’s interpretation in your particular circumstance.

What should I do with my health care directive?

Give a copy of your health care directive to your agent, your doctor and any other health care providers such as your hospital, nursing facility, hospice, or home health agency. In addition, you may want to give copies to others, such as close family members, your priest, and your attorney, if you have one.
Panelists at Parish Program Encourage Individuals to ‘Consider the Conversation’

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

An audience of healthcare workers, attorneys, senior citizens, and their adult children sat in the St. Francis Meeting Room at St. Joseph Parish in York earlier this year to discuss an often-dreaded topic: end-of-life care.

For those gathered at the parish-hosted sessions, it wasn’t an easy thing to discuss. Some were nurses pained by the suffering and illness of their patients, some were adult children unsure of how to address the topic of their parents’ healthcare wishes, others were wondering about their own mortality and how to select a health care power of attorney.

For these Catholics, the Church provides guidance.

Prompted by meetings that doctors and attorneys in the parish had been having with then-pastor Father Louis Petruha, OFM Cap., St. Joseph’s elected in the spring to host a series of sessions to present the Catholic Church’s teaching on advance directives and end-of-life care.

“Discussions with family members about these topics can be very difficult to have, and that’s understandable,” said Chris Echterling, MD, Medical Director of Vulnerable Populations at WellSpan Health of York.

“We all have our horizon, and so to be planning and thinking about your end-of-life care is actually a gift for your family, who would otherwise be forced to make decisions without guidance from you. These are normal conversations to have,” he said.

He told The Catholic Witness that St. Joseph Parish elected, therefore, to host four panel discussions with priests, health care workers and lawyers to offer information to attendees, and answer the myriad questions and concerns they posed.

Each session began with the video “Consider the Conversation,” a documentary that looks candidly at various perspectives on end-of-life care and features interviews with patients, family members, health care workers, clergy and social workers.

“A common misconception is that Catholics can’t have a living will — that’s not true,” Dr. Echterling said. “There is a fair amount of latitude, and the Church gives pretty clear guidance on how to make those moral decisions.”

Panelist Michael Scheib, an attorney and a member of St. Joseph Parish, opened the conversation by examining the difference between a living will and an advance health care directive.

“A living will is a document in which a person indicates what kind of treatment they do or do not want to have. A living will is a document in which a person indicates what kind of treatment they do or do not want to have. A living will is a document in which a person indicates what kind of treatment they do or do not want to have.

How can I make sure my spiritual needs are met?

When you enter a hospital, nursing home or other health care facility, state that you are a Catholic and want a priest or pastoral minister to care for your spiritual needs. Also, state if you want to see a particular priest. Unless you have done this, certain privacy rules may prevent the hospital, nursing home or other health care facility from informing your priest or pastoral minister about your situation or might not allow him or her to visit.

If you cannot communicate your wishes when being admitted, your health care directive should be authorized to do this for you.

How can I make sure decisions made on my behalf are consistent with my Catholic beliefs?

State in your health care directive your desire to have all health care decisions made in a manner consistent with authoritative Catholic teaching. The living will and health care power of attorney from the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference does this in a clear, straightforward way.

Appoint a health care agent who shares your beliefs or who you are confident will respect your wishes. If your health care agent is not familiar with authoritative Catholic teaching on these matters, tell your agent to seek guidance from a parish priest, a Catholic chaplain or the diocesan office in your diocese which deals with issues like this. The advance directive is an important communications tool which clearly explains what you believe, in your voice, even when you cannot speak for yourself.

Are Catholics morally obligated to have an advance directive?

No. However, an advance directive, especially one that appoints a health care agent, is one way to make sure that your care and treatment is consistent with the Catholic faith and your wishes. Therefore, it is recommended that you designate an agent.

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How can I make sure my spiritual needs are met?

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If you cannot communicate your wishes when being admitted, your health care directive should be authorized to do this for you.

How can I make sure decisions made on my behalf are consistent with my Catholic beliefs?

State in your health care directive your desire to have all health care decisions made in a manner consistent with authoritative Catholic teaching. The living will and health care power of attorney from the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference does this in a clear, straightforward way.

Appoint a health care agent who shares your beliefs or who you are confident will respect your wishes. If your health care agent is not familiar with authoritative Catholic teaching on these matters, tell your agent to seek guidance from a parish priest, a Catholic chaplain or the diocesan office in your diocese which deals with issues like this. The advance directive is an important communications tool which clearly explains what you believe, in your voice, even when you cannot speak for yourself.

Are Catholics morally obligated to have an advance directive?

No. However, an advance directive, especially one that appoints a health care agent, is one way to make sure that your care and treatment is consistent with the Catholic faith and your wishes. Therefore, it is recommended that you designate an agent.
An advance directive incorporates the pro-
visions in a living will, but also make a provi-
sion for a person to select a health care agent
or power of attorney who will make decisions
on the person's behalf if they're no longer
able to do so.

Mr. Scheib and fellow panelist Dominic Gio-
ioso, D.O., who specializes in hospice and
palliative care, encouraged people with ad-
vance directives to update their documents
on a routine basis or as their health changes,
and to share their desires with their family
members. An advance directive locked in a
safe deposit box at home is of no help to your
doctors and family members attempting to
make decisions in a hospital, they said.

Presenting Church teaching on the topic
was Father Paul CB Schenck, Director of the
Diocesan Office of Respect Life Activities, Di-
ocesan Director of Formation for Permanent
Deacons and Chairman of the National Pro-
Life Action Center in Washington, D.C.

“We have a certainty about what happens
when we die – that’s what Easter is all about,”
he said. “And still, the uncertainty we have
about death is that we have not yet died. I've
seen many people die, I've been with the dy-
ing, I've embraced the dying. But I have not
died, and that's the uncertainty. We wonder,
'What is death going to be like for me?'”

The Church's teaching on end-of-life issues
is deep and vast, and more than 2,000 years
old, he remarked.

When judging the quality of treatment at the
end of life, there are three questions to ask:

1. Is the treatment futile and won’t change
the outcome?

2. Will the treatment only increase the pa-


nt's suffering?

3. Is the treatment overly burdensome for
the patient, the patient’s family, or both?

If the answer to any or all of these ques-
tions is "Yes," then allowing the patient to
die comfortably and peacefully is often
the moral thing to do, Father Schenck said.

"We never judge the quality of a person’s
life, including our own," he said. “What we
judge is the quality of the treatment we’re
considering.”

He also spoke about the Church’s teaching
on assisted nutrition and hydration.

"The Church teaches that assisted nutrition
and hydration should not be considered ex-
traordinary means. The Church says these
ordinary means because food and water are
ordinarily meant to sustain life," he said.

He cautioned that the Church does not pres-
ent absolute teachings on end-of-life care.
Even regarding nutrition and hydration, there
are occasions when, during the dying pro-
cess, food and water can actually increase a
patient’s suffering or hasten their death.

"Each situation is unique. This is why you
should have a conversation with your family,
and invite your pastor in," Father Schenck
advised. “Every person is unique, and so is their
circumstance.”

“You absolutely can’t predict the full spec-
trum of what’s going to happen in your care,”
he said. “That’s why the Church gives us in-
sights and guidance.”

By Father Paul CB Schenck
Special to The Witness

‘Dear in the eyes of the Lord is the
death of his devoted ones.”
~ Psalm 116:15

A worldwide phenomenon is just about to occur, the first time in
human history. More people than ever before will be over 65 years
of age. In 2013, those over 65 made up a little more than 14% of
the U.S. population, but by 2040 that will grow to 22%. This means
that nearly 1 out of 4 Americans will face issues associated with
aging, such as declining strength, memory loss, loss of friends
and family members and economic restrictions, among other dif-
culties. Because of these difficulties in aging, older age is equated
with the diminishment of personal value. This will compound the
difficulties in aging with depression, anxiety and other emotional
problems.

In spite of these problems associated with aging, there is a grow-
ing appreciation for the possibilities of aging. As more people age,
there is a commensurate interest in maintaining health and inde-
pendence. Older people are more concerned with living health-
ly lifestyles, such as exercise and diet, with life-long learning, travel
and making new friends. Statistics show that as we age, we tend
to become more religious. These are the positive developments
within the aging population.

People are living much longer lives than they did a few genera-
tions ago. Worldwide, the average lifespan in 2010-2013 was 71
years. In the U.S., it was 78.7 years. Compare this with the aver-
age lifespan in 1900, which was 47.3 years, an increase of more
than 30 years in six generations. With this surging population of
older persons, more people are and will be facing the challenges
of aging, and so will their family members and care givers.

The personal, private and family experience of aging brings with it
the prospect of facing and making end-of-life decisions, such as
do-not-resuscitate, refuse or withdrawing treatment and deny-
ing assisted nutrition and hydration or even hastening or bringing
about death. These extreme cases are becoming more frequent,
and the conflict, confusion and anxiety associated with them are
being experienced by more and more people. We are facing very
complex and daunting decisions toward the end of life, and the
Church offers some very helpful belief and teaching to give the
older person, their families and care givers the guidance needed
to make the best decisions they can. It is essential that those de-
cisions are moral – respecting the person and God, who created
them and offers them eternal life.

In situations in which death is anticipated, either in the near term
or as the end of a terminal illness, decisions must be made in ac-
cord with the Church’s teaching. When these decisions are called
for, there are a number of things that should be kept in mind and
steps that can be taken to make the right and best decision for
the loved one, the family and the care givers.

The first thing to bear in mind is that each and every human life,
every person, is always a good. That is, there is never a time when
someone’s life is not worth living. Every person is created in the
image and likeness of God, unrepeatable and irrepealble. We
never judge the quality of a person, or of a person’s life. Rather, we
judge the quality of the treatment being proposed.

The answers to three questions will help guide us to the better
decision:

1. Is the treatment futile, and will not change the outcome? (this
means that the treatment will not do what it was made to do)

2. Will the treatment only prolong or increase the patient’s pain
and suffering?

3. Is the treatment disproportionate and overly burdensome to
the patient and the family?

The answers to these questions is yes, it may be, and often is,
the best decision to allow them to die as comfortably as possi-
ble. But we may never intend, hasten or bring about their death. If
the agent of death, such as cancer, is present and making its way
to its natural end, then we may allow it to come to its end with-
out violating the moral law. There is the question of artificial nutri-
tion and hydration (feeding tube and intravenous water). St. John
Paul II clarified this question, answering that these are not medical
treatment but the ordinary means of survival. Therefore, food and
drink should not be withdrawn unless it causes greater suffering
and hastens death.

The three questions are only the first step. Everything should
begin and continue with prayer. The decision makers should al-
ways consult with their pastor. If the pastor does not know the
answer, he knows who does. The pastor (or other clergy) will also
be prepared to provide spiritual guidance and comfort at the critical
time.

It is essential to integrate the teachings of the Church with health
care decisions, especially so-called end-of-life decision making.
In many ways, the term “end of life” limits the profound meaning
of this chapter of life and the importance of the experience of this
phase. In the words of Eucharistic Preface I For the Dead:

In Him (Christ) the hope of the
blessed resurrection has dawned,
that those saddened by the
certainty of dying
might be consoled by the
promise of immortality to come.

Indeed for your faithful, Lord,
life is changed not ended,
and, when this earthly dwelling
turns to dust,
an eternal dwelling is made
ready for them in heaven.

(Father Paul CB Schenck is Director of the Diocesan Office
of Respect Life Activities, Diocesan Director of Formation for Perma-
nent Deacons and Chairman of the National Pro-Life Action Center
in Washington, D.C.)

Panelists continued from page 12

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Organ Donation

Continued from page 8

saphenous veins—and with organs—heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and small intestines.

"You are never too old to designate yourself as an organ donor on your driver’s license," Mr.McCumber noted.

Donating an organ is considered an act of charity," he said.

The Catholic Church considers organ donation to be a good and meritorious act. Meeting last month with the Transplantation Committee for the Council of Europe, Pope Francis described organ donation as "a testimony of love for our neighbor."

The Gift of Life

In March of 2004, Kevin and Phyllis Cogan—members of St. Patrick Parish in Carlisle—received the call in the middle of the night that no one wants to hear.

Their 29-year-old son Tim—the oldest of their seven children—had been in a car accident just a few hours from his apartment and was on life support.

When it became apparent that Tim would not survive his head trauma from the accident, a representa-
tive from the Gift of Life Donor Program approached Mr. and Mrs. Cogan about donation.

"I can’t remember her name, but the woman from the Gift of Life was the kindest person," Mrs. Cogan remembers.

At the Time of Tim’s accident, Mrs. Cogan’s brother was in a hospital in Boston waiting for a heart transplant.

If Tim’s heart was a match, she inquired, could her brother receive it? It was possible. Tim’s heart was in a hospital in Boston waiting for a heart transplant. If Tim’s heart was a match, Mrs. Cogan asked.

"There were people sitting, and someone was thinking, 'Is this my last Thanksgiving?’" Mrs. Cogan said.

On Christmas Day, they gathered again with family, the same thoughts surfaced. Three days later, he called a hospital to find out how he could donate a kidney to someone in need.

"I’ve always been driven by the story of the Good Samaritan," he said. "I pictured somebody on the side of the road, who I don’t know, but is dying.

He donated a kidney in April 2010, and it was given to a woman in Baltimore helping to raise her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One of her family members was so grateful for the gift that he donated a kidney—another donation that inspired a chain of two more.

In 2011, few months after the death of Mrs. Turner’s donation, four kidneys were given to four recipients, and everyone is living full lives today.

"This transcends us all. This is God working through us all,” Mr. Turner said.

"The power of God is this: My recipient had been on dialysis for five years. She wasn’t going to make it another month or two. She was almost too sick to keep on dialysis. She was able to live."

Mrs. Cogan said. "It has been a comfort to us all along. Something really beautiful came out of it, and we want to be grateful for that.

"Things got very quiet in my mind. I just had this sense that, at Thanksgiving tables all around our country, there were people sitting, and someone was thinking, 'Is this my last Thanksgiving?’"

"The power of that moment just shook me," Mr. Turner said.

"As a result of the gifts I received, this is what I’m doing. I’m able to live, I’m able to enjoy life because I’m a person."

"I think about those families. In their hour of worst need, they were offering a gift to a stranger," he said.

And that’s what motivates Mr. Gargiulo, 65, now a retired principal and music teacher, to be the man he is today—involved as a Boy Scout leader, a cantor, and a presenter for the RCIA (rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

"As a result of the gifts I received, this is what I’m doing. I’m able to live, I’m able to enjoy life because someone was kind enough to give me those gifts,” he said.

"My job now is to be the best person I can be, to do all of the things that I wouldn’t have had the chance to do, "Mr. Gargiulo remarked. “I am the end product of what these people have done—whether living donors, cadaver donors or family members who made an unselfish decision to give somebody a chance to live.”
The Diocesan Notebook
Compiled by Emily M. Albert

Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church is hosting its Third Annual Noreen Neitz Memorial 5K Run and Walk on December 12. Run and walkers registered by Tuesday, November 24. Pre-registration registration is encouraged and t-shirts are guaranteed for all runners and walkers. Same day registration will be accepted beginning at 8am. Pre-

Retreats, Pilgrimages & Trips
An Advent Retreat will be offered December 1 at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Myerstown from 5:30 p.m.-9 p.m. The retreat is for those who have not attended a previous retreat in the Diocese of Harrisburg. Contact Christine Miller at (717) 564-1327 for information.

The annual Winterfest Holiday Market will be held December 5 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at the South Middleton Fire Company Hall, 2325 Mount Pleasant Road. There will be over 200 vendors, offering clothing, handmade items, Christmas decor, Christmas trees, gourmet foods, pet supplies, personal care, toys, and much more. For more information, call 717-393-9322.

The Mark of Christian Life Essay Contest for Grades 4 –12. Entrants can choose from two themes: “WE ARE STEWARDS OF GOD’S CREATION” or “HOW DO WE CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.” For details of contest rules and awards, please go to www.catholicdiocese.org.
Winning when you are expected to do so is perhaps the one of the most difficult feats in sports. Expectations create pressure, and how a team responds to that tension is always in doubt. But the Trinity Shamrocks girls’ soccer team handled that tension in an impressive manner as they successfully defended their PIAA State Class A championship with a 3-1 win over Loyalsock Township at Hersheypark Stadium on a chilly, but perfect soccer weather Nov. 20. A year ago at the same venue, the ‘Rocks beat Greensburg Central Catholic to win state gold.

While Trinity, a senior-laden squad on both ends of the field, has several superb offensive weapons, it’s their defense that has won them consecutive state championships. Tied 1-1 going into the second half against Loyalsock, the game could have gone either way between these evenly matched teams. The ‘Rocks only gave up two shots on goal the entire second half, and when the defense did let a ball behind them, Trinity’s outstanding goalie Amanda Knaub made a couple of bold saves coming out of the net to thwart these open field chances. Two perfectly placed top shelf shots by Lauren Gatesman and Amy Corbett gave Trinity the lead early in the second half to all but seal the deal for Trinity. After the championship game, keeper Knaub said of her defensive teammates, “They save my butt all the time…. They’re my rock; I’d trust them with my life.”

In the state semi-final against Warrior Run, another District 4 team who had beaten Loyalsock in their district tournament, played Trinity tight at Hamburg High School’s Hawk Hill Stadium. After 110 minutes of scoreless soccer, Trinity won 3-0 on penalty kicks in a tension-packed finish that saw the ‘Rocks bury their PK’s and the Lady Defenders kicks snuffed out on three brilliant saves by Knaub, who was a wall in net. It was a moment that defined this squad when pressure and tension met and was handled well. In the last two seasons, the ‘Rocks haven given up only 18 goals in 50 games, posting an amazing 35 shutouts over that span. If you don’t have faith in the old adage that defense does win championships, Trinity’s two state soccer champs should make you believe that this is quite true.