Parishioners Rejoice in Dedication of Rebuilt Our Lady of Refuge Church

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

On Sept. 11, 2011, Karen Gipe watched in horror as Our Lady of Refuge Church in Doylesburg burned in a destructive fire, leaving only its brick structure behind. Awakened by the terrible news of the fire in the middle of the night, Mrs. Gipe had rushed the two miles from her house to the beloved historic church. She arrived in time to watch the roof collapse.

More than 13 months later, on Oct. 28, Mrs. Gipe again stood with tears in her eyes as she gazed upon Our Lady of Refuge Church. It’s newly rebuilt now, and Bishop Joseph P. McFadden was there to dedicate it that day.

“Praise God! Thanks be to God!” Mrs. Gipe exclaimed as parishioners made their way out of the church following the Mass of Dedication. “We were able to rebuild, and we can celebrate today!”

For parishioners, the past year had been a long one, filled with grief over the loss, uncertainty about whether the church – a mission of Corpus Christi Parish in Chambersburg – would be

After Sandy, Parishes Will Try to Go Forward Step by Step

By Antonina Zielinska
Catholic News Service

After Hurricane Sandy swept through the East Coast, leaving untold destruction behind, cleaning efforts were under way at St. Rose of Lima Church in Rockaway Beach, N.Y.

“Step by step, we will try to go forward,” said Father Wladyslaw Kubrak, parochial vicar, as he shoveled leaves and branches off the church driveway.

Although the church sustained serious water damage and had no power, Father Kubrak was not planning on evacuating. He planned, however, to leave Rockaway Peninsula to recharge his electrical batteries and to bring back fresh food.

He told The Tablet, newspaper of the Brooklyn Diocese, that he wanted to stay to continue to console the people coming for guidance after they have lost so much. The church, he said, stayed opened the night of Oct.
Fallen leaves and the glow of church lights cast a warm hue over the grounds of Our Lady of Refuge Church Oct. 28 before parishioners arrive for its dedication.

The strength and faith of the parish community were among the focuses of Bishop McFadden’s homily during the dedication Mass. “In coming into this Church of Our Lady of Refuge, it’s important to understand that this building – as nice and as beautiful as it is – is really not the Church. This building, these walls, are not the Church of Our Lady of Refuge. You are,” he told parishioners. “The Church is made of living stones. The Church is you and I, gathered together.”

As living stones, they gather for Mass to listen to the Word of God, to celebrate the goodness of Jesus Christ, and to be nourished by Christ’s Body and Blood, the bishop said. “The Lord has chosen to dwell, and he will dwell, in this church,” Bishop McFadden said. “We will reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, and so it is here in Doylestown that we never have to go looking for God. We know exactly where we can find him – right here in this church.”

Catholicism in Path Valley dates back to 1737, when Thomas Doyle, a Catholic, received 530 acres of land there. The first Mass was celebrated in a local home in 1790. A log chapel that the Doyle family built next to the fami-
ly cemetery in 1802 eventually became the first church. The second church was dedicated in November 1853.

The current church is a symbolic connection between the old and the new. The brick shell from the second church remains. While floors, walls, roofing, windows, plumbing and electrical wiring are new, the re-built church includes pews from a church closed in Pottsville, Pa. And, enclosed beneath the concrete foundation is the former tabernacle, a cross and other items from the previous church.

The Mass of Dedication was filled with rich symbolism. Parishioners gathered outside the church for the start of the 8:30 a.m. Mass as the church keys were handed from the builder – Conewago Enterprises – to the bishop, who handed them to Father James O’Brien, pastor of Corpus Christi Parish, to open the doors. During the rite, the bishop sprinkled the people and the walls of the church with holy water, and anointed the walls and the altar with Sacred Chrism.

“It was a beautiful Mass!” exclaimed 84-year-old Mary Vocke as she exited the church with her husband Bill. They were married at Our Lady of Refuge in 1949 and raised two sons there.

Bracing herself against the chilly breezes and light rain that previewed Hurricane Sandy, Mrs. Vocke smiled as she looked up at the façade of the church, where she’s been attending Mass her entire life.

“I’m so happy that the bishop allowed us to rebuild,” she said. “I think this past year drew everyone together, and we’re very appreciative of the community’s help, especially in allowing us to use the Community Center all this time for Mass.”

Parishioners returned to that Community Center after the Mass to celebrate with brunch and a social. The occasion afforded them an opportunity to reflect on the support of the community during the past 13 months.

And as parishioners and clergy rejoiced in the re-building and dedication of Our Lady of Refuge Church, project construction supervisor Dave Greenholt of Conewago Enterprises shared in their happiness.

“For me, the best part of working on this project is turning the church over to the people,” he said.

Having worked on the project from June to October, he came to know many parishioners there as they eagerly watched the progress.

“They’ve been so excited about getting their church back,” he said. “That’s why I’m here today. I’m very happy for them.”

“Being able to rebuild was such a wonderful blessing,” said Mrs. Gipe. “Through the year, we kept our faith alive. Our prayers went up to God. He blessed us, and we were able to rebuild.”

“It was very uplifting to watch everyone process into the new church today,” she said. “It’s been a long year, but we’ve really come together in this time.”

Above: In a standing-room-only congregation, Brianne and Darren Gipe attend Mass with their son, Kasen, who represents the fifth generation of both sides of his family. In August 2011, Kasen was the last baby baptized at the previous Our Lady of Refuge Church, which was devastated by fire a month later.

Above, Right: Deacon Richard Ramsey lights a candle on the altar as Our Lady of Refuge Church becomes lit during the Rite of Dedication.

Bishop Joseph P. McFadden anoints the walls of the church with Sacred Chrism as the congregation looks on during the dedication Mass.
Talking Americans Down from the Assisted-Suicide Ledge

By Father Tadeusz Pakulczyk
Special to The Witness

Several weeks ago, as I was doing research for one of the articles for The Witness, I came across a website that had an incredible story of amazing young man named Nick Vujicic. A young man with no arms or legs, but with a full body, he was born without them. His website (http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org) and his YouTube channel explain that as a child and a teen, he often wondered about the purpose behind his life. By the time Nick was 19, however, he realized that his journey to understand why God made him the way he was was beginning. Why should we care about others like him? Could we ever imagine being able to allow people with lesser abilities to live? Could we ever imagine allowing others to choose to stop living? How could we cause harm to others in this way?

In addition to Nick’s innate presence, our dignity flows from our unique connection to God. It is we who are “created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), have by [our] very existence an inherent worth, and distinction. This means that God is present in every person, regardless of his or her race, nation, sex, origin, orientation, culture, or economic standing.” (CatholicSocialTeaching.org).

In short, social media should be a tool that unites us with others heart-to-heart. It can help us live it and express it. (pg. 57) I can hear the skeptics declare, “Utter poppycock!” To which I respond, “Social media needs to be used wisely.” It can never replace real world face to face relationships but rather it should be used to enrich our lives and make our relationships more true. It should never be used to create a persona that is “better” than the real world one. It should never be more important than the person with whom we share a meal, live under the same roof or the colleague working next to us.

Nick Vjicic states, “We have a calling, a ministry to come alongside the next generation and encourage them to be passionately inspired, to stand their ground in the face of ridicule and persecution, and to have the courage and confidence to never give up—NEVER be more important than the person with whom we share a meal, live under the same roof or the colleague working next to us.” (The Catholic Witness, 717-606-4004 ext. 201)

By Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC
Special to The Witness

Several weeks ago, as I was doing research for one of the articles for The Witness, I came across a website that had an incredible story of amazing young man named Nick Vujicic. A young man with no arms or legs, but with a full body, he was born without them. His website (http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org) and his YouTube channel explain that as a child and a teen, he often wondered about the purpose behind his life. By the time Nick was 19, however, he realized that his journey to understand why God made him the way he was was beginning. Why should we care about others like him? Could we ever imagine being able to allow people with lesser abilities to live? Could we ever imagine allowing others to choose to stop living? How could we cause harm to others in this way?

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, 

It is estimated by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that theft by employees costs American companies $20 to $40 billion dollars a year. It is not a small problem in our society. The recent theft of funds in one parish of our Diocese demonstrated that we are not immune to this temptation. Consequently we are vigilant of the funds in our care and take very seriously the responsibility to be accountable for what is entrusted to us. As a Church we bear experience acts such as these very rarely. Despite that, theft, when it is discovered, is disturbing and unsettling. It is not uncommon for a feeling of violation and betrayal to be felt by the victim. These feelings can be especially painful when the theft is done by one who holds an honored position in the Church. While these feelings are normal and human, we must always temper our emotions with recognition of human sinfulness and the Lord’s command for forgiveness.

In the Diocese of Harrisburg we strive to balance those feelings and our teachings with the need for justice; consequently we have zero tolerance toward financial maltreatment. We will do take legal action against those who are caught stealing. They are immediately reported to the civil authorities and are followed up with prosecution when warranted, as well as request for restitution. That is what is right and just.

I want to firmly assure the faithful that the funds that you have entrusted to your parish and school are as safe as we can make them. We must be good stewards of our resources. We have these established procedures and controls in place.

• Unannounced financial audits
• Parish Financial Councils
• Strict accounting guidelines
• A series of checks and balances
• Diocesan reviews of parish and school financial performance

Each parish and school in the Diocese is required to maintain adequate insurance. Because of the present situation in our Diocese and the disturbing national numbers on theft in general, it is imperative that we double our efforts to protect the funds in our care. Certainly we must ensure that the safeguards we have established are being followed.

My promise to you is that I will do everything in my power to ensure that this is an isolated incident and that our efforts in this area will be strengthened so that it will not be repeated. To ensure that we continue to act responsibly we are reviewing and updating our current fiscal practices and safeguard measures.

A critical piece is to ensure the proper functioning of Parish Finance Councils. These local bodies are mandated by Canon Law and serve a vital function at the parish level. These councils are to meet at least 4 times a year and be staffed by individuals with a financial background or are experienced in the business community.

The Finance Councils have the responsibility of not only advising the Pastor on matters pertaining to the temporal and financial administration of the Parish but also to help develop, review and support the parish budget. Critical functions include the review on a regular basis of the actual revenues and expenses against budgeted amounts and to also assist the Pastor in ensuring that proper procedures are followed for securing and safeguarding all collections and monetary transactions dealing with Parish funds.

To ensure the credibility of the process the Parish is required to make certain representations to the Diocese. This includes submitting the names and professional titles of the members of the parish finance council on an annual basis. The Parish must also submit the dates of all finance council meetings, as well as a signed statement by Finance Council Members that they have reviewed and approved the parish budget. Critical functions include the review on a regular basis of the actual revenues and expenses against budgeted amounts and to also assist the Pastor in ensuring that proper procedures are followed for securing and safeguarding all collections and monetary transactions dealing with Parish funds.

I ask for your prayers for all involved in this hurtful matter.

Sincerely, 

Bishop Joseph P. McFadden
Bishop of Harrisburg

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A legislative session review

By Joelle Shea
Special to The Witness

As the 2011-2012 legislative session comes to a close this month, some may already be looking towards the 2013 and hoping for some victories on issues of importance. But, as the saying goes, you get where you’re going, you’ve got to know where you’ve been. So, before we turn our calendars to the new session, let’s look at some of the issues of concern to Catholics fared in the 2011-2012 legislative session.

On the pro-life front, the legislature passed the Abortion Facilities Control Act, which holds abortion clinics to the same health and safety standards as other ambulatory surgical facilities. Prior to the passage of this legislation, it has been stated that the law favored the abortion industry – not women’s health, as is so often claimed. Legislation was passed that gave parents of stillborn children a certificate of birth. Previously, parents of stillborn children were given no official recognition of their child, and pro-abortion advocates balked at the request to recognize a child in the womb. The passage of this legislation is important for the parents who experience this most painful and heart-breaking death. Further pro-life successes can be found in the state budget, where line item to fund the state’s alternatives to abortion program, Real Alternatives, continued with a 2.5% increase. In a year when many programs were cut or level-funded, the PCC is pleased with this recognition of the value of life from conception.

In the coming session, pro-life advocates will again work for legislation that will remove abortion funding from the yet-to-be-created state health care exchange under the new federal health care law. Pro-life advocates also hope to revisit legislation that gives a pregnant woman the option to view her ultrasound when it is preferred to allow for a more fully informed decision. An ultrasound examination is already a standard practice in abortion clinics to determine gestational age or if the pregnancy is ectopic; it should be the mother’s right to choose for herself whether to view the ultrasound or not.

In the area of education, the popular Educational Improvement Tax (EITC) program was expanded this session to include additional industries and is now helping thousands more low and middle income families. Further, a new, programmed EITC 2.0, will help thousands more creating special educational opportunities for income eligible students in the lowest performing 15% of public schools. This new legislation also allows individual school districts to set up their own local voucher program. For more information on this program and eligibility, visit www.pacatholic.org.

A piece of education-related legislation that was kick-started in this session and will continue in the next session is the Religious Freedom Act of 2011, which is designed to protect religious educational ministries of young children from government interference. Under the current law, the state Department of Public Welfare (DPW) has blank check authority to regulate any aspects of a church’s or religious organizations teaching ministry, including curriculum. This is a classic church-state struggle, and after a positive vote in the Senate Education Committee and pledges from critical members of leadership in the Senate and the House, the PCC expects this legislation to pass in the next session.

In the area of concern for the poor in our state, the legislature re-opened the Homeowners’ Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP). This program has helped thousands of Pennsylvanians over the years by providing loans to homeowners who were faced with foreclosure through no fault of their own. In the first drafts of the state budget, the Human Services Block Grant, which includes state dollars that go to counties to provide a wide range of human services, was slated for a 20% cut. Upon final passage of the budget, the grant was cut by 10%. While the PCC was pleased that the full 20% cut was not made, we continue to advocate for funding for these vital services. Further budget cuts the shuttering of General Assistance. This program, which allowed for a $205 stipend to the truly needy who had no other place to turn, was not funded and there is no program to replace it. Advocates for the poor, including the PCC, are extremely disappointed with the elimination of the General Assistance program and will work cooperatively with the governor and DPW to find alternatives to assist those impacted, as the state budget must reflect concern for the most poor and needy in Pennsylvania.

Several bills dealing with immigration were introduced this session, but only one of these, the Public Works and Employment Verification Act, was passed and signed into law. This act requires contractors and sub-contractors on public works projects to verify new employee eligibility, visit www.pacatholic.org. Other proposals ranging from denying public benefits to undocumented immigrants to revoking the professional licenses of employers who knowingly employ illegal immigrants did not pass.

The 2013-2014 legislative session will bring even more activity on issues that are of importance to Catholics in Pennsylvania. And the legislature needs to hear from us. Contact your local Catholic legislator, Joelle Shea at the Director of Outreach for the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference – the public affairs arm of Pennsylvania’s Catholic bishops and the Catholic dioceses of Pennsylvania.)
By Rev. Joshua R. Brommer, STM
Special to The Witness

On July 19, 1870 war broke out between France and Italy, and the Church was once again waging a battle for the unity of the world. French troops had taken Rome and Garibaldi’s troops took their battle for unity into battle. Rome was occupied. The conflict brought an abrupt end to the gathering of some seven hundred bishops in the Vatican who were discussing the challenges that modern thought and scientific methods brought to Church as well as appointing a 33-year-old minor bishop as Pope. Pope Pius IX had formed the new Diocese of Harrisburg following the recommendation of the American bishops and the Vatican I, Pope Pius IX had formed the new Diocese of Harrisburg following the recommendation of the American bishops and the Vatican I, Pope Pius IX had formed the new Diocese of Harrisburg following the recommendation of the American bishops and the Vatican I. The world scene was changing rather quickly. Bishop Jeremiah F. Shanahan was consecrated in Philadelphia on July 12, 1868 (the Pope’s birthday) and took up residence in Saint Patrick’s Church, Harrisburg. In the fall, he would have an opportunity to travel to Rome and participate in the First Vatican Council.

However, with the onslaught of the Franco-Prussian War, this pastor and bishop would not have the opportunity for participation in Vatican I. The world scene was changing rather quickly. Bishop Jeremiah F. Shanahan was consecrated in Philadelphia on July 12, 1868 (the Pope’s birthday) and took up residence in Saint Patrick’s Church, Harrisburg. In the fall, he would have an opportunity to travel to Rome and participate in the First Vatican Council.

In these years, Trinity High School opened to the world four constitutions, nine decrees, and one encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII, and the Vatican II Summit would add their names to that list. The 1964 Evening News goes on to report that 225 priests and 1,055 religious sisters, “most of who are engaged in the teaching profession,” served throughout the Diocese of Harrisburg. A hundred years dramatically changed not only the world, but the Diocese of Harrisburg as well.

Bishop Leech carried this face of the Church in Harrisburg to Rome as he attended the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. In the days before the Council, he had been tasked with the people of the diocese to pray and make sacrifice for the intention of the Council. Therefore, in the Diocese of Harrisburg, Bishop Leech gave the entire diocese the opportunity for the whole world bishops seeking direction and suggestions for the Council. In the diocese, he would have considerable influence in the discussions and concerns for each of the documents that would come before him. In a certain way, the people of the Diocese of Harrisburg would help to shape the documents that would be presented to the Second Vatican Council in the person of the bishop.

Those initial documents presented to the bishops at Vatican II were compiled by commissions convened by Vatican departments in conjunction with the suggestions of theological experts and the thousands of recommendations about the Church. Therefore, the bishops’ recommendations were compiled in many large tomes that could be studied and examined throughout the almost three-year period of preparation. Great theological minds from across the Catholic world were called upon to lend their expertise in formulating the blueprint documents from which the bishops would fashion their teaching. From all of this work, seven “schemata” were presented to the bishops by the end of the year of 1963. Frustrated by the discussion on topics including the sources of authority in the Church, the role of Christ in the Church, the liturgy, family, social communications, and Church unity, every word would be scrutinized and discussed in the pope’s study until each of the entire portions of the work. In some instances, entire documents prepared by the commissions would be set aside.

One of the struggles at the start of the Council would be the idea that two of the central teachings of the Council: collegiality. Vatican I had set forth the idea of a hierarchical church but left unmentioned the teaching on bishops, particularly their authority. In an effort to avoid the doctrine of infallibility and certain questions on the nature of the episcopacy in general. While the decrees on collegiality were supposed to give the sense of collegiality among the bishops, centuries of historical development had reshaped the teaching on the bishops of the world, both individually and collectively. Most of the bishops came to Rome for the Second Vatican Council simply out of obedience to the Pope. None of them had ever participated in an ecumenical council. Therefore, when the schemata were presented to the bishops, it was uncertain if they were simply to approve the documents of the Pope or if they were to honestly criticize what was before them. Many bishops came to the Council uncertain of the role they would play. Yet, the inspired voice who called the Council into being also let the voice that assuaged the anxiety of these bishops. They might have hesitated to criticize anything presented by Pope John XXIII, after being approached by some concerned conciliar fathers, made it very clear that this was not to be a rubber-stamped experience, but a sincere cooperation about the teaching of the Church with the movement of the Holy Spirit. A true Council in the Church is not a collective approval of statements prepared by either the pope or Vatican offices. Instead, a Council is a supreme expression of the collegiality of the Church’s bishops working with one another and in communion with the pope to articulate the perennial teaching of the Church. The doctrine of episcopal collegiality, which would be defined clearly in the 1964 Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, would first be experienced by the bishops who, together, grappled to proclaim effectively the Gospel of Christ in an increasingly complicated world. Because of this, the work of the Second Vatican Council was brought to a new phase as the schemata would be dissected and refreshed to express, not simply the ideas of Vatican offices and various theological experts, but the discussion and prayer-inspired leadership of the more than two-thousand bishops filling the great nave of Saint Peter’s Basilica. Ultimately, the Council would present to the Church and to the world four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations.

One hundred years had brought about not only a change in the world, but had laid the foundation for a development in understanding how the Church’s bishops relate with the Supreme Pontiff, the Pope of Rome, and how they bear the responsibility of teaching the faith of Christ to humanity. In a true sense, this was not so much a change but a rediscovery of the relationship that had existed more clearly in the early Church. Laying aside what was sometimes seen as a limited secular vision of Church governance, the sense and experience of collegiality was born from communion, the mysterious unity of the bishops of the world with the successor of Saint Peter. The commitment of all the bishops with one another and with the Pope is a work of the Holy Spirit who guides the teaching authority of the Church to proclaim the Gospel clearly and boldly in every age. This is the oneness of “mind and heart” that guided the Church in the Acts of the Apostles and the oneness of “mind and heart” that guides the bishops of the world to teach the faith in union with the Pope to this day. As we explore the fourteen documents of the Second Vatican Council, it is helpful to know the context out of which these teachings developed. Far from denigrating the teaching, the awareness of the humanity that shaped these documents make them all the more relevant as they show forth the way the Gospel of Christ continues to take flesh in our own time and responds to our own needs and aspirations. As the last document of the Council teaches, Christ is “the key and the focus and the culmination of all human history” (Gaudium et Spes, 10). This includes the history of the Church and the history of the Council. As Christ, truly human and truly divine, spoke clearly and directly to the people of His time two-thousand years ago. He continues to speak relevantly to men and women of today as the Church extends His saving teaching and ministry.

(Father Brommer is the Administrative Assistant to the Bishop and Liturgy Coordinator for the Diocese of Harrisburg.)
The Catholic Church’s recent observance of All Saints Day on November 1 and All Souls Day on November 2, coupled with autumn’s barren trees and fields, understandably turn our thoughts to mortality. Yet, in pondering death, we’re also given an opportunity to reflect on God’s promise of eternal life. With it, we can contemplate the Church’s rich and symbolic teachings regarding Catholic funeral rites, reverence for the body, cremation and resurrection.

In this special section, *The Catholic Witness* presents a series of articles that explains the Church’s teaching regarding cremation, offers a pastoral examination of the symbolism of the funeral liturgy, and speaks to the Church’s belief in the resurrection of the body.

*Reflections on the Body, Cremation and Catholic Funeral Rites*, a booklet published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy states, “at the center of Christian faith is the belief that God has destined the human family for eternal life with Christ, the risen Lord.... For this reason, the human person, created in the image of God, has always been held in highest esteem in Catholic tradition. All creation is holy, because it was brought into being at God’s command. But humankind is especially cherished, since the human person, individually and in community, reflects the divine reality and is destined for eternal life.”

The bishops go on to write that “the body that lies in death recalls the personal story of faith, the past relationships, and the continued spiritual presence of the deceased person.”

Think of the Blessed Mother holding the body of her son, Jesus Christ, in the image of the Pieta. Recall the words of St. Augustine written in the days leading up to the death of his mother, St. Monica. The words of St. Augustine, one of the Doctors of the Church, are heartfelt and inspiring, recounting the wishes of his dying mother.

“Because the day when she was to leave this life was drawing near — a day known to you, though we were ignorant of it — she and I happened to be alone, through (as I believe) the mysterious workings of your will. We stood leaning against a window which looked out on a garden within the house where we were staying, at Ostia on the Tiber; for there, far from the crowds, we were recruiting our strength after the long journey, in order to prepare ourselves for our voyage overseas. We were alone, conferring very intimately. Forgetting what lay in the past, and stretching out to what was ahead, we enquired between ourselves, in the light of present truth, into what you are and what the eternal life of the saints would be like; for Eye has not seen nor ear heard nor human heart conceived it. And yet, with the mouth of our hearts wide open we panted thirstily for the celestial streams of your fountain, the fount of life which is with you.... One day during her illness she lapsed into unconsciousness and for a short time was unaware of her surroundings. We all came running, but she quickly returned to her senses, and, gazing at me and my brother as we stood there, she asked in puzzlement, ‘Where was I?’ We were bewildered with grief, but she looked keenly at us and said, ‘You are to bury your mother here.’ I was silent, holding back my tears, but my brother said something about his hope that she would not die far from home but in her own country, for that would be a happier way. On hearing this she looked anxious and her eyes rebuked him for thinking so; then she turned her gaze from him to me and said, ‘What silly talk!’ Shortly afterwards, addressing us both, she said, ‘Lay this body anywhere, and take no trouble over it. One thing only do I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be.’” (St. Augustine, Confessions)
The Power and Grace of the Funeral Liturgy

By Father Chester P. Snyder

As a young seminarian, I attended the funeral of the brother of a high school classmate and friend. The deceased was a young man, a husband and father of two children, who died tragically in an accident while serving in the military. Two images of that day have left a lasting impression: the first, the young widow, holding her by her family as she entered the church behind the casket of her dead husband; the second image, that same woman, standing on her own, holding a hymnal while singing the closing hymn as she followed behind the casket of her husband as the funeral procession left the church. What had caused this dramatic transformation? The answer is as simple as it profound: the power and grace of the funeral liturgy of the Church, carefully planned and executed by a sensitive, faith-filled pastor, transformed grief and sadness into renewed faith and hope for a family who had entered prayerfully into the suffering, death and rising of Jesus that is celebrated in the funeral Mass.

There is an oft-quoted saying about the liturgy of the Church: the law of prayer establishes the law of belief; that is, the way we pray both expresses and establishes what we as a Christian people believe. This is especially true of the funeral liturgy. In every Mass the Church celebrates Jesus’ Passover from death to life; in every Mass those who have been baptized into the mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection are renewed and nourished by the wisdom of God’s Word and the gift that is the Eucharist. That remembrance and celebration of Jesus’ suffering, death and rising is most evident in the prayers of the funeral Mass.

There is a trend in our society today to speak of funeral rites as a celebration of the life of the deceased. While celebrating the life of our loved ones is important, that celebration is best observed at the time of the viewing or visitation to choose an appropriate eulogy or when family gathers after the funeral rites.

The funeral Mass is first and foremost the time when the Church gathers to pray on behalf of the deceased. The life of faith, begun at baptism, was strengthened at the Eucharistic table. At her funeral rites, the Church commends the dead to God's merciful love and prays for the forgiveness of their sins. At the funeral Mass the Church also ministers to those who mourn the loss of a loved one as the proclamation of God’s Holy Word and the Sacrament of the Eucharist bring healing and comfort to those who are filled with grief.

The funeral Mass begins with the reception of the body of the deceased at the entrance of the church. That Rite of Reception calls to mind the baptism of the person who has died. As the coffin is sprinkled with holy water the Church prays: “In the waters of waters of baptism, our brother/sister died of the person who has died. As the coffin is sprinkled with holy water the Church prays: “In the waters of waters of baptism, our brother/sister died...”

“In him the hope of 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.

~ First Preface for the Dead, Mass of Christian Burial

Some parishes allow for a eulogy before the funeral Mass is ended. The eulogy, delivered by a family member or friend, should be read from a prepared text and speak of the faith and Christian virtues of the deceased. While personal memories might not be appropriate to the liturgy, the celebrant will announce the conclusion of the funeral Mass, generally stories, anecdotes and memories are better shared when family members and friends gather for a viewing or visitation, or after the funeral rites are concluded.

As a priest, I have always been struck by the prayer at the final Commendation at the end of the funeral Mass to be among the most beautiful and meaningful in the liturgical life of the Church. The commendation acknowledges the reality of painful separation at the time of the death of a loved one and commends the deceased to the loving mercy of God. The invitation to prays the faithful: “Before we go our separate ways let us take leave of our brother/sister. May our farewell express our affection for him/her, may it ease our sadness and strengthen our hope. One day we shall joyfully greet him/her again when the love of Christ, which conquers all things, destroys even death itself.”

As the coffin is incensed and the Song of Farewell is sung, we pray to the saints of God to come to the aid of our brother/sister and that the angels hasten to meet him/her and present him/her to the Most High. As a celebrant, when I incense the casket I pray privately that the person whom I am entrusting to the Lord will pray for me as a member of the Communion of the Saints. With the closing prayer and final hymn, the spiritual life of the deceased comes full circle. As the body is taken to the church and entered into the life of Christ in the waters of baptism, may now enter the gates of paradise, welcomed by the angels and martyrs into the new and eternal Jerusalem to celebrate the heavenly liturgy before the throne of God.

I often ask if it is depressing to celebrate funerals. There is a sadness that comes with leading a grieving family in prayer at such a sensitive time. But when the Church gathers and celebrates the rites of Christian burial for our brothers and sisters in faith, there is a comfort that comes with a calming peace and reassuring hope. I like to think of the funeral Mass, when we entrust our loved ones to the gentle mercy of our God, as a final gift we offer to those who have shared the joys and sorrow of our lives.

There is one experience surrounding the death of a parishioner that I found to be very sad and somewhat disconcerting. For several years I visited a woman of great faith whose life was marked by illness and grief, following the death of her beloved husband. She often told me of her desire to be buried with a funeral Mass at the parish church before being buried next to her husband. She told me the same thing to the funeral director she knew well.

When she died, the relative charged with making arrangements for her funeral would not allow her body to be taken to the church for a funeral Mass and would not allow me to conduct the Rites of Burial at the cemetery. And so, at the end of her life, this woman of faith was denied the benefits of a funeral Mass and was taken to her final resting place with no one present and without the supportive, intercessory prayers of the Church.

That experience reinforced for me the importance of individuals making known to their funeral director, family members and most especially to the person charged with making funeral arrangements their desire for a funeral Mass and Christian burial rites at the cemetery. In most families this is not a concern, but for some families where grief might be tensions or when family members may no longer be practicing the Catholic faith, it is important to leave instructions with the hope and request that those final wishes will be honored. A funeral is not for the consolation of the living alone but also for the spiritual benefit of the one who has died.

In the first Preface for the Dead in the Mass of Christian burial there is a paragraph that expresses well what we as a church believe about the meaning and mystery of our living and dead. In addressing the Father, Son and eternal God, the priest prays referring to his Son Jesus Christ: “In him the hope of 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.”

When the Church gathers for the funeral Mass, our prayer is always that of Jesus, who wept at the death of his friend Lazarus, will be our comfort and help as we entrust our loved ones to the mercy of the heavenly Father.

FATHER SNYDER is a retired priest of the Diocese of Harrisburg, who served as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Mechanicsburg from 1995 until his retirement in June of this year.)
Died with Christ, Buried with Christ, Risen with Christ: Considerations on Catholic Cremations

By Father Joshua R. Brommer, STL
Special to The Witness

The month of November has traditionally been a time for Christians to reflect on the mystery of death and hope in the resurrection, especially as we pray for the souls of the faithfully departed. Since the Year of Faith calls us to reflect more deeply on the main tenets of our faith, this is a particularly good time for us to reflect on our belief in the resurrection of the body and the Church’s teaching on Christian burial.

Since the earliest centuries of the Church, the words of the Apostles’ Creed have been confessed in one form or another by Christian men and women. Resounding with the voices of the faithful throughout the generations, we also profess this faith, with these concluding words: “I believe in … the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.” The early creeds developed from Baptism liturgies, where those preparing for the cleansing waters were called upon to state publicly that they have received and subsequently accepted the whole faith of the Church. Even today, the Profession of Faith continues to be a central part of the celebration of this Sacrament.

The context of Baptism gives the clearest direction for unpacking the rich doctrine contained in each of the short phrases of the Apostles’ Creed. The original form of this particular confession of faith is handed over from the Church of Rome and is preserved in the Latin language. Since we are accustomed to reciting this Creed in English, the original Latin words might surprise us: “Credo in … resurrectam rem” — “I believe in … the resurrection of the flesh.” As with all expressions of faith, every word we recite is significant and the choice of the word “flesh” is no different.

In the fifth century, St. Augustine struggled to explain succinctly the meaning of this part of our Creed. He preached, “Now with regard to the resurrection of the flesh (which is not like that of certain persons who have risen from the dead but have afterwards died, but is like the resurrection of Christ’s flesh, that is, to life everlasting), I do not see how I can explain matters briefly.” We can imagine this saint’s listeners groaned inwardly and prepared for a long sermon! Fortunately, for us, this brief statement says a great deal about our belief in the resurrection of Christ’s flesh, that is, to life everlasting.

In the sure and certain hope of this resurrection, St. John’s Gospel, nor is it like the miraculous resurrections of those at the time of the crucifixion. All of this brief statement says a great deal about our belief in the resurrection of Christ’s flesh, that is, to life everlasting. Amen.” The early creeds developed from Baptism liturgies, where those preparing for the cleansing waters were called upon to state publicly that they have received and subsequently accepted the whole faith of the Church. Even today, the Profession of Faith continues to be a central part of the celebration of this Sacrament.

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Yet, prior to these liturgical questions of a funeral with cremated remains, there are some other considerations that need to be taken seriously when choosing cremation. First, the cremated remains of a Catholic Christian must always be placed in a worthy vessel. A single urn is to be used. Ashes of a departed person may not be divided up into several containers. Although the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania permits cremated remains to be taken anywhere, the Catholic Church is clear that it is contrary to her teaching to divide the remains among different cemeteries or among different members of a family. Today, there is sometimes the option of devising jewelry or artwork out of the cremated remains of a loved one. Such actions are strictly prohibited by the Church.

Similarly, urns containing remains may not be kept in private homes or scattered in any way. All cremated remains must be interred with the proper rites of Christian burial. For the Catholic Church, the law is simple: should a Christian choose cremation, the entire remains must be contained in a dignified urn and either buried in the ground or entombed in a cemetery columbarium or mausoleum niche with the burial rites. This burial is a profession of faith! For those who have died with Christ in Baptism are to be buried like Christ as they await the Day of Resurrection.

Our practice reveals our faith and directs our practice. The Committal Prayer offered by the Church on these occasions sums up beautifully what we believe and how our choices are to reflect that belief: “In the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our brother/sister N., and we commit his/her earthly remains to the ground … (or their resting place): earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” (Father Brommer is the Administrative Assistant to the Bishop and Liturgy Coordinator for the Diocese of Harrisburg.)

CHRIS HESSEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS
Holy Saviour Cemetery, York
A human being is a composite of spirit (soul) and matter. This is a bedrock principle of the Christian faith. Christians are neither spiritualists nor materialists. Materialists emphasize the reality of matter (body) and minimize, even deny, the reality of spirit (soul). Spiritualists emphasize the reality of spirit (soul) and minimize, even deny, the reality of matter (body). Christians hold to the reality and the goodness of both spirit and matter.

There was (is) a heresy called "angelism," which the Church condemned centuries ago. Angelism, like Spiritualism, tends to erase the difference between angels and human beings, at the expense of human beings! We should know with utter clarity that no angel ever was or will be a human being, and no human being ever was or will be an angel. Angels and humans are two entirely distinct entities in God's creation.

By nature, angels are far superior to human beings. Nevertheless, there is at least one way in which human beings have it over angels. God never became an angel, but He did become a human being. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is the man! Jesus is in His glorified body and glorified soul.

The properties of Christ's risen and glorified body are previews of the risen bodies of all those human beings who will be numbered among the Just. Every human being, whether numbered among the Just or the Unjust, will experience the resurrection of his or her body when Christ returns at the end of time. The condition of the resurrected bodies of the Just will correspond precisely with the state of their souls. For those who have died in God's grace and friendship, their eternal glory will be manifested even in their bodies and they will possess magnificent properties.

One of the properties of the glorified body as named by St. Thomas Aquinas are:

**Identity:** The glorified body will possess its original identity in that it will be united to your soul. Your body will really be your body, but that does not mean it will look the same as it did during your life on this earth. When Jesus appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection, He often had to make Himself known in some way, even to those who were His closest disciples. See this in various post-Resurrection accounts in the Gospels, such as when He had to call Mary Magdalene by name before she could recognize Him at the tomb.

A question often asked is this: Will we be able to recognize our family members and friends in their glorified bodies? The answer is: Yes, God will see that to. We will see others and they will see us as we and they really are. Our bodies as they are in their present state do not adequately convey to others what and how we really are. In fact, we shall not, in the fullest sense, really know other people or be known by them until we are all in our resurrected bodies.

**Integrity:** The glorified body will be integral (complete), regardless of how it was during its earthly life, or at the moment of its death, or after it has decomposed in the grave. Everyone in Heaven will have the same physical integrity of his or her body while on earth, will have all his body parts. All will have perfect vision, hearing, mobility, etc.

People under all sorts of different circumstances. Many die of natural causes, but there are also those who die in ways that cause complete destruction of the body. They will not be resurrected in a form with which we cannot adequately understand what it is to be masculine or feminine.

One of the great misunderstandings about gender derives from taking out of context something that St. Paul wrote. He wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28). Some think that Paul is telling us that gender is irrelevant in the spiritual life. The context is different. If you read the verse in context, Paul is talking about Baptism, the rite by which both males and females enter into Christ. What Paul is saying is that in His grace, all human beings, male and female, of every race, social standing or gender — enter into Christ Jesus in the same way and under the same terms.

One of the persistent myths that have haunted human imagination is the myth of "the fountain of youth." This will cease to be a myth in the resurrected life. It shall be reality. We shall be forever young. Our glorified bodies shall never age, never break down, and they will never die!

All human beings are always equal in terms of their fundamental human dignity. Equality in dignity does not mean "sameness" in all other ways. Individuals are, obviously, diverse in many ways, including talents, abilities, and vocation. We shall not need to worry about what one need only look at one's own children to see that. In Heaven, there shall be no inequality among human persons based on race, nationality or other merely human constructs.

But there will be distinctions of any sort? Yes, there will be distinctions, but these distinctions will not be at odds with the fact that human dignity is not a human construct. It is a gift of grace. For example, of all God's creatures, including the angels, Mary is first in the order of grace. Everybody in Heaven will be completely happy forever and as satisfied as he or she can possibly be. That said, even among those in Heaven there will still be varying degrees of glory according to the degree of merit which one has merited through his or her cooperation with God's gifts of grace on earth, cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 2010, 2025.

**Agility:** This is the property by which our glorified bodies, acting completely unaided by earth or air, will be able to go effortlessly wherever we desire to go — at the speed of light. This is a property of heaven, cf. Luke 24:36. St. Paul teaches us about it as well as about other properties of the glorified body in his First Letter to the Corinthians Chapter 15 verse 40. "And, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed, for this perishable body shall be fashioned like unto an imperishable, and this mortal body shall be clothed with immortality. Then shall be manifested the word of righteousness, for it shall be known as subtlety, Jesus was able to pass through the door of the house where the disciples were gathered (cf. Luke 24:13). Our risen bodies, while physical and tangible, will be completely under the direction of our souls, free from restraint or impediment of any kind — not just能量 over-spiritualize. Remember the principle that human beings are a body-soul unity. Both body and soul are good and important. The reality in heaven is never-ending, uninterrupted happiness. There shall never be boredom in Heaven. We will go "from glory to glory" for eternity! The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Then he said, "Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true." — Revelation 21:5.  

**Clarity (sometimes referred to as Brilliance):** In Chapter twelve, verse three, of the Book of Daniel, the prophet writes, "And those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever! Indeed they shall shine, both in company with Moses and Elijah, and was transfigured in their sight. He does this to give them a hint not only of what they will be like after Resurrection, but also of what they will be like after theirs! About this event, St. Matthew writes, "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light" — Matthew 17:2. We see this quality stunningly and powerfully explained in Chapters one and four of the Book of Revela-

**The Catholic Witness**

Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Mechanicsburg

By James F. Gontis Special to the Witness

A question often asked is this: Will we be able to recognize our family members and friends in their glorified bodies? The answer is: Yes, God will see that to. We will see others and they will see us as we and they really are. Our bodies as they are in their present state do not adequately convey to others what and how we really are. In fact, we shall not, in the fullest sense, really know other people or be known by them until we are all in our resurrected bodies.

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By Chris Heisey
The Catholic Witness

No program has won more District 3 girls’ volleyball championships than the Squirettes of Delone Catholic. Since 1974, they have won an amazing nine Class AA titles, with their latest coming with a thrilling victory over the Saints of Berks Catholic played in front of a raucous crowd at Dallastown High School on Nov. 3.

Having won the YAIAA league title over Southwestern when they stared down a match point to come back to top the Mustangs in a tense five-setter, Delone similarly had their hands full with the Saints, dropping the first two sets of the five-set match. And trailing 6-1 in the third, things looked bleak until off the bench came injured senior middle hitter Ali Smith, who’s been nursing a sprained ankle late in the season.

Behind Smith, the Squirettes rallied to beat the Saints 25-17 in the third, 25-15 in the penultimate set and won an exciting, 15-13, in the deciding set to win gold. Not only did the Squirettes benefit from the senior’s hitting ability by pounding the outer lines, the Squirettes were able to adjust their defense to dig and block the Saints imposing, big hitters.

By Chris Heisey
The Catholic Witness

Just days before Hurricane Sandy blew through Central Pennsylvania, a perfect, warm late autumn day unfolded for the District 3 cross country championships at Hershey’s 3.1 mile Parkview course. In the Class A, (a new classification starting this year) Delone Catholic won the team title, besting York Catholic by team points. Delone Catholic was led by freshman Kate Mowrey, who eclipsed the 21:00 mark on the tactically difficult course that features steep inclines and a start that requires runners to get out fast so as to not be forced back into the pack as the route narrows. Delone placed three runners in the top-6 and York Catholic had five runners in the top-20 to earn second place team silver.

Hershey’s Parkview course is also the site of the PIAA state meet, which was held in cold blustery weather that was into the harrier’s face the final mile. Delone’s Kate Mowrey fights to climb the final incline during states where she finished nearly 25 seconds behind her district pace. It’s a difficult course to race on in a ten-day span. In Class AA, Lancaster Catholic’s senior Shannon Cruz finished in the Top 20 at states, cracking the critical 20-minute barrier to win a medal.
CRUSADERS’ DOUBLES TEAM REBOUNDS FOR STATE TENNIS TITLE

By Emily M. Albert
The Catholic Witness

Two young ladies, Lil Veronis, left, and Julia Davis, right, made school history for Lancaster Catholic at the PIAA State Tennis finals. They are the first doubles to win a state championship for the Crusaders.

“There wasn’t time to be nervous,” commented Lil, a sophomore. “It was probably the best we ever played.”

The beginning of the season would not have predicted this win for the two Crusaders. Julia started the season with an injury, and Lil played along the side of another teammate. They picked up their double’s place together mid-season, noting that they didn’t really start to play to their full potential until Districts, where they finished second against Berks Catholic.

“We were still trying to get used to playing together,” said Julia.

In the state finals, the girls went head to head again with the District-3 champions from Berks Catholic, but finished first this time in a close match, 6-3, 7-5. “It was pretty intense in the second set,” Julia and Lil both agreed. “We just tried to forget what was on the line and relax.”

TRINITY TRADITION SHARES SOCCER STAGE TOGETHER

By Chris Heisey
The Catholic Witness

Good soccer at Trinity High is a tradition for both the girls and the boys. And now that the two programs have a chance to shine in the fall with the move of girls’ soccer to coincide with the boys’ season, it is possible for the two programs to play in the District 3 playoffs at the same venue on the same day.

That’s what happened at Comet Field at Penn Manor High School in Millersville, Nov. 1. The girls won a classic double overtime match against Wyo-missing to reach the district final. Micaela Oliverio netted the semifinal game’s only goal late in the second OT. The Shamrocks went on two days later to handily beat Northern York, 3-0, at Hersheypark Stadium to win the Class AA title.

The boys’ lost to Biglerville 3-0 in the semis at Comet Field.

Trinity’s Micaela Oliverio goes airborne after a shot on goal.
Ogden, pastor. Program by Jan Chaplick. Cost is $20 and includes RSVP, contact Carolyn Yankovitz at 717-258-4216 by Nov. 10.

Danville. This season of hopeful waiting is a time to pause and reflect from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at Saint Francis Xavier Center, Gettysburg. Fair will feature a variety of vendors, including handmade items and bake sales. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be served. For more information, call 717-232-2169 or visit www.gettysburgkofc.org.

St. Margaret Mary School in Hanover. Contact Donna Giberti at 717-818-5105 or Ourfaith1208@aol.com.

St. Cyril Spiritual Center in Hanover. Fair features a variety of vendors, including handmade items and bake sales. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be served. For more information, contact Tanya at tanya41979@yahoo.com or Kris at kristenmbernard@verizon.net.

Sponsored by Father Charles Persing, pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Harrisburg. Cafeteria dishes up fresh made clam chowder, minestrone and chicken corn noodle soups, meatball subs, homemade chocolates and confections, cakes, pies and cookies, wreaths, candles, jellies and bisbocchi. The Café dishes up fresh made clam chowder, minestrone and chicken corn noodle soups, meatball subs, homemade chocolates and confections, cakes, pies and cookies, wreaths, candles, jellies and bisbocchi. The Café dishes up fresh made clam chowder, minestrone and chicken corn noodle soups, meatball subs, homemade chocolates and confections, cakes, pies and cookies, wreaths, candles, jellies and bisbocchi. The Café dishes up fresh made clam chowder, minestrone and chicken corn noodle soups, meatball subs, homemade chocolates and confections, cakes, pies and cookies, wreaths, candles, jellies and bisbocchi. 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Among the parishes that opened their churches for shelter for people whose homes are no longer habitable was the Blessed Trinity Church in Breezy Point. It is located in the mandatory evacuation zone declared for Hurricane Sandy, but Msgr. Michael Caputo, pastor, said he and the other parishioners moved to a nearby church in the immediate aftermath of the storm. The police set up a command center in one of his church buildings.

Bruce Angle was among the Breezy Point residents who did not evacuate and watched as flood waters forced their way into his home. He said the water was a couple of feet high and his beds were completely soaked. He spent the night sleeping in the choir loft of St. Thomas More Church, a worship site of Blessed Trinity Parish.

“There is no heat, but it’s still warmer than my house,” he said. He had used a priest’s chasuble as a blanket to keep warm during the night.

Msgr. David Cassato, chaplain to the New York City Police Department, and Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello, pastor of Mary Queen of Heaven Parish in Mill Basin, joined Bishop DeMaria on his pastoral visit. At every stop people came to speak with them, some in tears and others asking for prayers. Bishop DeMaria said he will ask parishes throughout the diocese to take up collections to help with the rebuilding process. He will also coordinate with Catholic Charities’ emergency action plan to get people the help they need. He said his message to the faithful is: “Pray for the people of the community, and pray for a long road to recovery.”

That road, however, seems marked to many people affected by the natural disaster.

“I don’t think anyone knows what the process is,” said Bill Slattery, who saw his family’s secondary residence in Breezy Point reduced to a pile of ash.

“Alcohol is what you hear on the radio,” Mr. Slattery has been part of the community for 30 years. He is on the softball team there, and his wife has been part of the community there for her entire life. He said “that’s the hardest part because of all the minutes of being there — and now what do you do?”

However, he said the people in the community take care of each other.

“There is no one person who is alone, we are all a community,” he said, as soon as information is available to one person, everyone will know, even if they don’t have access to electricity or a phone, he said.

In neighboring New Jersey in the Diocese of Paterson, the full extent of damage to the physical plants of diocese’s 111 parishes is still being learned by insurance adjustors, according to Richard Sokerka, communications director for the diocese. Worst hit were rural and suburban areas with downed trees.

“I lost a pine tree on my property,” said Patrick Francis of Little Falls, who lives near his church and crushed through the fence,” Mr. Sokerka said.

The power to Mr. Sokero ka’s home was restored in 48 hours, “which is a miracle,” he added. For many others in the three-county diocese, “the power companies are still giving dire forecasts of seven to 10 days” to restore power, he said.

Diocesan Catholic Charities agencies had power, but phone and internet problems have forced them to put together a cell-phone network to start relief efforts.

A special collection was to take place in parishes the weekend of Nov. 10-11. Half will go to diocesan Catholic Charities agencies serving the needy affected by Sandy, and the other half will go to parish es whose storm damage was not covered by insurance.

How to Help

Catholic Charities USA is accepting cash donations as it develops its response to the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Donations can be made online at the Catholic Charities USA website at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org. Donations also can be made by calling toll-free (800) 919-9338 or by mail to P.O. Box 17066, Baltimore, MD 21297-1066.

The Alexandria, Va.-based agency has begun working with state and local government disaster response agencies and charitable groups to meet emergency needs in communities in New Jersey and New York devastated by the late October storm.

Pope to Synod: Foster ‘Missionary Dynamism’ and ‘Pastoral Creativity’

By Francis X. Rocca

Catholic News Service

Winning converts to the Church, ministering better to practicing Catholics and bringing lapsed members back into the fold are all parts of the multifaceted effort known as the “New Evangelization,” Pope Benedict XVI told a group of bishops and other Church leaders from around the world.

The pope made his remarks Oct. 28 during his homily at a mass celebrated on the first day of the world Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization. The three-week gathering, which brought more than 260 bishops and religious superiors to the Vatican along with dozens of official observers and experts, discussed how the Church can revitalize and spread the faith in increasingly secular societies.

Pope Benedict underscored “three pastoral themes” that he said had emerged from the talks.

“Ordinary pastoral ministry... must be more animated by the fire of the Spirit, so as to inflame the hearts of the faithful,” he said. He emphasized the importance of the sacrament of confession, and the necessity of “appropriate catechesis” in preparation for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist.

The pope also called for a “new missionary dynamism” to “proclaim the message of salvation to those who do not yet know Jesus Christ.”

“There are still many regions in Africa, Asia and Oceania whose inhabitants await with lively expectation, sometimes without being fully aware of it, the first proclamation of the Gospel,” the pope said. And as a result of migration driven by economic globalization, he added, the “first proclamation is needed even in countries that were evangelized long ago.”

Finally, the pope spoke of the need to persuade lapsed Catholics “especially in the most secular countries,” to “encounter Jesus Christ anew, recover the joy of faith and return to religious practice in the community of the faithful.”

This effort, in particular, calls for “pastoral creativity” and use of a “new language attuned to the different world cultures,” he said. As an example of such innovation, the pope mentioned the Vatican’s “Courtyard of the Gentiles” project, which promotes dialogue between religious believers and agnostics.

Referring to the day’s theme from St. Paul of the Gospel of St. Mark, the pope invoked Bartimaeus – the blind man who miraculous ly received his sight back from Jesus and then joined him as one of the disciples as a model for Christians in countries “where the light of faith has grown dim.”

“New evangelizers are like that,” Pope Benedict said, “people who have had the experience of being healed by God, through Jesus Christ.”

The day before the closing Mass at the synod’s last working session Oct. 27, Pope Benedict thanked the participants for their work, including the final propositions that will eventually serve as the basis for a document of the pope’s own reflections on the new evangelization.

At that same meeting, the pope said that he had decided to make two administrative changes relevant to the new evangelization. Responsibility for seminars will shift from the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education to the Congregation for the Clergy, he said; and responsibility for catechesis will shift from the latter office to the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization.

The pope also congratulated the six bishops, four of them members of the synod, whom he will induct into the College of Cardinals Nov. 24. He said he had named the new cardinal s-designate, none of whom hails from Europe, as a sign of “the universality of the Church, showing that the Church is a Church of all peoples, [and] speaks in all languages ... not a Church of one continent, but a universal Church.”

One of the cardinals-designate, Philippine Archbishop Luis Tagle of Manila, was also one of 15 new members of the ordinary council of the general secretariat of the Synod of Bishops announced Oct. 26.

The new council members, who will oversee the international gatherings of bishops periodically held at the Vatican, include two U.S. bishops: Cardinals Donald W. Wuerl of Washington and Timothy M. Dolan of New York. Others included Cardinals Christoph Schönborn of Vienna, Austria; Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; and George Pell of Sydney.
On the Feast of All Saints, Nov. 1, Bishop Joseph P. McFadden made a pastoral visit to Lancaster Catholic High School where he celebrated Holy Mass and afterwards spent time with students as he visited several classrooms.

“There has never been a more important time than now to get a Catholic education,” Bishop McFadden told the students and faculty. He reminded the students to thank their parents and guardians for understanding the importance and sacrifice needed to provide this gift of sending their children to such a wonderful Catholic school. And he reminded them to never forget how much their parents love them and want them to succeed by their continuing support of Catholic education.

“This day is your holy day, because you all have the potential to become future saints,” Bishop McFadden said in his homily.