Conference Upholds ‘Women of Light’ against Destruction of Sexual Revolution

By Rachel Bryson, M.S.
The Catholic Witness

“You are women and this revolution has mostly been conducted in your name. We have the credibility to say, ‘It’s not working. It’s a failure.’”

This is the message Helen Alvaré shared with nearly 700 women who attended the annual Diocesan Women’s Conference, Women of Light, Sisters in Christ, on Saturday, Oct. 12 at Bishop McDevitt High School in Harrisburg.

A law professor at the Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University in Washington D.C., Alvaré shared many examples from both a legal and cultural viewpoint that have led to our current hyper-sexualized culture. She explained that when it comes to conversations about the Catholic Church, the vast majority of the information presented revolves around the “Sexy Six issues – celibacy, sex abuse, abortion, contraception, married priests and homosexuality.”

Alvaré explained that the Church is one of the “last voices on these subjects that is talking sense,” and that Catholic women have “a special vocation to speak to this and about this. After all, a lot of what’s going on is supposedly in the name of our freedom...so we have a special responsibility to speak to it.”

Casual sex, contraception, abortion, a decrease in the number of marriages – no topic was off limits as Alvaré walked through the rise...
On Aug. 15, 2019, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lily Key, originally of St. Patrick Parish in Carlisle, became Sister Lily Marie, a novice in the Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance.

She had spent one year as a Postulant at Mount Saint Mary’s Abbey in Wrentham, Mass. At the end of a two-year novitiate period, she may make her first Vows of Stability, Conversion of Life and Obedience.

Sister Lily Marie was home-schooled and earned a B.A. in Theology from the University of Dallas. She attended one of the first Fiat Days retreats in the Diocese of Harrisburg, which introduces young women to various religious communities and how to discern God’s call.

The Cistercians of the Strict Observance, also known as Trappistines, are a contemplative community and part of the Benedictine family. Mount Saint Mary’s Abbey has approximately 40 Sisters. Like all Benedictines, their life is grounded in “Ora et Labora,” prayer and work. In addition to Mass and praying the Liturgy of the Hours seven times a day, the Sisters support themselves by making and selling candy. Contemplative nuns and monks live a hidden life, but their presence is vital to the life of the Church because of their prayer for the whole world.

Mount Saint Mary’s Abbey hosts two “Monastic Experience Weekends” per year, where women between the ages of 20 and 40 can spend some time at the monastery. These weekends give women discerning a religious vocation an immersion in our communal prayer and a taste of our way of life through the witness and experience of some of our sisters. These events also offer the joy of meeting other young women who are seeking their place in the Church. Time is provided for individual conversations with the sisters on the formation team.”

For more information on the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, contact their Vocation Director, Sister Katie McNamara, at 508-541-7340 or s.katie@msmabbey.org, or visit www.msmabbey.org.
Lancaster County Project Provides Meals for 10,000 at Annual Day of Service

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

Each year on the Saturday before Christmas, Aimee Ketchum and her daughters wake up well before dawn, hop in their car and head to downtown Lancaster. By the time they get to their destination at 4:00 a.m., the Ketchums find scores of people waiting in line, braving the cold – and sometimes the snow – for the annual holiday tradition.

The Ketchums aren’t searching for bargains on Christmas gifts, though. They’re helping to distribute meals and cold-weather items to those who are less fortunate.

Now in its 33rd year, the Lancaster County Project for the Needy distributes more than 2,500 boxes of food, complete with everything recipients need to cook a holiday meal that will feed six to eight people.

The meal-distribution day takes place a few days before Christmas at Clipper Magazine Stadium. As early as 3 a.m., recipients line up at the venue, where more than 500 volunteers greet them with turkeys, roasting pans, potatoes, eggs, milk, bread, fruits and vegetables.

Additional volunteers deliver packages of food to local residents who are unable to travel to the stadium.

“Our mission is to provide everyone in need with food, to ensure that they have a nice holiday meal for Christmas, said Tom Fasnacht, project coordinator and a member of St. James Parish in Lititz.

An Annual Tradition
Aimee Ketchum began volunteering with the annual project more than 15 years ago. When her daughters were kindergarten-age, she started bringing them with her, instilling the value of service at an early age.

The Ketchums, members of St. James Parish in Lititz, have also undertaken efforts to provide people with winter-weather items, especially as they wait in line for their packages of food.

“We noticed early on that the recipients standing in line weren’t always dressed in the warmest clothes. I had my children dressed in snow pants, gloves and hats, and we’d see babies with garbage bags around their strollers,” Ketchum said. “So we had the idea that we could help the recipients in line with bringing hot chocolate and maybe some hats, gloves and scarves.”

Over the years, their collection of the items – largely gathered through donation boxes they place throughout town – grew to include coats, boots, snow pants and blankets.

“One year, we had three or four full carloads with more than 2,000 pieces,” she said.

Ketchum’s daughter, Kayla, a high school senior, said collecting the winter-weather items and serving on food distribution day is part of her family’s Christmas traditions.

“It definitely makes us a lot more thankful for what we have, and when we’re opening our gifts on Christmas, it brings us back to reality to think about everybody who isn’t as fortunate as we are,” she said.

Matthew 25 Grants at Work
The Lancaster County Project for the Needy began in 1986, an effort of two men who set out to help the less fortunate by giving grocery bags and fresh food necessary to make a meal. The first year, they distributed more than 150 turkeys.

Today, the project gives out more than 2,500 turkeys and all the trimmings, feeding in excess of 10,000 people.

“It’s an amazing day,” Fasnacht said. “The spirit of the volunteers is incredible. We get young and old, and to see how excited the young people are is inspirational. I see a lot of the young people engage the recipients and start conversations with them, to really understand what it is that’s happening in their lives.”

According to the project, 72 percent of all households in Lancaster County are cost-burdened, meaning that families utilize at least 50 percent of their income for rent/mortgage, utilities and transportation.

The Lancaster County Project for the Needy is a recipient of grant money distributed from the Diocese of Harrisburg’s annual Matthew 25 Collection. The collection, which will take place in parishes the weekend of Nov. 24, supports efforts that provide food, clothing and shelter. Seventy-five percent of the money contributed to the Matthew 25 Collection is distributed through grants to parish-supported ministries, like the outreach center. Twenty-five percent of the collection is given back to the parishes for their support of people in need.

“We have been very blessed through the Matthew 25 grant that we receive because we have been able to purchase additional turkeys and provide more meals throughout the county. Each year, we’ve been able to grow this project, and it’s only through generous donations to Matthew 25,” Fasnacht said.

“It can be very stressful for people who are trying to figure out how they’re going to buy gifts for their children, or how they’re going to have a meal for their family. We hope that we can relieve a little bit of that stress and give a little joy to people, so they don’t have to worry about putting a meal on the table. Matthew 25 is about helping people who don’t necessarily have what we have,” he said.

Romaine Hornberger and Claudia Kendall, residents of a Section 8 housing complex in Lancaster, are recipients of food items the project volunteers deliver.

“It means a lot, because there are a lot of us that live here that have no families and really rely on something good they can make,” she said. “Everybody seems really happy to get it. It’s very nice to get something different, a full meal at the holidays.

“We thank them very much for what they’re doing, because it’s for a good purpose,” Hornberger said of the project’s volunteers and the contributors to the Matthew 25 Collection.

“We are grateful for them.”

“It really comes in handy. Not everybody has family around here,” said Kendall. “And there’s always somebody here, maybe a neighbor, who will share with other people, or cook the meal for people who don’t know how to.”

“We’re grateful that there are people out there who even think of us, to do these meals,” she said.

(From the second in a series of three articles on organizations supported by the Diocese’s Matthew 25 Collection to provide food, clothing and shelter to people in our communities. The collection will take place in parishes the weekend of Nov. 24. Learn more at www.hbgdiocese.org/m25.)
of the sexual revolution and how this movement has been destructive for women, children, families and society.

Alvaré reviewed several legal cases during her keynote address, stating that “all of these separate sex from marriage from children. What they really did was add value to non-procreative sex. That’s the trajectory of sex cases.”

Traveling back to the early years of Christianity, Alvaré added that Christians stood out in Greco-Roman times because of their views on sex, marriage and parenting.

“Jesus’ statement about how husbands should treat their wives, His statements against divorce, how He treated children; Christians became quite distinctive,” said Alvaré. “They rejected contraception, abortion, infanticide from the very beginning of the Church.”

Fast forward to today, where the views of marriage and procreation have been drastically changed under the guise of freedom, and now is the time for women to stand up.

“The sexual revolution has been devastating for children. We now have four out of every 10 children growing up without both a mom and a dad. It can’t be fixed in every case, but it shouldn’t be celebrated as some kind of progress for women’s equality. We also want to take the lead to avoid the awful violations that come with a lack of sexual respect between men and women,” said Alvaré.

“We are so against the world’s view of things now. We need to do this not as a defensive rear guard action, but in a celebration that what we promote is love.”

Faith Fellowship

Alvaré’s keynote address kicked off a day filled with more than 40 workshops, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, music by Seasons, opportunity for Confession, fellowship with hundreds of women, and Mass celebrated by Bishop Ronald Gainer.

“My hope, my prayer for each of you that came to our conference, my hope and prayer for you is that today’s experience here, some of the things you heard, some of the times of prayer, some of the time in receiving absolution, some of those experiences will help you on the path to true happiness, authentic beatitude,” said Bishop Gainer during his homily. “Maybe you find yourself at this time in a valley of decision and I hope that you received some grace today that will help you in this valley of decision. Maybe some of you found a burst of enthusiasm for some aspect of our faith, a burst of new enthusiasm for how much God loves you. I hope today has helped you in that way. Maybe you encountered Christ in confession, which brought you peace and strength.”

“By obedience to Christ in the ordinary routines of your lives, you will be for your families, in the workplace, in your neighborhoods, in your parishes, in the Church and in a world that so desperately needs you to be, you will be Women of Light and Sisters of Christ,” said Bishop Gainer.

The conference was a group trip for several young women involved in campus ministry at Bloomsburg University.

Gabriella Zimmerman, a St. Columba parishioner and campus minister at Bloomsburg, said she heard about the conference and was looking forward to the rest of the conference sessions.

“I think she [Alvaré] made a lot of great points that it’s up to us to make decisions,” said Sarah Emily D’Agostino, a parishioner from Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Harrisburg and a member of campus ministry at Bloomsburg University.

“A lot of these laws were made to help us, but haven’t helped. It seems like they have been using women and we have to be aware of that.”

“We need to have other resources in our conversations (related to hyper-sexualization) or we’ll be put to the side,” added Zimmerman.

Kira Paige, a Catholic-in-training who attends St. Columba, added that she was excited to attend the conference to learn about using her gifts more fully in whatever way God has in store for her.

Elena Vergura from Our Lady of Victory Parish and Anna Watson from St. Peter’s both explained they were looking forward to the sessions on how to discern real love.

The Women’s Conference is coordinated through the Diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. More information on the conference can be found at www.hbgdiocese.org/event/womens-conference.
By Donna Walker
Special to The Witness

Families whose children attend Resurrection Catholic School in Lancaster call it "a blessing," and they have "three generations of people who came before" who handed down the possibility to them.

"We don’t ever feel different here," Kassandra Settle told Gerald Ganse, president of the Catholic Education Foundation, which provides tuition assistance. "For my girls to come here is beyond a blessing."

Retired pharmacist Gerald Ganse formed the foundation five years ago as an independent nonprofit. He visited Resurrection on Oct. 1 to meet families awarded $7,211 in CEF grants, specifically from the Dr. Albert J. and Mrs. Ave Marie (Butz) Schreder and Family fund.

"Dr. Al always believed in Catholic education and he wanted to give back to others. He and his family established a fund to help families come to Resurrection. There are three generations of people who came before who wanted to pass it forward," Ganse explained.

"My husband and I work hard to pay (tuition), I feel so privileged to have this help," Yaneth Rubio said.

She said her children are naturally kind to others they meet, even strangers in a grocery store.

"That comes from here," Rubio said.

The Catholic Education Foundation is another way for Catholics to give, Ganse said, in a way that advances the vision and mission for Catholic education in Lancaster County.

Lancaster County.

To learn more about CEF, contact Ganse at 717-577-2735.

(Courtesy of Donna Walker, Resurrection Catholic School.)

In observance of the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Patrick School in Carlisle welcomed animals big and small for a pet blessing at the school. The pet population was overwhelmingly canine this year, with a few cats, lizards, chickens and guinea pigs as well.

Camille Gross is pictured with her chickens and Alexsia Bartoli is seen hugging her dog.

(Courtesy of Lisa Maddox)

Students at Holy Family School in Berwick welcomed the new Diocesan Secretary for Education and Superintendent of Schools, Daniel Breen, on Oct. 2. Breen, who plans to visit all 38 Diocesan schools before Thanksgiving, toured Holy Family and met with students and staff. The fourth-grade students are pictured with Breen, center and Pete Morisco, right, principal.

(Courtesy of Holy Family School.)

Schools are encouraged to share news about events and student achievements for publication in The Witness. Photos and follow-up stories are selected for publication on the Catholic Schools page in most editions. Event promotion is printed on the Diocesan Notebook page. Send your news to witness@hbgdiocese.org.

(Donna Walker is the Marketing Director at Resurrection Catholic School.)
St. Pius Parish Participates in National Rosary Rally

By Justin Engle
Special to The Witness

Fifty members of St. Pius X Parish in Selinsgrove took part in a Rosary Rally on Oct. 12 as part of a national event where more than 20,000 rallies took place across the United States with the goal of spreading the word of Our Lady of Fatima.

Our Lady of Fatima is the name given to the apparition of the Virgin Mary that appeared to three children in Portugal in 1917.

During the 30-minute gathering, parishioners sang, worshiped, prayed the Rosary and prayed for America under a pavilion at Charles Attig Park in Shamokin Dam.

Father Tukura Pius Michael, O.P., pastor of St. Pius Parish, said, “we have come to pray for our nation and to ask for peace in our world.”

Coordinator for the event, Sherry Evans, called it “very important,” saying, “I care about the common good.”

Heather Effinger, of Selinsgrove, a much-involved member of the church, enjoyed the service. “To be present and be part of something bigger, there are no words to describe it.”

The event’s location had a special meaning for the church, as it’s named after a former parishioner, Charles Attig, Jr., a Shamokin Dam Police officer killed in the line of duty.

Attig’s mother, Rosa Attig, a member of St. Pius Parish, was in attendance and called the service “nice,” adding that the park “is a nice memory of him.”

COURTESY OF JUSTIN ENGLE, THE DAILY ITEM
Heather Effinger prays the Rosary.

White Mass Recognizes Health Care Workers

The Diocese’s annual White Mass drew Catholic physicians, health care workers, dentists and medical students to St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg on Oct. 20 to recognize their vocation and pray for God’s blessings upon their work.

Bishop Ronald Gainer was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass.

The annual Mass is sponsored by the Harrisburg Diocesan Guild of the Catholic Medical Association, a chartered professional association of Catholic doctors and other health care workers who are united by faith and committed to the ethical practice of medicine.

The Catholic Medical Guild provides spiritual and professional support to members. Since being chartered in 2009, it has sponsored Lenten days of reflection, summer family picnics at the Carmelite monastery in Elysburg and the White Mass.

Catholic physicians, dentists, medical students, health care workers and clergy interested in learning more about the Catholic Medical Association should visit www.cathmed.org or www.cathmedharrisburg.org.

Altar servers lead the entrance procession for the Diocesan White Mass for health care workers.
Becky Biter was in the throes of post-abortion traumatic stress, suffering from two abortions she’d had as a teenager. She knew what she had done. In the years that followed, she cried constantly, struggled to function as a stay-at-home mom, lost hope for her future, and contemplated suicide.

She didn’t know where to turn.

“For 20 years, my husband and I sat in the pew and never heard the word ‘abortion’ being spoken about, and so it wasn’t something we thought our pastor could help us with,” she said. “We spent most of our marriage hiding behind masks.”

But ten years ago, Biter found healing through a retreat that is part of a multi-faceted approach the Diocese of Harrisburg is undertaking to give compassion and hope to those struggling with the grief of abortion.

Project Rachel is the U.S. Catholic Church’s ministry to those who have been involved in abortion. It provides an integrated network of ministries and services – including the Sacrament of Reconciliation, pastoral counseling, support groups, retreats and referrals to licensed mental health professionals – tailored to each woman’s needs.

“Post-abortion traumatic stress is very real, and very devastat-

ing,” Biter said at a recent pro-life event at St. Patrick Parish in York. “Based on statistics, one in four women will become a victim of abortion by the age of 45.”

“In a church with 1,200 families, based on statistics, some 300 women will be impacted by abortion. When we factor in the often-forgotten fathers, our number doubles: 600 people impacted by a decision they never will be able to reverse,” she remarked. “It’s not just the babies’ lives that are at stake – it’s the life of the mother, the father, the whole family.”

“We cannot be afraid to talk about abortion,” Biter stressed. “Women and men need to hear that they are not alone in their suffering. They need to know where they can find hope, to heal their broken hearts. They need to know about post-abortion healing ministries.”

**Integrated Approach to Healing**

Project Rachel is a diocesan-based network. Specially trained priests, religious, counselors and laypersons offer a team response of care for those suffering in the aftermath of abortion. The ministry is available to anyone – regardless of their faith – who was involved in an abortion: the woman, her boyfriend or husband, her parents or grandparents, and siblings grieving the loss of their aborted brother or sister.

It is currently being introduced in the Diocese of Harrisburg through the Diocesan Office of Family and Respect Life Ministries.

More **PROJECT RACHEL**, continued on page 8

“I want you to know I went to Confession tonight. I was terrified. Needlessly.

The priest who heard my confession was not disgusted by me, or angry with me. He never stopped smiling at me even as I revealed my ugliest sins. He was gentle, kind, and loving. Of course, this made me cry. Hard.

He was patient.

He absolved me of my sins. Told me I was worthy of all God’s kingdom.

So not what I expected.

Thank you so much for being there in a way that didn’t make me feel dirty or contemptible. For making me feel human again.”

~ **Expressions of Healing and Thanks**, www.hopeafterabortion.com
PROJECT RACHEL
From page 7

Tom O’Neill, Director of the Office, attended a conference for Respect Life Directors offered by the USCCB last year and felt called to introduce Project Rachel here. He commended the many pro-life resources in central Pennsylvania – including parish pro-life ministries, pregnancy resource centers and pro-life witnesses outside of abortion facilities.

“I felt the Holy Spirit was calling us to do more in one area – post-abortion ministry,” he said. “We have hosted a strong, vibrant Rachel’s Vineyard retreat program for many years. However, post-abortion ministry also needs a high profile to reach as many people as possible, the type of profile the Diocese can provide.”

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, the Project Rachel network includes 10 therapists and 25 priests specifically oriented to the ministry.

During their annual workshop Oct. 13-18, Diocesan priests were introduced to the ministry’s launch in the Diocese of Harrisburg.

“By training priests and therapists to address trauma and grief as well as guilt, and by giving post-abortive women and men an anonymous, compassionate and non-judgmental way to ask for help, Project Rachel Ministry extends Jesus’ mission of love and forgiveness to those who need it most,” O’Neill said.

Those seeking hope and healing can connect to the ministry in a number of ways: by contacting the helpline directly, by speaking with a priest in pastoral counseling or in the confessional, or by talking to a therapist.

“It is very difficult for a woman or a man to reach out in seeking help for post-abortion counseling. Many times, it’s ten years or more after the abortion experience before someone will step forward to find help or call or make inquiries,” said Linda Plummer, Executive Director of Morning Star Pregnancy Services.

Plummer ministered with Project Rachel in the Diocese of Raleigh and has more than 20 years of experience working with post-abortive women and men. Meeting them where they are and listening to their stories is critical, she said.

“Sometimes a first step for them is, ‘I just want to talk to somebody that has some knowledge of what the healing process looks like.’ Sometimes a woman or man may very quickly identify, ‘I want to talk to a priest,’ or, they may need to talk with a therapist first,” she said.

“What they need to hear when they do pick up the phone is, ‘There is help for you,’” Plummer said.

Avenues for healing and forgiveness include the Sacrament of Reconciliation, pastoral counseling, professional counseling, support groups and the Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat.

Regardless of the particular program that sets them on their journey, “Project Rachel means that there is a confidential, designated helpline where women can be confident that the person on the other end of the line is going to listen, understand where they’re coming from and have a compassionate response that directs her to healing opportunities,” said Mary McClusky, Assistant Director of Project Rachel Ministry Development for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities.

“Whenever we talk about abortion, we must always include the message that healing and forgiveness are possible: ‘Yes, abortion is a sin, and we recognize the loss of your child and we want to help you heal,’” she said.

A Sea of Mercy
Nine years ago, and more than two decades since her abortions, Becky Biter was plagued by thoughts of suicide.

“I planned to slam my truck into a tree, because I thought that was the only way out of my misery,” she said.

Fortunately, she found help through a Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat.

“The Holy Spirit led us to Rachel’s Vineyard, and at our retreat, he bestowed on us the grace of undefeated courage. I begged him to drown me in the sea of his mercy, and he embraced my soul and pulled me from the pit,” she said.

A Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat weekend provides an opportunity for women to examine their abortion experience, identify the ways that the loss has impacted them, and acknowledge any unresolved feelings.

Father Dwight Schaline, pastor of Our Lady of the Visitation Parish in Shippensburg, ministers at the confidential retreat weekends, which are offered regularly in the Diocese.

“It is a retreat experience in which people who have experienced abortion are able to walk through the grief process, or at least start it,” he said.

Father Schaline is passionate about the ministry.

“I’ve really learned what a woman with post-abortion syndrome is going through. Most people don’t know what that is, because it’s politically incorrect to look at abortion as such a horrific thing. [Society tells us] it’s supposed to be a ‘useful’ thing, but it is very destructive, especially for a woman,” he said.

Post-abortive women can experience a range of emotions and unhealthy behaviors, including

“I pray for forgiveness for us all and for our hard hearts to be touched by Jesus Christ. My child forgives me. This I know by special graces. That is the icing on the cake, because I know that Christ forgave me long ago. Sacramental penance and laying her properly to rest through Project Rachel are invaluable healing.”

~ Expressions of Healing and Thanks, www.hopeafterabortion.com

COURTESY OF THE USCCB
Jesus’ message of mercy, “Neither do I condemn you,” is given through Project Rachel.
shame, depression, anger, nightmares, anxiety, withdrawal from family and friends, fear of intimacy, unhealthy sexual relationships, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts.

A Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat is one way to begin the healing process, Father Schlaline said.

“There’s a strong sense with the women who go on the retreat that everything bad that happens to them after the abortion is a punishment from God. We have to work with that pastorally,” he said.

The weekend allows participants to experience Jesus’ mercy and healing in a real way, confidentially among others who are struggling. Father Schlaline said post-abortion grief is often considered “a forbidden grief.”

“It’s a grief that a lot of people won’t understand.... The only place people really have to grieve the loss of their unborn baby is through Project Rachel, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Rachel’s Vineyard retreat,” he said. Healing and forgiveness are found in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

“A woman has to have a lot of courage to confess, but once they do, there’s a kind of release, a lifting of the burden off of the shoulders,” Father Schlaline said.

“We cannot be dismissive, or tell a woman that it’s not a big deal. The worst thing you can do is say that someone’s abortion didn’t mean anything. That’s what everyone else is doing, but that’s where the Church is distinct,” he remarked. “We receive their grief in the sacrament and we give them God’s forgiveness,” he said.

McClusky said Project Rachel is a ministry of the Church because it continues Jesus’ healing ministry.

“The Lord offers his mercy and forgiveness any time Confession is available and won’t refuse a repentant heart. We the Church are there to proclaim and offer the gift of Christ’s mercy,” she said.

An Open Door to Compassion and Healing

“I have never seen such transformational healing take place as I have witnessed in this ministry,” Plummer said of her experience in Project Rachel.

“What I see is women and men coming from such pain and suffering, shame and guilt with this secret burden, to walking away saying, ‘I feel light.’ ‘I feel peace.’ ‘God has forgiven me.’ ‘My children have forgiven me.’ ‘My relationships with other people can be different now;’” she said.

Based on inconsistent reporting requirements from research centers and institutes, a likely estimate is that nearly one in four women in the United States will have had an abortion by age 45. For those involved in Project Rachel, the message of mercy is crucial to helping a woman heal from the emotional and psychological scars.

“Approach it from a perspective that there are probably people in my family, friends, people sitting next to me in the pew that have had this experience,” Plummer advised. “Whenever we are talking about a pro-life message, we always have to mention that we have this ministry of the Church, and there is an open door to healing. The message we need to make sure everybody hears is that there are people who can help you.”

McClusky said the Church’s teaching on the value of human life also extends to its compassion for those who have had an abortion.

“Since we greatly treasure the incomparable gift of life, naturally it follows that we also appreciate a woman’s loss. Consider that since we so greatly treasure both the life of the mother and her child, naturally we are going to be appreciative of what it means when a woman has been convinced by the lie that abortion will empower or free her,” McClusky said.

The Church’s response to a woman seeking healing and forgiveness from an abortion can be the difference between her walking away from the Church, or coming back to it, she said.

“We understand the truth and want to help bring her to Christ, who can heal that wound. We can walk with her along the journey to healing and hope. We can give her the gift of listening and consolation.”

More information on Project Rachel and other post-abortive ministries in the Diocese of Harrisburg can be found at www.hbgdiocese.org/respectlife, by calling 717-857-2282 or by emailing prm@hbgdiocese.org.

“I had 2 abortions; one when I was 17 and the other when I was 22. I lived with the pain and depression caused by those mistakes for over 27 years. I spent most of that time trying to deny that I had any lasting problems from those procedures.

During this time I suffered a major depression and suicidal thoughts. I felt like I wasn’t worthy to be anyone’s friend or even to be alive.

It wasn’t until I heard someone from Project Rachel tell her story. My husband and I were in our car coming home and I began crying along with the lady on the radio and I knew right then that I needed to grieve and mourn the death of my two children.

I contacted Project Rachel and went to a retreat to heal. It was the most extraordinary experience I have ever experienced and I now feel forgiven by both God and myself.”

~ Expressions of Healing and Thanks, www.hopeafterabortion.com
Healing within Marriage from an Abortion

From the USCCB Respect Life Program

When Susan’s* husband, Juan, told her about the abortion he was involved in when he was in college, she finally understood why he was so depressed and had trouble bonding with their children. However, she wanted him to just get over it, without seeking help from a post-abortion healing ministry. It bothered her to think of him dealing with this in relation to another woman and child.

During Steve’s premarital preparation with his (now) wife, the topic of her past abortion never arose. Now married and participating in a post-abortion healing ministry, Steve notes, “It is one of the questions you never think to ask during premarital preparation.”

With an estimate of over 56 million abortions in our country since the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973, there’s little doubt that countless marriages are suffering from one or both spouses’ involvement in an abortion.

Although many of the same struggles may arise when only one spouse was involved in a previous abortion, couples who aborted their own child before marriage may experience their own unique difficulties, as Tina shares:

“...I didn’t think it bothered me until after we were married for a year and our son was born. I was so resentful that my husband hadn’t protected me and our baby when I became pregnant before we were married. ...I began to resent and hate him. It was like a great divide between us. I couldn’t and wouldn’t let go of the anger and resentment, because if I did, it would be like saying the abortion was ok, and it wasn’t. (Our baby died,) I was hurt, and he could just go on like nothing happened.”

For cases in which one spouse is unaware of the other’s past abortion experience, some feel it is crucial for him or her to be told, while others believe it is in the past and it’s not necessary to address it. But if “the two shall become one” (Mt 19:5), can the marital union be brought to its fullest potential with the secret of an abortion lingering in the past?

Steve doesn’t think so: “...looking back over our 29 years of marriage, it is probably the one thing from [either] of our pasts that has affected our marriage more than any other.”

It is no secret that the devastation of abortion brings with it many challenges. Many times the people who have participated in an abortion are not even aware of the countless ways it is affecting their lives. Often, it is not until they recognize some of the effect it is having and become involved in a healing ministry that they begin to more clearly identify their personal abortion connectors (people, places or things that trigger memories of their abortion experience).

It is not uncommon for those suffering from past abortions to overreact to present situations because of the trauma they experienced. For example, what would otherwise be a normal disagreement between spouses can seem like a very real act of abandonment to someone who was co-erced into having an abortion. An abortion may also lead to infertility or difficulty conceiving later in life, which bring their own emotional strains for a couple.

Fear of intimacy is another struggle that may arise. Some men and women have kept past abortion experiences a secret and live in the fear of being exposed. They never really open themselves completely to intimacy for fear of being rejected if their spouse ever discovered their secret. Others may not be willing to practice their faith because of the guilt and shame they feel, which deprives them of spiritual consolation and drives a wedge between them and their spouse. It is scary for a person to tell his fiancée or her fiancé or spouse about a past abortion. It requires great trust in that person’s love for them and trust in God. Unfortunately, sometimes that knowledge can threaten the relationship, but it can also be a means for the couple to grow closer together.

Through the help of a post-abortion healing ministry, couples can successfully work through abortion-related challenges, and God’s grace can bring true healing in their relationships. Matt shared his own story of this experience: “I had a hard time learning about the abortion and was not sure if i in fact was still going to be able to marry my fiancée. Attending the retreat helped me to recognize that she was the same person I had loved the day before I learned, and that if God had forgiven her, I needed to forgive her as well. Through counseling and direction we have been able to work through the many feelings and fears I had, and I feel confident we are now able to work on any issues that come up together, and move past them through the grace of God. I feel I am now able to love her the way God intended.”

Significant growth can also result from working through the pain together as a couple. For example, the spouse that was not involved in their husband’s or wife’s past abortion may choose to “spiritually adopt” their spouse’s aborted child. This spiritual adoption can be a beautiful way to unite the couple as the family God intends them to be, as Steve recognized: “I made the decision that this was part of what was brought to our marriage ‘in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health...to love and honor...all the days of my life.’ I take that vow seriously. We had to make this journey together. ...I now look upon it that I have two sons, the one [whom] she conceived before we met, and the one we conceived together. Would it be any different if the child had lived and ... [were] here present in our lives? No! The only real difference is that we have a child who is with God and who is working and praying for us.”

Abortion affects countless marriages more than many people recognize. But there is no doubt that God will bring great healing to those who trust in his infinite mercy. If a past abortion can be acknowledged and addressed, a married couple can make great strides in experiencing even more fully God’s design that “the two shall become one” (Mt 19:5).

(*The stories of Susan, Juan, Steve, Tina and Matt (their names are changed for their privacy) are just a few examples of the many marriages touched by abortion. To find out what pastoral resources for marriage may be available in your local area, contact your diocesan family life office. To find resources for post-abortion healing, visit HopeAfterAbortion.org. Reprinted from Respect Life Program, copyright © 2017, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.)

Support Rachel’s Vineyard through Wish List

Depression, guilt, inability to forgive oneself, grief, sadness, anger, rage, emotional numbness, promise breaking, eating disorders, low self-esteem, drug and alcohol abuse, nightmares, suicidal urges, difficulty with relationships, anxiety and panic attacks are just a few of the symptoms of post-abortion trauma.

A Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat offers a place to renew, build and redeem hearts broken by abortion. The confidential weekend retreats are held several times a year – in English and Spanish – at the Undefeated Courage House in Columbia, Lancaster County. Those who wish to support the ministry can assist with supplies, by viewing Rachel’s Vineyard’s registry at amazon.com. The registry is in need of small kitchen/bath items found at Amazon baby registry (search “Rachel’s Vineyard”). Monetary donations are also accepted, by adding “Undefeated Courage” to an Amazon Smile account, to www.undefeatedcourage.org, or to Undefeated Courage at P.O. Box 213, Enola, Pa., 17025-0213.

For information on Rachel’s Vineyard Retreats and Undefeated Courage, call 717-788-4959 or email undefeatedcourage@gmail.com. All calls are confidential. The next retreat in English is Dec. 6-8; the next retreat in Spanish is Nov. 8-10.


Parish Bazaars

(A listing of parish bazaars is also online at www.hbgdiocese.org. Submit parish bazaar announcements via e-mail to communications@hbgdiocese.org.)

The Columbiettes, St. Joseph’s Auxiliary 12788 in Mechanicsburg, seventh annual Christmas Fest on Nov. 23 at the St. Joseph Parish Life & Education Center, Mechanicsburg, from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Breakfast and lunch available for purchase. 60 craft vendors, a silent auction, Scholastic book sale, raffle, bake sale, musical performances, children’s games and a visit from St. Nicholas.

The CCW of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Hershey, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 9 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. in the school cafeteria. Grandma’s Attic treasures, flea market, baked goods, jewelry, crafts, Christmas decorations, toys and more! Breakfast and lunch available.

The Annunciation Women of Mercy and Joy, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 2 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. in the St. Teresa of Calcutta school hall in McSherrystown. Fall baskets, raffles, decorated wreaths and trees, outdoor wood pieces, craft creations, children’s and adult baskets, filled tubs with gift cards, baked goods and 50/50. Breakfast and lunch served with two soups.

St. Francis Xavier Gift Fair & Holiday Bazaar in Gettysburg, Nov. 9 from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at Xavier Center. Local vendors and artisans. Fair trade items, collectibles, holiday gifts, baked goods, children’s activities. Café offering breakfast and lunch items. Door prizes, multi-item raffle and more. Free admission. Call 717-309-2485; www.sfxgccw.org.

The CCW of Corpus Christi Parish in Chambersburg, Holiday Craft Fair, Nov. 2 from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at the parish center. 26 vendors with a variety of unique hand-sewn items, crafts, jewelry, home decor, baked goods and much more. Breakfast sandwiches, a warm lunch and dessert from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. For more information, contact Kathy at 717-352-7354.

The CCW of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Lykens, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 9 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the social hall. Food, Chinese auction, raffles, jewelry and craft stands, baked goods.

St. John the Baptist Parish in New Freedom, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 1 from 5-8 p.m., Nov. 2 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., and Nov. 3 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. in the social hall. Raffle and silent auction items (Nov. 1 and 2), gift baskets, Christmas crafts, vintage items, art gallery, delicious homemade baked goods, men’s warehouse, garden and religious tables, and much more! Kids’ activities are on Nov. 2 and include a visit with Santa (10 a.m.-2 p.m.), Secret Santa Shop, and make-your-own gingerbread house! Dinner on Nov. 1 and breakfast and lunch on Nov. 2 prepared by Knights of Columbus Council #8891. For information, call the parish office at 717-235-2156.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Hanover, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 2 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Vendors, raffle, kitchen items, bake sale. Sponsored by St. Vincent’s Knights of Columbus Council 14865.

Assumption BVM Parish in Lebanon, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 2 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. in the parish center. Handmade items and craft items, pulled pork BBQ, soups, cakes, cookies, candy, assorted gift baskets, raffle gift items.

St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Lancaster, 34th annual Christmas bazaar, Nov. 9 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. and Nov. 10 from 9:30 a.m.-noon in the Resurrection Catholic School cafeteria. Wear and garden trim-a-tree, crafts, religious items, gift shop, children’s crafts, gift baskets and jewelry table. Raffle items valued at a minimum $50 include a television, Fitbit, garden wagon and bench, mani-pedi, Sister Irenita watercolor, and gift cards to local restaurants and businesses. Food available throughout, including authentic Vietnamese eggrolls, soup and sandwiches. Contact Livia Riley at 717-299-6617 for information.

The CCW of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Annville, holiday bazaar on Nov. 16 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. in the parish social hall. Handmade crafted items, homemade candies, cookies, pies, cakes and more. Potato filling for holiday dinners. Café items for breakfast and lunch include donuts, bagels, soup, sandwiches and more.

St. Columba Parish in Bloomsburg's Winterfest, Nov. 23 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at the corner of 3rd and Iron Streets. Craft vendors, wood products, activities for children, homemade baked goods, lunch items to eat in or take out, dollar tree, holiday music and performances, and gift basket raffle of crafts, jewelry and more. Benefits St. Columba School.

Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Harrisburg, craft show on Nov. 2 from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. in the gymnasium. Craft vendors, raffle gift baskets, one-stop shopping with background Christmas music. Café offering breakfast sandwiches and hot lunch food. Tables for crafters and vendors are still available. Contact Mary Lou at 717-541-5273.

St. Teresa of Calcutta Catholic School, annual Conegog Christmas craft bazaar, Nov. 16 from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Conecog Campus in Hanover. Vendors with handcrafted items, homemade baked goods, games of chance, silent auction, classroom raffle baskets, breakfast, lunch and much more. Santa visits from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. All proceeds benefit students of St. Teresa of Calcutta Catholic School.

The CCW of St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Waynesboro, eighth annual Christmas bazaar and craft show, Nov. 2 from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. in the school. More than 25 vendors selling handmade crafts: home decor, paintings and notecards, hand-sewn items, kitchen gifts, jewelry, Christmas items, raffles and bake sale! Lunch of homemade soup and breadsticks served from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

The CCW of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Collegeville, inaugural Christmas bazaar, Nov. 23 from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. in the parish center. Handmade crafts, candles, wreaths, centerpieces, Christmas decorations and ornaments, white elephant, raffles, homemade Christmas cookies. A kids’ craft project will be available while you shop.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Abbottstown, Christmas bazaar on Nov. 16 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Fund, food and yummy treats. Start/finish your Christmas shopping. Breakfast and lunch provided by the Knights of Columbus.

Divine Redeemer Parish in Mount Carmel. Holiday Faire on Nov. 8 from 6-8 p.m. and Nov. 9 from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. in Divine Mercy Hall. Food available Saturday only: potato cakes, haluski, sausage, porkette, pierogi, bakedale. Holiday themed baskets/items.

St. Mary’s Women’s Societies’ annual Christmas bazaar, Nov. 9 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Nov. 10 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. in the parish hall at Immaculate Conception BVM Parish in York. Handmade crafts, homemade baked goods and candy, attic treasures, raffles, Santa’s Shop, sandwiches & soup from Mrs. Claus’ Kitchen, and a gingerbread house workshop for children. For more information, call the parish office at 717-846-7629.

St. Cecilia Parish in Lebanon, Christmas bazaar, Nov. 23 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. in the hall on State Drive. Walnut, poppy seed and apricot strudel, sugar cookies, gift baskets, chance booth, candy, jewelry, handbag boutique, flea market, baked goods, Christmas booth. Light lunch will also be available.
Tell me a little about your childhood.

I was born in Pittsburgh and my dad is a salesman so we went to different areas. We lived in Buffalo for awhile, then moved to Littlestown, which is a small town next to Gettysburg. That’s where I mainly grew up.

St. Aloysius was my home parish, and was a wonderful parish growing up. It’s really where I heard my first call to the priesthood. It’s a small farming parish, with families who are close together. My pastor growing up, Father Sterner, was kind of the grandfather of the town and its people. He just retired three years ago, but had been there for 26 years. Everybody knew him and loved him. He had a great love for the Mass, and you could always see how much he really cared for each part, and how he prayed through each part of the Mass. I think that reflected in all the people he cared for.

That’s where I heard the call, seeing him celebrate the Mass, and being drawn into the Mass through that. I describe a lot of my being able to hear the call through his love for Jesus Christ and his love for his own priesthood.

Talk about your experience before you entered seminary.

In high school, I had gone on youth retreats and had already heard the call and had a pretty good idea that one day I was going to be a priest. I didn’t know what that looked like, what that meant, how that would turn out. Whenever I would talk to a priest, they would say, “I had a job for awhile,” so I assumed I needed a job before I would be accepted into seminary.

So that’s what I did. I went to Penn State. I was very good at math and I loved the sciences, so I went into physics. Near the end of my studies, I was looking at what I was going to do after I graduated. If I was going to continue in the physics field, I wanted to become a professor. When I looked at what it would take to become a professor, it was six years for a Ph.D., and then post-doctoral work, and then maybe you become a professor in ten years. I was thinking, “If I do all that, and spend ten years just getting to the profession I’d like to be in, would I want to immediately leave that job I just got, when I know I’m called to the priesthood?”

That’s when I called the Vocations Director and started looking at whether I was too young to start the process. When I talked to him, I found out that people actually started entering seminary out of high school. So in my last year of college, I was looking at colleges to apply to continue studies while also discerning whether I should enter seminary.

Father LaVoie, the Vocations Director at the time, said to me, “If you know where you’re going, why delay?” I completely agreed with it. The priesthood is what I really wanted my whole life.

Tell me about your experience at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary.

The Mount was a big part of my initial discernment in high school because that’s where we’d go on our youth retreats. We’d go to Mount 2000, and it would have hour-long Adoration. I remember the first time I went there and saw Adoration, I was bored, really. But then I looked around, and I saw people kneeling for an hour in real, serious prayer, I could tell there was love on their face. There was something there. When I saw that, I was really intrigued. I had a good faith, but it wasn’t that deep.

So I started praying to have that deep faith in the Eucharist like those people. Over time with that prayer, the faith brewed in me.

It was amazing that I got to go to the Mount for seminary and be a part of those same youth retreats; helping students at that event also guided me on the road to priesthood.

What do you enjoy most about being a priest?

I love the priesthood. I had a weekend recently where I celebrated four different sacraments: marriage, baptism, confession and Mass. The reason I became a priest in the first place was, I always said, “Lord, let me celebrate the Mass once in my lifetime before I die.” It’s the only thing I ever truly wanted. I’ve been able to do it every day for over a year now. I love this parish. It’s a wonderful place to be. There are holy people here, and I’ve enjoyed getting to know them. This is the first time I’ve been somewhere for an extended period of time, so I get to see people more often and grow with them. It’s a blessing.

How do you encourage young people who are discerning?

They should do what I should have done much earlier. Get a hold of the Vocations Director. Get in conversation with people and let them know it’s something you’re interested in. I kept silent for so long. And yes, I am glad that I have my physics degree. I think it’s a part of Providence that I did wait until the end of college to enter. But it’s good to talk to somebody about it and pray about it. The Eucharist is a wonderful gift, the Rosary is a wonderful gift. Mary is a great guardian for priests, for people discerning.

The Liturgy of the Hours also helped me. When I first got in contact with Father LaVoie, he gave me something called The Shorter Christian Prayer, which is a summation of what priests pray every day. Just praying that twice a day was a really big help in my discernment.

Join the Council of Catholic Women in Sharing ‘Boxes of Joy’

The Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women is participating in Cross Catholic Outreach’s Box of Joy program this year, and is encouraging others to join them in the effort.

A “Box of Joy” is a shoebox filled with clothing, toys, school supplies, and personal care items for children in developing countries. The program is a way to demonstrate Christ’s compassion to poor children in developing countries. Any family in the Diocese interested in participating should select if their box is for a boy or girl, and their age (2-4, 5-9, 10-14) and indicate that on the top of the shoebox.

Boxes can be filled with items such as toothbrushes, pencils, crayons, t-shirts, hard candy and toys. No liquids or toy guns, please. Include a check for $9 made payable to “Cross Catholic Outreach” to cover the cost of shipping and to support the priests and nuns ministering to the children. Place a rubber band around the box to secure it.

Boxes will be collected at the Diocesan Center in Harrisburg on Nov. 11 from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. They will be delivered to five of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere where priests, nuns and lay missionaries will give them to the children and tell them of God’s love and the love of people who sent the gifts.

Cross Catholic Outreach is a 501c3 Catholic relief and development ministry that provides food, shelter, medical care, water, education, self-help programs, care for orphans and emergency relief to the poorest of the poor in countries around the world in the name of Christ.

For more information on the project, contact Diane Roskos at diane.roskos@jeepcon.com or Mary Ann Wayne at royalroad212@aol.com or 717-737-0685; or visit www.crosscatholic.org/boxofjoy.
Silence within Listening
By Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC
Special To The Witness

As a child, I was thrilled to wait for the school bus in the morning. It meant I could “play” with other students from my school and interact with those who were both younger and older than I. Looking back, I can now understand that the simple act of waiting for the school bus broadened my personal understanding of what community is all about, because I welcomed everyone into my field of perception.

Recently, as I drove to work during the first week of school, I was saddened to see this scene: Very close to the Diocesan Center, a group of students wait for their buses. At this stop, there are high school, middle school and elementary students. As I drove past them, I noticed that every one of them had ear buds in their ears and were all paying attention to their phones, either standing or sitting at the curb in complete silence. They were completely engrossed inwardly to noise coming from their ear buds.

I could not help of thinking of this story as I continue my reflections on listening. According to Kay Lindahl, author of The Sacred Art of Listening, silence within listening gives us the ability to access a personal still point. As I was reading her reflection, I thought, “What’s a ‘still point’?” According to CJ Manheim, a Craniosacral Therapist, “During the still period, which may last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes, all parts of the body become quiescent [being at rest; quiet; still; inactive or motionless], and then a profound relaxation occurs.”

So how does silence within listening work? As illustrated in the opening story, we are bombarded with sensory overload. Sustained silence gives us a moment – the ability to process what our senses present to us. Silence gives us the skill to organize sensory chaos all around us. How do you find this “still point?” Unplug. Turn off the radio, iPod, TV, etc. Consciously breathe deeply and reflect, not just react. By doing this, we begin to actually slow down, to reflect on what is happening, to listen to ourselves and the wisdom of others as well as to be present to the now. In short, it connects to God, who often speaks through silence. I can also hear you say, “Come on, Sister! In today’s world, this is not reality!” I understand where you are coming from. I gave up listening to the radio for Lent and have not gone back to it because I have discovered that the added silence gives me a profound perspective of God in my every day life. You see, I practice what I preach!


(Sister Geralyn Schmidt is the Wide Area Network Coordinator at the Diocese of Harrisburg and the Director of Formation for Wives in the Diaconate Program. An educator for 30 years, she is responsible for Professional Development Programs for every age learner. Through her presentations, she challenges her audiences to be the individual God has called them to be.)

Saint Spotlight
St. Cecilia
Feast Day – November 22
Patron of poets, hymns, baritone harpsichord, singing, musicians, and Mar de Plata, Argentina

Compiled by Angela M. Orsini

St. Cecilia was born in the second century A.D. in Rome. She professed a vow of virginity but was forced by her parents to marry a pagan nobleman named Valerian. When it was time for the marriage to be consummated, she told Valerian that an angel of the Lord was watching over her and would punish him if he violated her but she would love him if he respected her virginity. He asked to see the angel and she told him to go to the third milestone on the Via Appia (Appian Way) and be baptized by Pope Urban I. He followed Cecilia’s advice and saw the angel standing beside her, crowning her with a chaplet of roses and lilies. Subsequently, Valerian and his brother Tiberius were converted by Cecilia, but were later asked to renounce their religion by Christian persecutors. They refused and were beheaded and buried on the Appian Way. Cecilia was arrested for the crime of burying their bodies and was given the choice of sacrificing to the gods or being executed. She steadfastly refused to denounce her faith and her captors decided to execute her primarily because of her nobility and youth. They confined her to a steam bath in her home to suffocate her. She did not succumb and was martyred circa 176 and 180.

The legend of her death says that after being struck three times on the neck with a sword by an inexperienced executioner who fled in fear, she laid, head half severed, with her face on the floor, and continued praying. She lived for three days and asked the pope to convert her home into a church. After her death, her body was clothed in robes of silk and gold and placed in a coffin in the same position in which she died. Cecilia was buried in the catacombs of St. Callixtus in Rome.

In 822, during the restoration of the church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere reportedly built over the site of her house, Pope Paschal I wanted to transfer her body to the church. He located her body and interred her in the church below the altar, along with her husband and brother-in-law and the martyr Maximun, a Roman soldier. During a renovation of the church in 1599, Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrati had the remains excavated and reburied when he reported it to be incorrupt.

Through the centuries, Cecilia’s feast day is usually an occasion for music festivals around the world. Cecilia symbolizes the central role of music in the liturgy. The Sisters of St. Cecilia shear lambs’ wool to make the palliums (woolen “sash” worn over the shoulders) for new archbishops. The lambs are raised by the Cistercian Trappist Fathers of the Tre Fontane (Three Fountains) Abbey in Rome and are blessed by the pope every January 21 and given to the new archbishops on the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, on June 29.

2019 Diocesan Catechetical Conference

“Making Disciples for Jesus and His Church”

Saturday, November 9 from 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Diocesan Center, Harrisburg

Keynote: Dr. Peter J. Murphy
Former Director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the United States Bishops Conference and Current Director for the Families and Schools of Discipleship Mission Team for the Diocese of Green Bay

Principal Celebrant and Homilist: Bishop Ronald Cainer

Workshop topics include the Mass, the Holy Spirit, Angels and Demons, Apologetics, New Age vs. Authentic Religion, Marian Apparitions, Saints, Scripture, Devotions and more.

The conference is sponsored by the Diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechesis. It is open to anyone involved in catechesis or interested in learning more about the Catholic faith.

Register online and find more information, including a full schedule and workshop sessions, at http://www.hbgdiocese.org/cat_conference/.

Catholic Witness October 25, 2019 • The Catholic Witness • 13
**Fundraisers & Events**

Catholic men and women volunteers for prison ministry team (about three hours monthly), needed to visit Dauphin County Prison (Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings), Camp Hill Prison (Friday and Saturday mornings) and Keystone Work Release (Sunday afternoons). No experience necessary, orientation to be scheduled. Prison Christian Fellowship, Inc. 6531010/@parishofmercy.com/. Contact Bob Ribic at bobribic@yahoo.com or 717-571-4217.

**Spiritual Offerings**

Masses for the dead begin at 7 a.m., speaker begins at 7:30 a.m., followed by Q&A.

**Calculation of Catholic WITNESS**

Celebrating 100 years since the birth of John Paul II, Nov. 27 at 6:30 p.m. Spend the evening with Our Lord in adoration, song, family and friends, are welcome. Contact Pattie Evans at 717-754-1131 to order.

**Diocesan Notebook**

(Submit typed announcements to witness@hbgdiocese.org, nine days before the issue date. No flyers or ads, please. See the bottom of the Notebook section on page 15 for next issue’s deadline.)

**Pilgrimages & Retreats**

Celebrate 100 years since the birth of John Paul II with Father Tkura Pius Michael, O.P., pastor of St. Pius X Parish, Selinsgrove, on a 12-day pilgrimage, Aug. 3-14, 2020 visiting Poland and Prague. Land-only price: $2,950 pp in double occupancy. All class hotels accommodations, private motorcoach transportation, all breakfasts and eight dinners, and professional guided sightseeing. Contact Catholic Heritage Tours at 1-800-290-3876 or www.catholicheritagetours.com. (p)PC or Mark Filohoski 570-374-3933.

**Diocesan Notebook**

Veterans Day Mass at St. Peter Church in Columbia, Nov. 11 at 6:30 p.m. Homilist will be Deacon Michael Oles, USA, ret. All are welcome to attend.

**Charismatic Mass with prayers for healing**

Nov. 5 at 7 p.m. at St. Theresa Church in New Cumberland. Father Samuel Dubois, parochial vicar, celebrant, Call Mary Ann at 717-564-7709.

**Memorial Mass for Babies Never Born**

Oct. 30 at 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Church in New Freedom. All moms and dads who have lost babies before they were born, along with family and friends, are welcome. Contact Patti Evans at 717-235-8833 for information.

**Connor of Arc Church in Hershey**

Nov. 6 at 7 p.m. Spend the evening with Our Lord in adoration, song, meditation and praise, and receive his abundant mercy. A reception will be held immediately following in the cafeteria. All are welcome, bring a friend. For more information, call 717-583-0240.

**Education & Enrichment**

“WinDowns,” a ministry for widowed, divorced and singles, invites adult men and women for activities and friendship. The group is a ministry of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Harrisburg. Upcoming activities include Thanksgiving dinner and crafts. Call St. Margaret Mary Parish Office at 717-754-1131 for information. The group will meet at Progress Grill on Dec. 2 at 6:15 p.m.; and the Sylvan Chorale Concert Dec. 6 and 7. For information about the ministry and its events, contact Julia Becoski at 717-652-3598.

**Corpus Christi Parish in Chambersburg**


**George Weigel, renowned biographer of St. John Paul II,** to speak at St. John the Evangelist Church in Lancaster, Nov. 13 following 6:30 p.m. Mass. A friend of Popes Benedict XVI and Francis, Weigel will speak on the contemporary Church, drawing on his new book, “The Irony of Modern Catholic History – How the Church Rediscovered Itself and Challenged the Modern World to Reform.” Free public event sponsored by the Order of Malta.

**Harrisburg**

Knights of Columbus of St. Ann Byzantine Parish in Harrisburg, homemade halupki dinner on Nov. 10 from 11:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Eat in or take out. Includes halupki (cabbage rolls), baked potato, vegetable, roll and beverage. Cost is $10 for adults, $5 for children (children 5 and under eat free). Enjoy free samples of homemade baked goods, jams and jellies made by the Byzantine Carmelite Nuns in Sugarloaf, Pa. Orders will be taken, with pick-up on Nov. 24.

**Piano Bar Night at Lancaster Catholic High School**

Nov. 9 from 7:30-10 p.m., featuring alumni “The Lavelles.” Admission by donation to the LCSH Fine & Performing Arts Program. Snacks and drinks served. Must be 21 or older to attend. RSVP to Tony Brill at brill@lchsyes.org by Nov. 5. Must have 8-10 to reserve a whole table.

**“BIG BIG Jazz Band Dance”**

Nov. 16 at Lancaster Catholic High School, featuring a full big-band ensemble with vocals, jazz ensembles and swing groups. Must be 21 or older to attend. RSVP to Tony Brill at 717-509-0310 or thrilledjazzyes.org. Tables with 8-10 guests can reserve seating. All others can choose seating when they arrive for the dance. Free event. Donations will be accepted for the Fine & Performing Arts Program.

**Lancaster Catholic High School presents Little Women**

Nov. 21-23 at 7:30 p.m. in Old Main Auditorium. Tickets are available at the door, $15 for reserved seating, $13 adult general admission, $7 student general admission. For advanced tickets, mail payment (checks payable to LCSH FPA) to Tony Brill at Lancaster Catholic HS, 650 Juliette Ave, Lancaster, Pa., 17601.

**Knights of Columbus of St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Millersville, toy train show**

Nov. 16 from 9 a.m.-noon. Only show of the year. Vendors selling toy trains and train related items. Admission fee. For information or interest in knowing more about toy trains, call Charlie Sauer at 717-872-8481.

**Knights of Columbus and Columbus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Mechanicsburg, all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast in the parish hall, Nov. 3 from 8:15-11 a.m. Pancakes, scrambled eggs, potato casserole, sausage, coffee, tea, orange juice. Cost is $7 for ages 12 and up; $3 for ages 8-11; and under 4. Proceeds benefit seminarians and charities supported by the organizations.**

**Dioecesan Notebook continues on page 15**
OBITUARIES

The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parishes. Please remember in your prayers the happy repose of these recently departed souls and the consolation of their loved ones.

Annville
St. Paul the Apostle:
Anthony Dooley
Marion Ortwein
Patricia Poloney

Bloomburg
St. Columba:
Michael Fago

Camp Hill
Good Shepherd:
Anthony Sgrignoli

Dauphin
St. Matthew:
Barbara Kotkiewicz

Elizabethtown
St. Peter:
Jean Stivala
Beverly Weiss

Gettysburg
St. Francis Xavier:
Jerome Brady
José Rodriguez

Hanover
St. Vincent de Paul:
Kenneth Brandt
Wayne Margelot
Florence Myers

Harrisburg
Cathedral Parish of St. Patrick:
Vincenzo Fazzolari

Holy Family:
Phyllis Reagan

St. Catherine Laboure:
Patricia Egale
Joseph Erbel
Rose Swinehart
Maryann Retzi

St. Margaret Mary:
Gertrude “Trudy” Fry
Ann Headen
Lynn “Rock” Rothrock
Lucille Russo
Josephine Salvetti

Lancaster
Assumption BVM:
Kathryn Keenan

Littlestown
St. Aloysius:
Ann Marie Garman
Donald Weaver

Mechanicsburg
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton:
Mary Hagan

Middletown
Seven Sowers BVM:
Richard Costik, Jr.
William Darrah
Dean Drayer
Marie LiBrandi
Lillian Russ
JoAnn Shipkowski

Mount Carmel
Divine Redeemer:
Helen A. Hirsch
Verne Shierant

New Cumberland
St. Theresa:
Nancy Donatucci
Joseph Kent
Gerry Mattera

Quarryville
St. Catherine of Siena:
Kenneth Rose

Rohrerstown
St. Leo the Great:
Jerome Free
Dr. Andrew Stephen “Steve” Peyton, Jr.
Charles Thomas Riley

York
St. Patrick:
John Stonesifer

St. Rose of Lima:
Norman Futer

St. Catherine Laboure Knights of Columbus Council 12811 in Harrisburg, indoor flea market on Nov. 9 from 8 a.m.-noon at the parish’s Murray Hall.

Artist-in-Residence Day with poet Joseph Ross at Lancaster Catholic High School, Nov. 7 in four sessions throughout the day: 8:30-9:15 a.m., 10-10:45 a.m., 12:30-1:15 p.m., and 2-2:45 p.m. All are welcome. Contact Dana Kinsey at dkinsey@lchsyes.org

St. Lawrence Chapel will be featured in a church and organ tour on Nov. 16 hosted by the Historic Harrisburg Association and the Harrisburg Chapter American Guild of Organists. St. Lawrence Chapel will be featured at 10:20 a.m. during the tour, which is from 9:30-11:40 a.m. in seven downtown churches. No cost to attend, no registration necessary. For information, contact Chris Prestia at 862-266-7333 or chris.prestia@gmail.com.

Lancaster Catholic High School seeks part-time cafeteria worker for the current year, Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Contact Misty Pitruch at 717-509-0306.

Lifeline of Berks County, Inc. (www.lifelineofberks.org), a pro-life pregnancy resource center in Reading, Pa., seeks a registered nurse to provide services and education to women facing an unplanned pregnancy. Position is part-time or 12-16 hours Visit https://lifelineofberks.org/make-a-difference/join-our-team/.

Diocesan Notebook continued from page 14

Good Shepherd Parish in Camp Hill, Bingo Bash, Nov. 8 in the parish hall. Reserve your seat at https://gsschpa.wufoo.com/forms/m2jir000chpqk/ or purchase at the parish office. Cost is $25 in advance. If seating is available, cost is $30 at the door. Admission includes a sheet of 150 bingo cards (20 cards). Doors open at 6 p.m.; eyes down at 7 p.m. For info, call the parish office at 717-761-1167. Cash only; adult only event. Blackout is 50/below with a chance to win $500. Light concessions and raffle tickets will be sold at the event.

Delone Catholic High School in McSherrystown, Squire Picnic on Oct. 27 from 1-4 p.m. Student Council hosts the annual Squire Picnic for students in third, fourth and fifth grades. Games, hamburgers, hot dogs, and prizes. Students from all schools (public and private) are welcome to attend. Register at www.delonecatholic.org and complete the Squire Picnic sign-up form.

The Silence of Mary Home’s 13th annual gala, “The Greatest of These is Love,” Nov. 16 at 5:30 p.m. at The Lodge at Liberty Forge in Mechanicsburg. The home is a Christian family home for abandoned or neglected people of all ages in the Allison Hill section of Harrisburg. Gala tickets are $95. Call the office at 717-737-4107 (Mon.-Fri. from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.) or e-mail silenceofmaryvolunteer@verizon.net. To learn more about the Silence of Mary, visit www.thesilenceofmary.org.

Deceased Clergy

Please pray for the following clergy who died in October during the past 25 years:

Father Walter Halaburda, 2000
Father Edward J. Barrett, 2001
Father John Suknaic, 2004
Father Bernard Quinn, 2006
Deacon Edwin Fitzpatrick, 2008
Father Stephen Sheetz, 2009
Father Kevin Kayda, 2013
Father Andrew J. Fontanella, 2014
Msgr. Vincent Topper, 2016
Father Walter Sempko, 2017
Father Paul Theisz, 2017

St. Catherine Laboure Knights of Columbus Council 12811 was awarded the Columbian Award for the 2018-2019 fraternal year on Oct. 10. The award rewards excellence in the council’s programming and charitable outreach. Pictured is State Deputy Mark Jago, right, and Grand Knight Charlie Scolion.

Mark Your Calendars!

Next Deadline: October 30

Want to share an announcement for the Notebook page? The deadline for submissions for the November 8 edition is Wednesday, October 30 at 4:30 p.m. Submit your written announcement via e-mail to Witness@hbgdiocese.org. Limit 70 words. No ads, posters or PDFs, please.

A link to the submission deadlines for all editions in 2019 is posted on The Catholic Witness page at www.hbgdiocese.org.
Lancaster Catholic Goes Three Love to Win at District 3 Girls’ Tennis

By Chris Heisey
The Catholic Witness

For the first time in the school’s illustrious sports history, the Crusaders of Lancaster Catholic girls’ tennis team swept all three competitions at the District 3 championships. Success in Class 2A girls’ tennis usually means beating the Spartans of Wyomissing, who have won 15 of the last 21 District 3 team titles. So when the Spartans were upset by Hamburg in the semifinals at Hershey Racquet Club on Oct. 17, the Crusaders seized the day by easily dispatching Kennard-Dale in their semifinal and then denied Hamburg any chance at two stunning upsets. Lancaster Catholic soundly beat the Hawks, 3-0, behind the play of their number one singles’ player, Riley Smith, and number two, Anna Millen, who both lost only two games in their matches against Hamburg. The Crusaders move on to the PIAA state team tournament with a record of 1-2.

In the singles’ tournament played a week earlier in Hershey, Lancaster Catholic’s Riley Smith edged the tournament’s number one seed, Ava Lewis, of East Pennsboro to capture the Class 2A gold medal. In the finals’ first set, Smith won 7-6, capturing the set’s tense tiebreaker (7-3). Smith easily beat Lewis, 6-2, in the second set to win the gold medal. Lewis had won the Mid-Penn Conference title. Smith also cruised in her quest to win the Lancaster-Lebanon League championship in late September.

In the doubles’ District 3 championship on Oct. 19, the double’s team of Anna Millen and Angelle San Jose beat Wyomissing 6-4, 6-3 to capture the third gold medal of the week for the Crusaders.

The PIAA state tournament will be played at the Hershey Racquet club with the team tournament being played the last weekend of October and the singles’ and doubles’ championships held the first weekend in November, where the Crusaders will be a high seed in every bracket.

Playoff soccer is heats up in late October as the weather chills considerably, and the York Catholic boys have had a great season playing on their new turf field. With a 15-3 record, the Fighting Irish enter the District 3 Class 1A tournament as a two-seed behind Halifax. Senior Pasen Maynard leads the team with 16 goals and 4 assists. The District 3 championship game is at Hersheypark Stadium on Oct. 30.

On the volleyball court, the Fighting Irish of York Catholic have had a terrific regular season and enter girls’ District 3 Class 2A with a 16-1 record. Remarkably, the team has dropped only four sets all year, compiling a 57-4 mark. Led by senior libero Julia Yanick, who’s dug out 120 balls this season, the Fighting Irish will have to beat Delone Catholic and Trinity, who have also had great league play seasons. Delone has won 13 District 3 championships, which stands as the most of any District 3 school. The Fighting Irish have beaten the Squirettes twice in the York Area league play this fall.