Giving Thanks in Millersville Means All Are Welcome

By Chris Heisey

It’s a beautiful sign when word meets deed in a gracious manner. That has been a tradition on Thanksgiving Day at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Millersville for 35 years.

When you drive south on Millersville Road crossing over the meandering Little Conestoga Creek, you ascend up a steep hill that takes you into the college town. And what greets you atop that summit is a visible sign that states: St. Philip’s Thanksgiving Dinner: All Are Welcome.

In 1985, Father Michael Homola, then St. Philip’s pastor, urged several of his devoted parishioners to start a Thanksgiving Dinner that would freely serve the community, no matter the recipients’ creed. That first year, some 100 meals were served. Three and a half decades later, the parish now offers a turkey dinner with all the delicious trimmings to more than 300 people in the eastern Lancaster region. Present throughout all 35 years has been Charlie Sauer, who now has three generations of his family helping to prepare and serve the meals.

“This beautiful thing started because of Father Homola, because he wanted to do something for the community,” Sauer said as his team of 30 helpers busily prepared plates and served tables for the more than 300 gathered in the parish gym. The parish also provides meals to the homebound and to local long-term care facilities to help ease the meal burden for them on Thanksgiving.

“This takes four key groups working together to bring this all together,” Sauer said. “And it keeps growing and growing.”

Not only does the parish cook all the meals from scratch – that
Bishop Gainer Returns from Ad Limina Visit with Pope Francis

Bishop Ronald Gainer joined Bishops from Pennsylvania and New Jersey in Rome for an ad limina visit with Pope Francis, Nov. 25-29. The bishop, who was scheduled to return to Harrisburg Dec. 4, said he had an engaging and open conversation with the Holy Father.

Due to press deadlines prior to Bishop Gainer’s return to Harrisburg, The Catholic Witness is planning a feature article on his ad limina visit in the Dec. 20 edition.

All American bishops are traveling to Rome November through February for meetings with Pope Francis to assess the state of the Church in the United States.

An “ad limina apostolorum” visit is a papal meeting required for every diocesan bishop in the world to provide an update on the state of their diocese. The trip to Rome, usually taken with bishops from a specific region, is also a pilgrimage to “the threshold of the apostles,” giving the bishops an opportunity to pray at the tomb of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Ad limina visits typically take place every five years; the last ad limina visit for bishops of the United States was with Pope Benedict XVI in 2011-2012.

Additional photos of the visit to Rome can be found on the Diocese of Harrisburg’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Dioce HARRISBURG. Stay tuned to the next edition of The Witness for full coverage.

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Year-End Giving

Please note the following dates when considering year-end giving to the Diocese or your parish.

- December 31st – All credit card gifts must be completed by 11:59 p.m. on December 31, 2019, to count for the 2019 tax year
- December 31st – All checks sent via USPS must be postmarked by December 31 to count for the 2019 tax year.
- December 16th – Stock gifts must be initiated by December 16 to ensure that the stock will settle by December 31st to count for the 2019 tax year.

Donors who are considering using their IRA to make charitable gifts are encouraged to contact their custodian to determine the final date to initiate year end gifts.

If you have any other questions, please contact the Office of Stewardship & Development at (717) 657-4804, ext. 245.

Visit with Pope Francis

• December 7 – Celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Joseph Church, Hanover, 10 a.m.
• December 9 – Celebrate Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg, noon.
• December 12 – Celebrate Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Joseph Church, Hanover, 6 p.m.
• December 14 – Attend Undefeated Courage’s “Boundless Love Gala,” Keystone Building Atrium, Harrisburg, 6 p.m.
• December 25 – Celebrate Christmas Masses at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg, midnight and 9:30 a.m.
Deacon Candidates Learn Importance of Boundaries and Self-Care

By Rachel Bryson, M.S.
*The Catholic Witness*

Boundaries are everywhere. We can find them when driving, in sporting events and in our relationships with others. The 34 men in formation for the Permanent Diaconate and their wives recently spent an intense day of learning about boundaries and self-care in ministry from the Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator, retired State Police Captain Janet McNeal.

“Today, we’re going to understand the importance of establishing and understanding boundaries,” said McNeal. “Everyone that walks out of here should be completely informed on how to interact with other people in a way that is safe.”

There are many forms of boundaries, some common and some not, explained McNeal. “Boundaries are a gift from God. They are absolutely important and preserve and protect,” said McNeal. “They provide focus and direction and rely on shared self-discipline. They clarify our intentions.”

McNeal added that clergy relationships, which includes deacons, are unique. “You bring an essential resource into the relationship for the purpose of connecting to the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” McNeal said. “In many ways, pastoral ministry is a limitless profession. Things that are social events for parishioners are often working occasions for the clergy. You can’t even walk in the grocery store without someone wanting to talk. You have a dual relationship with your people, personal and professional, but be very, very careful with that personal side.”

“The pastoral relationship is intended to be a safe connection. It’s a sacred commitment that includes a promise to serve God and God’s people” McNeal added. “It is safe and reasonable to expect that whatever is done in the context of the clergy relationship is done to serve the Gospel, to fulfill the commitment to serve God and God’s people, and make Jesus known.”

By setting boundaries and maintaining them, it is harder to slip into instances where sexual misconduct or sexual abuse could occur, said McNeal.

“You have a responsibility not just to your wife and your family, but to your parish, to your Diocese and to God to not cross those boundaries,” said McNeal.

Throughout her presentations, McNeal also covered what is considered sexual misconduct, harassment and abuse.

During the second half of the day, McNeal provided the deacon candidates with several healthy habits of self-care – Establish Sabbath Time, Preserve Family Time, Practice Self-Care, Stay Informed and Involved, Establish a Support System, and Seek Help as Necessary.

McNeal stressed to the Deacon candidates the importance of having a day off. “We all need rest. Even God rested. You cannot stay connected to God without it,” said McNeal.

When it comes to self-care, McNeal explained that you can be your best advocate or worst enemy.

“Take an assessment of where you are right now. Simplify your life. Take care of your physical health,” said McNeal. “If you are going to be effective, you have to be the most whole person you can be.”

About

McNeal, a retired Captain who successfully ran the Megan’s Law Section of the Pennsylvania State Police, oversees the Diocese’s Safe Environment and Youth Protection programs. As a private contractor, McNeal brings 26 years of law enforcement investigative and policy development experience to this position. She will review the Diocese’s current youth protection programs, develop programs and policies to make any needed improvements and will work with parish pastors/administrators, parish staff, school administrators/principals and appropriate Diocesan department heads to ensure that all adults who come in contact with minors are effectively screened and trained, according to the Diocese’s regulations, policies and procedures. The Permanent Diaconate Formation Program is charged with the important work of providing the formation needed for those men in preparation for ordination to the permanent diaconate. The 34 men in formation, God willing, will be ordained as Permanent Deacons in June of 2020.

To learn more about the Diocese’s Safe Environment Program, please visit www.youthprotectionhbg.com. More information on the Permanent Diaconate program can be found at www.hbgdiocese.org/clergy/deacons.

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Autism Ambassador Energizes York Catholic Students to Reach for Dreams

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

A presentation at York Catholic High School on autism awareness on Nov. 22 was more pep rally than assembly, as 21-year-old Ben Hartranft captivated and energized students with his story of exceeding expectations while living on the spectrum.

“Hello everybody! This is Ben Hartranft,” he eagerly summoned students over the public-address system. “I’m going to present your assembly today! Who’s excited?”

Students arrived in the auditorium to music and cheers from Hartranft, who ran through the aisles giving high-fives, telling the crowd about his nonstop “Benergy.”

Laughster-inducing video clips of Hartranft winning the Homecoming King title at North Penn High School in Lansdale, Pa., riding rollercoasters with Philadelphia Eagles’ center Jason Kelce and receiving the shock of his life on The Ellen DeGeneres Show filled the presentation. But Hartranft’s message was clear and serious.

“Whenever I meet people, I treat them like a rock star and turn their frowns into smiles. I love going out and networking with people,” he said.

The Courage to Stand

“I teared up watching him and listening to his story. I never saw anyone get that kind of reaction from students at an assembly,” said student Grace Hatchard.

After the presentation, students gathered around Hartranft, eager for selfies, hugs and handshakes as they waited to greet him in the lobby.

York Catholic dedicated its monthly Mission Collection to the Eagles’ Autism Challenge, giving $1,000 to help autism research and programs.

Hartranft visited York Catholic’s Academic Assistance Center, where students asked him about his experiences with learning, and how he was regarded by teachers and peers in school.

During the small-group discussion, Hartranft pointed to a message of inspiration on the classroom wall, painted by a student: “It’s easy to stand with the crowd. It takes courage to stand alone.”

“I love that message. That’s everything, right there,” Hartranft said.

“My message to you guys in this classroom is, pray, pray, pray,” he said. “It’s not always easy. There were times I didn’t get what I wanted, but I continue to pray because God is leading me.”

Carolyn Obermeier, Academic Assistance instructor, said Hartranft reinforced the powerful message her classroom has been sharing since she started the program 16 years ago.

“Ben’s message is what I tell my students every day, so for them to hear that from a peer reinforces that they can be different and still make a difference in the world,” she said.

“When parents come to York Catholic to see if our school can educate their child, they are so impressed with our resources and the help we can give students with learning challenges,” she said. “Our school is open to anybody, everyone else because I have the help to strive forward, just like Ben said we should all do.”

“I thought Ben’s message was wonderful,” Avery said. “He’s so positive, and it makes me want to be a better me. I try my very best to see the positive side of things. It was amazing to see him show that.”

How To Go To CONFESSION

“It’s been so long, I can’t remember what to do.”
“I don’t remember the Act of Contrition.”
“I’m embarrassed because of my sins.”

If you have experienced one of these thoughts, you are not alone.

1. Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—indeed your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ’s command to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

2. Greeting: The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

3. The Sign of the Cross: Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been >give days, months, or years since my last confession.”

4. Confession: Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

5. Penance: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

6. Act of Contrition: After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

7. Absolution: The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, “Amen.”

8. Praise: The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures forever.”

9. Dismissal: The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

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Showcase at Sacred Heart in Lancaster Invites Community to Discover Catholic Schools

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

Late January in Catholic schools across the country brings a plethora of open houses, community service activities, schoolwide assemblies, special breakfasts with grandparents and the ever-popular dress-down day.

It also brings freezing rain, sleet and snow, and the cancellation of activities.

This year, the National Catholic Educational Association introduced a second week for Catholic schools to shine a light on their faith-based, educational and leadership values. Named “Discover Catholic Schools Week,” the national initiative invited schools to connect with families, donors and community members at a time when families are looking for the right school for their children.

Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Lancaster was one of the schools to take advantage of the week, Nov. 1-2, kicking it off with the “Sacred Heart Showcase” after Sunday Mass. The event featured a display of student excellence, as well as registration information for prospective and returning families.

“The Sacred Heart Student Showcase was a wonderful way to bring together parishioners and school families after Mass to kick-off Discover Catholic Schools Week,” said Arcie Brody, a Sacred Heart School parent.

“Highlighting the students’ artwork, writing narratives, science projects, etc., while providing a social setting for all of the Sacred Heart community to be together was a great way to show what makes Catholic schools special,” she said.

Additional activities during the week included a visit from students at Lancaster Catholic High School, student activities with their 2020-2021 teacher, and an opportunity for students to bring a friend to Sacred Heart for the day.

The school also hosted socials and activities that encouraged parents to bring a non-Sacred Heart parent to visit the school and interact with teachers and Sister Danielle Truex, IHM, principal.

“Discover Catholic Schools Week was a great opportunity to engage our parents, parishioners, and friends in promoting the mission of Catholic education with those outside our everyday interactions,” Sister Danielle said.

“Sacred Heart’s education for life was on full display at our opening Showcase of Student Excellence and continued throughout the week with personalized parent-led tours, presentations for parents to support the formation of their child/children, and opportunities for all to join us in prayer and service,” she said. “Collaboration with Lancaster Catholic High School enhanced our week as students and parents were able to experience the full promise of Catholic education in Lancaster through fun and educational activities.”

Discover Catholic Schools Week is part of an ongoing, year-round approach to marketing Catholic schools. The 46th annual Catholic Schools Week is Jan. 26-Feb. 1, 2020. For information on Catholic schools in the Diocese of Harrisburg, visit www.gocatholicschools.org.

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90% of our Elementary students score above the national average in Reading.
85% of our Elementary students score above the national average in Math.

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Holy Trinity School Helps Those in Need at Our Daily Bread

A week before Thanksgiving, the entire student body from Holy Trinity School in York carried donated food items from their campus to nearby Our Daily Bread, to assist the soup kitchen in preparing Thanksgiving meals.

Forming a line outside of the school, students carried bags of donated items – including fruit, oatmeal, sugar, instant coffee and tea, condiments, plastic cutlery and napkins – as Father Mark Weiss, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Dallastown, blessed the bounty.

Escorted by parents and teachers, students walked to Our Daily Bread, where they presented their donated goods. According to a 2017 United States Census Bureau report, 36 percent of York’s population lives in poverty. Our Daily Bread serves an average of 275 meals, five days a week, to assist the less fortunate.

Twenty-six teens from the Diocese of Harrisburg attended the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis, Nov. 21-22. The biennial NCYC is an experience of coming closer to Christ through prayer, community and empowerment for Catholic teenagers and their adult chaperones. Teens and their group leaders enjoy speakers, workshops, live music, electrifying large sessions, an amazing closing liturgy, and exploring faith in a supportive environment. NCYC is the largest Catholic youth gathering in the U.S. with 23,000 young people and adult chaperones attending from all over the country.
On a Mission with Coffee
San Jose Café in Newville Will Support Families in Honduras

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

Last November, with two master’s degrees in hand, Nicholas Higgins was planning to find a job as an industrial engineer in Florida.

Today, he’s in rural Newville, working to open a coffee shop to benefit the people of Honduras.

“I’ve had a total conversion. It is very clear that God has called me here,” Higgins said from behind a display counter, which will become the espresso bar and pastry case for his project, the San Jose Café.

Higgins, the Young Adult Minister at Our Lady of the Visitation Parish in Shippensburg, is a member of the Missioners of Christ, an association of the faithful whose mission is discipleship of evangelization of youth and young adults. The association is based in Virginia Beach, and has a permanent mission in Honduras. Higgins has been involved with the Missioners for eight years.

After completing a two-year mission trip to Honduras as a Missioner last year, Higgins prayed about getting involved with the Missioners of Christ, particularly on the main thoroughfare at High Street and Route 641, a few doors from the only stoplight in town, the San Jose Café is a work in progress. Volunteers have painted and decorated the shop with furnishings and décor reminiscent of a Honduran mountain village. Professional plumbers and electricians have been creating progress too, and the transformation has generated a space with coffee-bar tables and chairs, couches, room for live music and an outdoor area for summer-evening gatherings.

Additional volunteers and funding are necessary, though, to achieve a planned soft-opening early in the new year, and an intended Tuesday-Saturday operating schedule.

“We’ve been working with other churches in Newville to help breathe new life into the community with this shop, a healthy place to hang out and enjoy coffee and conversation,” Higgins said.

“San Jose Café is named for St. Joseph the Worker, particularly on the dignity of the worker,” he explained. “Seeing the injustices in Honduras regarding the ability to find work and make a living, or to get honest pay for coffee, inspired me to choose that name.”

Sustaining Families

“Seeing the Hondurans sacrifice for their own families was my conversion,” Higgins said. “I spoke with a family there, which I’ve come to love and be a part of, about the struggle of selling coffee. That was part of my motivation to turn this building into a coffee shop.”

In the coffee trade in Honduras, money is lost with the middle-man who sells a family’s product to buyers. The middle-man, known as a coyote, often keeps most of the profit from the sale, leaving little or nothing for the Honduran farmers in return.

“At the café, we’ll be doing direct-trade coffee,” Higgins said. “The sale of it here eliminates the injustices in the coffee trade. Direct-trade coffee gives as much money to the Hondurans as possible, so they can sustain themselves.”

San Jose Café will feature two coffees produced by families of Missioners of Christ from Honduras: Roil Coffee from the mountains of La Paz, and Volcán Coffee from the mountains of Comayagua.

Handmade items by the people of Honduras are currently available for a suggested donation, with monies directly benefiting the people of the Hondurans, the café and the projects of the Missioners of Christ.

One of the projects is a physical therapy program, which rehabilitates, among others, people who have suffered injuries as a result of violence in the country. The café has several handcrafted items made by patients of the physical therapy program to support their families. Among them are Rosaries, Rosary bracelets and decorative woven bracelets.

Another program is one for teenage boys in foster care. To help support the efforts, the teens carve stunning wooden pieces, from crosses to decorative patterns, to benefit their family working to provide meals and a home for 13 foster sons and three biological children.

“This mission is about discipleship, walking with people for the long haul to help them become leaders in their community and in their country,” Higgins said of the shop and its products.

Discipleship is also part of the plans for the second floor of the coffee shop. The San Jose Café is public and non-denominational, but upstairs holds space for private events like Bible study and praise and worship. It’s also where Higgins will live as a Missioner of Christ as he operates the shop.

He continues to pour his time and efforts into the San Jose Café, with gratitude for volunteers and benefactors, and optimism for a grand opening in the spring.

“It comes down to my own conversion,” Higgins said. “Jesus died for us on the Cross; little sacrifices and giving up my intentions for a full-time job is necessary to help the Hondurans that I want to help. I want to give every penny and every ounce of time I have to help them. It’s all or nothing.”

(For more information on the status of San Jose Café, its coffees, handmade products and how to help, visit www.sanjosecafe.wordpress.com.)
Continued from 1

MILLERSVILLE

means homemade gravy, buttered carrots, mashed potatoes, corn and green beans – it also brings in 28 turkeys that are generously cooked at nearby Millersville University, which Sauer said makes the abundant meal possible. “We could not do this without their help of preparing the turkeys,” he said.

The effort is also served by a couple who faithfully drive the homebound meals throughout the area; the gym is transformed into a big dining room that allows family units to sit together and enjoy the meal. Finally, all the meals are served hot and ready, brought directly to the tables. A slice of pumpkin pie with whipped cream tops it off. It’s easy to see that the little things done well at Saint Philip’s are what makes the big meal the success it has become.

What’s also visible is that the day is not truly about the meal, it’s about the kind welcome you receive upon entering that is the true sign this parish thankfully gives to the community.

Charlie Sauer has been helping to serve Thanksgiving meals for 35 years.
York Catholic, Delone Catholic
Take Top Two Spots at
Cavalcade of Bands

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

When the third place winner in the Cavalcade of Bands Independence A Class Division was announced following performances by 12 high school marching bands at West Chester University on Nov. 7, Cecelia Mezza and Brian Yealy were already embracing.

The marching band directors from York Catholic and Delone Catholic high schools, respectively, knew their bands had just captured the top two spots in the coveted tournament.

York Catholic, with an overall score of 89.35, earned first place in the Grand Championship, also winning awards for High Music and High Overall Effect.

“It was amazing! All of the students worked so hard and performed their best,” said Mezza, Choral, Instrumental and General Music Director at York Catholic. “Brian and I were standing on the sidelines together. When we realized our bands were either first or second, we were already hugging.”

York Catholic’s show this season was “A Storm at Sea,” with selections that reflect a sea-going adventure, a storm that tosses shipmates overboard, and calming waters that culminate with “Eternal Father, Strong to Save.”

After York Catholic’s drum majors Moses Krueger and Mason Kovach and color guard captains Susie Konstans and Bethany Weaver accepted the championship award, they were congratulated and embraced by the Delone band.

“This experience was so special because we were together. Brian and I have been friends for years and I hold him in the highest regard. He has so much experience and knowledge and I look to him as a mentor. We are so happy for both schools,” Mezza said.

“Marching band is so different from many things,” she said. “Band members cheer for each other all the time. We want to see a great show from every band and we applaud everyone. This was made even more special since we are programs that work together as friends.”

Delone finished second with a score of 86.25, their highest of the season, and also captured the Tony Ferroli Best Visual Performance Award.

The 2019 season was a rebuilding year for the Delone Band, having recently graduated a large senior class. That left the band with 26 members – four juniors and seniors, and eight of whom were sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

Four of the instrumentalists learned to play a new instrument over the summer to help cover all the important parts and balance out the sound for the 2019 field show, “Mangiore Magic: The Music of Chuck Mangione.”

According to Yealy, now serving in his 36th year as Delone’s band director, “The Delone Band’s success this season can be directly traced to the dedication, hard work and persistence of the students, along with the tremendous help and support of the band staff and parents. We would also like to acknowledge York Catholic for winning the Independence A Class Championship this year and thank the YC students and staff for their friendship and camaraderie throughout the season.”

Austin Stiles, Delone’s band president, reflected, “It was one of our more difficult seasons, but the band worked together and pushed through to the very end.”

Drum major Emily Kiger, added, “Our experience at Championships is a testament to the truly incredible group of people that I have been blessed to work with over the marching season, as well as the wonderful family and friends we have to support us. The perseverance, dedication, and sheer amount of effort we have put in have yielded an amazing end to the season, and I could not be more thankful.”

Art Contest – Design a Convention Cover

For girls in grades 9-12 in the Diocese of Harrisburg

The Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women are sponsoring the contest for an original piece of art for the cover of the program for their 95th Annual Convention in April.

The theme is: “Rejoice and Be Thankful”

Grand prize: $150
Second prize: $75
Third prize: $50

Artwork should be designed for a 9x12 program cover. Must be an original drawing or painting. Mediums include watercolor, oil, acrylic, charcoal or pencil. Contest judged by local artists on the Board of the HDCCW.

Deadline to enter is January 20, 2020. For information, questions, contest guidelines, Contact 717-860-0700 or hdccw1@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

When: Saturday, December 14, 2019 at 11:30 a.m.
Where: 4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg PA
Who: All Youth Ages 13-18 (individuals with a parent/guardian and youth groups with their chaperones)

Wear your Christmas sweater and bring your friends for a day of Christmas fun!

• Sharing of World Christmas Traditions
• Games & Trivia
• Stocking Decorating
• Gift Exchange Games (please bring a $5-10 wrapped gift)
• We provide the Hot Cocoa Bar and you bring Christmas Cookies to share! Share with us your traditional holiday sweets: cookies, pizzelles, chocolate chips, etc.

Youth Groups are asked to RSVP via a group by Friday, December 6, 2019 and Individuals by Wednesday, December 11, 2019 to RSVP contact Debbie at 717-879-4964 ext. 13 or at jennifer@hdccw.org
A Perfect Gift

From the USCCB Respect Life Program
Soon after the birth of my son Charlie*, who has Down syndrome, a visitor asked whether he was “mild, moderate, or severe”—referring to his level of cognitive impairment. I knew the terminology, but the question shocked me. In my arms I held my beautiful baby boy, who defied easy categorization. Clinical labels may capture our hearts so smile lit up a room or how not describe how Charlie’s whole story. Labels could an individual’s “function.” Clinical labels may me. In my arms I held my but the question shocked me. I knew the terminology, of cognitive impairment. “mild, moderate, or severe,” Down syndrome, a possibly shocking the an individual asked whether he was Dr. Mark Miravalle and renowned Marian expert, Dr. Mark Miravalle and his son, Dr. John-Mark Miravalle, on December 14. Visit setonshrine.org/retreats. Other Christmas events include a Celtic Christmas Concert, Christmas Mass times, and more. To view them all, visit setonshrine.org.

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Registration with the e-mail service will not automatically cancel your mailed subscription. If you prefer to receive the online version instead of a print copy, e-mail your name and mailing address to witness@hbgdiocese.org.

Christmas Events at The Seton Shrine

Advent is a season to grow in joyful expectation of the Lord; however, sometimes we may need assistance in doing so. The Seton Shrine in Emmitsburg, Md., has several programs this Advent to help the faithful prepare their hearts for the Lord’s arrival, including:

Door To Bethlehem
Runs: December 6-8, from 5-7:30 p.m. with a new walk beginning every fifteen minutes. Based on the tradition of Las Posadas, groups walk with Mary and Joseph as they search for shelter and encounter a series of colorful innkeepers at various locations at the Seton Shrine. The experience concludes with an invitation to song and reflection on the birth of Jesus Christ. Find out more and get tickets at https://setonshrine.org/event/door-to-bethlehem-2/.

Candlelight Tours of Christmas Past
Runs: December 2-5 and 9-14 at 4 p.m., 5 p.m., and 6 p.m. Candlelight Tours of Christmas Past takes visitors back to the early 1800s to experience Christmas as Mother Seton and her sisters would have. A guide will lead you by lantern to the historic homes decorated for the Christmas season where you will encounter beloved friends of Elizabeth Ann Seton. The grounds will be illuminated with 1,000 luminaries. Learn more and get tickets at https://setonshrine.org/event/candlelight-tours-6/.

Advent Retreat Series
The Seton Shrine will host Advent retreats this season, including A Season for Hope, led by the Shrine chaplains on December 20; and Morning With Mary: A Half Day Advent Retreat with renowned Marian expert, Dr. Mark Miravalle and his son, Dr. John-Mark Miravalle, on December 14. Visit setonshrine.org/retreats.

A Fundamental Truth
Perhaps this is why so many families of children with disabilities, despite difficulties, often radiate joy. When I meet another parent of a child with Down syndrome, there is usually a moment of instant recognition and understanding. Our eyes meet, and we smile conspiratorially, as if we’re in on the same secret: the fundamental truth that every life is a good and perfect gift.

Many know this on an intellectual level, but those who love someone with a disability see it in their loved one’s face in a particular way. Our love for our children has nothing to do with their abilities. We love them simply because of who they are, and understanding this teaches us how to truly love everyone. We also begin to understand our own worth, which depends not on our skills or appearance, but solely on the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God and loved by Him. Our lives—all our lives—are worth living.

(*Name changed for privacy. The author has a Ph.D. in developmental psychology and has been advocating since the birth of her son Charlie* for children who are prenatally diagnosed with disabilities. Article reprinted from Respect Life Program, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.)
The Called
A series of profiles on clergy and religious

Father Daniel Mitzel
Hometown: Red Lion
Education: St. Joseph in Dallastown, York Catholic High School, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary
Assignment: Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Gettysburg

When did you first hear the call to priesthood?
As a good number of children did at that time, we played “priest,” using Neco wafers to imitate distributing Communion. A few years older, when I was in seventh grade, asked me if I thought about being a priest.

During my high school years, I never mentioned it. It was only at the eleventh hour – April of my senior year – that I went to the high school principal, Father Waldron, and said, “I think I’d like to apply for seminary.” He put things together for me to have an interview to go to St. Charles Seminary following graduation in 1972.

I spent four years at St. Charles Borromeo, and then four years with the Vincentians in North Hampton, near Allentown. As far as the phrase “hearing the call,” it took awhile. I finished my fourth year of Theology and then checked out Brownsville, Texas, as far as thinking there were some other options besides the Diocese of Harrisburg. I liked the idea of working with the poor and the Spanish-speaking. Back in the 1980s, they were not nearly the presence in our Church, especially here in Harrisburg, that they are in 2019. When I was thinking about doing that, someone said, “You know, we have Spanish-speaking here.” Texas did not work out, and so I came back here. Happily, since 1990, I’ve spent a lot of years working with Spanish-speaking, especially these last three-and-a-half years in Gettysburg.

But on the question of being “called” or not, as I kept discerning, there was some sign/evidence/grace as far as the support of people and the prayers of people and the experience of pastoral work that you get through the field education component of seminary formation, but there was still a certain amount of tentativeness within, and especially in relationship to the phrase “hearing the call.” That seems to work for most people, but it doesn’t work for everybody.

I did not have that confidence that, yes there is a call that I’m hearing. So as I was getting closer and closer to applying to the bishop for Ordination to the Diaconate and later Priesthood, I spoke to God: “I’ve been waiting a long time to hear this call. I’m hearing silence. So I’ll move forward. You can bless it or you can stop it.”

I like to share this in the sense that I don’t think I’m the only one. Although I think I’m in the minority. I think that people in other areas of life besides priesthood and religious life have similar experiences as far as the call to be a father, to be a husband, to be a wife to a particular spouse. Maybe there’s a good sense, but not necessarily that confidence that the voice of God is involved.

Talk about your experiences as a parish priest.
Being ordained in 1981, I got the assignment of St. John Neumann in Lancaster, which is known as a parish with more of wealthy people in the Diocese than most parishes. It was a very good assignment, and one of the joys of St. John Neumann was that the laity had adequate time to be part of parish life. They did their ministries well. We had children’s liturgies, and I would not have had the capability to come up with the creative ideas for that liturgy that would effectively engage the children. The people in this ministry had the imagination for it.

I moved from there to Holy Name of Jesus in Harrisburg. I had Father Mahoney as a mentor, a parish that was active, and a school of 800 students. The six years there put me in a good position as far as discerning the earlier desire of working with the Spanish-speaking and the poor. By 1990, the Hispanic community was a healthy and visible part of life in the Diocese, and a component that needed more involvement on the part of the presbyterate.

I put my name in for our Lady of Guadalupe in Lebanon, and served there for five years as pastor. Our Lady of Guadalupe was my first pastorate, and it was a small community in the very beginning. The great majority were Puerto Ricans, but as my five years there moved on, Mexican Catholics began moving in.

I had ongoing assistance through the people at Our Lady of Guadalupe and Sister Mary Matthew who brought me along. That prepared me to be able to go to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Harrisburg when then-Father Kevin Rhoades, who was pastor there, went to Mount St. Mary’s as rector.

Has your approach changed over the years? What is different for you?
What I’ve found over the last six years is, in the beginning, some people thought that Pope Francis was exaggerating priests as far as criticizing clericalism, but I found it refreshing that he was challenging us. Most recently on the Feast of St. Jean Vianney, he wrote a wonderful letter to priests expressing sensitivity to the difficult position that we’re in with the variety of challenges we’ve been facing the last few years.

I’ve especially taken to hear this quote: “Priests must be especially merciful, or they should ask their bishop for a desk job and never walk into a confessional. A priest who isn’t merciful does much damage. If snapping at people is caused by being high-strung, go to a doctor who will give you a pill for your nerves.”

Pope Francis is so clear. I contrast that to some of the things we went through with situations like the Grand Jury report and the hyper polarization and negativity that’s happening on the political scene and among the citizenry. It doesn’t seem anymore that you can have decent conversations when you disagree. There are negative, dark and evil forces that we’re up against, and we need a sense of courage, wisdom and willingness to be warriors in a healthy sense. I like this quote from Nietzsche: “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster himself.”

How do you prepare your homilies?
I read. A book called “Move.” They quoted what they referred to as a spiritual teacher, Angeles Arrien, “who reminds us what indigenous people know, that anyone who stops singing their own song, dancing their own dance, telling their own stories, or who has lost the ability to be still, loses their soul.” That combination of singing, dancing, telling stories and being still – that’s what has changed most in terms of my preparation for homilies. In the past, I would say that my work was much more in the area of what has been said and said well. Even though I knew that there is supposed to be a prayerful sense to the Holy Spirit at work, I underplayed that. Stories say much more than their content. So I now emphasize two parts: Working to find a story that will be appropriate or helpful, as well as stillness. I set aside 15-20 minutes to turn off the constant noise of my mind and just listen in the quiet.

Over the course of ten years having that as a way to start the day, I’ve experienced a change and an awareness that a number of people are praying for me. I was aware of that, but never before as much aware of it as during my brief episode of a 12-week regimen of chemotherapy to treat cancer. During those 12 weeks, I was not able most of the time to set aside that quiet time. It had become a daily desire, like a need for breakfast, or like an appointment with God. That time helps me diminish the noise of the mind.

What do you enjoy most about being a priest?
The area that has meant a lot from the earliest formation days to now is, the support of people, a recognition that the pastoral ministry isn’t something that “I” do, so much as that we do. It’s the idea that there is a team, and the team is the pastoral staff here and the presbyterate. Priest friends have made a great difference in terms of the blessings that I experience in the priesthood and being able to live it year after year. And friends I have in families and staff over the years, as well as religious. It’s the idea of not being a solo act.
Listening with the Heart

By Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC Special to The Witness

Words. Words. Words. In today’s culture, words are little packets of information that fly from our fingers or our mouths, often with little or no thought.

I never truly thought much about words until I began writing for The Catholic Witness. Writing causes me to slow down and actually reflect on the words I use. You might describe myself, I turned to Dictionary.com. It defines wordsmith as “an expert in the use of words; a person, as a journalist or novelist, whose vocation is writing.” Hmmm ...

Vocation of writing! ... No way is that me. I have been called by God to use words to proclaim Him! I am indeed an evangelist. Still, I love to describe myself, I turned to Dictionary.com. It defines wordsmith as “an expert in the use of words; a person, as a journalist or novelist, whose vocation is writing.” Hmmm ... Vocation of writing! ... No way is that me. I have been called by God to use words to proclaim Him! I am indeed an evangelist. Still, I love to describe myself, I turned to Dictionary.com. It defines wordsmith as “an expert in the use of words; a person, as a journalist or novelist, whose vocation is writing.” Hmmm ... Vocation of writing! ... No way is that me. I have been called by God to use words to proclaim Him! I am indeed an evangelist. Still, I love to describe myself, I turned to Dictionary.com. It defines wordsmith as “an expert in the use of words; a person, as a journalist or novelist, whose vocation is writing.” Hmmm ... Vocation of writing! ... No way is that me. I have been called by God to use words to proclaim Him! I am indeed an evangelist. Still, I love to describe myself, I turned to Dictionary.com. It defines wordsmith as “an expert in the use of words; a person, as a journalist or novelist, whose vocation is writing.” Hmmm ...

Douglas Martz’s book, The Power of Words, uses the Latin words dis and logos to help explain their difference in this manner: “Dialogue comes from the Greek dia, which means ‘through,’ combined with logos. Dialogue literally means words flowing through. In a flow of conversation, new understandings emerge that might not have been present otherwise. Dialogue, conducted in a spirit of inquiry and a genuine desire to understand, is an open-ended exploration.

Discussion comes from the Latin dis, which means ‘apart,’ and quatera, ‘to shake.’ Discussion has the same root as percussion and concussion, meaning to break things up. In a conversation each person is analyzing the subject, looking for answers, results or agreement.” She goes on to explain that there is another way to explain their difference, “Discussion leads from the intellect. Dialogue leads from the heart.”

Let’s apply the idea of discussion and dialogue when we come to God in prayer. How do we approach God? Do we, as a colleague say, “approach it like going to see the wizard” with our wants and demands? Or, do we humbly approach our Creator and Beloved and dialogue with Him about our day, how our hearts have been, our needs and wishes? Do we open ourselves to Him in love, share with Him and then sit there allowing Him to whisper back in a language of love that only hearts know?

In a world of fast food, fast communication, fast travel, fast everything, I often think that we expect our prayers to be quickly answered. Remember, when we pray/dialogue with God who is, we touch a being that is beyond time and location, beyond words and image. We touch our Creator who loves us so much that He wants us to be in a relationship with Him – a relationship that stems from the heart; the core of our being.

Responding to that is certainly a vocation in any language!


(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. Lucy

Feast Day – December 13

Patron of the blind, Perugia, Italy, throat infections, writers, Syracuse, Sicily, diseases of the eye epidemics, the Caribbean island of Santa Lucia in the Lesser Antilles and many more.

Compiled by Angela M. Orsini

According to tradition, Lucy was born into nobility around 283 A.D. Lucy’s father was Roman and he died when she was five, leaving her and her mother, Eutychia (seemingly of Greek origin), without a guardian. However, Lucy, like many of the early martyrs, consecrated herself to God. Her mother fell ill and, not knowing of Lucy’s promise to God, arranged a marriage to a man from a pagan family.

Eutychia was persuaded to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Agatha, who had been martyred 52 years earlier, in hope of a cure for her illness. While she was there, St. Agatha appeared to Lucy in a dream and told Lucy that because of her faith her mother would be cured. After her mother’s cure, Lucy persuaded her to let her give a portion of their riches to the poor. Her mother suggested an amount, but Lucy said “...whatever you give away at death for the Lord’s sake you give because you cannot take it with you. Give now to the true Savior while you are healthy, whatever you intended to give away at your death.”

When news spread about the money and jewels being given away, her betrothed denounced her to Paschasius, the Governor of Sicily. He ordered her to burn a sacrifice to the governor’s image, but she refused and was ordered to a brothel to be defiled. Roman tradition says that when they came to move Lucy, they could not, even when she was hitched to a team of oxen. Then bundles of wood were piled about her and set on fire, but would not burn. Finally, a sword was thrust into her throat. There is also a traditional version of the story that she was tortured and her eyes were gouged out.

Many depictions show Lucy holding a plate with eyes on it. At burial, her eyes were intact. Santa Lucia died in 043 A.D. in Syracuse.

Lucia, the Italian version of her name, is symbolic of her as a light-bearer in the darkness of winter. A popular event celebrated in Scandinavian countries is of a young girl dressed in white wearing a red sash symbol of martyrdom, carrying palms and wearing a wreath on her head with lit candles.
Ecumenical, interreligious candlelight remembrance ser- vice for anyone who has experienced the death of a friend, family member, or loved one to suicide, Dec. 6 at 8 p.m. at Sacred Heart Basilica in Conway. Light refreshments in the parish hall following the service. All are welcome to this time to come together and know you’re not alone.

Twelfth Night music celebration at Assumption BVM Church in Lebanon, Jan. 5 at 3 p.m. Bringing together choirs, ensembles, bell-ringers, soloists, instrumentalists and bands from Assumption Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Benedict the Abbott and St. Cecilia in Lebanon, the Fatima Mission in Jonestown, Church of the Holy Spirit in Palmyra, Mary Gate of Heaven in Myerstown, St. Paul the Apostle in Annville, and Sacred Heart of Jesus in Cornwall. Everyone is invited to a reception following the concert.

Caerorum at St. Joan of Arc Church in Hershey, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. Spend an evening with our Lord in Adoration, song, meditation and prayer, and feel his presence and mercy. A reception will follow in the cafeteria. All are welcome, bring a friend. For more information, call 717-583-0240.

Sunday evening Adoration and Mass on each of the four Sundays of Advent at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Haven, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with Vespers at 4:30 p.m., Holy Mass at 5:30 p.m., and Benediction following Mass. Come out of the spiritual cold and dark and into the warmth and light of Christ’s love through the Eucharistic adoration and Holy Mass. Make time in the quiet of a Sunday evening to remain in Christ and prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Confessions available upon request.

15-decade Rosary for Life, every third Saturday of the month following the 9 a.m. Traditional Latin Mass at St. Law- rence Chapel in Harrisburg. All are invited to attend for prayer following the 9 a.m. Traditional Latin Mass at St. Law- rence Chapel in Harrisburg. All are invited to attend to pray. For more information, call 717-225-1704. www.sacredheartsg.com/

Day of Vocation Discernment with the Sisters of Saint Cyril and Methodius, Dec. 15, from 3-6 p.m. at Villa Sacred Heart in Davlin. Open invitation to single Catholic women ages 18-40 for conversation, prayer and supper for those inquiring about religious life. The congregation has been liv- ing and serving within the Diocese of Harrisburg for more than 100 years. RSVP by Dec. 12 at vscmacollection@gmail.com.

Celebrate 100 years since the birth of St. John Paul II with Father Tukia Pius Michael, O.P. pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Selinsgrove, on a 12-day pilgrimage, Aug. 3-14, 2020, visiting Poland and Prague. Land only price: $2,950 pp in double occupancy, first class accommodations, private motorcoaches, all breakfasts and eight dinners, and professional guided sightseeing. Registration deadline is April 15. Contact Catholic Heritage Tours at 1-800-290-3876 or www.catholicheritagetours.com/PPP or Mark Flishko at 570-374-3933.

Christmas Bazaars

Christmas Festival at St. Rose of Lima School in Thom- asville, Dec. 7 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Breakfast with Santa, pictures with Santa, kids’ Advent craft, face painting, chil- dren’s Bingo and games, raffle baskets, gift card Bingo, bake sale, food and fun. For tickets, sign up, or info, contact Jill at 717-586-8046 or jojo68@yahoo.com.

St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Bonneville, Christmas bazaar on Dec. 7 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. A variety of vendors with crafts, homemade candy, etc. Break- fast and lunch served. Santa will make a visit for children.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Spring Grove, Christmas bazaar on Dec. 7 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Vendors, raffles, chil- dren’s activities and silent auction. Food served throughout the day. To RSVP for 8 a.m. Breakfast with Santa or for more information, call 717-225-1704. www.sacredheartsg.com/

St. Peter Parish Council of Catholic Women in Colum- bia, Christmas bazaar on Dec. 7 at 5:30 p.m., and Dec. 8 at 9 a.m., in the parish center. Handmade craft items, specialty baskets, homemade desserts and door prizes. Sunday features a full-course turkey dinner from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Tickets available at the door the day of the event. The Youth Choir, under the direction of Carole Bitts, will provide entertainment.

The Women’s Auxiliary of St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Millersville, 25th annual Christmas craft show and sale, Dec. 7 from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. More than 70 vendors with handmade wares for sale. Women’s Auxiliary will sell homemade cookies and chicken corn soup. Free parking and free admission.

St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Millerstown, Women’s Guild Christmas Cookie Walk & Bazaar, Dec. 7 in the church so- cial hall from 9 a.m.-noon (or while supply lasts). Purchase an empty container for $10 and fill it with your choice from a wide variety of homemade Christmas cookies. Sale features handmade crafts and needlework, homemade cand- ries, and a White Elephant table with assorted Christmas items. Doors open at 8 a.m. with free coffee. Contact Joyce Price, 717-994-0209.

Assumption BVM Parish in Lancaster, annual craft show on Dec. 8 in Assumption Hall, following 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses. Featuring everything from food to fine art. Free admission.

Students in grades K-6 are invited to Funties Night at York Catholic High School’s Athletic Booster Club on Dec. 11. The afternoon will feature the annual Cookie Bazaar on Dec. 13 from 9 a.m.-noon. All events will feature the sale or making of cookie donations. Students are invited to participate in the Cookie Bazaar on Dec. 13 with an item they would like to sell. Grades K to 8 are invited to participate in the Cookie Bazaar on Dec. 13 with an item they would like to sell. Grades K to 8 are invited to bring their own items to sell.

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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.

Abbottstown
Immaculate Heart of Mary:
Lawrence Parker

Anville
St. Paul the Apostle:
Robert Connor, Sr.
Rosemary Leininger

Berwick
Immaculate Conception BVM:
Elizabeth Keiser
Rocco Petrillo

Bonneauville
St. Joseph the Worker:
Julie Eckenrode
Robert Strasbaugh

Camp Hill
Good Shepherd:
Patricia Kilkenny
Earle Simons
Edward Zielber

Chambersburg
Corpus Christi:
William Kirchoff
George Elgan
Doris Maier
William Misa

Gettysburg
St. Francis Xavier:
Joseph G. Sanders
Robert E. O’Brien

Harrisburg
St. Catherine Labouré:
Matthew Szechusi

Hershey
St. Joseph of Arc:
Mary Blanchini

Lancaster
St. Joseph:
Benjamin A. Roda

Middletown
Seven Sorrows BVM:
Sandria M. McCurdy
Anna Zapotocky

Milton
St. Joseph:
Sara Loftus

Mount Carmel
Divine Redeemer:
Gloria M. DeFrancesco
Patricia Lubeski
Francis Filardo

New Cumberland
St. Theresa:
James F. Bailey

New Freedom
St. John the Baptist:
Dr. Boris Ivovich

Palmyra
Holy Spirit:
Shirley A. O’Brien

Shippensburg
Our Lady of the Visitation:
John Sheaffer

Sunburst
St. Monica:
Joseph Richard Gilroy

Trevorton
St. Patrick:
Ruth M. Shipe

Mary Jane Koch
Philomena Weiman
Rose Moser Haines
Nancy M. Frey
Lebanon
St. Cecilia:
Joann Loser
Cecilia Woelfling

Lewisburg
Sacred Heart of Jesus:
Chris Whitmer
Edward Brennan
Patrick Gargano
Graizyna Bart

Lykens
Our Lady of Help of Christians:
Connie Lytle
Mary Anne Wolfe

Mechanicsburg
St. Joseph:
Marie Costa

St. Katharine Drexel:
Mary Kapalo

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Harrisburg seeks an organist/choir director for 3 weekend Masses and one choir rehearsal each week. Interested persons may email a résumé to ourladyoftheblessedsacramentparish-harrisburg@hbgdiocese.org. No phone calls, please.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Lancaster seeks a part-time parish secretary/bookkeeper to perform a broad range of administrative duties. Responsibilities will include daily office operation, reception, records maintenance, filing, mailings, bookkeeping, youth protection and clearance maintenance and other duties as needed. Candidate must be a practicing Catholic and possess an overall knowledge of general office procedures and equipment operation. Proficiency in Microsoft Office applications is required. All Child Protection Clearances and procedures for Employees in the Commonwealth of PA are applicable. For more information, contact the parish at 717-394-0757. To apply, submit name, address, phone number, recent related work experience and at least three references to Father Michael Metzgar at frmetzgar@hbgdiocese.org. Questions can also be directed to Father Marcroce via email or at 570-275-2512, ext. 2.

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Deceased Clergy
Please pray for the following clergy who died in December during the past 25 years:

Msgr. Joseph Bradley, 1996
Father Robert Kobularik, 1999
Father John Aurentz, 1996
Deacon Michael Lydon Sr., 1999
Father Vitale Leonard Casey, 1997
Deacon Charles Rebuck, 2005
Father Joseph Blascovich, 1999
Deacon Robert C. Gribbin, 2013
Father Thomas Hemler, 2006
Father Thomas M. McLernon, 2009
Father Paul Aumen, C.P.P.S., 2010
Msgr. Leo Bierster, 2011

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Diocesan Notebook continued from page 14

Lancaster Crusader girls’ spring softball registration is open. Assembling teams for 8U, 10U, 12U, and 14U for the spring 2020 season. All home games are played at St. Leo the Great in Rohrerstown. As a feeder program for Lancaster Catholic, teams accept girls from any parish in Lancaster County. Register online at https://stleos.weshareonline.org/CrusaderSoftballRegistrationSPRING2020. Registration deadline is Jan. 15. We anticipate indoor practices beginning in March. Need more information? Contact Ed Krow, Crusader Softball Coordinator, at edkrow.com.

Job Openings
St. Benedict the Abbot Parish in Lebanon seeks a bilingual (English/Spanish) parish secretary. Above-average keyboard skills, excellent organizational and strong interpersonal skills with the ability to follow instructions as well as work independently. Proficient in Microsoft applications, especially Publisher, Word, Outlook, and Excel. Responsible for the daily operation of the parish office, including supervising logistical aspects of all on and off-site events. Maximizing event efficiency by interfacing with various committee personnel. Submit résumé at the parish office, 1300 Lehman St. Lebanon, PA or by email at sbenedictlebanon@hbgdiocese.org. For questions, contact the office at 717-450-4506 or sbenedictlebanon@hbgdiocese.org.

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St. Joseph Parish in Danville seeks a part-time music coordinator. Music degree or equivalent experience preferred, but not required. Experience in accompanying at Catholic Masses and work with choir also preferred. Position requires competent playing of the organ and/or piano at weekend Masses, Holy Days, and other sacramental and devotional services (such as weddings and funerals); also coordinates cantors and directs the parish choir. Interested parties should submit a basic résumé and letter of interest to Father Timothy Marcroce, pastor, at timmarcroce@hbgdiocese.org. Questions can also be directed to Father Marcroce via email or at 570-275-2512, ext. 2.

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Mark Your Calendars!
Next Deadline: December 11
The deadline for submissions for the December 20 edition of The Witness is Wednesday, December 11 at 4:30 p.m. Submit written announcements 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 Witness’ page at www.hbgdiocese.org.
By Kris Keck

Special to The Witness

Since their foundation in 2018, the Discalced Carmelite Sisters in Fairfield have relied on gifts from benefactors and pilgrims to build their monastery. On Sept. 14, a ladies’ pilgrimage from the Latin Mass Community of St. Joseph Parish in Lancaster visited to learn about the Carmelite way of life. Mothers and daughters were encouraged to attend the pilgrimage together. Gregorian chant from the Sisters enhanced Holy Mass on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross with Father Brian Olkowski as celebrant and pilgrim chaplain.

Following Mass, two reflections were offered. Father Olkowski spoke of the importance of vocational discernment while the Carmelite Sisters spoke candidly from behind their speak-room about the challenges and joys of being a Carmelite Sister.

For Father Olkowski, “It was a great chance for some of the young women who are discerning vocations to the religious life to speak with and hear from those who are living out their calling to religious life.”

With so many young ladies in attendance, the Sisters’ advice was especially relevant. In fact, so many registered to attend that a waiting list was required. Due to space constraints in the temporary chapel, only 24 pilgrims may comfortably attend at one time.

The pilgrims enjoyed a picnic lunch before completing various work projects at the nearby farmhouse, such as creating a garden, cleaning the inside of the farmhouse and assisting in sewing projects for the Sisters.

St. Joseph Parish plans to offer a men’s pilgrimage in May 2020 to assist the Carmelite Sisters with painting, moving, clearing land, log splitting and general repairs.

Since moving to Fairfield in 2018 to accommodate the growing numbers at the Carmelite Monastery in Elysburg, the Sisters have started to build a multi-building monastery in the rolling hills of Adams County. While they build their permanent chapel, cells and enclosure from local stone, the Sisters live in a mobile trailer and use a barn for a work area. A guest house serves as the temporary chapel.

The Carmelites live an enclosed, simple and contemplative life of prayer and work. The Sisters worship God by attending Holy Mass, praying the Divine Office in Latin, and studying Carmelite spirituality, focusing on mental prayer and spiritual readings, to allow for their own sanctification.

Father Olkowski reflected that “The prayers of the Carmelites help give life to the Church.”

The Sisters’ most important work is to pray for the whole world, with a special emphasis on praying for the sanctification of priests, especially for the bishop and priests of the Diocese of Harrisburg. The Sisters also do manual work, including farming, looking after animals and making liturgical items. Individuals and groups have supported the Sisters by providing for their temporal needs or by making a pilgrimage to assist in building and maintaining the monastery in. Many spiritual writers have commented on the benefits of pilgrimage for one’s own spiritual life. Not only does it benefit them individually, but also assists the Carmelite Sisters in building their monastery to allow more religious women to pray for the many needs of the Church and the Diocese of Harrisburg.

For pilgrim Christin Miller, “The work the Sisters do in praying for the bishop and our priests and seminarians is of utmost important and is of great benefit to not only our Diocese but also our souls.”

To learn more about the Sisters, visit www.fairfieldcarmelites.org. (Kris Keck is a member of the Latin Mass Community at St. Joseph Parish in Lancaster.)

Consider a Charitable Gift Annuity

Looking to increase your income in retirement while supporting the Diocese of Harrisburg and/or our Catholic schools and Parishes? A Charitable Gift Annuity may be the right vehicle for you. Rates will decrease beginning on January 1, 2020.

Here’s an example of what you could expect for a gift of $25,000 (minimum to establish a CGA is $10,000) with one annuitant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>60</th>
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<th>70</th>
<th>75</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Rate</td>
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<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Rate</td>
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<td>5.1%</td>
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<td>6.2%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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The Office of Stewardship & Development at the Diocese can provide you with personalized illustrations of the potential tax savings you may enjoy while supporting causes you are passionate about. Prior to committing to any charitable gift, we recommend consulting your personal advisers.

To learn more, contact:
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www.hbgdiocese/giving