



THE MAGAZINE OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh Catholic

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At the Door

DIGNITY AT THE DOOR

A story of welcome and warmth

LISTENING FOR GOD

Finding direction in faith

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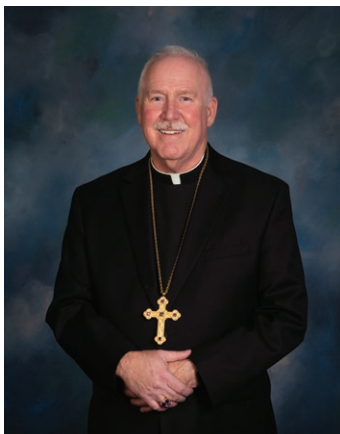
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Serving in Faith and Charity

BY BISHOP MARK ECKMAN

As we prepare to enter the holy season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 18, I am grateful for the opportunity to walk this path with you for the first time as your bishop. Lent is a sacred opportunity for us to pause, reflect, and draw closer to the Lord. This year, it carries a special meaning for me as I continue listening, learning, and growing with all of you.

I have been blessed to meet many of you through parish liturgies, diocesan gatherings, school events, and everyday happenings. In each meeting, I am moved by your faith, your kindness, and your commitment to living the Gospel. Your witness reminds me that the Church is strong because of the people who pray, serve, and love in quiet faith. Now, let us journey through Lent together.

Lent is a time for us to examine how we are living out our baptismal promises. Lent brings us back to the basics of our faith: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These practices help us slow down, pay attention, make room for God in our routines and share his love with those in need. They are invitations to open our hearts to the Lord.

We can begin by reflecting on how the Lord is already present in our lives. I think of families praying together before meals. I think of those who stop in church for a brief moment of prayer. I think of neighbors checking in on someone who is struggling, volunteers preparing meals for the hungry, and teachers and catechists sharing the faith with our young people. Such actions, no

matter how big or small, reflect who we are as followers of Christ.

This season also invites us to look honestly at the burdens we carry. Many individuals and families are facing illness, poverty, strained relationships, grief, or uncertainty about the future. In hard times, our Lenten practices remind us that the Lord is closest to us when life feels heavy or unclear. He walks with us, strengthens us, and gives us the courage to take the next step.

If you enter this Lent with worry or weariness, know that the Lord is with you. Lent is a time to rest in God's mercy. Jesus invites us to bring Him our concerns, our fears, and even our exhaustion. He receives all of it with love.

As you consider how to observe Lent, I encourage you to choose practices that are simple and realistic for you. You might set aside a few minutes of prayer each day. You might attend a weekday Mass or spend time in eucharistic adoration. You might read a short passage from Scripture, return to the sacrament of reconciliation, or offer a small act of charity to someone who needs encouragement. Even the smallest step toward the Lord is pleasing to Him.

As we draw gradually closer to Holy Week, I invite you to keep your eyes fixed on the Lord. Lent leads us to the cross, but it also leads us to hope. Christ walks with us each day, and His love gives us strength.

Please know of my prayers for you and your families during this sacred season. May your Lenten journey bring you peace, renewal, and a deeper awareness of God's presence in your life. I ask your prayers for me, as I continue to pray for all of you. †



The magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh
DIOPITT.ORG

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026
Volume 6: Issue 1

Most Reverend Mark A. Eckman
PUBLISHER

Jennifer Antkowiak
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Theresa Breitenbach
CONTENT AND DESIGN EDITOR

Nathan M. Sudie
OPERATIONS MANAGER

Ann Rodgers
SENIOR EDITOR

Jennifer Antkowiak | **Rev. Charles Bober** |
Theresa Breitenbach | **Bill Hill** | **Ann Rodgers** |
Nathan M. Sudie | **Pam Surano**
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tom Davidson | **Chip Kelsch** | **Nick Sciarappa**
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jaclyn Lemon
CONTENT DESIGN AND PROMOTION

Mike Anania
VIDEO EDITOR

Krista Foster
ADVERTISING AND SALES CONSULTANT

Carmel Miller
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Deacon Kevin Lander
Fraser Gensler
Laura Wagner



FaithCatholic.com

Patrick Dally
ART DIRECTOR

Pittsburgh Catholic (USPS 434240) is published bimonthly by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, 2900 Noblestown Road Pittsburgh, PA 15205-4227. Periodicals postage paid at Pittsburgh, PA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Pittsburgh Catholic, 2900 Noblestown Road Pittsburgh, PA 15205-4227. ©2021 Pittsburgh Catholic, Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Copies of *Pittsburgh Catholic* magazine are mailed to registered members of parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Call your parish to become a registered member.

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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Reader,
As Lent carries us toward Easter, many of us are paying closer attention to our habits, our relationships, and how we integrate our faith into daily life. This season has a way of sharpening our awareness, helping us notice how God is present and the ways He invites us to respond.

You are already standing at the door of that invitation.

The man you see on our cover understands what it means to be welcomed. Through The Red Door ministry, he has found warmth, dignity, and care during a difficult chapter of his life. “Dignity at the Door” explains how a simple sidewalk outreach continues to grow through collaboration with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh into a steady, compassionate presence for those experiencing hunger and hardship.

Lent is also when many people think more intentionally about their direction and purpose. In “Discerning God’s Call,” Fr. Kevin Dominik reflects on his own vocation to the priesthood and on the broader call shared by all the baptized. He speaks thoughtfully about discernment as a process that unfolds over time through listening, prayer, and trust. His perspective offers reassurance to anyone seeking clarity, whether about a major life decision or the next faithful step.

You’ll notice a new recurring feature in this issue: “Good Shepherds.” This series highlights members of our diocesan clergy who reflect Christ’s shepherding heart. Through the voices

of parishioners and families, these stories offer a glimpse into how their presence, leadership, and care are lived in parish life.

Community is another context in which faith takes shape. For many in our diocese, that includes gathering at parish fish fries throughout Lent. Our 2026 Lenten Fish Fry Guide returns with a comprehensive look at opportunities across our six counties to come together for food, fellowship, and service. Enjoy!

In this issue, we also explore the role of Catholic scouting in the lives of young people and families. Scouting has long helped form habits of responsibility, service, and leadership, grounded in faith. One of our priests reflects on his family’s experience with scouting and how those early lessons helped shape values that carried forward into adulthood.

Read how a relic of Blessed Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, has found a permanent home at Saint Anthony Chapel. Blessed McGivney’s life and witness, marked by charity, unity, and care for families, continue to resonate in the Church today. His presence here offers a meaningful opportunity for prayer and reflection as we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection.

Together, these stories tell one story of a Church that continues to welcome, accompany, and serve.

As you read, my hope is that you’ll notice where you are standing at the door this Lent. Perhaps it’s an opportunity to serve more intentionally, to listen more closely, or to take a step you’ve been considering. Wherever you find yourself, may you feel encouraged to open that door to Christ, your neighbor, and to the path unfolding before you. †

God bless,
Jennifer Antkowiak
Editor-in-Chief

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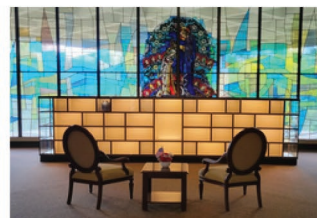
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ACROSS THE DIOCESE

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

■ Bishop William J. Waltersheid joined Father Jim Holland and the parishioners of Our Lady of the Lakes Parish as the principal celebrant of a Mass and blessing of a new Rosary Prayer Garden at Saint Victor Church, Bairdford.

As his Eagle Scout project for Troop 186, Alex Godinez designed and constructed the Rosary Prayer Garden. The son of Lucas and Danielle Godinez, Alex is a senior at Deer Lakes High School and an altar server at Our Lady of the Lakes.



▲ Alex Godinez assisted Bishop Waltersheid as the altar server at the Mass and blessing of the Rosary Prayer Garden.

BEAVER COUNTY

■ After attending a Defending the Faith Conference at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Danielle Bianco and Jennifer Shafer, Our Lady of the Valley parishioners, created a group to help parents better understand and explain Catholic teachings and traditions to their families, while cultivating a deeper relationship with Christ. Originally created for parents to attend while their children were in faith formation, the Adult Catholic Defenders Group is now open to anyone interested in learning to defend the Catholic faith. Now, in its third year, the program has hosted popular guest speakers and addressed current topics affecting youth.



▲ (Left to right) Father Howard Campbell with guest speaker Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers with Catholic Defenders founders Jennifer Shafer and Danielle Bianco.

BUTLER COUNTY

■ Divine Grace parishioners were invited to spend November examining their time spent on smartphones, tablets, laptops and TVs, so they could make space for God and their loved ones. Inspired by Father Dan Kusher, the ScreenFast education initiative asks questions including: Is this screen time helping me live my vocation, or am I just wasting time? Associated events included an All Souls candlelight procession and bonfire with all night adoration and a family game night. Many parishioners accepted the challenge—"Unplug to Recharge Your Faith."



▲ Father Dan Kushner, 2nd from left, at the parish candlelight procession and bonfire

GREENE COUNTY

■ Saint Matthias Parish in Greene County has shifted to family catechesis, following a parish pastoral plan that calls for building stronger connections between families and the parish.

The once-a-month family catechesis includes a children's Mass with students participating in all ministries, except extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

"Feedback from parents and other family members says that they are learning elements of the faith that they had forgotten, didn't understand, or did not realize," said Father Tom Lewandowski, the pastor.



▲ Saint Matthias parishioners created an outdoor living rosary at Saint Hugh Church, honoring Mary and the gift of the rosary.

LAWRENCE COUNTY

■ Participants in Holy Spirit Parish's Stitching Angels Ministry use sewing and crochet to create lovingly handmade items for nursing home residents, cancer patients, people in need, and foster children.

"After surviving injuries from a serious auto accident and feeling that God saved me for a reason, I got inspired by an article in the Pittsburgh Catholic newspaper in 2015 and started Stitching Angels shortly afterward," said ministry leader Sara Kalata.

The "angels" meet bi-monthly for a social gathering and to share patterns. Each works in her home to create items for blessing bags given to the homeless, nursing home residents, veterans, and others.



▲ A sample of the nearly 12,000 items Stitching Angels has made and donated since its beginning in 2015, with almost 2000 items this year

WASHINGTON COUNTY

■ At Saint Andrew the Apostle, "our food bank ministry serves over 1,100 people – and over 1,000 pets – each month," said Father Levi Hartle, the pastor. "Together we embody Christ's call to feed the hungry."

The Mon Valley ministry is supported by individual donors, volunteers and partnerships with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, 412 Food Rescue, Hunters Share the Harvest, Catholic Charities, and the Washington Area Humane Society.

Additionally, partnerships with the Literacy Council of Southwestern Pennsylvania and Intermediate Unit 1, "allow us to extend the reach of education, formation and community support," he said.



▲ Parish volunteers with bags ready for pickup, and behind them the shelves filled with more goods.



When the Heart Needs Healing

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

February is Heart Month, and this year I am keenly aware of that. Almost a year ago, my husband had a major heart attack, completely out of the blue. One moment everything was normal; the next, life was fragile and precious.

It brought back memories of losing my mom to the same kind of heart attack years ago, adding another layer of painful tenderness to those uncertain days.

We are deeply grateful he survived and for every step of recovery. But we've also learned that medical progress is not always linear, and sometimes it isn't what you hoped it would be. Physical, emotional, and spiritual healing takes time. Some days feel steady and strong. Others feel fragile and tender all over again. Yet, even in that, God has been present.

As Lent approaches, I've been thinking about how this season speaks to anyone whose heart is burdened. Maybe you've faced a health scare with someone you love. Maybe you're a caregiver for someone difficult. Maybe your struggle is with grief, stress, or worry.

Lent arrives in the midst of these real-life circumstances. Sometimes Lenten demands for "more" -- more discipline, more sacrifice, more schedules -- feel overwhelming.

But the longer I sit with it, the more I believe that Lent is not meant to weigh us down, or to add pressure to burdened hearts. It is about letting God meet us with gentleness.

This year, my Lenten practices feel simpler and quieter, especially my prayers. They aren't long or polished. They're honest: "Lord, please help." "Lord, stay close." "Lord, give us strength today." And I believe deeply that He hears every single one.

I've found myself slowing down in small, intentional ways. A few quiet minutes in the morning, a slow walk when the weather cooperates, or just sitting in silence before the day races ahead can create just enough space for peace to slip in. If we are able to calm our hearts and minds, it's easier to notice small mercies: a kind word from a co-worker, a reassuring conversation, a calm afternoon. Such gentle moments remind us that God is right here in the details.

Letting people help doesn't come naturally to me, but I'm learning. When life shifts beneath you, the support of others is one way God shows His love. A thoughtful message, someone saying, "I'm praying for you" -- these small kindnesses hold tremendous weight. I need to gratefully welcome them, knowing that to reject them is to reject God's mercy.

More than anything, I've been leaning into Christ in a deeper way. Lent reminds us that Jesus knows suffering intimately. He doesn't walk ahead of us or behind us, He walks with us, holding our hand, right in the middle of whatever we're carrying.

So, if your Lent needs to be gentle this year, let it be gentle. If all you can offer is the honest feelings in your heart, that is enough. If your prayer is simply, "Lord, be with me," He already is.

Healing unfolds slowly, layer by layer. But through every layer, God is with us.

Maybe the invitation of this season is to let Him care for our hearts exactly as they are.

My prayer for you is that this Lent gives you space to breathe, room to notice grace, strength for each new day, and a quiet confidence that you are not walking through anything alone. †

A Prayer for Healing Hearts

*Jesus, heal our hearts gently this Lent.
Bring strength to those recovering,
comfort to those who are worried,
peace to those who are overwhelmed,
and hope for those who feel uncertain.
Walk with us in every step of our journey
and renew us with Your love. AMEN.*



JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK
executive director of the
Department of Communications
and Community Relations;
diocesan spokesperson

Emulate Saint Patrick's generous, faithful spirit

BY THERESA BREITENBACH

Did you know that Saint Patrick was actually British? Or that as a young man, his faith was not an integral part of his life? God worked wondrous things when Saint Patrick opened his heart to His will, and can do the same for us. As we approach Saint Patrick's Day on March 17, here are a few tips to help.

God can bring good from any situation

► Saint Patrick was born in Britain to a family of faith, but wavered in his own devotion. At age 16, he was captured by Gaelic slave traders and shipped to then-pagan Ireland. Working as a slave for a pagan clan and enduring great sufferings, he slowly opened his heart to God. Realizing that God had used suffering to draw him to Himself, Patrick's heart burned with gratitude. How is God working through your own sufferings?

Don't underestimate the impact of lived faith

► While still a slave, Patrick heard a voice telling him to return home. He managed to escape slavery and board a ship bound for Britain, arriving there three days later. He and a group of pagans traveled through the wilderness in search of civilization. Though his companions mocked his faith, Patrick clung to it. When food ran out, Patrick prayed to God, and a herd of pigs miraculously appeared. Patrick's faith softened the pagans' hearts.

Go where God leads, without fear

► Back home, Patrick grew in his faith. In a vision, he heard the people of Ireland begging him to return. Patrick felt God's call to become a missionary to the Irish people. He was ordained a priest, then a bishop, and returned to the country that had held him captive for six years. He did not let any fear of past sufferings hold him back; he trusted that God would provide for him.

Rely on God, not yourself

► Through Bishop Patrick's deep faith and many miracles that God performed through him, pagan lords in Ireland began to convert to Christ. The people they ruled soon followed. Still, Bishop Patrick faced painful opposition from many for his



mission work. Despite the dangers, he baptized and confirmed thousands of people, built churches, ordained clergy, and established religious orders.

God will not be outdone in generosity

► When Patrick realized the debt of gratitude he owed the Lord for using captivity to convert his heart, he gave his life over to Christ. God repaid Patrick's generosity countless times, using his "yes" to convert pagan Ireland to a Christian nation.

What can God do with your generous "yes" to His plan? Pray about it, starting with Saint Patrick's Breastplate, a prayer he wrote that includes these words: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me." †



QUESTION:

WE HEAR ABOUT FASTING OFTEN ENOUGH IN CHURCH, BUT WHAT ARE ITS BIBLICAL ROOTS AND CONTEMPORARY PURPOSE?

ANSWER:

To begin with, it is important to distinguish between abstinence and fasting. Abstinence usually refers to not eating meat on a given day. Fasting usually implies abstaining from food of any kind for a given day or period of time.

Fasting is an ancient religious practice, often accompanied by prayers and good deeds. The Law of Moses required fasting on the Day of Atonement. Christ fasted (Matt. 6:16 and Mark 2:20,

9:29), the apostles fasted (Acts 13:2, 14:23) as did the early Christians (2 Cor. 2:27).

For many reasons, over the centuries local and universal directives about fasting changed. Most recently the Catholic Church has emphasized that fasting should be both an external obligation and a more personal commitment to changing your life.

Fasting involves personal renunciation for a higher purpose. Jesus challenged us to take up the cross and

follow Him. Each one of us will have to account for the way in which we respond to that challenge. For some Christians, carrying a cross is a choice; for others it is not optional because their lives are filled with “crosses” about scarce food, inadequate shelter, health care and daily existence. By fasting from basics that others lack – donating the price of a meal we skipped – we may lighten their burden (and help them carry their cross).

Humility is linked with fasting in Scripture. The scribe Ezra tells us, “Then I proclaimed a fast . . . that we might humble ourselves before our God” (Ezra 8:21). Scripture adds that fasting “should lead us ...to greater

prayer not to quarreling and strife” (see Isaiah 58:3-4).

Fasting also invites us to a self-reflection that leads us to refrain from whatever is spiritually or physically harmful to us. We might also consider how what we say or do harms others. Fasting from these actions will help us and others as well.

Fasting might entail ridding our lives of things that are of themselves good or neutral but do not contribute to our well-being or peace. When I was in the seminary, a priest told us, “...two forms of personal violence are haste and noise.”

Can you imagine what a difference it could make to diminish some of the noise in our lives? Silence and quiet are precious. They allow room for God to speak to us. Yet, we fill our days with what can only be considered noise. Too often we respond merely to immediate to needs because we are too distracted to take time for reflection or planning. We are burdened with the details of meeting deadlines or events. Imagine what life would be like if we fasted for a time from both noise and haste.

This Lent, fast from the things that clutter your life and that distract you from encountering both God and the needs of your neighbors. †



FATHER CHARLES BOBER is pastor of Saint Mark the Evangelist Parish. He has written his column for the *Pittsburgh Catholic* newspaper and online since 1983.

FIRE UP YOUR FAITH



"If we wish to serve God and love our neighbor well, we must manifest our joy in the service we render to Him and them. Let us open wide our hearts. It is joy which invites us. Press forward and fear nothing."

– St. Katharine Drexel (1858-1955),

patron of racial justice and philanthropy, feast day March 3. After serving a novitiate with the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh, she founded an order to promote the education and civil rights of Black and Indigenous Americans.

Mark Your Calendars for Lent and Holy Week:

Ash Wednesday, **February 18** | Palm Sunday, **March 29** | Holy Thursday, **April 2** | Good Friday, **April 3** | Easter Sunday, **April 5**

Learn to talk with others about Jesus

On Sat., March 21, 2026, a Saint Paul Street Evangelization Workshop will be held at Saint Blaise Church Hall (Saint Augustine Parish), 772 Ohio Ave. Midland, Beaver County, 15059. Running from 9 am-4 pm, it equips Catholics to engage others in conversations about Jesus and the Catholic faith. Registration is \$20 at stpaulse.com/midland-pa. A light breakfast and full lunch are included. Auxiliary Bishop William Waltersheid will celebrate the closing Mass at 4 pm

A silent retreat for Spanish-speakers

The diocesan Latino Ministry is offering a three-day silent retreat on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, with meditations and spiritual direction in Spanish. The retreat will be held in the Saint Paul of the Cross Retreat Center, 148 Monastery Ave., Pittsburgh 15203, from 6:30 p.m. Feb. 13 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 15. The cost is \$240 and participants must be at least 18 years old. For information contact jvela@diopitt.org or 412-337-7268

Annual Parish Appeal

Show your love for the Church on February 14-15, which is commitment weekend for the Annual Parish Appeal. Pray now about what God wants you to give to support diocesan ministries and services such as chaplains for nursing homes, college campus outreach and payroll management for your own parish. As you make this pledge, remember Saint Peter, who possessed little but said, "What I have, I give."

Support outreach and ministry in the United States

On the weekend of March 14-15, every parish in the diocese will take a combined second collection for three national ministries that provide spiritual and social support for impoverished people in the United States and its territories:

- ▶ **The Catholic Home Missions Appeal** supports ministry and evangelization in dioceses where Catholics are too few or too poor to support their own churches.
- ▶ **The Collection for Black and Indian Missions** sustains culturally sensitive outreach by and for Black and Indigenous Catholics – including a youth summer camp for low-income students in Pittsburgh's Hill District.
- ▶ **The Catholic Campaign for Human Development** helps people who are disadvantaged, exploited or unemployed to solve community problems, advocate for better working conditions and create small businesses.

A gift of just a few dollars can change the lives of individuals in places as diverse as Alaska, New Mexico and New York. Please give generously.

Help Christians in the Holy Land

On Good Friday, April 3, 2026, all Catholics are asked to give to the annual Holy Land Collection, which supports churches and holy sites – such as Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity – in places where Jesus and His disciples once



▲ Bell tower of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

walked. Administered by the Franciscan Order, the collection also provides grants to keep a living Christian witness in a region where followers of Christ suffer discrimination, and where many have lost homes, loved ones and livelihoods in the recent warfare. Gifts to this collection provide Christians in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere with homes, parishes, schools, hospitals, and assistance to families and the elderly. Your gifts help Jesus to rebuild the places where He lived.



DIGNITY *at the* DOOR:

HOW THE RED DOOR AND CATHOLIC CHARITIES ARE FEEDING THE HUNGRY

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

At lunchtime along the Boulevard of the Allies, a long line of hungry people queues at a small, bright red door, as they have for nearly 100 years. Located at Saint Mary of Mercy Church (Divine Mercy Parish), The Red Door ministry has unfailingly fed the hungry since the Great Depression.

What began as a simple sidewalk outreach is now a daily lifeline for hundreds of people. Today, their needs are greater than at any point in recent memory, as cuts hit many government social

services and federal grant recipients.

“The need continues to grow,” said Father Nicholas Vaskov, pastor of the Shrines of Pittsburgh and Divine Mercy Parish. “Jesus said,

‘The poor you will have with you always.’ We’ve witnessed that. In some ways, what we do is simple. We fill the need that’s in front of us. We offer consistency and stability.”

For Terry, one of the men

who regularly comes to The Red Door for lunch, that consistency has become something he can count on.

That consistency matters. This past summer, The Red Door saw its daily meal numbers jump from about 150 lunches a day to 350. Relying entirely on volunteers and donations, the ministry serves lunch seven days a week and a hot dinner every Thursday evening.

As more neighbors faced food insecurity, rising rent, SNAP benefit delays, and the closure of other meal programs Downtown, the lines at The Red Door grew longer. People waited in sometimes harsh weather.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, which has moved into the former diocesan pastoral center adjacent to the Red Door, stepped in to help by creating

an indoor dining area in a former auditorium.

"People can come inside to get out of the cold in the winter and the heat in the summer," Father Nick shared. "They can sit, rest, charge their phones, and meet with caseworkers from Catholic Charities if they need help beyond a meal."

Meals continue to be prepared in the kitchen of St. Mary of Mercy Church and distributed by Red Door volunteers, while Catholic Charities provides indoor dining space, security, hospitality, cleaning, and a supportive environment for people to connect with services.

Together, the Red Door and the many social services at Catholic Charities are known as Compassion Corner, for their location at the intersection of Stanwix Street and the Boulevard of the Allies.

"This collaboration works because both ministries see feeding the hungry as a calling of the Gospel," said Susan Rauscher, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh. "The Red Door continues its tremendous legacy, and Catholic Charities enhances

that tradition by offering a dignified, welcoming place for people to eat and receive help."

While feeding the hungry is a shared mission of both organizations, Compassion Corner makes possible what the sidewalk could not: a space where guests are welcomed with dignity and invited into a community of care.

For Terry, who comes to the Red Door for lunch and now eats inside at Compassion Corner, that dignity is deeply personal.

Speaking about Catholic Charities caseworker Anastasia Friesen, Terry said, "She's been a very good support system." He comes for the meals, but what keeps him returning is the sense of welcome he finds inside.

"The people make me feel warm when I come in," Terry said. "It makes me feel like I have something to offer when I come in."

Reflecting on his own past, Terry added, "I had a very rough childhood, and the people at Catholic Charities are the type of people that I can sit down and talk to."

On the first floor of Catholic Charities, guests can enjoy a meal, rest, and



"IN SOME WAYS, WHAT WE DO IS SIMPLE. WE FILL THE NEED THAT'S IN FRONT OF US. WE OFFER CONSISTENCY AND STABILITY."

talk with volunteers and case managers. These simple human interactions often become the doorway to life-changing support. A meal may bring someone through the door, but access to

compassionate support can help them take the next step.

Susan Rauscher, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Charities, sees that need growing every day.

"Hunger and homelessness



"THE RED DOOR CONTINUES ITS TREMENDOUS LEGACY, AND CATHOLIC CHARITIES ENHANCES THAT TRADITION BY OFFERING A DIGNIFIED, WELCOMING PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO EAT AND RECEIVE HELP."



have grown dramatically over the past year," Susan said. "There are regularly days when more than 200 individuals come for meals."

Catholic Charities' broader programming has seen similar trends. From July 2024 to June 2025, the organization served 34,836 clients, a 42% increase from the previous fiscal year.

The reasons are layered and intertwining:

- Rising housing costs
- Limited shelter beds
- More families facing eviction
- The recent SNAP benefit delay
- Closures of other local food sites

Since Downtown is a hub for public transit and support services, many individuals experiencing hardship come from throughout Greater Pittsburgh to seek help at these two ministries.

Upstairs, Catholic Charities provides many services:

- The Gismondi Job Training Program for wiring, cabling,

and fiber optics careers

- Free medical and dental clinics
- A Mental Wellness Program with opportunities such as art therapy
- Baby essentials, packed by volunteers for vulnerable parents
- Utility assistance through Duquesne Light's Customer Assistance Program

"It's a beautiful place," Susan said. "Not because of the building itself, but because of what happens inside."

As Lent approaches, a season when Catholics are called to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the collaboration between the Red Door and Catholic Charities is a living example of what it means to feed the hungry with love and dignity. Both ministries view their partnership as an expression of Christ's command to feed the hungry and care for those in need.

"Every day, we see hope," Father Nick said. "We see generosity at work. People

5 WAYS TO FEED THE HUNGRY THIS LENT

Volunteer at the Red Door. Volunteers must be 18 or older and meet diocesan safe environment requirements.

Donate food or supplies. The Red Door relies entirely on the generosity of donors.

Support Catholic Charities. Your gift helps sustain indoor dining and essential services. Donate here: <https://ccpgh.org/>

Pray for neighbors in need. Hold those facing hunger in prayer throughout Lent.

Invite others to help. Organize a food drive or collection to support the ministry.

sharing their time and gifts. And when someone walks out with a smile, it's God's love at work."

The workers and volunteers at Catholic Charities "feel

privileged to serve," Susan said. "The need is growing, and we are committed to responding with compassion, healing, and hope. Every person we help matters." †



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▲ Father Kevin Dominik, Director of the Office of Priestly Vocations, speaks about priesthood during an annual vocations retreat of juniors from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Answering God's call

Parishioners help parishioners discern priesthood, religious life

BY ANN RODGERS

**FATHER KEVIN DOMINIK
WANTS TO SPEAK WITH
ANYONE WHO IS SEEKING
GOD'S PATH FOR THEIR LIFE.**

He will help people discern whether they may be called to marriage, or singleness or to consecrated life. But the vocations director for the Catholic Diocese

of Pittsburgh is intensely focused on men who sense a call to priesthood. Bishop Mark Eckman has asked him to double seminary enrollment from 34 to 68.

Discerning a vocation is difficult in today's society, Father Dominik said.

"We assume that we are all going to get a college degree and a master's degree and then a job – and find fulfillment in that. And the reality is, that's nice, but how are we using the gift that God has given us?"

Men often enter seminary after several years in their dream profession, which they had worked hard to attain but did not find fulfilling, he said.

He has been searching for men who are searching. He visits schools, participates in men's retreats, holds monthly gatherings for inquirers and fields questions via phone and www.pghpriest.com. Now, he is enlisting assistance from every parishioner through Called By Name, which encourages all Catholics to prayerfully suggest others who might become good priests or religious.

“

Praying is the most important element – praying for those who are discerning, praying about who we might be asking and praying for them to answer with that 'yes.'”

The centerpiece is a pew card for parishioners to write the names of people they believe exhibit the characteristics of leadership and holiness necessary for priesthood or religious life. To support this effort with publicity and education, each parish has formed a vocations council.

"We want to give every parish all the tools they need, from bulletin blurbs to homily helps," Father Kevin said. "Praying is the most important element – praying for those who are discerning, praying about who we might be asking and praying for them to answer with that 'yes.'"

Those whose names are submitted will be invited to a dinner where Bishop Eckman will speak and pray with them about a possible vocation.

Priesthood isn't just another profession. It is a lifelong commitment to serve the Church, which, in the Roman Catholic Church, precludes marriage.

"But with the help of God, they understand that it's not just their call," Father Kevin said. "It's a two-way street. God is calling them."

His own call was quiet and slow. Now 63, Father Kevin was ordained in 1988. Initially, he had earned a degree in religious education at Saint Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Mich., but sensed no call to its affiliated seminary. He loved teaching young people about the faith. He dated and fell in love with a young woman – who went off to become a missionary.

"I came back here to Pittsburgh," he said.

He began to wonder if his gifts indicated a call to priesthood. Praying continually for God's guidance "I just kept making those steps, up to that of priesthood."

His seminary experience differed greatly from that of today. Back then, men who were long out of school, perhaps with degrees in math or engineering, were plunged into academic philosophy. They had no field experience

of parish service until their final year.

Today all seminarians begin with a "propaedeutic" year. The eye-glazing Latin word means "early instruction," and is a spiritual and practical immersion into parish leadership. Each first-year seminarian is assigned to work at a parish, mentored by the pastor. He lives at the seminary, entering into a life of prayer, receiving spiritual direction and studying Scripture and the basics of the faith.

The propaedeutic year is followed by two years of "discipleship" -- basic academic and spiritual formation.

"It's saying I want to follow Jesus. I'm excited about this," Father Kevin said.

Next come three years of "configuration." These are deep studies in theology, "in which we are configuring ourselves to be like Jesus," he said.

The final year of study, after diaconate ordination, is for "synthesis."

"It's to pull together everything that they have studied," Father Kevin said.

Along the way, some seminarians "discern out," concluding that priesthood is not their call. Others may leave for a time, then return. Neither is considered failure.

"We walk with these individuals – hopefully to the altar of God for their ordination. But then we are also excited to walk with him to the altar of God for their marriage," Father Kevin said. "If they have found in their time with us that priesthood is not fulfilling what they are called to do, then we are blessed to have young men trained in Catholicism who can step up in our parishes and be very strong Catholic husbands and fathers."

What all the vocations have in common is that they are about a relationship – first of all with God, but also with the Church, with a spouse, with a community or with some other kind of service, he said.

In each case, "you have to work at that relationship. You have to understand it. There's a lot of give and take. A lot of discussion and arguments," he said.

"It's wise to ask questions and essential to seek God's guidance with all your heart. Priesthood is the most fulfilling vocation imaginable. Priests are happy – happy in giving their whole lives to serve God and the people of their parishes." †



▲ Seminarian Ben Remlinger gives a witness talk to juniors at the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart vocations retreat, part of a team of seminarians who join Father Dominik for such events.



Lenten Fish Fry Guide

COMPILED BY BILL HILL AND CARMEL MILLER

Enjoy a parish fish fry for food and fellowship. *Unless otherwise noted, dates are for Lent 2026 only.* Check parish websites or bulletins for menus, details and changes.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY – City of Pittsburgh

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (Polish Hill) • Rosary Hall • Fridays, not Good Friday, 3-6:30pm • Dine-in or takeout •

Order: 412-621-5441 starting Fri. noon.

Mary, Queen of Peace Parish (South Side) • Parish hall • Fridays, not Good Friday, 11am-2pm, 3:30-7:30pm • Dine-in or takeout, drive-thru pickup available

• Order: smomff.square.site or 412-481-9390 • Info: mqpeace.org/fish-fry

Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish (Troy Hill) • School building • Fridays, not Good Friday, 3-6:30pm • Dine-in or takeout • Order: pghshrines.org/fishfry

St. Jude Parish • Sacred Heart cafeteria (Shadyside) • Fridays, not Good Friday, 5-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • Online orders after 3:30pm: st.judepgh.org/fish-fry • Phone orders after 4pm: 412-441-1582 ext. 204

St. Teresa of Kolkata Parish (Beechview)

• St. Catherine of Siena social hall (below church) • Fridays, not Good Friday, 11am-2pm, 3-7pm • No curbside • 412-531-2135 ext. 219 • Pre-order Mon-Thurs: stteresakolkatapgh.org

ALLEGHENY COUNTY –**North, outside the city****Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish** • St.

Teresa of Avila (Perryville) • Fridays, Good Friday • Dine-in 4:30-7:30pm or drive-thru 4:30-7pm • No pre-orders • mountcarmelpgh.org

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish • St.

Mary of the Assumption, Marian Hall, Glenshaw • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • Curbside pickup • Order: olphpg.org/fish-fry or 412-684-1112 • Assistance: 412-486-4100 (office hours)

St. Aidan Parish • St. Alphonsus campus,

Blessed Francis Seelos Academy, Wexford • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday • Dine-in 4:30-7:30pm; takeout 4:30-7pm • Online orders: saintaidanparish.org/fishfry, or call after 2pm: 724-931-0596

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish • Ss. John

and Paul Church hall • Franklin Park • Fridays, not Good Friday • No curbside • Hours, info & orders: saintluke.net/fishfry

ALLEGHENY COUNTY –**East, outside the city****Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish** • St.

Bernadette campus, Lourdes Center, Monroeville • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4:30-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • Order: cdsfishfry.org

Christ the Divine Teacher Catholic

Academy, Aspinwall • Friday, Feb. 20 and Friday, March 20 • Lunch is takeout only, 11am-1pm • Dine-in, takeout, curbside, 4-7pm • Order: 412-781-7927 or christthekingpgh.org

Guardian Angels Parish • Most Blessed

Sacrament campus • Natrona Heights • Fridays 4-7pm, not Good Friday • Drive-thru only • Menu: guardianangelspgh.org • 724-226-4900

Holy Family Parish • three sites •

holyfamilypgh.org • 412-793-4511 • All dine-in and takeout • Order ahead only at St. Irenaeus, Oakmont • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday • Lunch 11am-1pm; dinner 4-7pm • St. John the Baptist, Holy Family School, Plum • Fridays only, not Good Friday 4-7pm • Our Lady of Joy (Knights of Columbus), Plum • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday, 4-7pm

Our Lady of the Lakes Parish • St. Victor

campus, activity building, Bairdport • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday • 3-6:30pm • Orders start 2:45pm: 724-265-4017 • No online orders or curbside • ollakes.org/fish-fry

ALLEGHENY COUNTY –**South, outside the city****Blessed Trinity Parish** • St. Albert the

Great Parish Center, Baldwin • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday, 11am-2pm & 3-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • 412-440-0221 • blessedtrinitypgh.org

Corpus Christi Parish • St. Barbara Church

Hall, Bridgeville • Feb. 20, March 6, 20, 11am-1pm; dinner 4-7pm • Dine-in or takeout, no curbside • Orders: 412-914-3461 • Online orders until midnight Thurs: corpuschristiPGH.org

Mary, Mother of God Parish • Corpus

Christi Hall, McKeesport • Fridays, not Good Friday • 10am-7pm • No curbside • Delivery until 6pm • 412-672-2220 • Menu: marymotherofgod1.org

Our Lady of Hope Parish • 2 sites • Menu

and details: www.olhpg.org • St. Valentine, Frawley Hall, Bethel Park • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4:30-7pm • Orders: olhpg.org before 2 pm Thurs; or by phone Fri. 2-6pm, 412-851-9176 • Pickup starts 4:30pm, no curbside • Online payment preferred; ATM in Frawley Hall or checks payable to Our Lady of Hope • St. Gabriel, Whitehall • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • Orders: Fri. 3-6pm, 412-881-0495 • No online orders

Resurrection Parish • St. Thomas More,

Bethel Park • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4:30-7pm • Dine-in at Family Life Center

• Curbside pickup and drive-up orders in front of Ave Maria Academy (behind church) • Online for takeout only Sat-Thurs: resurrectionpgh.org • No phone orders

St. Catherine Labouré Parish • St. Louise

de Marillac cafeteria, Upper St. Clair • Fridays 4-7pm, not Good Friday • Dine-in or takeout • sldm.srccs.org/family-fish-fry

Ss. Joachim and Anne Parish • Two sites

• St. Michael, Fridays, not Good Friday 3:30-6:30pm • Dine-in or takeout 412-751-0663, ext 7 • Queen of the Rosary • Ash Wednesday, Fridays and Good Friday, 11am-6:30pm • Dine-in or takeout 412-872-5136 or 412-672-7209

St. Michael the Archangel Parish • St.

Bernard, Clairvaux Hall (lower level), Mt. Lebanon • Fridays, not Good Friday, 11:30am-1:30pm, 4-7:30pm • Dine-in or takeout • Order: 412-440-2697 • Info: smapgh.org

St. Paul of the Cross Parish • South

Hills Catholic Academy gym (old St. Anne School), Castle Shannon • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • Orders: 3:30-6:30pm • Info: stpaulofthecross.com/news

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish • two sites

• Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday. • thomastheapostle.net • St. Maximilian Kolbe, Homestead • 11am - 6:30pm • Will deliver to businesses for \$50 minimum • 412-462-1743 • St. Agnes, West Mifflin • 11am-6:30pm • 412-466-5500

Triumph of the Holy Cross Parish Info:

triumphoftheholycrosspgh.org

ALLEGHENY COUNTY –**West, outside the city****Archangel Gabriel Parish** • St. Malachy

cafeteria (lower lot), Coraopolis • Fridays, not Good Friday 11am-7pm • phone orders start 10am 412-771-0848 • No online orders or curbside • Info: 412-787-2140 ArchangelGabrielParish.org/FishFry

Divine Redeemer Parish • St. James

cafeteria, Sewickley • Fridays, not Good

Friday, 4:30-7pm • Order: 412-528-1030 or DRfishfry.com • Takeout in Gathering Space (not cafeteria) • No curbside

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish •

St. Joseph, Coraopolis • Fridays, Good Friday, 3-7pm • Order: Fri. 1:30-6:30pm, 412-329-7911 at least 30 minutes ahead • No online or curbside • Menu: www.mshj.org

St. Philip Parish • Ascension, Conner Hall, Crafton • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, Good Friday, 4-7pm • No phone or online orders • No curbside • Dine-in or takeout • saintphilipparishpgh.com

St. Raphael the Archangel Parish • Ss. Simon and Jude Parish Life Center gym, Green Tree • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4:30-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • Orders: straphaelcgs.org

Regina Coeli Parish • Assumption, McGovern Hall, Bellevue • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • Phone orders start 3pm 412-307-7724 • No online or curbside • Details: reginacoeliparish.org/fish-fry

BEAVER COUNTY

Mary, Queen of Saints Parish • two sites • St. Titus, Titan Hall, Aliquippa • Potato pierogi only Feb.18, 27 March 13, 27, noon-6pm • Advance orders: 724-378-8374 • Day of sale or takeout: 724-378-2734 • maryqueenofsaints.org • Our Lady of Fatima School, Kohler Hall, Hopewell • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • Curbside available • ourladyoffatima-hopewell.org

Our Lady of the Valley Parish • two sites: St. Cecilia social hall, Rochester • Fridays, Good Friday, 11am-6pm • Orders: stceciaroc.square.site, 724-775-3775 or 724-709-7426 • Dine-in, takeout, curbside or delivery 11am-1pm • Ss. Peter & Paul School cafeteria, Beaver • Fridays, 11am-7pm; Good Friday (takeout only) 3-7pm or until sold out • 724-359-2548 or 412-496-1272

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish • Good Samaritan, (Jericho Hall) Ambridge •

724-266-6010 • Fridays, Feb. 13 through March 27, 3-6pm, not Good Friday • No curbside • Info: saintluke.net/fishfry

BUTLER COUNTY

All Saints Parish • St. Conrad social center • 125 Buttercup Rd., Butler • Fridays, not Good Friday • 4-6:30pm • Takeout only • Order: Fri. noon-4pm allsaintsbutler.org/fish-fry-1 • Curbside • No phone orders

Divine Grace Parish • St. Ferdinand Church, Oldenski Hall • 2535 Rochester Rd., Cranberry • Ash Wednesday & Fridays, 11:30am-1 pm, 4-7pm; Good Friday 3-7 pm • Order: 724-776-2899 • divinegracepgh.org/fish-fry

St. Faustina Parish • two sites • Info: stfaustinaparish.org • St. Peter, Slippery Rock • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • St. Louis, West Sunbury • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-6pm • No phone orders or curbside

St. Francis of Assisi Parish • St. Mary of the Assumption School, Herman • Fridays (Feb.13-March 27) not Good Friday, 3-6pm • Takeout orders only, option to eat in • No pre-orders, no drive-thru or curbside • saintfrancisparish.net

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish • St. Kilian Church and School • 7076 Franklin Rd., Cranberry • Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7:30pm • Dine-in or takeout • Order: 2-7pm 724-625-1665 • No curbside • saintmark.org/fishfry

St. Wendelin School • St. Wendelin Church hall, Butler • Good Friday 3-7pm • Dine-in or takeout • No curbside or pre-orders

GREENE COUNTY

St. Matthias Parish • two sites • stmatthiasgreene.org • St. Ann Church, Waynesburg • 724-627-7568 • Most Fridays starting Feb 20: 11:30am-1pm, 4-6:30pm; Good Friday: 11am-1pm • St. Marcellus Church, Jefferson • 724-883-2445 • Fridays, Good Friday, 11:30am-6:30pm

LAWRENCE COUNTY

Holy Spirit Parish • St. Vitus gym, 915 S. Jefferson St., New Castle • Fridays, not Good Friday, 11am-6pm • Dine-in or takeout • Orders: Fri. 10am-5pm, 724-652-5538 • Info: 724-652-3422 • hsplc.org

WASHINGTON COUNTY

St. Andrew the Apostle Parish • Donora social hall • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, 11am-6pm • Drive-thru only, curbside pickup • Orders: 724-379-7559 or saintandrewmidmon.org

St. Isidore the Farmer Parish • two sites • stisidorethefarmer.org • St. Alphonsus Hall, McDonald • Ash Wednesday and Feb. 20, 11am-7pm • Takeout option • No pre-orders • Our Lady of Lourdes Hall, Burgettstown • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, not Good Friday, 4-7pm • Takeout option • Orders start 2pm: 724-947-5076

St. James Parish • St. James Parish & JFK School • Immaculate Conception Hall, Washington • Ash Wednesday and Fridays, not Good Friday, dine-in or takeout 10:30am-6pm • Orders: 9am-5pm 724-222-9737 • Debit/credit card over \$10 • Menu: catholicpartnerparishes.org

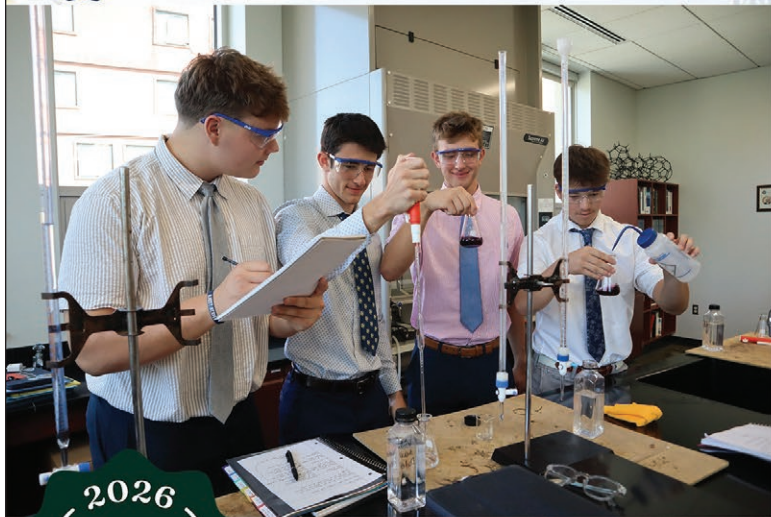
St. John XXIII Parish • two sites • john23.org • St. Francis of Assisi Church, Finley Hall, Finleyville • Ash Wednesday, 11am-6pm • No pre-orders or curbside • St. Benedict the Abbot Church, Pope Benedict Activity Center, McMurray • Fridays, not Good Friday, 11am-1pm; 4-7pm • Pre-orders lunch only • No curbside •

St. Katharine Drexel Parish • Drexel Hall, Bentleyville • Feb. 6 & 13, Ash Wednesday, Fridays, not Good Friday, 10:30am-6pm • Orders start at 10am: 724-209-1370, ext. 424 • Takeout and curbside available. Menu: catholicpartnerparishes.org

St. Oscar Romero Parish • two sites • Ash Wednesday, Fridays, not Good Friday, 11am-7pm. Orders: romeroparishfishfry.square.site • Miraculous Medal Banquet Hall, Meadowlands • Dine-in, takeout, curbside • St. Patrick, Canonsburg • Takeout and curbside only • 724-416-3873



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Scouting builds skills and shapes souls

BY PAM SURANO

At Corpus Christi Parish in Bridgeville, 16-year-old Patiance Nugent is an Eagle Scout who has earned merit badges for her understanding and practice of Catholicism.

“Each award taught me something new about my faith, and helped me grow closer to God,” she said.

The Parvuli Dei (Children of God) emblem recognized activities she had undertaken to show her love for God, her family and her parish. In middle school, the Ad Altare Dei (To the Altar of God) medal required a deeper study of Scripture and greater parish involvement. Most recently the Pope Pius XII medal engaged her in intense exploration of what God was calling her to do with her life.

So naturally, “my Eagle Scout project was a way I could give back to my Church community,” she said.

She led a renovation of the outdoor space at Holy Child Church (Corpus Christi Parish) in Bridgeville, overseeing the construction of a firepit and accompanying woodshed, as well as the restoration of picnic tables.

“Scouting can share in the mission of the Church to form disciples,” said Jonah Soucy, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

He believes that camping, wilderness skills and other outdoor activities give young people the opportunity to encounter God without distraction in the beauty of His creation.

Scouting, including Catholic Scouting, has undergone recent organizational changes. The former Boy Scouts of America is now Scouting America to reflect its commitment to both boys and girls. Girl Scouts of the USA continues.

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Catholic Committee on Scouting supports families who want faith to be integrated into their child’s scouting experience. The committee connects them with supportive troop leaders and hosts the annual Scouting Convocation at Saint Paul Cathedral, where the bishop presents faith awards at Mass.

Earning the faith awards makes a discernible difference in the scouts’ lives, said Gerri Maurer, who chairs Pittsburgh’s Catholic Committee on Scouting. She often hears scouts in deep conversations about Christ and the Church while working on their emblems.

The work “emboldens their faith” she said. “It draws them into their faith in ways they might not experience otherwise.”

That starts early, rooted in the scouting pledge “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God ...”



▲ Eagle Scout, Patiance Nugent wearing all three Catholic religion awards on her shirt



▲ Girl Scout, Rachel Friday and the Rubik's Cube Project at Saint Louise de Marillac School in Upper St Clair



▲ Eagle Scout, Patiance Nugent and completed woodshed Eagle Project at Holy Child Church in Bridgeville

For 11-year-old Michael Barker, a sixth grader at Mother of Mercy Academy in Whitehall, scouting and faith go hand in hand. “I told my friend about Jesus,” he said.

His 8-year-old friend then told his family, and soon they started going to church.

Michael’s younger sister is also a scout. Scouting has provided an opportunity to combine faith with love of nature and the outdoors when her troop visited a Christian horse farm.

Parents see scouting as an opportunity for children to put their values into action.

At Saint John XXIII Parish in McMurray, 15-year-old Rachel Friday says Girl Scouts has helped her grow in faith and leadership. She earned the Family of God pin, and the Saint Kateri patch for religious knowledge. Currently she is pursuing the Mary, the First Disciple Award, learning to better emulate the Blessed Mother. Each helped her learn about Scripture, the sacraments, and the saints.

Among her scouting projects, she started a Rubik’s Cube Club at Saint Louise de Marillac School in Upper Saint Clair, using the notoriously frustrating puzzle to teach students the virtue of perseverance along with problem-solving skills.

“Selling cookies, earning badges and awards, going to camp and overall being an empowered young leader improved my



▲ 70th Convocation with Bishop David Zubik -Scouts receive Catholic Awards at Saint Paul Cathedral



▲ Eagle Scout, Caleb Anthony and Mom and Dad Mary Lynn and Jeff Anthony



▲ Girl Scout, Rachel Friday receiving her Saint Kateri Award with Bishop Eckman at Saint Paul Cathedral

confidence and helped me gain experience in the real world," Rachel said of scouting.

Caleb Anthony, a senior at Seton LaSalle High School in Mt. Lebanon is an Eagle Scout with Troop 23 in Dormont. He is grateful that the outdoor activities and built-in social life makes it easier to lessen his time on digital screens.

His Eagle project brought him to South Hills Catholic Academy in Castle Shannon, which he had attended when it was Saint Anne School. Supported by other scouts, family and friends, he led the project to build new shelves for the sports closet, restore the free lending library and repaint the playground railings.

"It felt good to give back," he said.

Lindsay Seibel from the Laurel Highlands Council of Scouting America, which covers 14 counties in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia, sees renewed interest in scouting as parents seek good mentors, solid values and alternatives to social media.

"Our youth are at a time when the world is confusing, and they need guidance," she said.

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Jonah hopes to build stronger connections between youth ministry and scouting troops

"At its heart, scouting is about much more than learning outdoor skills," Jonah said. "It gives young people room to grow into the people God is calling them to be." †

Scouting impacts a family, produces a priest



Father Tom Burke grew up as part of a thriving Cub Scout pack and Boy Scout troop at Saint Norbert Parish in Overbrook. Boys packed the parish hall, working on projects and planning campouts.

"We were always camping," said Father Tom, pastor of Saints Joachim and Anne Parish in southeastern Allegheny County. In scouting, "you talk about God and country, nature, respecting your body, morals, values, and praying."

Faith and scouting were central to the Burke household. Both spurred him to be an altar server, a lector, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and later a CCD teacher. His father, Bill, was the Scoutmaster. His mother, Margaret, stitched each merit badge onto his uniform as soon as he earned it.

His sisters, Linda and Lisa, were Girl Scouts. Four of their seven sons became Eagle Scouts and all later had service-oriented careers, such as firefighter and teacher.

"How they turned out, all seven of them, their morals and values, their faith and career choices, scouting had a very positive impact," said Father Tom.

"No matter how young or old you are, scouting still lives with you."

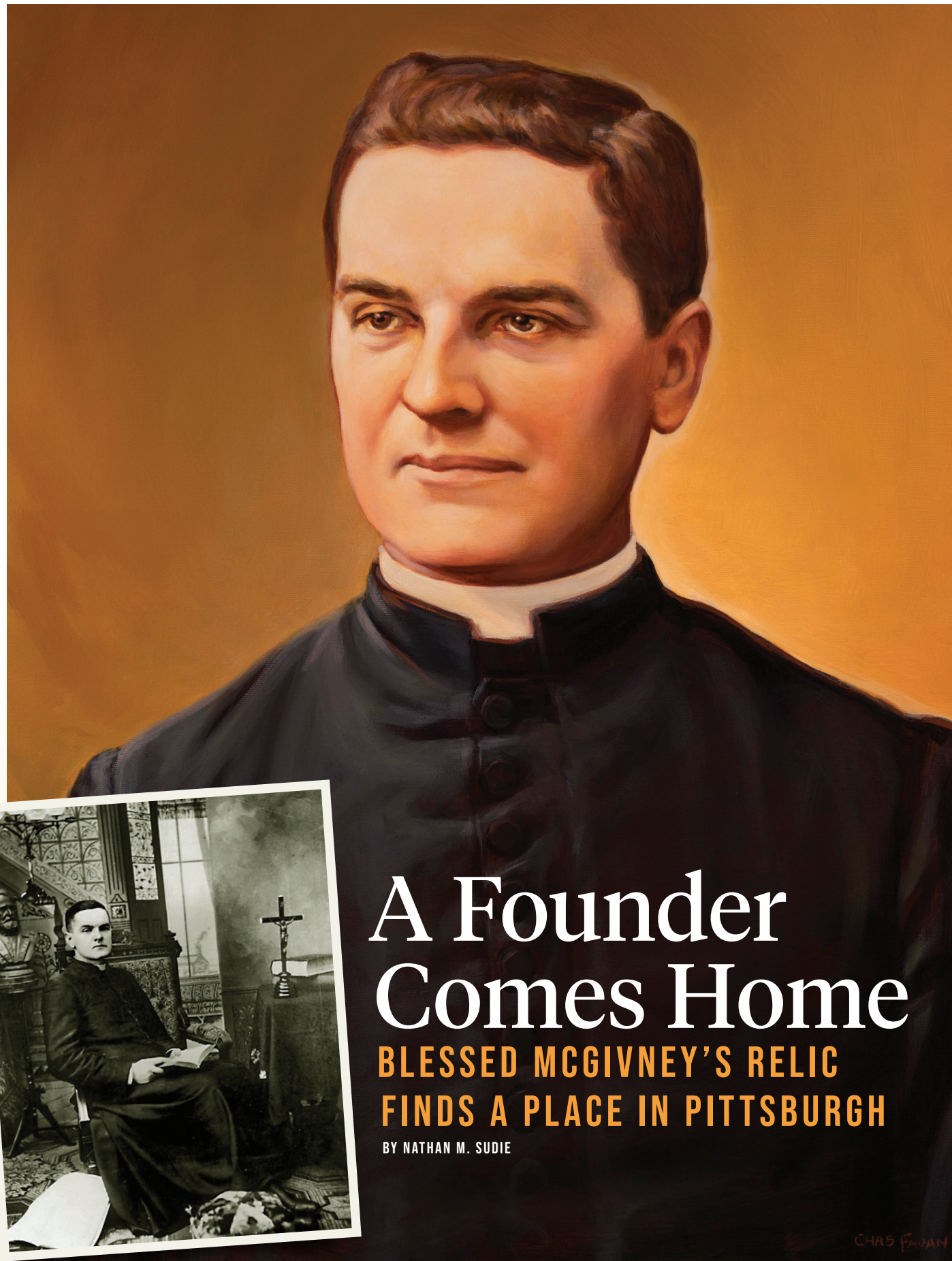
As a student at Clarion University, Father Tom dreamed of doing broadcast radio. Instead he worked in marketing before becoming a District Executive for the Boy Scouts. He was overseeing a Cub Scout sign-up when a priest asked if he had ever considered priesthood. He prayed about it and enrolled in seminary a year later.

Today, in addition to being a pastor, Father Tom hosts *Catholic Education Plus* on KDKA Radio. The show about Catholic schools and the values that sustain them brings his broadcasting dream full circle.

"Scouting made me a better person," he said. "It led me exactly where God wanted me to be."



▲ Father Tom and nephews (L to) Donovan Schueler, Father Tom Burke, Wyatt Schueler



A Founder Comes Home

**BLESSED MCGIVNEY'S RELIC
FINDS A PLACE IN PITTSBURGH**

BY NATHAN M. SUDIE

CHAS FIDAN



As Ted Schorr carried a relic of Blessed Michael J. McGivney in the procession for its installation at Saint Anthony Chapel, he could feel the holiness of the founder of the Knights of Columbus.

Months before, one of Ted's brother Knights of Columbus had undergone routine surgery that turned into an emergency with a fatal prognosis. Desperate, another knight obtained a first-class relic, a fragment of the mortal remains of Blessed McGivney. The knights took the relic to the bedside of their dying friend and prayed for Blessed McGivney's intercession.

"Two days later, he was up and talking," Ted said.

That experience convinced him that Saint Anthony Chapel needed a relic of Blessed McGivney. Located atop Pittsburgh's Troy Hill, Saint Anthony is home to the largest collection of relics outside the Vatican. Most of the chapel's more than 5,000 relics were collected in the 19th century, but new saints

continue to be added.

Ted's older brother, the late Father W. David Schorr, had been pastor of Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, where the chapel is located, from 1989 until 2008. Father David baptized two of Ted's grandsons and celebrated the marriage of Ted's youngest daughter there.

"The chapel is a family place for me," Ted said.

It seemed fitting to return there with a relic of a priest who devoted his life to strengthening Catholic families.

Blessed McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus in New Haven, Conn., in 1882 at a time when many Catholic immigrant families faced significant social and economic challenges. Language barriers, cultural differences, and demanding working conditions often made family

life precarious, especially when illness, injury or death struck. With few protections in place, widows and children were especially vulnerable. Father McGivney responded by creating a fraternity rooted in charity, unity and faith, dedicated to supporting families and strengthening their Catholic identity.

"I initially decided to become a knight to make friends," Ted said. "The knights have proven to me that there are a lot of good men who look out for each other and their families."

A prime example was obtaining the relic of Blessed McGivney to pray for their brother knight. That relic is different from the one obtained for the chapel – a second-class relic consisting of a piece of Blessed McGivney's cassock.

"Wherever there is a relic of Blessed McGivney present, my hope is that knights will visit and say a prayer through his intercession," Ted said.

Since his beatification in 2020, devotion to Blessed McGivney has grown steadily. Saint Anthony Chapel is

already a place of international pilgrimage and is part of the Shrines of Pittsburgh.

At the special Mass held at Saint Anthony's on October 23, 2025, Ted witnessed a large turnout of fourth-degree Knights of Columbus, who stood guard in their ceremonial uniforms. The state chaplain, the state deputy, and two past state deputies were present to participate.

Ted was awed to be entrusted with the relic of Blessed McGivney's cassock – the garment in which he had been buried before being exhumed as part of the beatification process. He carried it in the procession and saw it take its place among the relics of thousands of other saints.

Ted hopes that Blessed McGivney's relic at Saint Anthony Chapel will inspire even greater devotion, renewed acts of charity, and continued growth in the life of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

"Father McGivney is here," he said. "And we can feel his presence." †

Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Michael McGivney

Founder of the Knights of Columbus

God, our Father, protector of the poor and defender of the widow and orphan, you called your priest, Blessed Michael McGivney, to be an apostle of Christian family life and to lead the young to the generous service of their neighbor. Through the example of his life and virtue, may we follow your Son, Jesus Christ, more closely, fulfilling his commandment of charity and building up his Body which is the Church. Let the inspiration of your servant prompt us to greater confidence in your love so that we may continue his work of caring for the needy and the outcast. We humbly ask that you glorify Blessed Michael McGivney on earth according to the design of your holy will. Through his intercession, grant the favor I now present (*here make your request*). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Please report all favors received:

The Father McGivney Guild
1 Columbus Plaza
New Haven, CT 06510-3326 • USA
www.fathermcgivney.org

Painting by Chas Fagan © Knights of Columbus

Saint Philip Catholic Parish

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invites you and your family to join us during this holy Season of Lent as we deepen our life in the Lord Jesus!

Ash Wednesday Schedule

8:00 AM Mass	Saint Philip Church	50 West Crafton Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15205
12:00 Noon Service	Ascension Church	114 Berry Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15205
4:00 PM Service	Saint Philip Church	50 West Crafton Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15205
7:00 PM Mass	Ascension Church	114 Berry Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Also, join us Wednesday evenings in Lent for our FREE Soup, Salad and Speaker Series at Ascension church. Our theme this Lent is "Create in me a new heart!"

Our annual Lenten Fish Fry will be held on Ash Wednesday and every Friday in Father Conner Hall at Ascension church, 4:00pm to 7:00pm.

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GOOD SHEPHERDS

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

► “Good Shepherds” highlights members of our clergy whose faithful service reflects Christ’s shepherding heart. These reflections are offered with gratitude and hope for the future of vocations in our diocese.

GOOD SHEPHERDS: Father Mike Ackerman

Anne and Dave Paolicelli have formed a deep connection to Father Mike Ackerman at Resurrection Parish in the South Hills, which they attend with their daughters Elizabeth and Theresa. His compelling homilies and clear love of God and the people have made the parish into their true home, shaped by the warmth of the community and Father Mike’s joyful leadership.

Anne now serves as a lector, and Dave was invited to join the parish’s finance council. Their daughters enjoy serving as altar servers for Father Mike and the other priests of the parish, something Anne sees as a sign of the welcoming, faith-filled environment he helps create.

“I saw Father Mike ask for an appeal from the pulpit, and everyone applauded,” Anne recalls. “He has no ego. He’s a true servant. He is charismatic, genuine, and humble, what a magic combination.”

A former history teacher, Father Mike brings a love of learning into his homilies. “We learn from him every week,” Anne says. “He teaches us.”

Anne also said Father Mike has a gift for connecting with parishioners of all ages and shows up, consistently and fully, for parish life.

One moment stands out in a special way: Father Mike took time out of his day to administer the anointing of the sick to Anne’s father while he was in the hospital.

“The light of Christ shines through him probably brighter than anyone I’ve seen,” Anne said. “He enjoys his vocation. You can see it. And watching him enjoy it attracts others. He’s leading the way.” †



▲ Left to right - Dave Paolicelli, Anne Paolicelli, Father Mike, Elizabeth Paolicelli, Teresa Paolicelli - Resurrection Parish May 22, 2022.

The Pittsburgh Catholic welcomes submissions for our “Good Shepherds” feature. Please email communications@diopitt.org to share a story.

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Good News

in our Elementary Schools



▲ Norman and Denise Warren stand with their children, Noah, Nolan and Nyomi as they celebrate Student of the Month honors at Saint Benedict the Moor School.

Saint Benedict the Moor School, Pittsburgh

Fourth graders Nolan and Noah Warren and their sister, first grader Nyomi, were recognized as students of the month at Saint Benedict the Moor School.

The honor is supported by the Extra Mile Foundation, a Pittsburgh nonprofit that makes Catholic education accessible and affordable.

Students are selected for the award based on academic effort, consistent attendance, and the core values of being prepared, respectful, and kind.

The family joined the school community this year.

Principal Jennifer Farrand said the Warrens have “embraced everything it means to be a St. Benedict the Moor scholar.”

Saint James School, Sewickley

The Saint James School Robotics Team has begun hands-on building and problem solving through the FIRST LEGO League.

The program, run by a nonprofit, helps young people explore creative robotics and STEM projects require teamwork and real-world skills.

Saint James students worked together to design LEGO models, programming a small robot to complete multiple challenges. The activities taught them project management and other professional skills, such as idea-sharing, encouragement, and respect for others.

In their first scrimmage at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy, the SJS Robotics Team placed in the top 10 overall.



▲ Students from the Saint James School Robotics Team run their robot through a mission challenge.

Good News

in our High Schools



▲ Central Catholic students ask questions during Q&A with former Polish President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Wałęsa.

Central Catholic High School, Pittsburgh

Students at Central Catholic welcomed former Polish President Lech Wałęsa for a visit to the school.

Wałęsa, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, led the Solidarity movement in the 1980s that, with moral support from Pope John Paul II, led to the end of communist rule in Poland. Central and Eastern Europe soon followed..

Wałęsa was an electrician before becoming the first democratically elected president of Poland. He spoke with students about his life and the road to his country’s democracy.

The visit was part of the Brother David S. Baginski, FSC Scholars Program, which encourages students to explore leadership, history, and global issues.

Students asked Wałęsa about the challenges he faced and about the responsibility young people have to shape the world today.

“By applying his historical insight and expertise, I was able to better understand the world around me, which is especially important as I navigate a senior thesis project relating to contemporary politics,” said senior Brian Lemon.



▲ Former Polish President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Wałęsa meets students in Central Catholic’s Brother David S. Baginski, FSC Scholars Program.

Bishop Canevin High School, East Carnegie

Betsy's Place is more than a coffee shop. For four years, the student-run cafe has been an opportunity to learn and grow as Bishop Canevin High school students make and serve coffee, smoothies and breakfast treats.

It honors the memory and kindness of alumna Elizabeth "Betsy" Gannon, who died in a mass shooting at a nearby LA Fitness in 2009.

The café and kitchenette are integrated into Canevin's business curriculum. Workers also include students from the Saint Anthony Schools program for intellectually challenged pupils.

"The coffee shop is an inclusive, hands-on learning experience in life skills," said Chris Westrick, the Saint Anthony Program director.



▲ Bishop Canevin students seniors Vyla Tomachesky, Gianna Varley and Isabella Sysak serve at Betsy's Place.



▲ North Catholic High School students in the hallway lined with their projects explaining miracles documented by Saint Carlo Acutis.

North Catholic High School, Cranberry Township

In Mary Ann Schweitzer's junior religion class at North Catholic High School, students recently undertook a project inspired by the newly canonized Saint Carlo Acutis.

The class studied the life of the teenager from Italy who used his love for technology to document and share eucharistic miracles around the world. After exploring his well-known website, students chose individual miracles to study and created displays that explain each.

Their finished work lines the hallway outside the religion classrooms as a witness to the school community.

Oakland Catholic High School, Pittsburgh

Oakland Catholic's junior class stepped away from the regular school day for a retreat focused on

what Christian leadership looks like in everyday life.

Students heard from classmates, staff, and guest speaker Caroline Massetto, a local Catholic ministry leader who described how faith has shaped her path from high school into college and young adulthood.

The retreat offered time for prayer, quiet reflection, and small-group conversations. Students laughed and engaged in deep discussions about how they can carry Christ into their choices, friendships and daily lives.



▲ Oakland Catholic juniors join hands during a team-building activity at their Christian leadership retreat.

Seton LaSalle High School, Mt. Lebanon

A group of Seton LaSalle juniors and seniors had an unforgettable experience as exchange students in County Donegal, Ireland, hosted by Coláiste Ailigh School.


Accompanied by Bridgette Kennedy-Riske, director of admissions and religion teacher, the students lived with host families. They toured the region and spent a day exploring Dublin, experiencing Ireland's beauty and culture.

"It was a great experience for all involved," said Lisa Osterhaus, president of Seton LaSalle.

The exchange program continues this year when Seton LaSalle is scheduled to welcome students from Coláiste Ailigh.




▲ Students from Seton-LaSalle High School with their chaperone, alongside Irish students and the principal of Coláiste Ailigh in Letterkenny, Ireland during an exchange trip.



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- TRACY LAUN, OUR LADY OF
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book to follow, by joining
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direction of the season."

- CATHE BRUNER,
ALL SAINTS PARISH

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