St. Joe High part of new Bishop’s hometown journey

The four years that the next bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg spent at a Catholic high school in the Diocese of Pittsburgh proved to be important steps in his journey of faith.

“Saint Joseph High School played an instrumental role in forming me,” bishop-elect Larry Kulick told The Pittsburgh Catholic. “I received a solid education and experienced a healthy, realistic dimension of the faith in all aspects of my high school life at Saint Joe’s.”

Pope Francis on December 18 named Monsignor Kulick as the sixth bishop of the Greensburg diocese. He will be ordained and officially installed on February 11.

Principal Beverly Kaniecki taught mathematics to the future bishop, who graduated from the Natrona Heights high school in 1984.

“You knew he was somebody special, always a planner, and creative, very much like he is today,” she said. “As a senior he brought back the May crowning and convinced a classmate to dress up as the Blessed Mother.
“He also recommended taking our graduation to the Diocese of Greensburg and asking the bishop to be the principal celebrant. He’s not afraid to try new initiatives, and wants to help as many people as he can.”

“Bishop-elect Kulick is an amazing pastor and an outstanding administrator,” said Bishop David Zubik. “I am thrilled for the faithful of the Diocese of Greensburg that Pope Francis has appointed one of their own clergy.”

Born and raised in the small town of Leechburg, Westmoreland County, Bishop-elect Kulick is the oldest of four children whose father was a policeman and later the chief of police. He went to a public elementary school before attending Saint Joseph High School.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, he received a master’s degree in systematic theology and master of divinity from Saint Vincent Seminary before being ordained to the priesthood in 1992. In 2012, Bishop-elect Kulick earned a licentiate in canon law from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

He has served as the vicar general of the Diocese of Greensburg since 2012 and was named administrator when Bishop Edward Malesic was appointed as Bishop of Cleveland, Ohio last September. Bishop-elect Kulick also is pastor of Saint James Parish in New Alexandria.

In 2016 he was given the Spirit of Saint Joseph Award by his high school alma mater.

“Monsignor Kulick lives the Saint Joseph High School values of sanctity, justice, honor and scholarship,” principal Kaniecki said in her speech, “And like Saint Joseph, he is a just man, someone we can count on!

“I find it providential that Bishop-elect Kulick graduated from Saint Joseph High School, was pastor of Saint Joseph Parish (in New Kensington), and is now named Bishop in this newly-declared Year of Saint Joseph,” she said.

“I have a great devotion to Saint Joseph,” said Bishop-elect Kulick, “and I am humbled and deeply honored to serve the diocese that’s been my home.”
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. JOSEPH HS
By Father Richard S. Jones
Chaplain, UPMC Mercy Hospital

A New Beginning

For God, every day is New Year's.
Every day the sun rises is His act of confidence that creation continues.
Every baby born is His act of Hope that humanity goes on.
Every marriage is His trust that love is stronger than hate.
Every morning brings a new chance.
Every prayer a new hope.
Every blocked path a new route.
Every sin repented a fresh burst of grace.
Every mistake a lesson learned.
Every death a new life.

We have a God who relishes fresh starts, new dreams, trying again, resolutions made.
He is the Lord of second chances.
He never tires of giving us another opportunity.

-Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan

What a year 2020 was! No one was spared its challenges, changes, complications, hardships, headaches or losses. In my hospital ministry, I have a frontline view of this menacing global coronavirus pandemic.
Recently I spoke with a 103-year old patient who was an infant during the pandemic of 1918-1920. When I asked for her secret to longevity and resilience, she replied, “Make faithfulness to God a daily priority.”

Her words echo the Scriptures. David wrote in Psalm 42:8, “May the Lord show his constant love during the day, so that I may have a song at night a prayer to the God of my life.” The mystic saint, Teresa of Avila said, “When we accept what happens to us and make the best of it, we are praising God.”

Looking outside the Scriptures, January gets its name from the Roman god, Janus, who is depicted with two faces, one looking back and the other toward the future. Janus was the god of beginnings and transitions, which was one reason we make New Year’s resolutions for January.

When we do so, we are simultaneously looking back to see how we performed in the old year and looking ahead to see how we will improve in the New Year. We long to make a fresh start. Yet, “Better not to make a promise at all, then to make a promise and not keep it.” (Ecclesiastes5:5)

So how do we choose wise resolution under God’s guidance? When I make my annual retreat, the Holy Spirit prompts me to answer two questions: What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to start doing?

Someone once said that the best spiritual director is life itself. God speaks to us through experiences.

Saint Paul was a wise life coach who constantly encouraged the followers of Christ as he prayed that we would be well-conditioned disciples regardless of our circumstances. He understood that, while we are redeemed, we remain wounded and vulnerable, easily distracted from God’s path.

As Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) said, “Virtue does not consist in making resolutions but carrying out one’s good intentions.”

While we consider what resolutions to make, we know that we are called to love rather than hate, to reconcile rather than retaliate, to show humility rather than hubris, to humanize rather than demonize, to be a good-finder rather a fault-finder. Christians must let go of ranking or elitism and embrace cooperation and collaboration, seeking flexibility rather than rigidity and control.

We are called to practice daily meditation and mindfulness, to be liberated from the imprisonment in the citadel of the ego. We must count our daily blessings and delete life’s imperfections, cultivate friendships and forgive our enemies.

In that list of God-ordained virtues, each of us can find the basis for New Year’s resolutions. We do not carry them out alone, but with aid from the Holy Spirit, the sacraments and the prayers of the saints.

Pope Francis has declared 2021 the Year of Saint Joseph, guardian of Jesus, husband of Mary, and patron saint of the Catholic Church. Let us pray for his guidance to surrender to the divine will, to pray always, to trust in grace, to live the fruits of the Holy Spirit. He can help us to live a grateful life, to have a sense of humor, to share our good news with others.

Let our New Year’s resolutions guide us to live in loving ways, to encourage others without exception, to respond to social concerns. May we seek to lead a saintly life and show the heart of God in all we think, say, and do. Happy New Year 2021!
Battling addiction with love

JANUARY 1, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Diocesan News, Featured

In 2020, overdose deaths reached an all-time high in Allegheny County, showing that the diocesan Addiction Recovery Ministry is more crucial than ever.

“Addicts are afraid. They're always living on the edge,” said Father Michael Decewicz, founder of the ministry known as ARM, and a recovering alcoholic. “Shame is the biggest inhibiter to recovery. It says you are not worthy. You can't believe that God can love you.”

In 2017, the county marked a record 737 fatalities from accidental overdoses, and the toll was expected to top 760 last year, according to the Office of the Medical Examiner.

“Abuse has increased during the pandemic,” said Deacon Tim Noca, ministry chair. “Isolation is really bad for those suffering from addiction.”

ARM, which began nearly three years ago with funding from Our Campaign for The Church Alive!, offers weekly meetings, spiritual enrichment and special events. The gatherings follow COVID health guidelines.

The group’s mission is “to provide support, encouragement, education, and to bring the love of God to all those struggling with addiction and recovery, and to all those loved ones who have been affected in any way by this disease.”

Board member John Tamiggi, executive director of Allegheny Valley Habitat for Humanity, saw the devastating impact of addiction in the New Kensington area. In response, he started a training program for addicts in recovery.
“They learned skills they didn’t have before, putting up drywall and working with concrete,” he said. “I witnessed firsthand their improved self-esteem and personal growth.”

ARM began a new partnership with Gateway Rehab for recovering addicts coming out of treatment, providing cash for a first month’s rent, a bus pass or to turn a phone back on.

The fund, named for the late Bill Dixon, Father Decewicz's AA sponsor, has helped more than 50 people so far, according to Deacon Noca. “It creates a cushion,” he said.

“Stress is a big factor in relapse,” Tamiggi added. “They need support.”

ARM’s regular program schedule includes:

- **Holy Hour**: 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at Madonna of Jerusalem Church, 220 Ninth St., Sharpsburg.

- **Enrichment**: 7 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month at Madonna of Jerusalem, and is live streamed at [https://www.facebook.com/Addiction-Recovery-Ministry-Pittsburgh-272173470125033](https://www.facebook.com/Addiction-Recovery-Ministry-Pittsburgh-272173470125033).

- **Monthly meeting**: 7 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the John Paul I Center, 201 Ninth St.

- **Several AA, NA, Al-Anon and Nar-Anon meetings.** For full list, visit [https://www.addictionrecoveryministypittsburgh.org/](https://www.addictionrecoveryministypittsburgh.org/)

“People can help through prayer,” Deacon Noca said.

“Recovery isn’t a cure,” Father Decewicz added. “But it’s worth the fight.”
Father Decewicz shares how you can help support his ministry.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=fzysEGFe1Fk
New parish leadership: Rooted in tradition, poised for growth

JANUARY 1, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Featured, Parish Life

Just as Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare of Assisi were united in ministry 800 years ago, their new namesake parishes will be led by a diocesan priest who has been long influenced by the Franciscan tradition.

On January 4, Father Matthew McClain becomes pastor of both Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare of Assisi parishes in Butler County. Saint Francis of Assisi Parish brings together the former parishes of Saint John in Coylesville, Saint Joseph in Cabot and Saint Mary of the Assumption in Herman.

Saint Clare of Assisi Parish was established through the merger of the parishes of Saint Joseph (North Oakland), Mater Dolorosa (Chicora) and Saint Wendelin (Carbon Center).

Bishop David Zubik has assigned to the clergy team two Capuchin Franciscans who have served in the area—Father Ward Stakem and Father Jim Kurtz. Rounding out the group is diocesan priest Father Lou Pascazi.

Father McClain previously had led Saint Wendelin and Saint John parishes.

“We've been preparing to hit the ground running,” Father McClain said. “We are one clergy team but these are distinct parishes and we will respect all the work that went into these mergers.”

The model of ministry, called multi-parish pastoring, provides an opportunity to promote stability and growth in the new parishes. Diocesan staff will assist with pastoral planning resources.

Father McClain’s uncle, Capuchin Father Bob McCreary, helped him to discern his calling to the priesthood. He was ordained in 2002, initially serving in the parishes of Saint Alexis, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Peter in Slippery Rock, and as diocesan vocations director.
“Father McClain is well prepared to take on this new chapter of ministry,” said Father John Gizler III, regional vicar of the diocese's North Vicariate. “He knows the Capuchin spirit and community, has a pastor's heart and connects with people in many ways.”

“Communication will be key to staying on the same page,” Father McClain said. “The parishioners and staff have been great. We will get to know people over time.”

The new parishes will continue to use the six church buildings, which will retain their previous names.

There is a lot of territory to cover, Father McClain said, adding that his team is up to the challenge.

Father McClain can count on the strong faith of the people, Father Gizler said.

“These are some of the oldest parishes in the diocese, deeply rooted in their communities,” he said. “They are proud supporters of their parishes and of Saint Wendelin School.

“They are faithful in so many ways, and have a wonderful sense of what it means to be a disciple.”

PHOTO BY JIM JUDKIS
Coaching lessons from a pandemic

JANUARY 1, 2021

Categories: Columns
Tags: Featured, Guest Contributors

By Rachael Kriger, M.A.
I could not imagine growing up without sports.

My life revolved around basketball and cross-country running when I was a student at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Hopewell Township, Beaver County. There was something special about putting on the Fatima jersey with my friends.

Sports were a great way to get exercise and form close bonds with my classmates. We learned about teamwork while improving our physical skills and the ability to communicate and compete.

For the past seven years, I have had the privilege of coaching at Fatima School, serving as an assistant coach for the junior varsity and varsity girls basketball teams and now as JV head coach. Earlier this year, I took up coaching soccer, as well.

Little did I know that soon we would learn many new lessons, including adaptability, patience and appreciation.

When the pandemic hit in March, spring soccer was shut down, but our fall season was great. I was excited that we would play. Sports would give the kids a little bit of normalcy.

By following protocols like taking temperatures and socially distancing when possible, our team didn’t have a single positive COVID-19 test during the season. Although we missed out on the playoffs by one point, we had a lot of fun.

The biggest lesson I learned, as a coach, is to be adaptable. All of us—our players, coaches and parents—learned patience. Even though everyone was tired of the restrictions, we tried to be patient with each other with schedule changes and cancellations.

We made a point to avoid talking about the pandemic. That was something the kids were living through every single day during an altered school year. They were focused on sports and just simply playing with their friends.
Coaching during a pandemic has been strange. Saying the prayer before games was a distanced event. Celebrations meant elbow bumps instead of high-fives. We didn't shake hands afterwards—we just stood and waved.

Right now, our basketball season is on hold due to rising cases. I have to admit, selfishly, that I'm just as upset for myself as I am for the kids. But, as we all know, God sometimes has a different plan for us.

The pandemic has altered a lot of things. In the end, we did get to have a soccer season. Many of the kids now have a deeper appreciation for being able to participate in sports this school year, and that it is a privilege to play.

I hope that a vaccine will be widely distributed soon and that cases will start to decline so that we can overcome this pandemic. With guidance and God's grace, we can do anything.
Technology and ethics

JANUARY 1, 2021

Categories: Columns
Tags: Featured, Guest Contributors

“Old Main,” Duquesne University

Catholic precepts can help tech firms

By Patrick Sorek

Anyone who uses digital technology – which means almost everyone – knows it is being scrutinized more than ever for contributing to bad behavior:

- The U.S. Department of Justice recently sued Google for anti-competitive practices
- Social media continues to be used to spread disinformation, particularly in U.S. elections
- Various groups – including current and former social media executives – are pressuring technology firms to be more responsive to how their products impact society.

Tech companies need to incorporate ethics inquiries and standards into their design and deployment of new technologies. And among the best place to look for such guidance are the religious institutions that have provided the foundation of our society's ethical and moral principles since the beginning of the American experiment.

Faith traditions have not been an obvious source of inspiration for tech firms, which tend to be run by hard-driving entrepreneurs whose empires were forged by mastering complex computer processes rather than philosophy.

Yet our culture expects – indeed demands – that ethics be a part of most important decisions. Today there is growing discussion of the moral precepts of tolerance, understanding, compassion, equality, patience, mercy and forgiveness as principles upon which all organizations should be run.
For millennia, identifying those ethical and moral precepts has been the province of religion. These values should be applied to current problems. While dogma can ignite heated rhetoric, most people – conservative and progressive – can agree on certain basic principles for human behavior.

Religion and technological development have historically been partners. Catholics developed the field of optics (Roger Bacon), invented the stethoscope (Rene Laennec) and launched modern accounting (Luca Bartolomeo de Pacioli).

Catholic scientists discovered genetics (Gregor Mendel), founded microbiology (Louis Pasteur) and developed the theory of Big Bang cosmology (Fr. Georges Lemaitre). Catholicism gave rise to universities and developed fields including jurisprudence and bioethics, as well as entire genres of music and architecture.

These innovations all contribute to what Catholic ethics calls “the common good,” in which all persons and communities enjoy the conditions necessary for their mutual flourishing. Acting for the common good requires a blend of innovation and ethics. For each new technology, we must consider: What does it do for people and to people, especially the most vulnerable? Pope Francis's encyclical – Fratelli Tutti, or Brothers and Sisters All – is the church’s latest instruction on how religion must be in the service of all people.

How do we connect Catholic ethical expertise to institutions looking for guidance? Specialists at Catholic universities such as Duquesne University stand ready to assist. Duquesne's Carl G. Grefenstette Center for Ethics in Science, Technology, and Law, which recently hosted a symposium on recognizing and combating disinformation in social media, is one such center. It works in collaboration with other universities to advocate for a greater role for moral values across society.

Among its partners in this mission are the Center for Informed Democracy and Social Cybersecurity at Carnegie Mellon University, the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, and the Initiative in Ethics and Transformative Technologies at Seattle University. All are capable of driving forward the push for greater ethical accountability.

These institutions will act as management consultants, which corporations have used since the 19th century to improve performance. Universities have an excellent track record of collaborating with business, and have played critical roles in developing innovations including radio, computers, rocketry and vaccines.

This collaboration between universities and business produces a virtuous cycle: People are educated, they succeed in business, and they endow academic institutions and courses of study. These, in turn, help educate successive generations to use the tools necessary to succeed in an evolved business environment. This cycle benefits the entire community.

The unprecedented scale of social media companies is an indicator of their success at tackling tech issues. Now they must solve “people issues,” at which they are less adept. The open-minded consideration of values that have been around for centuries, and the expertise of people who have made careers studying these values, can be a place to start.
Patrick Sorek is special advisor to the Carl G. Grefenstette Center for Ethics in Science, Technology, and Law at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.