Lighting the Way for Catholic Schools Week

JANUARY 29, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Catholic Schools, Featured
Michelle Peduto and Jennifer Antkowiak chat about how Catholic Schools are “Lighting the Way”

Despite ongoing challenges from COVID-19, Catholic schools are “lighting the way” in leading young people to God as Catholic Schools Week begins on February 1.

“Every day our children are encouraged and shown how to have a conversation with God,” said Michelle Peduto, director of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. “That’s the light in each child’s heart. That is what our schools do.”

Instead of families visiting school buildings for Catholic Schools Week, tours will be held online. Peduto urged families to visit school websites https://www.diopitt.org/schoolfinder and call individual schools. Registration will be continuing through the spring.

In an interview with diocesan spokesperson Jennifer Antkowiak to promote Catholic Schools Week, Peduto praised teachers, administrators and staff for working
tirelessly during the pandemic.

“From Day One they stepped up, rolling out their virtual program last March, helping to prepare our health and safety plan over the summer, and doing what it takes to keep students in classrooms this school year,” she said.

Despite short-term closures in a number of schools, there has been no internal spread of the coronavirus within Catholic schools in the diocese.

Strategic regionalization of elementary schools has been especially valuable at this time, helping educators share ideas and strategies while building relationships, Peduto said.

The primary purpose of regionalization is to continue to provide families with access to Catholic elementary schools that are academically excellent, spiritually vibrant and financially sustainable.

All parishes in a region share in the operation and support of Catholic elementary schools, which are led by principals under the oversight of a regional administrator and business manager. Schools are governed by a board of clergy and volunteer lay leaders who represent all the parishes in an area, giving them a voice and investment in Catholic education.

“Our academics are outstanding, along with our extracurriculars,” Peduto said. “We are known for our sports, forensics, musicals and so many other activities. All of those things are signs of hearts on fire for God and for life.”

What makes Catholic schools different?
“We value every single member of our community,” Peduto said. “It shows how important you are to this mission, how important your child is, and how much your teachers value you.”

Michelle Peduto visits with Sacred Heart 8th grade student Morgan McCray on Jan. 28.
Changes for Ash Wed.

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Ash Wednesday services on February 17 will be different this year due to health guidelines put in place for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments announced that clergy are to first bless the ashes, sprinkle them with holy water, and address all those present by saying one time, “Repent, and believe in the Gospel,” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Then, instead of making the sign of the cross with ashes on the forehead of each person, this year **ashes will be sprinkled on top of the head**.

“It will help the priest or deacon to avoid having direct contact with a large amount of people,” said Father Tom Kunz, diocesan associate general secretary and vicar for canonical services. “This method of receiving ashes is common in other countries.”

The Blessing of Throats on the memorial of Saint Blaise on Wednesday, February 3 also will be socially- distanced. A priest or deacon may give the blessing to those
assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing.

“Even in a pandemic, Lent is a season of grace and an important moment in the Church’s penitential practice,” Father Kunz said. “The Church encourages us towards ever-deeper conversion through acts of penance, including prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

“We then rejoice in the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord during the Solemnity of Easter and throughout the Easter season,” he said.

2021 Dates – Lent and Easter Triduum

- Ash Wednesday – February 17
- Holy Thursday – April 1
- Good Friday – April 2
- Easter Vigil – Saturday, April 3 (Masses may begin at 8:30 p.m.)
- Easter Sunday – April 4

Lenten Regulations

1. **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday** are days of fast and abstinence. The **Fridays of Lent** are days of abstinence in the United States.

2. The obligation of abstinence (refraining from eating meat) begins at the age of 14. The law of fasting (limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals) obliges all between the ages of 18-59. No one should consider this obligation lightly.
3. Those individuals who have a medical condition in which fasting may be considered harmful are not obliged to fast, but should perform some other act of penance or charity.

4. Pastors and parents are asked that minors, though not bound by the law of fast and abstinence, are educated in the authentic sense of penance and encouraged to do acts of penance suitable to their age.

5. Notable during this Lenten season is that the Solemnity of Saint Joseph falls on a Friday. Because of this, **there is not an obligation to abstain from meat on Friday, March 19, 2021, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, according to the norm of canon 1251.**

6. The faithful are encouraged to do acts of penance and charity during the Lenten season beyond what is prescribed by the law.

**COMING SOON:** The Pittsburgh Catholic’s annual Fish Fry Guide and Lenten resources on diopitt.org.
Bridging the Gap

Bishop David A. Zubik

I love our country. Our country welcomed my immigrant grandparents in the earlier part of the 20th century. Our country gave my dad the opportunity to earn a decent living working for most of his adult life for the A&P Supermarkets. Our country has given me the freedom to profess my faith in Jesus Christ freely.

That is why my heart broke on January 6 when I witnessed the violent mob, some of them carrying Christian symbols, storming the citadel of our democracy, the United States Capitol Building. It is a job of our elected leaders and law enforcement to determine the legal response of that rampage. My concern is the moral and spiritual response each of us makes in our heart.

Following that tragic event and coupled with the inauguration of our new President, this is a time when we need to unite as neighbors and heirs to the legacies of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, of Dorothy Day and Rosa Parks. This is a
time when we need to model what it means to show respect for the absolute dignity and respect of every human being—including and especially those with whom we disagree.

The people who ravaged the Capitol, assaulted police officers, proclaimed racist and anti-Semitic slogans, threatened elected officials—do not represent American or Christian ideals. They show what can happen when we allow anger to rule our hearts. We need to pray for them. We also need to pray for us—as a nation.

At the same time, we—you and I—need to examine our own hearts to make sure we are not harboring anger toward people for being different than we are. That’s true whether the difference is one of race or political affiliation, ethnicity or lifestyle, faith or economic strata.

The essential question is: Can we disagree without derision? Can we persuade without disparagement? Can we proceed without dismissing others because of their opinions and, even more important, because of their faith? In a true democracy, differences are meant to be a source of strength. They compel us to examine issues and ideas we would otherwise overlook.

Moreover, as Christians, as we consider the challenges that we face as a nation and as a global community, our faith in the ever-abiding presence of Jesus must be our guide. When a message provokes us to vengeance, hatred or derision, we need to go back to the teachings of Jesus and let Him be our guide.

At one of the most tender moments in his life, when Jesus gathered together with the Apostles around the Last Supper table, He spoke these words to them: “Peace I leave you, My peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is My gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” (John 14:27) Those words are intended as much for us now as they were for the early Apostles.
Saint Paul clearly resonated with the spirit of Jesus’ own advice when in his Letter to the Galatians he wrote these powerful words: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There can be no law against things like that, of course. You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.” (Gal. 5:22-23)

Isn't it interesting that Saint Paul would use the word “crucify” in reaction to realities like vengeance, hatred or derision in each of our lives? The image of crucifixion means to put to death for the sake of bringing forth “lasting life.”

In the interest of “lasting life,” we need to pursue common ground for the common good and put to death words and deeds of vengeance, hatred or derision.

On January 22, as we celebrated Masses in our churches as a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children, and on January 28 and 29, as we marked the annual March for Life (albeit virtually this year), we clearly know the agenda that is before us: especially the protection for the unborn and also justice for immigrants, a safety net for the poor, environmental sustainability, and many causes that are necessary for a culture of life. The best way we can, we must continue to work peacefully for the preservation of all of those important realities based on the teachings of Jesus, Who is our Prince of Peace.

One of my favorite saints is Saint Barnabas. Three separate times in the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Barnabas appears as a bridge, connecting an early Christian community that was often divided amongst itself. The late, great theologian, Father Walter Burghardt, called Saint Barnabas “a middle man for Christ.” Barnabas helped people work together to conquer their differences in a quest for truth and to accept not only the truth but each other as well.
You and I need to be like Barnabas, to be people of love, peace and unity. As the Apostle John tells us in his first letter: “If anyone says, ‘I love God’ but hates his brother (or sister), he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother (or sister) whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20)

That lesson is not just for the people who ransacked the Capitol Building. It applies to all of us who may find ourselves angry in response to those terrible events. Justice must take its course where crimes were committed. But if we are to help heal our nation, then our own attitudes, convictions and words do make all the difference.

Especially in these difficult times, you and I need to reach out in love—and sometimes with tough love—to those who might want to act out of vengeance, hatred or derision.

One of the beautiful lessons which I learned when I was a youngster in the first grade was the hymn entitled “America” and especially the verse that leads into the hymn:

“My country, ’tis of thee,

Sweet land of liberty,

Of thee I sing;

Land where my fathers died,

Land of the pilgrims’ pride,

From every mountainside
Let freedom ring.

But if that song is to ring true, that we live in the “sweet land of liberty,” our goal must always be to live up to both the great promise and the great challenge that we are “One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

May the words of our Pledge of Allegiance be more than words that we speak with our lips. May they be convictions that we live with our hearts and with our faith.

*Photo credit: Justin Merriman*
Ex-orphanage site, current seminary now diocese HQ

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The Diocese of Pittsburgh is moving its headquarters from downtown Pittsburgh to a place where thousands of young lives were once saved, a future governor was born, and where new priests have been formed for more than a half century.

The Diocesan Pastoral Center on the Boulevard of the Allies downtown, which has served as the diocese's main administrative location for more than 60 years, has relocated to Saint Paul Seminary in the Oakwood section of Pittsburgh, the former home of Saint Paul Orphanage.

Bishop David Zubik made the decision as part of the On Mission for The Church Alive! strategic planning initiative. It calls for the Church to use its resources for mission rather than maintenance in order to bring Jesus's love and mercy to everyone.

“Like our parishes and schools, we want the goods of the faithful to be used for ministry as much as possible,” said Father Lawrence DiNardo, diocesan general
secretary and vicar general. “The seminary campus is the best location for all of our staff and visitors to gather in a post-pandemic world because of its good facilities, free parking and easy accessibility.”

The future use of the Boulevard of the Allies building is under study.

**Early days**

The story of the journey to the seminary site is even older than the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

In 1836—seven years before the diocese was created—three Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg, Md., founded Saint Paul Orphanage for girls in Pittsburgh. Nine years later they were recalled by their order and the Sisters of Mercy were given care of the orphanage.

In 1844, the first Bishop of Pittsburgh, Michael O’Connor established Pittsburgh’s first diocesan seminary in the city’s Birmingham neighborhood, today’s South Side. It briefly was discontinued, operated for a year in Cambria County, reestablished in Pittsburgh’s Glenwood section, but eventually closed.

Due to a pressing need to also care for orphaned boys, in 1846 Bishop O’Connor allowed Saint Paul Orphanage to expand into the Birmingham seminary building. In that era, some children deemed as orphans had parents who were unable to care for them. As the population of orphan boys continued to grow, another structure was built for them, but it, too, eventually became inadequate.

On May 27, 1900, the cornerstone was laid for the new Saint Paul Orphan Asylum on 17 acres between Crafton and Carnegie. The property was purchased for $28,000.
Boys and girls moved into the first building in 1902 and more structures went up. By 1919 there were 1,200 orphans at the site. The final addition was an activities building featuring a gymnasium, swimming pool and auditorium.

![St. Paul Orphanage, circa 1950s. Construction site in the upper left corner is the future site of Bishop Canevin HS.](image1)

In December 1950, a boy named Kenneth was born at the orphanage. A year later he was adopted by couple and given a new name. Tom Vilsack received a good education, earned a law degree, and eventually became the 40th Governor of Iowa, served as U.S. secretary of agriculture, and ran for president.

![St. Paul Seminary campus in 2016, with expansion of St. John Vianney Manor underway at top. (Google Maps)](image2)

**Synod Hall**
In the 19th century, the diocesan cathedral stood on Grant Street downtown, with the chancery offices located at Epiphany parish house. A new Saint Paul Cathedral was built in Oakland, opening in 1906. Nine years later, the diocese erected an adjoining structure, Synod Hall.

The building contained offices for the bishop and his staff, a library, assembly rooms, and the 975-seat hall. Its primary purpose was to house the diocesan synod, a consultative body that makes formal recommendations to the bishop regarding ecclesiastical legislation, policies and guidelines for the diocese. Synod Hall also was one of the finest acoustical halls in the city and hosted many concerts.

As the number of parishes and schools in the diocese grew, so did the need for office space. Bishop John Dearden commissioned the Diocesan Pastoral Center to be built next to Saint Mary of Mercy Parish downtown. Staff moved into the five-
story building in 1958. For a time, Synod Hall became the headquarters of the Newman Clubs of local colleges, and it has served a variety of purposes since then.

Seminary returns

In 1965, the operations of Saint Paul Orphanage were combined with those of Holy Family Institute in Emsworth, and Bishop John Wright founded Saint Paul Seminary on the property. It was the first minor seminary located in Pittsburgh since 1876.

The youth activities building on campus became O’Connor Hall, which is now a space for large gatherings. Saint John Vianney Manor for retired priests has expanded twice.

Over the past 55 years, hundreds of men have received spiritual formation for the priesthood at the seminary while taking academic classes at Catholic universities. In 2007, Bishop Zubik moved into an apartment at the seminary to live and pray alongside the future priests of the diocese.

The remaining buildings, once the refuge of orphans, now is home to all diocesan staff as they serve the faithful and strive to bring people closer to Jesus across the six counties of southwestern Pennsylvania.

Please note that effective immediately, the new mailing address of the Diocese of Pittsburgh Pastoral Center is 2900 Noblestown Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15205. The main phone number for the diocese (412-456-3000), and for each diocesan office and staff member, remain the same.
The former Diocesan Pastoral Center at 111 Blvd. of the Allies, downtown.
In “Views from the Pews,” we catch up with parishioners across the diocese and ask them a faith based question. This week, we asked our social media followers the question: “How will you improve your relationship with Jesus in 2021?” Below are a few of our favorite responses.

Follow @DioceseofPittsburgh on Facebook and Instagram to participate in future “Views from the Pews.”

“I believe that in order to be closer to Jesus I need to know Him better. I received The Word on Fire Bible: The Gospels for Christmas. It seems like the perfect way to get to know Jesus better: through understanding the Gospels.”
–Susan Petri Sanker, pictured with her husband Tim, is a parishioner at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Ross/Perrysville/West View/Observatory Hill.

“I plan to spend more time with the Scriptures. Last year, I tried to complete a year-long Bible reading plan. I failed, but still plan to finish it. This year I plan to spend time with the Scriptures through the Bible in a Year podcast. I feel like the more we learn about God’s Word the closer we come to Him.”

–Lisa Genton, pictured with her daughter Erin Marie (a 6th grader at Divine Mercy Academy), is a parishioner at Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish in Monroeville/Penn Hills/Pitcairn.
“I’m planning on attending Eucharistic adoration weekly.”

–Nick Bileck is a member of St. Matthew Parish in in Etna/Reserve/Glenshaw/Millvale.
Catholic at Home

JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

Years ago, I interviewed Bishop David Zubik for a book on how to help family caregivers. An entire chapter was devoted to the strength that faith gives us. Having been a family caregiver myself, and knowing that Bishop Zubik was also a caregiver, I was eager for the conversation.

“Bishop, when a loved one is sick, or dying, it can be hard for us to understand how God could let that happen. And, as we struggle for something that makes sense, we can start to feel frustration with God. What should people do when they feel angry with God?” I asked.

Bishop Zubik answered, “If you are angry at God, you should yell at Him and let Him know about it.”
We laughed at my surprise at his response. Then the Bishop went on to say, “I mean it. If you are angry with God, tell Him. We need to think of God as an earthly father. We need to build a relationship with Him. He loves us and wants to have a relationship with us.”

Framing my faith that way, as having a real relationship with God, has helped me in many ways over many years. Tuning in to His presence throughout my day is life-changing.

How can we experience more peace, joy, love, and feelings of purpose through a better relationship with Jesus? I offer these five tips:

1. **Talk to Him:** Make it a daily routine. This can be through formal prayer, or with informal conversation. Wake up and thank Him for the hope and promise of a new day. Ask for His help as you consider how to serve Him and others. Ask Him to help you feel His presence.

2. **Obey Him:** Examine your daily dedication to trying to live like Jesus. Are you holding true to His values and commandments in the way you treat yourself and those around you? Honoring and obeying Him — “living” Him — draws you closer to Him.

3. **Learn about Him:** When you’re developing a relationship with someone, a basic is to learn more about the person. Where were they born? Who are their parents? How were they raised? What do they hold dear? We can learn more about Jesus through the scriptures. Carve out time to dive into reading the stories of His life, and what He had to say about how we should live.

4. **Show gratitude to Him:** Lifting our hearts in thankful prayer immediately transforms our souls in ways that ripple out to those around us. Softening our hearts when life is hard is easier said than done, but Jesus can help with that, too. Just ask.
5. **Invite Him in:** How can you welcome Jesus into your life on a daily basis? He loves us. He wants to be with us for all the little things as well as the big ones. He’s ready and waiting to help every minute of every day. Maximize your minutes with Him.

When I discussed this recently with people in our diocesan Facebook and Instagram communities, we heard some wonderful ways that people are planning to build a better relationship with Jesus this year.

Stephen wants to include more prayer and volunteer work in his routine. He also shared he is “carefully avoiding over-planning to keep things fresh and enthusiastic.”

Meg will take advantage of adoration at her parish to help her feel more connected with Jesus. She intends to devote quiet time for talking with Him.

Bernadette plans to learn more about Jesus by participating in various small groups, receiving the sacraments and by seeking opportunities to be more present to others.

There is still time to make a 2021 resolution to build a better relationship with Jesus. With Him in your heart, the future looks bright.