Celebrating 2021 high school graduates

MAY 7, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Catholic Schools, Featured
A year after COVID-19 forced educators to switch high school commencements into virtual events, the Class of 2021 is celebrating in style and in-person, although with limited attendance.

*Click here for a full list of Catholic high school graduations.*

“We’re thankful to our seniors for stepping up in a trying year,” said John Benzing, assistant principal at **North Catholic High School**. “They will leave here ready to tackle the challenges of the world and will represent North Catholic well.”

Instead of a prom, the senior class is planning a dinner cruise on a Gateway Clipper ship on Thurs. May 27.

**Central Catholic High School** seniors say their prom will be held at outside and indoors on Fri. May 14. Carnival and casino games will be set up in the school.
parking lot, along with three food trucks. A DJ will be playing music inside the gym.

Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement for Central Catholic will be held as one ceremony on campus Tues. May 25. “We are excited that we have the opportunity to do something special for this senior class who, with great patience and perseverance, weathered the storms of COVID-19,” Brother Tony Baginski, principal, wrote in a letter to parents.

**Oakland Catholic High School** will hold its Baccalaureate Mass on Mon. May 24, with Commencement scheduled two days later. Seniors have garnered a record $30.5 million in college scholarships, said president Mary Claire Kasunic.

Graduating seniors from **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School** will receive their diplomas on Sun. June 6 at Saints John and Paul Church in Franklin Park. The class is heading to 34 different colleges, three branches of the military and one trade union.

The 105th graduating class of **Saint Joseph High School** will celebrate on Friday, May 28. The school year was extra special in that 1984 graduate Larry Kulick was ordained Bishop of Greensburg.
Aquinas Academy is holding its Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement on Sat. May 29. A spring formal dinner dance was held on April 23. “It was truly a wonderful evening, said Leslie Mitros, head of school.

Bishop Canevin High School seniors are planning their senior prom for Friday, May 21 outdoors on their campus, renting a big tent and dance floor, and having the event catered. Principal Mike Joyce said there also will be a karaoke contest. Commencement is set for Sat. May 29.

Seton LaSalle High School’s graduation and Baccalaureate Mass will be held on Fri. May 28 at Saint Anne Church in Castle Shannon. The entire senior class will attend the Senior Awards ceremony on Wed. May 26. Principal Lauren Martin said they are not holding a formal senior prom, but a dance is planned for Fri. May 21 with a DJ, food and drinks.

Nazareth Prep will hold an Honors Convocation on Sat. May 15, according to Rita Canton, head of school. Commencement is scheduled for Thurs. June 10 on campus. Instead of a prom, seniors will be making a trip to Cedar Point amusement park on Fri. May 14.

Graduation for Serra Catholic High School will be held Thurs. May 27 at Saint Paul Cathedral. Principal Tim Chirdon said seniors will celebrate with a social event on Sat. May 8 in their school gym–no dancing, but there will be a magician and games.
On the home page: Central Catholic seniors (l-r) Bryce Hunt, Jahrale Dennis, Connor Downs and Cameron Annear on the school athletic field April 30 for a special breakfast hosted by the Central Catholic Mothers’ Guild and Parents of the Class of 2021.

On path to priesthood

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Categories: News
Tags: Featured, Parish Life
Two seminarians have taken the important step of becoming candidates for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Tom Kadlick and Dan D’Antonio were granted admission to candidacy during Masses celebrated by Bishop David Zubik on April 25 and May 2.

“Until now they have been discerning their call to the priesthood, doing academic work and spending time in formation,” said Father Tom Sparacino, rector of Saint Paul Seminary. “This is the last step before their ordination to the transitional diaconate next year.”

Kadlick, 26, has spent his pastoral year at Saint Andrew the Apostle Parish in Monongahela, Charleroi and Donora. He’s assisted at daily Mass, brought
communion to the sick, taught Spanish at Madonna Regional Catholic School and run an adult education class.

“Tom has just clicked with everyone,” said parishioner Bruno Pappasergi. “Spiritually he has made a big difference in my life.”

“I have been discerning a calling to the priesthood for five years,” Kadlick said, “and the Church has also been discerning me. During the last year I've gotten a good sense of what it’s like to be a parish priest. It’s been a fantastic experience.”

D’Antonio, 43, is assigned to Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish in Duquesne, Homestead, Munhall, West Mifflin and Whitaker. He describes admission to candidacy like “becoming engaged to the Church.

“I fell in love with the people,” D’Antonio said. “They’ve been so welcoming—supporting and encouraging me as I work side-by-side with them.”

He assists at weddings, blessing services, Scripture studies, Vacation Bible School, fundraising events and many other parish activities.

“Seminarian Dan has been a true blessing,” said pastoral associate Lori Ellis. “As Bishop Zubik said at Mass, he enjoys being with people of all ages.”

“This pastoral year has been critical to my discernment to becoming a priest in the diocese,” D’Antonio said. “I’m taking what I’ve learned in theology and applying it to different age groups.

“Father Dan (Sweeney) also has taught me a lot, especially that this is a ministry of presence—being there for others.”
“It’s great for the people to see the steps that these men take,” Father Sparacino said. “The parishioners have embraced the seminarians and lifted them up. They are a witness for them, and a gift to them.”
Honoring Mary

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Categories: News
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Catholics honor Mary in special ways during the month of May. A new effort is encouraging the faithful to come to know her better.

On May 1, the diocese kicked off “To Jesus, Through Mary,” to help deepen parishioners’ devotion to Mary and ask her to draw them closer to Jesus. More than 2,000 people have already registered for daily texts.

Posts on the diocese’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts offer Marian inspirations from the Scriptures, the saints, prominent Catholics, and from prayers and hymns.

On the diocesan website, people can learn more about how to grow closer to Jesus through Mary; get a refresher on the mysteries and prayers of the rosary; download Marian wallpaper for their smartphone or computer; and register for the daily texts.

“We are excited to share these resources that will help people build a stronger relationship with our Blessed Mother,” said Jennifer Antkowiak, executive director of communications and community relations for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. “After a
year of so many challenges and struggles, just like we turn to our earthly mothers for comfort, we can find refuge in her love and light.”

Father Adam Potter, parochial vicar of St. Teresa of Kolkata Parish, explained that the idea of approaching Jesus through Mary is deeply rooted in the Scriptures.

The Wedding Feast at Cana shows how Mary intercedes for us. When the wine ran out, the servants approached Mary. She asked Jesus for help and He turned jars of water into wine.

“Because she was invited, she changed the dynamic of the situation and brought her Son in,” Father Potter explained.

Practical devotions can help us to grow closer to Jesus through His Mother. Father Potter recommended beginning every day with a simple prayer to Mary, asking her to help us to pray, to love, and to trust God as she does.

He also recommended praying the rosary regularly, a practice that he has seen change people’s lives. The prayers and the mysteries of the rosary allow us to focus on Jesus through Mary’s eyes.

“No one knew Jesus better than Mary,” Father Potter said. “She spent more time with Him than anyone else on earth. Life is about knowing and loving Jesus, and Mary can help us to do this.”

Text MARY2021 to 84576 to register. For the prayers of the rosary and many other May devotions to Mary, visit: https://diopitt.org/to-jesus-through-mary.
Key deadline to support Catholic Schools

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Categories: News
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By Michael Freker
Diocesan Director of Planned Giving

An important deadline is approaching for businesses that support Catholic schools through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program. Those companies that have been approved the prior year for credits must renew by Mon. May 17, 2021.

The tax credits have traditionally been “sold out” within the first day or two. New businesses that are applying this year for the first time will want to do so by July 1 at https://dced.pa.gov/programs/educational-improvement-tax-credit-program-eitc/

The Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program is celebrating 20 years as a great success story for school choice throughout the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania was the first state in the nation to pass an education tax credit program aimed at corporations.

In the first year the EITC budget was $30 million, with $20 million designated to scholarship organizations for K-12 tuition assistance.
In 2007 the state increased funding for K-12 scholarship organizations to $44.7 million. Although there have been budget challenges, state support has been steady. In 2012 the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) program was created to serve the families that reside in low achieving public school districts.

In 2014 the legislature expanded the opportunity for unincorporated businesses and qualified Individual donors to participate through Special Purpose Entities. This has provided more opportunities to qualified donors to redirect up to 90 percent of their PA tax liability to an approved scholarship organization.

Special Purpose Entities that have been created to support the Diocese of Pittsburgh Scholarship Program have received approvals recently for this 2021 tax year. Qualified individuals should contact our stewardship office for more information at 412-456-3085 or via our website at www.diopitt.org/eitc

Why do we support Catholic education and scholarship? We should always look at the “end product.” Children who graduate from our Catholic schools have been molded to be productive and moral citizens. We are shaping our future leaders and workforce who have been taught to give back to their churches, communities, and country.
Festival of Praise to highlight Pentecost 2021

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It’s being called a Worldwide Worship Event, online and in person, held on the birthday of the Catholic Church at the birthplace of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement.

Organizers say *Pentecost 2021* is a work of “holy collaboration” between Praise Nation, The Ark and The Dove retreat center, Pentecost Today USA, and Nature of Fire.

The outdoor event will be held on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, from 1-5 p.m at The Ark and The Dove, 10745 Babcock Blvd, Gibsonia. Nature of Fire food truck will provide free food, and Praise Nation will lead its popular Festival of Praise, a celebration of song, adoration, prayer and witness.

“Our goal is to celebrate Pentecost and the glorious ways the Holy Spirit has been poured out and animated the Church since the day of Pentecost and the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal,” said Alicia Hartle, executive director of Pentecost
Today USA, which serves and supports the movement nationwide. “We will pray for a new and ongoing Pentecost in the Church.”

Her brother, Father Levi Hartle, co-leader of Praise Nation, expects they will feed about 500 people before worship begins at 2:30 p.m. The last in-person festival was held in October 2020.

“We've heard from a lot of people who have missed the festivals of praise,” he said. “There's a real hunger for them.”

The retreat house was the scene of the historic Duquesne Weekend in February 1967, where a group of students and university staff attended a retreat on biblical teachings about the Holy Spirit. Many reported a powerful experience of the Spirit and praying in tongues.

The event is considered to be the beginning of the charismatic movement in the U.S. Catholic Church, which the Vatican estimates has now reached over 120 million people throughout the world.

For more information about Pentecost 2021, visit https://www.praisenationpgh.org/events or www.thearkandthedoveworldwide.org.

Join the Event: https://www.facebook.com/events/177315700785243
In March, Praise Nation presented a virtual Festival of Praise with Bishop Zubik
Jack Shaw has heard rising anxiety and sinking depression in people’s voices throughout the COVID pandemic. So the grief specialist organized an online forum through Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh to help people understand and respond to what is happening to them and to those they love.

The free Zoom forum, “Mental Health Awareness & Support Through Post-Pandemic Stress,” is scheduled for Wednesday May 19, 8-10 a.m. EST. Registration for live participation is at http://bit.ly/CCPGHmentalhealth. A recording will be available the next day on the sponsors’ websites.

In addition to stress directly related to COVID, people have suffered emotionally from other recent events, ranging from political turmoil to major changes in their parishes, said Shaw, who is coordinator of evangelization and outreach at Saint Jude Parish in Pittsburgh's East End.

As part of that ministry he runs a seven-week grief recovery program, while also serving as program coordinator for Lifeline of Listening Friends, a support group for those who have lost loved ones to suicide.
Those programs were unable to work effectively during COVID because hurting people crave the physical presence of those who understand them, he said.

“Isolation is very hard on people,” he said. “When I was a kid we sat around the dinner table and talked about the events of the day. Part of our spiritual journey is to be able to process what is happening in our lives. With all of this isolation, we’re seeing more anxiety and depression, and more alcohol abuse.”

People with questions about stress, grief and isolation can find information at the forum on May 19.

Sessions include:

- “Mental health issues facing adults after COVID-19,” Melissa Barr, a therapist and regional director at Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh
- “Mental health issues facing children after COVID-19,” Susan Caban, director of education for the National Alliance on Mental Illness
- “Suicide-related issues facing adults and children,” Jesse Putkoski, regional director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- “Information on grief and support groups,” Jack Shaw, program coordinator for the Lifeline of Listening Friends.

The forum is sponsored by Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh and the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, in partnership with the Lifeline of Listening Friends, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the National Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health First Aid USA.