Coming through for Coach Cleary again

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Tags: Catholic Schools, Featured
Recently retired Serra Catholic High School athletic director/basketball coach Bill Cleary thought he was going to Edgewood Country Club for a wedding reception. Instead, he found some of his former players and family and friends, who had been waiting to yell, “Surprise!”

A couple of players from Coach Cleary’s former teams organized the party and were thrilled to see the look on his face when he walked in. “I’m overwhelmed with how special this is,” Cleary told the crowd.

Cleary is one of the most successful coaches in WPIAL history. His 34-year girls basketball coaching career includes more than 600 wins, four WPIAL titles, a PIAA crown and 10 WPIAL championship appearances.

Coach Cleary served as Serra Catholic’s athletic director for 38 years and was the diocesan representative to the WPIAL board. He was a social studies, health and physical education teacher for 41 years, and taught his two sons during their time at the high school.

“My years at Serra were tremendous – the most perfect place for me to be,” the coach told guests at his surprise party. “The people I worked with, the kids I coached and taught at school – it was just a fantastic place to work,” he said.

So far, Coach Cleary has been enjoying retirement. “The day is yours. I’ve been doing some things I’ve always wanted to do- playing a little more golf than I used to, so it’s all good,” he said.

Looking out to the room filled with so many of his former players, he reflected on their time together. “We had a lot of fun and we worked hard,” he said. “It was never about me; it was about us. The successes you celebrate today are yours. I’m overwhelmed. I love you all.”

Although he’s beginning a new chapter in his life, Coach Cleary’s name and legacy will remain an important part of his beloved Serra Catholic High School. The school announced that moving forward, its gym will be known as
“William J. Cleary Court.” A formal dedication will be held near the end of this year.
Lessons of St. Lawrence

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https://youtube.com/watch?v=Fky5PjZdlY
He lived 18 centuries ago, but much like today, Saint Lawrence encountered troubled times. Still, he never stopped serving others and kept loving the Lord, to the point of surrendering his life.

Bishop David Zubik helped mark the Feast of Saint Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr, with a Mass and dinner on August 10 with deacons, candidates to the diaconate, and their spouses.

One of seven deacons of Rome in the third century, Saint Lawrence was martyred in 258 A.D.

“Lawrence became a saint because he hungered and thirsted for the Lord, not only for himself, but for the sake of the Christian community that was being persecuted and tortured in his day,” Bishop Zubik preached in his homily.

“His first lesson to us was to celebrate and to serve the Word of God, and to be an instrument, a visible sign of God’s presence, and endless acts of charity.

“Perhaps the most immediate challenge that you and I face is to call back those who have left this sacred celebration,” he added.

Bishop Zubik has called for a new class of Catholic men to begin formation to serve the Church as permanent deacons. Currently there are 96 deacons in active ministry and 27 men in the formation program, according to Deacon Stephen Byers, director.

“The respondents to Bishop Zubik’s call have been sincere,” Deacon Byers said. “The men who attended the three recent information sessions or have contacted the Diaconate Office are genuinely asking themselves if this might be what the Lord is asking of them.

“It’s a real joy to help men discern a possible call to the diaconate and to walk with those who embark on the formation journey,” he said.

Deacons assist priests at Mass, preach on occasion, and preside as needed at baptisms, weddings, funeral services and other liturgical functions. They also help provide pastoral care to people in hospitals and nursing homes, jails and prisons, and various other settings, sharing the faith by word and example.

Deacons along with bishops and priests constitute the three levels of ordained ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

Applicants are required to be between the ages of 30 and 59, a college graduate with a secure job or source of income, in full communion with the Catholic Church, and they may be married or single.

To begin the process, a priest or deacon of the diocese needs to nominate the applicant by the deadline of September 1. For more information: deacons@diopitt.org, 412-456-3124, or www.diopitt.org/permanent-diaconate.
Father Ken Marlovits has succeeded Father Mike Ackerman as director of the diocesan Office of Priestly Vocations, with Father Ackerman settling into his new assignment as senior parochial vicar at Saint Kilian and Holy Sepulcher parishes. Pittsburgh Catholic correspondent Bill Hill posed several questions to Father Marlovits about his new role.

What is your main goal in your new position as vocations director?

Like many people today, I am learning how to re-establish pre-Covid work relationships. For those of us in the Church of Pittsburgh we also faced the need to adjust to changes brought on by the On Mission for The Church Alive! initiative. So, my top goal is to establish vibrant working relationships with the each of our new parishes as well as the many vibrant faith communities and organizations we have here in the Pittsburgh area.

The Catholic Church describes four vocations — the ordained life, consecrated life, married life and single life. But you see it a bit differently.

That is what I would call the safe, textbook answer. However, a vocation is always going to be a call to love that originates from God. Our understanding of this vocational call often changes over a lifetime. However, for most of us, we finally come to understand the best pathway of love God has placed before us and we enter into a permanent vocation by way of ordination to the priesthood or diaconate, by sacred vows in the religious and consecrated life, or through marriage or the single life. This answer understands the question asked as being specific to permanent states of life. Of course, no matter what our current state is, we are all called to the vocation of holiness.

Does the vocations office encourage all vocations? Or is it focused mostly on priestly vocations?

As a priest, one of my most fundamental callings is to help people encounter, love, and follow God. With that understanding, I am here to help everyone discover their vocation. However, in my position as director of the Office of Priestly Vocations, often times simply called the vocation director, I focus primarily on priestly vocations for the diocese. Please keep in mind, however, that a goal of this office has always been to work collaboratively with others for the promotion of our universal call to holiness and to promote events that help all people find their true vocation.
How can we listen to God's call in such a busy world?

Noise is the greatest weapon the world has to prevent us from hearing God's call. There is the obvious noise of TV, radio, social media, video games, music and the entire entertainment industry. But there is also the noise of our own minds. Our attempts to tell God what we want or need. To talk constantly at God, or to talk to ourselves about why we are not good enough in the eyes of God. All of this noise prevents us from hearing God speak to us. Yes, sometimes even our own prayer blocks out God's voice!

We need silence to listen to God. It is important to find that silence. Maybe you can spend time at a Holy Hour, Perpetual Adoration, or visit a Church and be with the Lord in the tabernacle. Maybe your silence can be found in a walk in the woods or in your garden, on the back porch with a cup of coffee watching the sun come up. Maybe your only “alone time” is in the car, so you need to take advantage of that opportunity for silence. To listen to God you must find silence, both the external and internal silence which will allow the soft whisper of the Lord to be revealed.

How do we discern His will?

To discern God's will we must be in community. We can never discern alone. We are a people of community. We are the Body of Christ. If you want to discern God's will you need to be active and to get involved. Get engaged in your local parish, Bible studies, ministries, service programs and projects. You need to be active to discern. Utilize your individual gifts and talents to help others and learn from those interactions what brings you joy and fulfillment. More importantly, have someone to talk to about your experiences. As you share your experiences and successes and failures with someone else the themes of your joy will become evident, and from there you can gain the insight needed to discern God's will in your life.

For men who have questions about the priesthood, how can they get in touch with you?

The best ways to reach me are either by email (kmarlovits@diopitt.org) or by the contact feature from pghpriest.com. My office phone is 412-456-3123.
Seven educators at Catholic schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have received the 2021 Golden Apple Award:

- Lisa Radzanowski - teacher, Ave Maria Academy
- Robert Childs - associate principal, Serra Catholic High School
- Darci Smith - teacher, Archangel Gabriel Catholic School
- Mallory Gurney - teacher, Blessed Francis Seelos Academy
- JoLynn Clouse - principal, Saint Wendelin School
- Meloni DiPietro-Guthoerl - teacher, Seton LaSalle High School
- Emily Janocha - teacher, John F. Kennedy Catholic School

The award recognizes their excellent performance in the classroom, church and community. Each educator will receive a monetary prize, thanks to the generosity of the Donahue Family Foundation.

The Pittsburgh Catholic is featuring a Golden Apple honoree each week until the start of school.

Golden Apple Award Winner: Lisa Radzanowski

School/position: Ave Maria Academy (Bethel Park campus), 3rd grade teacher
Quote: “Catholic schools have provided me with a strong foundation and shaped the person and teacher that I have become.”

When it comes to teaching, and her Catholic faith, Lisa Radzanowski is “all in.”

“With so much uncertainty last year—a new school, the pandemic—I knew that a deep commitment was needed, and that's just the way I am,” said Radzanowski, one of seven Catholic educators to receive the diocese’s 2021 Golden Apple Award.

“I am incredibly honored to be chosen. There are so many teachers who are deserving,” she said.

After leading the preschool for a decade at Our Lady of Grace in Scott Township, Radzanowski moved to Ave Maria Academy's Bethel Park campus, where she taught third graders for the first time. On top of that, she had to pivot to hybrid learning, with most students in-classroom but some learning remotely.

Georganne Henson's daughter Jessica was a virtual student. Because her father was being treated for a medical condition, she mostly lived with her grandparents and had to be brought up to speed quickly.

“With all the encouragement and support that Mrs. Radzanowski provided virtually, Jessica was able to master this learning process,” Mrs. Henson wrote in her nominating letter.

Jessica's grandmother added that she “embraced the mission of...service, mercy and love to my granddaughter and to me during these challenging times.”

Principal Lynne Lynch described her as “without a doubt, one of the most qualified, responsible and energetic educators you will meet...truly gifted. She quickly develops positive rapport with her students, establishes solid routines (and) maintains consistent communication with parents.”

South regional administrator Sharon Loughran Brown, who served as Radzanowski's principal for seven years at Our Lady of Grace, wrote that, “she is a true servant and epitomizes all that we value in Catholic education.”

Added Father Mark Eckman, pastor of Resurrection Parish, “Lisa encourages each student to do their best, not to give up...to recognize their God given talents. Additionally, (she) instills in each child a concern for the other person.”

Radzanowski began her career in Catholic education as a sixth grade teacher at Saint Elizabeth of Hungary School in Pleasant Hills. She graduated from Our Lady of Grace, Seton LaSalle High School, received a bachelor of science in elementary education from Duquesne University, and a masters in special education from Point Park University.

Volunteer service includes the parish festival at Our Lady of Grace, serving attendees at the parish Santa Breakfast, mentoring elementary and high school robotics teams, helping at the Red Door downtown, serving as a science camp director, and as a leader with the Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts.
Lisa Radzanowski taking a selfie with her students from Ave Maria Academy.
Reflection on Assumption: Mary lifts the lowly

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By Father Richard S. Jones

Chaplain, UMPC Mercy Hospital

The strength of everyday Catholic devotion to the Blessed Mother – and the strength families supported by those prayers – came home to me on a recent visit to an 88-year-old widower and leg amputee. He had arrived at UPMC Mercy hospital with a forehead gash after falling out of his wheelchair as he attempted to pick up his rosary beads, which had dropped onto the floor.

His son drove six-and-a-half hours from North Carolina to Pittsburgh to be with him at this trying time. His father’s calm and peaceful demeanor spoke volumes as he patiently waited to be discharged. What a faith story!

As we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we pray that our lives magnify the great love and mercy of God. Mary helps us to look to the heavens with confident faith, trusted hope, and abiding love.

Christians both in the East and the West have a long tradition of celebrating Mary’s Dormition (“falling asleep”), with her “translation” into heaven, which is the Assumption. Mary’s Assumption points to John 14:3—“And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be.” Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven to be with Jesus, the Son of God, who had prepared a place for her.

This could happen to Mary alone. As St. Thomas Aquinas points out, the last curse common to fallen men and women is that they must return to dust. Mary, however, was never tainted by original sin and remained free from this curse. Thus, she did not go to the grave, but was taken body and soul directly into heaven – lifted or “assumed” there by her Son.

Pope Pius XII defined the infallible dogma of the Assumption of Mary on November 1, 1950. In his encyclical, Munificentissimus Deus (Generous God) he cited Mary’s intimate connection with her Son—the new Adam—and His victory over sin and death:
“Mary having completed her course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory” by God. We accept this teaching, this doctrine of the Church as an article of faith. We believe and so we pray, ‘Hail Mary, full of grace.”

Mary is truly the Queen of heaven. “Mary already shares in the glory of her Son’s Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all the members of His Body” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 974).

She has been “exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she may be the more fully conformed to her Son” (Catechism, 966). Her Assumption is a sign of sure hope (Lumen Gentium, 68, Vatican II) that Jesus will raise us up to rejoice with Him forever.

In the words of St. Paul concerning what happens to our bodies after death: “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body”. (1 Cor. 15:42-44)

Mary’s great prayer, the Magnificat, gives voice to her hope and faith that God will rescue His people, beginning with those most poor and lowly. It echoes through the corridors of time for those who trust and believe in God’s promises. Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, pray for us.

We celebrate Mary’s life and rejoice in her everlasting reward. Her exemplary witness reminds us that today is an opportunity to renew our own hope in the promise, that on the last day, our soul will be reunited with our resurrected body, and we will rise, body and soul, to life everlasting.

We rejoice in Mary, our spiritual mother in faith, and give praise and glory to God for her faithfulness, humility, obedience, holiness, and love. She is indeed the most perfect model of every Christian virtue, and it is fitting that both Sacred Scriptures and tradition unite to proclaim her Assumption into her eternal reward in heaven.

May this amazing and most wonderful truth stir us and spur us to live out our faith more fully, day by day.
Sister Sharon Iacobucci, who strengthened bridges between religious communities and the Diocese of Pittsburgh during her two years as diocesan delegate for religious, has been elected to a national position with the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of Hope Province in North America.

“Without a doubt, I will miss everyone here in the diocese,” Sister Sharon said. “Not only did I serve as a bridge and liaison for Bishop Zubik with those in consecrated life, I truly enjoyed collaborating with the staff at the Office for Clergy and Consecrated Life and with all the various departments at the Pastoral Center.”

Bishop David Zubik praised her diocesan service, the majority of it during the COVID pandemic.

“We were blessed to have a delegate with her level of administrative experience, social awareness and spiritual insight,” Bishop Zubik said. “She understood where the needs were – both of the religious themselves and those to whom they minister. In the midst of the storm, she helped everyone pull together in the service of Jesus.”

The delegate for religious is a liaison between the bishop and all religious communities of men and women in the diocese.

“It was my privilege to collaborate with men and women religious, to share present concerns and future directions, especially during the pandemic,” Sister Sharon said.

Those included “how to meet the needs of our elderly religious and how to address the signs of the times, to bring awareness of the significant role that those in consecrated life provide by their presence within the diocese, prayerful support and diverse ministries in parishes, schools hospitals and service organizations to the poor.”

She promoted collaboration among communities through her service on the Catholic Sisters Leadership Council in Pittsburgh. She has been a member of the National Council of Vicars for Religious, and served on the board of directors of Sisters Place – a ministry to single parents and their children – and on the seminary advisory and admission boards for the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.
She is a graduate of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School in Coraopolis – a ministry of her community – and of LaRoche College, with a master of arts in formative spirituality from Duquesne University. She served for many years in schools and parishes and is certified in bereavement ministry, social ministry and advanced catechesis.

In her new role with the Felician Sisters, Sister Sharon will be one of five provincial councilors serving across the United States and Canada. She will live at their provincial house in Beaver Falls, but travel frequently to assist Felician communities in ministry, renewal and governance.

In March 2020, Sister Sharon wrote a column honoring National Catholic Sisters’ Week.

“As religious life undergoes many changes and is in transition, there have been difficult decisions to make as each congregation faces limitations and challenges,” she wrote.

“Yet undeterred, religious women move forward dedicated and passionate in their pastoral response to the cries of the poor, the bereaved, victims of social injustice and those with spiritual hunger. These women remain open to God’s providence with love, mercy, compassion and courage.”

The pandemic struck shortly after that column was published. Since then, Sister Sharon has participated in an effort by women’s communities to provide food for food banks and other outreaches to those suffering from hunger in the wake of COVID-19.