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A Christian Family, This Year and Always

Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky,
Prime Bishop

During the National Clergy Conference, which was held at the end of 2017, the bishops, priests and deacons of the Polish National Catholic Church gathered together to share their thoughts and concerns about many of the issues which are confronting our Church and our society. At the end of a number of these discussions, the clergy were asked to choose one item which would be the focus of 2018 for the Future Direction program of the Church. They overwhelmingly chose "The Year of the Family."

We are probably all aware that the family is under attack in many places and for many reasons within our society. The relationships of parents to children, of spouses to each other, of brothers and sisters are all facing difficult times. Some of these difficulties arise from outside issues which may be beyond our control such as the fact that families are now much wider spread and people have become much more mobile for work and other activities. But some of the issues are those which every individual chooses every day, such as the alienating effects of lack of respect and even the use of social media and technology. Along with all of this there is also the fact that our society no longer encourages respect, or even love, between family members who may live in the same house. Any way in which we look at it, the family is being degraded all around us.

If we really spend a moment to think about this situation though, it might really not be all that much different than what was confronted many years ago.

In 1914 the Polish National Catholic Church established what we now refer to as the Solemnity of the Christian Family. At that time, the members of the Church were facing difficult times in which the immigrant families struggled because of lack of respect and faced many challenges within the wider society. To counter this the Church established this solemnity, which is celebrated on the Second Sunday of October, this year on October 14, as an opportunity for all of us to focus our attention on the role of the family within the Christian faith.

No Christian truly stands as an island in the life and practice of the Christian Catholic religion. It is rather in connection to a community, that we practice the faith, live the faith and share the faith, and of course this begins for each of us in our own individual family. So much of our Christian understanding points us to the importance of the family as the beginning of the life of faith. We hear it in the opening prayer for the Solemnity of the Christian Family: "God, our Heavenly Father, You have blessed each of us with the gift of family that through our family life we may learn to love and care for others. Open our eyes to recognize in all people the bonds of kinship. May we unselfishly serve them who with us have been made co-heirs with Christ."

There is so very much here to examine and each part of this prayer says something to us. First, is that to live and be brought up in a family is itself a blessing

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**Email Addresses
for the
P.N.C.C. Offices**

The email addresses for the staff of the National Church Center and *God's Field* are:

Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky
pbmikovsky@pncc.org

Secretary to Prime Bishop — Julie Orzell
secretarytopb@pncc.org

P.N.C.C. Treasurer — Joan Scheuneman
treasurer@pncc.org

God's Field - Rola Boża Editor — Julie Orzell
godsfield@pncc.org

Questions or concerns? Call us at 570-346-9131 or 570-346-2125.

**God's Field — Rola Boża
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CONTROLLER:

Most Rev. Anthony A. Mikovsky
1006 Pittston Avenue
Scranton, PA 18505

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of God. But of course as with most gifts of God, they can be used for good or for ill. So this blessing places great responsibilities, not only on the parents of children, but also for husband and wife in their relationship with each other, and on brothers and sisters and even extended members of a family. The prayer goes on to say that a part of the blessing is “that through our family life we may learn to love and care for others.” And we know that this is something that must be taught from the earliest of ages and also continually lived out in each and every family interaction.

In regards to this situation on young children we quote from a P.N.C.C. publication called, “The Home Sanctuary: The Child’s First Church,” which was written in 1994. It states “To Parents! Your child is God’s gift to you. God is their heavenly Father. ... One of the striking things about the ministry of Jesus was the great concern and love He had for little children. The human instinct to protect and care for these innocent little ones was never more highly developed than in our Master. What an honor and responsibility is ours as parents! Having children is more than a physical union between man and woman. It is the consummation of a love that grows as it creates and creates as it grows. The primary task of a parent is to build in his or her child faith in God. It is an unwise parent who makes the statement ‘when my child is old enough, I will let him or her choose for himself or herself the faith to live by.’ Man does not have this option, for children will live by their parents’ faith. Each day, by observing his or her parents, they will be making this decision. The religion of the child is a fusion of the religion of the parents. We are representing God to our children. What the child sees in his or her parents, they will imitate and accept as his or her own.”

We must also continue through the prayer given for the Solemnity of the Christian Family to see how all of this expands. The prayer reads: “Open our eyes to recognize in all people the bonds of kinship.” This reminds us that in a very concrete way, that we, in fact, belong to multiple families, each of which expresses a bond of love and service between people.

It is in this way that we can examine something that was done at the 1914 General Synod in a little different light. During that Synod in the afternoon session on the third day of deliberations the matter of holy days was entertained. The Synod record states: “The bishop [Bishop Hodur] raised the matter of establishing holy days of the National Church: 1. The Holy Day of the Arising of the National Church, on the second Sunday of March; 2. The Holy Day of the Fatherland, on the second Sunday of May; 3. The Holy Day of the Family, on the second Sunday of October. The Synod did not only receive the information but with enthusiasm supported the thought given by Bishop Hodur. The Holy Days were approved.” Each of these feasts continues to be celebrated within the Polish National Catholic Church to this day, although the Feast of the Fatherland has been changed to the Heritage Sunday, now celebrated in October.

We see here that in essence, the Church is pointing out three of the ‘families’ to which each of us belongs: our individual family, the family of the Church, and the family which is our larger community. This also falls in line with a statement from the Confession of Faith of the P.N.C.C. which was also approved at the 1914 Synod which states: “I also believe that all people have sacred obligations towards God, themselves, their nation, state and all of human society.” Again we are a part of a family from which we receive blessings and to which we have sacred obligations. It is these blessings and obligations that form the bonds that we have, one to another, within these family groups.

A similar sentiment was put in the Eleven Great Principles of the P.N.C.C. in 1923 when Bishop Hodur wrote: “Nations, as one Great Family – Nations are members of one great family of God on earth, therefore, it is not right for one nation to rob another nation of land, their political, religious and social freedom, their right to create a native culture; as it is not right for one man to rob another of his property, his good name, freedom of conscience, and the pursuit of happiness, insofar as that pursuit does not interfere with the common good. The right to live and develop is the highest of all rights.” We see

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an extension here from the individual family in which love and commitment are first practiced, to the relationship of one individual to another, to finally the relationship among a group of individuals as one great family of God.

It is to all of these levels of family that the words of Scripture are ultimately addressed as well. During the journeys of St. Paul, we hear the jailer speaking to Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answered, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.” (Acts 16:30b-34) Those who were the first missionaries and preachers were bringing the message of the gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, not to individuals alone, but often to whole families and even larger family type communities. St. Paul also shared with St. Timothy a message to be taught to others: “And whoever does not provide for relatives and especially family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8) Our family bonds and obligations, at every level, are of serious concern as we must put into practice the call to “unselfishly serve them who with us have been made co-heirs with Christ.” This calls not only for unselfish service but also the recognition that we all stand as equal members of the family of faith.

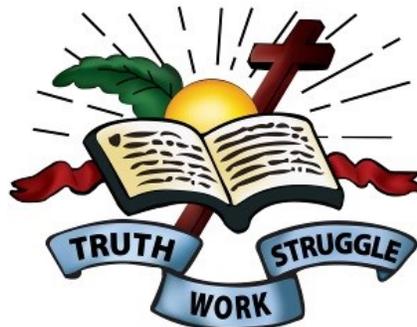
The XXV General Synod as Family

This edition of God's Field will be the last one before the clergy and lay representatives of the Polish National Catholic Church will gather in Belleville, IL for the XXV General Synod. It is important for all of us, not only the delegates, but in fact the whole Church, to acknowledge that we are, in fact, one

great family of God. This being said, and more importantly being felt within our hearts, we know that we are all responsible for the outcome of the Holy Synod. The delegates will gather and hopefully take in a very serious fashion their role within our synodal family as representatives of their parishes and the whole Church. They must put aside any personal issues that they bring to the synod and instead put the thriving of the Church family at the forefront. Likewise the clergy must continue to exercise their pastoral roles in now bringing the presence of Jesus Christ, not only to the parishes in which they serve, but to the whole Church gathered in Holy Synod. In other words we must gather as a family, a Church family. Yes, there might be disagreements, like there are in any family, but as a family we must always keep the “bonds of kinship” at the forefront and strive always to “unselfishly serve them who with us have been made co-heirs with Christ.” This must also be true of those who are not delegates, since, as a family, they must be in support of the action and work of the delegates and also remain united in prayer for the family of the Church.

As long as we strive together as a family in Christ we will, as individuals and together as brothers and sisters, come to better know, love and serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and also to build up our family home, which is, not only the parishes that we worship within, but more broadly the kingdom of God on earth.

This is the role of the family, our individual families, the parish community families and the family which is our holy Church. Let us live this at the time of the Synod and then truly celebrate it in the Solemnity of the Christian Family and beyond.





God's Field Appeal for Christmas Greetings

It is not too early to start thinking about publishing your Christmas greetings in the December issue of *God's Field*.

In past years your responses to our appeals have been very enthusiastic and we sincerely hope your generosity and support will continue this year.

The cost for publishing Christmas greetings for individuals, parishes and organizations is \$20.00. Due to space constraints in the page setup of the *God's Field*, greetings are limited to up to three (3) lines of text.

An online form can be found on the pncc.org website at: pncc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/online_greeting_form_2018.pdf

ALL GREETINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY PAYMENTS, MUST BE RECEIVED BY NOVEMBER 30, 2018 IN ORDER TO BE INCLUDED IN THE CHRISTMAS ISSUE.

Please send 3-line greetings, along with payments in the form of check or money order payable to God's Field, to:

God's Field - Christmas Greetings

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Thank you for your continued support.



2014 Constitutions Available

“The Constitution and Laws of the Polish National Catholic Church” booklet, as revised at the XXIV General Synod in Erie, PA, is available from the P.N.C.C. Book Department.

“The Constitution and Laws of the Polish National Catholic Church” should be in the hands of all members of the P.N.C.C. but above all by those who serve on the Parish Committees and other organizations.

Orders may be submitted via email to secretarytopb@pncc.org, by calling (570) 346-9131 or by writing to:

Book Department

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The cost is \$3.00 per copy plus \$1.75 (US)/\$2.95 (Canada) postage and handling. Shipping costs for multiple copies will vary, depending on shipping method (USPS or UPS), weight and distance of shipment.

Downloadable and printable pdf versions of “The Constitution and Laws of the P.N.C.C.” can be found on the website, pncc.org, by selecting the *Beliefs and Principles* option from the *Who We Are* dropdown menu on the home page.

“Our Way of Life” — History & Archives

This 40-page booklet was written by Prime Bishop Francis Hodur. It was translated into English 15 years after his death, and published by the United Maria Konopnicka Societies.

The book contains the Confession of Faith for the Polish National Catholic Church and seven other sections. The other sections are as follows: I. Understanding God, the Father; II. Jesus Christ and His Relationship to Man; III. God's Relationship to the World in General and With Humanity in Particular, IV. Spiritual Rebirth, V. On The Sacraments, VI. On Social and National Affairs, and VII. On Earthly and Eternal Life: On Man's Purpose and Destiny.

The booklet has a foreword by Most Rev. Leon Grochowski, Prime Bishop Polish National Catholic Church in the United States and Canada. The foreword states that this booklet “does not constitute an official and final dogma of the Polish National Catholic Church's teaching on the matters dealt with in this work of Bishop Hodur.” The foreword also says that Bishop Hodur resisted dogmatization of Christian doctrine as one of the greatest evils and that we would be “doing him a great disservice by dogmatizing now the person or the teachings of this divinely inspired leader of the Polish people. But we must note with pardonable pride and lasting gratitude that most of the thoughts expressed by Bishop Hodur in this pamphlet some sixty years ago are just as valid and compelling now as they were during the troubled years of our Church's beginnings.” Prime Bishop Grochowski also says that with this translation into English, he is hopeful that younger clergymen and lay members will “be duly inspired by the lofty message of Bishop Hodur expressed in Our Faith.”

The Introductory Observations contain the Confession of Faith for the Polish National Catholic Church (P.N.C.C.). Bishop Hodur said that in developing its set of beliefs, the P.N.C.C. in America drew “upon the Holy Scriptures and on other works which were inspired by the Holy Ghost.” This section of the booklet continues with descriptions of the development of the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, which became the standard of the Christian Faith. He then mentions other declarations of faith such as the Roman Catholic Creed of Pius the Fourth, the Protestant Augsburgian Creed and those developed by the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church and others. The P.N.C.C. used the Apostles Creed and the

Nicene Creed also as the basis for the Confession of Faith adopted by the Provisional Synod held in June and July 1912. “In it, the principles of Christ's Church are briefly summarized in order that the people who are united in the P.N.C.C. may gain a greater understanding of their faith and acting accordingly, find more meaning in their life on this earth while increasing their likelihood of achieving eternal happiness.” This is followed by Confession of Faith for the P.N.C.C.

Section I. UNDERSTANDING GOD, THE FATHER, begins with a brief description of the three principal responses to the question of whether God actually exists; atheists who deny the existence of God; agnostics, who are skeptics, and believers in God. Bishop Hodur concluded “Thus, because history tells us that man has always believed in God, and because man's faith has always been the principal force behind his charity, his creativity, and his self-development, then we are clearly led from effects to their cause and from outcomes to their sources. In other words, we are lead directly to God.”

Section II. JESUS CHRIST AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO MAN. Bishop Hodur said “No one will deny that Jesus Christ commands an outstanding role in history. No one will deny that His personality and His teaching gave humanity a new set of values and restored to it a dignity which had seriously deteriorated at the time of Christ's appearance on this earth.” This section asks whether there was a similarity of Jesus Christ's contribution to other philosophers, prophets and reformers or was it something different. He answered that we must say yes. He said “We see him as the advocate of a new way of life, calling for unbounded human goodness, which way of life he characterized as the kingdom of God on earth. Fundamentally, this kingdom of God is to be based on our complete submission to the will of God and the complete incorporation into our personal lives and throughout all society the virtues of love, justice and dedication to the welfare of others.”

Section III. GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD IN GENERAL AND WITH HUMANITY IN PARTICULAR. This section opens with discussion of the ways in which God's relationship with the world is treated in different religions and philosophical systems. Bishop Hodur said “If God cares for all the things He created in the Universe, no matter how

small and insignificant they may appear to be, then He must be concerned with mankind in an extraordinary special way.”

Section IV. SPIRITUAL REBIRTH. Bishop Hodur quoted John 3:3 “Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Bishop Hodur continued by saying that this imprecise introduction of the idea of rebirth into a new being, led to many interpretations. Bishop Hodur then said that “Rebirth comes from a spiritual transformation which changes man. This reborn individual becomes a completely different person. He has changed spiritually and morally. He has changed his attitude towards God, towards his fellow man, and towards his environment. The reborn individual’s basic attitudes towards life and towards his fellow human beings also change. The man who has not been reborn is often greedy, covetous, a seeker of sensual pleasures, and a pursuer of wealth and status. He desires recognition, accolades of applause and worldly fame. But the man who has been reborn does not care about any of these things. Neither wealth, nor fame, nor honors, nor fleshly indulgence have any significant or lasting value for him. He sees them as transient aspects of life, which are not worth the risk they entail to the spiritual treasures of the soul and to its share in eternity.” The rest of this section give examples of what the reborn man believes and does. It talks about his attitudes of life, what he considers success, his reactions, how he grieves. Bishop Hodur then speaks about some famous men whose lives led them to trample on others to gain fame or power but were unable to find happiness. He then spoke about Paul of Tarsus and Augustine of Tagasta who came to “their understanding of life after much meditation, reflection, and consideration of causality” after pursuing earthly goals early in their lives.

This section concludes with “The man who had been previously been selfish, apathetic and useless now becomes God’s implement, He helps his fellow man. He is like a lamp which burns with a flame of love, enthusiasm and self-denial. Such a man is blessed a hundred times over!”

Section V. ON THE SACRAMENTS. Bishop Hodur begins the section with the statement, “A sacrament is an external manifestation of man’s union with God.” He also said that Jesus Christ didn’t “formalize His teaching on the Sacraments, nor did He specify their number.” The number has been set at various times at three, five, seven, ten and twenty or more.

Definitions have changed at different councils. Catholic churches eventually recognized seven while Protestant churches recognize only two. The Polish National Catholic Church recognizes seven and added the sacrament of listening to the word of God. Bishop Hodur cites the saying of Luke 11:28 “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” and of John 5:24 “He that is of God, hears God’s words.” Bishop Hodur says that the apostles agreed with Jesus Christ’s assignment of sacramental rank by referring to Acts 13:46 and I Cor. 1:18.

Section VI. ON SOCIAL AND NATIONAL AFFAIRS. The section begins with a statement that “One of the most important problems in religious life is determining the proper role for the church in social and national affairs.” There is some discussion about the difficulty in solving this problem. It continues with a discussion of these impacts on Jesus’s teachings and branches out into descriptions of the effects related to nations, nationalities and languages. Bishop Hodur then talks about the strong sense of social justice held by Jesus and gives many examples.

Bishop Hodur concludes this section with the statements, “The church must not be the instrument of the aristocracy, of the wealthy, or of any particular faction in politics or society. Instead it should bless and support any human endeavor and righteous work which is directed towards the betterment and enrichment of mankind, towards the creation of a more equitable social and political structure, and towards the triumph of peace, truth, beauty and light — in other words, the triumph of God — within the human soul.

Section VII. ON EARTHLY AND ETERNAL LIFE: ON MAN’S PURPOSE AND DESTINY

The section discusses the search by man for truth over time. Bishop Hodur said “A sense of human dignity and of justice demands that his life continue as long as it is necessary for him to know and possess the truth. The same may be said about justice and happiness. Our dream of happiness and our yearning for justice will not be realized in our earthly lives.” The rest of the section deals with the differences in the completion of man’s existence through death and into the next life. Bishop Hodur concludes by saying “In our next life, the attainment of happiness will be a fact rather than an empty promise. It will not be characteristic of only a few select individuals but it will become the way of life for everyone who inher-

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Sharing Our Gifts at Home and in the Parish

By Fr. Scott and Shelley Lill

“Now there are different gifts but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of work, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone.” ~1 Corinthians 12: 4-6

While St. Paul was speaking primarily of spiritual gifts in the passage above, the same can really be said about the unique and personal talents that God gives to each one of us. While every person has unique abilities with which the Lord has gifted him or her, they are all granted for a common purpose: to use them for everyone's good. Sometimes we may be tempted to use our special gifts only for our own benefit, but we know that this would not be pleasing to the Lord who gave them to us. Instead, we are all called to selflessly apply these talents throughout all the areas of our everyday lives, and are reminded that when we do so, wonderful things happen.

First, we actively express our thanks to the One who so generously bestowed such gifts upon us. To use them selfishly or, perhaps worse, to neglect using them at all, would be very ungrateful. When we use them, we are thanking God for our own special talents.

Second, whenever we use our gifts and talents to help others we are actually serving as co-workers with God whose work of sustaining and renewing creation in Christ continues in a wonderful way *through us*. In this way, the Holy Spirit is active in the world and we are his instruments.

Finally, putting our special gifts into good use leads to our receiving the wonderful fruits of the Holy Spirit among which are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Overall, whenever we generously use the special gifts that we have received from God, we are helping Him transform the still-fallen world, a little bit at a time, while we ourselves are also changed for the better. We become more holy, which also means we become happier because we are more fully becoming the people He made us to be.

Before we can ever really use these gifts, however, we first need to discern them and then begin to hone them. All of this begins at home within the family. Parents should pray with their children, from a very early age, teaching them to continually ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to them their own unique abilities and how He wants them to use these talents. Many times, adults ask children, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” For us as Christians, however, the question should really be this: “what do you think God wants you to be when you grow up?” Prayerfully helping them begin recognizing their own giftedness and wondering why God may have given them such abilities is a first way by which parents help their children discern their lives' vocations. This is really a life-long process that begins slowly in childhood, gradually flowers over time as children mature and develop within the family as each gift revealed by God at just the right moment in accord with his plan.

Once personal gifts are acknowledged, even if only partially at first, parents can lead their children in giving thanks to God for such talents and immediately start to encourage them to accept them with gratitude. This really means *inspiring them to start using them*. Parents can have creative conversations with their children to guide them—but not dictate to them—to some particular ways to use them within the home for the whole family's benefit. This is a great way for children to not only recognize but start to polish their gifts and perfect their talents, while beginning to see the positive impact they can have in the lives of others and starting to experience the great joy that comes from this. Then, with a special contributing role initiated within the family, these unique skills can naturally be extended and put to good use in the life of the parish family. Here are just a few practical examples to demonstrate this:

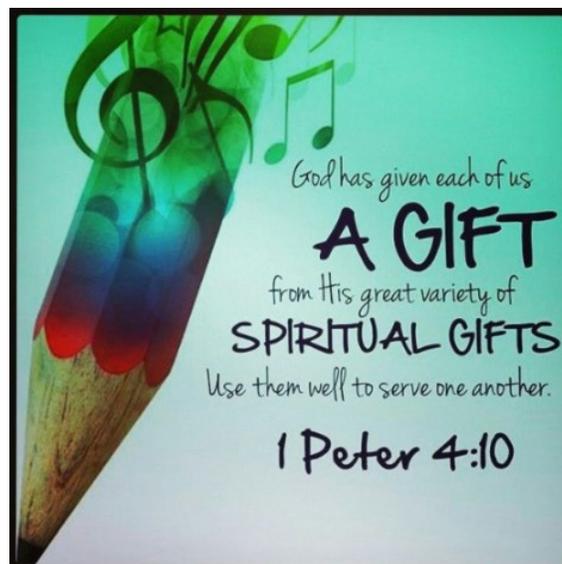
- *In a family with a younger child who may exhibit a talent for singing and who really seems to enjoy it, the parents can help him or her realize this and then gently nudge them toward sharing it with everyone else, by giving them the honor of leading carols at the family's Christmas Eve Wigilia. Over time, en-*

couraged by the other family members' recognition of their special talent and growing in their self-confidence, this gift can eventually be shared in the parish as a member of the youth or adult choirs or even as a cantor.

- *With a child who may be a bit older and who demonstrates an artistic ability, parents can help him or her recognize this and start to use it, perhaps by drawing pictures to cheer up members of the family who are ill. As the talent is honed and the child personally sees the benefits of sharing it, they can be asked to help make seasonal decorations for S.O.C.L. bulletin boards or crafting homemade cards for the parish's shut-ins.*
- *Should a family have a (pre)teenager who demonstrates a blossoming talent for leadership or emerging organizational skills, mom and dad can celebrate this as a gift from God and ask him or her to assist in getting younger siblings ready for school by organizing back packs or packing lunches. As this ability matures, they could then assume officer roles in the parish's youth association, help as S.O.C.L. assistants, or lend a much-needed hand in organizing the parish's book cases or office space.*

There are as many opportunities as there are children and gifts. As should be clear by now, however, *the role of the parents is of paramount importance.* Far be it from them to ever discourage their children from using their special talents, parents are the first and enduring source of grateful self-confidence for their children. They are entrusted by God with the weighty and yet joyful duty of guiding them to clearly recognize, diligently develop and begin to use their unique abilities to His glory and for the benefit of others. While this starts at home and then naturally moves into the parish, their endeavors will eventually start to bear fruit throughout every aspect of their lives, as the Lord works with them and through them in ways previously unimagined.

The greatest and most important way that parents can fulfill this responsibility, though, is by *setting a good example for their children.* They themselves must constantly look for as-yet uncovered gifts that God has bestowed upon them, never being afraid to learn something new or to practice unmastered skills, and *to share their own gifts with the family at home and in the parish family.* While moms and dads *could* simply remind their children to pray for guidance in this every day, it's far better when the whole family prays *together* in this way. The whole family—parents and children—together all asking the Lord of Glory, the Giver of all good gifts, to show them *all* exactly how they should use their special talents serve Him and his people that day. As we continue our journey in this Polish National Catholic Year of the Family, this would be a great spiritual practice for each family to embrace. It would engender within us all a deeper, more humble gratitude to the Lord for the abundant talents with which we are all uniquely graced, and remind us that we are all commissioned to use these gifts to praise their Giver by generously serving his people everywhere.



P.N.C.C. Celebration

Solemnity of the Christian Family — Sunday, October 14, 2018



The P.N.C.C. is again offering to the parishes a full-color brochure describing the Solemnity of the Christian Family, a unique feast of our Church. This is a perfect point of information to include in welcome packets or to have in bulletin racks.

The brochures are available for purchase from the P.N.C.C. Book Department:

25 brochures:	\$8.50
50 brochures:	\$15.00
75 brochures:	\$21.50
100 brochures:	\$27.50

(All prices include shipping costs.)

Checks, payable to P.N.C.C. Book Department, should be sent to:

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1006 Pittston Avenue
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We hope that all parishes will help to spread the awareness of this important Solemnity of the Polish National Catholic Church.

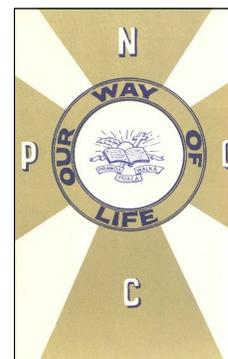
And don't forget that you can still view Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky's 2016 Solemnity of the Christian Family online presentation by visiting the P.N.C.C. Future Direction YouTube page at youtube.com/watch?v=qlB2ias2sKM. We encourage you to watch this with your parish family or with your family at home.

(“Our Way of Life” - Continued from Page 7.)

its the kingdom of God, for all those who cross the threshold of eternity in varying degrees of union with their creator.”

I urge everyone to read these words of Bishop Hodur so that they can better understand the bases for the Polish National Catholic Church.

Joseph Francis Seliga
Chair, P.N.C.C. Commission on History and Archives



From the National Youth Chaplain

As we find our Holy Church immersed in the “Year of the Family,” I can think of no other example than to envision your parish family as one wherein the youth are our concern just as they are in the family. And, where is the place where we can use our gifts for the good of the family? Certainly in the parish family.

But as families dream about where they would like to be down the road, they make some course corrections, choose different thinking about the context of family and then move in that direction. We in youth ministry can do this exercise in shifting thinking. We can look at the future direction of our family of the parish and strengthen not only in this area, but ultimately be able to use this thinking to change in our nuclear families as well.

It’s time to think differently about ministry. It’s time to take a look at going deeper into ministry. It’s time to ask the more robust question of how to serve Christ while we serve kids. Some of the current research is showing that, while some kids are doing well, and some are doing very poorly, there are a lot of kids for which their world is fairly dark. We should provide in our ministries, in our parishes, some attempts at providing resources to help parents know where their kids are in this culture. In a matter of survival, parents, because of their unique relationship with their kids, may not know who their kids are when they have to deal with peers, teachers, authority figures, et al. Some questions to consider: What does it mean to serve Christ in this culture? What should our ministry look like as we try to deal with the multi-faceted lives of our young people? How can we know that what we do is pleasing the heart of Jesus?

Re-framing Youth Ministry

Sometimes something happens during our ministry that tends to shatter the framework in which we are working. Sometimes something happens that causes the view of our ministry to skew because our frame is in need of some “crazy glue” to bring it back all squared once again. To begin our thinking, finish this phrase: “The goal of youth ministry is ...?” (I’ll wait) ... “to lead kids to Jesus Christ” (in our tradition we would describe it as evangelization – leading kids to Christ to see who He is [a missional or Chris-

tocentric view])...or from Matthew 28, making disciples for Jesus Christ (remember though that Jesus says first, “All authority has been given to Me, therefore, go...” And in your going, make disciples). If you thought this as your goal, remember that “disciple” means follower of Jesus Christ, and if this is our goal, do we really mean it? Or “to help kids grow spiritually” ... but what does it mean to grow spiritually? Is it to become more introspective? ... “to foster in kids a vibrant faith” ... “to get kids passionate about God” ... but what does it mean for a kid to have a vibrant, passionate faith? Or “create an environment where kids encounter Christ.” How many of you had any of the answers above? How many of you had different answers? The trouble with any of the above is that they are not really goals; they can’t be measured. But in the midst of all this, we have the command of Jesus that He had given to His disciples the night before He was to be betrayed, (John 15:1-17), “I have one command, love each other.” This is Jesus’ summarization of youth ministry. It’s interesting that we usually separate the verses in John 15. In 1-8, Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” This is something we can’t ever forget; we can’t switch that around – we must cling to Jesus. Next, He says, “apart from Me, you can do nothing” – it is corporal, it is community. It’s all of you, and (for those of you in the deep south), it’s “all y’all.” It’s not “me and Jesus” it’s “us and Jesus” – those who are called out to do His work. Then come verses 9-17, ‘as you cling to Me, I have one command, one goal for My body, one way to live your life, one thing to think about’; this is ‘City Slickers’ “‘one thing’, and here it is: love one another.” “You are My friends, if you do what I command you.”

We need a theological goal for youth ministry. Here’s one we may consider: as you re-frame your goal for youth ministry, the “one thing” that needs always to be in front of you: If kids get to know Jesus, if they direct their life through this knowing, if the decisions they make are based on this relationship, then I’ve done my job. My job is to get them to know Jesus, to fall in love with Him, and get them involved in the mission and ministry of the Church. Our programs’, from a monthly pizza party at the parish to the national youth convocations, goals are to get kids to know and love Jesus Christ. We can’t

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only do the first half; we have to get them to know and love Jesus, and then take that love and share it with others.

For an educational goal to be effective there must be a measurable outcome. To write, "The student will understand that $2+2=4$ " and your only evaluation is to ask the student, "Do you understand this?" They will nod their heads "yes" all day, but you won't know if they really do understand it. You must get them to do something that you can measure to decide the level of their understanding. In this example, you must then say, "Please write the answer to the equation, $2+2=?$ " By what they write you will know the level of their understanding. If they write the answer, "cheese," then you know you've got some work to do. For us to say, "Do you love Jesus?" most of our students will nod their heads "yes" all day long; but unless we give them some activities or directives that we can measure their love for Jesus (service, kindness, self-denial, et al.) then we can truly know how much they love Him. The Church community is not an option; it is through community that this love can be manifested. The local community is truly a microcosm of the Body of Christ in the world today. Our kids must be a part of that.

Every Rite of Confirmation has the candidates promise that "always and everywhere I will remember that I am a member of the Polish National Catholic Church." In saying this, they are also saying that they will remember always and everywhere that they are a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, globally. How many of our confirmands can truly say this? Do they understand that? Can we measure their understanding? Are they around so we can do this? When our kids graduate from our confirmation program and perhaps go to college, the military, or another job away from their hometown, how many of them can say, "Wherever I am, I will never forget my command to love one another, and stay united in the family of the Church?" This is a deeper theological goal of youth ministry.

But in saying this, I must also admit to the challenge that confronts us, and basically it's not to use the word "challenge" to our kids. We struggle with the challenge, but to say, "I challenge you to love Jesus more; to give your life more." what we're really saying is, "I've made it, you haven't – get busy; I'm up here on the spirituality ladder, and you're way down there." That's how we lose a lot of our kids. We

hold on to our kids when we integrate them into the parish community and allow them to interact internally and externally. Listen to God as recorded in Mark, chapter 10. The disciples were rebuking the crowd who wanted to see Jesus. They were saying, "get in line, don't push, don't shove, let's have an orderly audience with the Lord." And what did Jesus say? "Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them." To hinder is just not to stand in the way, hinder is also not showing the way. Jesus knows there is no pretense with children. That's the making of a great community. Philippians 2 is a great passage because it reminds us of what it means to live together in Christ. Philippians 2 begins by saying this, "If any of you have any encouragement, any comfort from His love, any community with the Spirit, if you have any tenderness and compassion then make my joy complete by being like-minded. You should look not only to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

Youth ministry has evolved into a much institutionalized machine having lost its connection with the community of faith. If the youth group has become so detached from the parish community, then the youth begin to look at those who are older as those who can't be trusted; can't be connected to them. We have got to re-invent a model of youth ministry that stays connected to the larger parish community. So the theological goal of youth ministry is this: to assimilate the youth into the parochial, national and global Body of Christ. As I say that, I know I am also saying that even when leading a School of Christian Living class, a Bible study class, a service project, a youth retreat, an acolyte retreat, a diocesan or national Convo, what is the goal? Will we create spiritual orphans who will feel detached from what they may call the "institutionalized Church," because they haven't been connected to people?

And that leads to the second piece of this: we have to turn history on its ear. Youth ministry is probably (and I pray to God, at least this) the only program that appears as a line item in the annual budget. Not School of Christian Living, that's something else; not junior choir, that's something else; not the junior divisions of the Women's Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament Society, that's something else; not the Defenders of the Young Men's Society of Resurrection, that's something else. There has to be a proactive component in getting our kids integrated in the local, seniorate, diocesan, national and global Church. That takes some creative financing.

Also, and I've written about this in the past - we were worried about ratios. The best ratio has always been indicated as 1:5. Even today you can get five kids into your car, four will have seat belts. You can have small groups; you can take ministry trips. Kids feel safe and secure when there's one adult for five kids. But, you see, that was true 20 years ago. In a culture where structures are less and less secure, in a culture where kids feel less supported by the adults in their lives, in a culture that has become more fragmented and yet more programmatically oriented, in a culture where they define themselves by conformity and image, 5:1 is still that ratio, gang. But a theology of assimilation says this - your ministry still has to have a ratio of 1:5, but it's not 5 kids to one adult, and (I know you see it coming) ... to have an effective ministry, by the time they graduate, each kid must have five adults in their lives that truly love them and care for them in your ministry. Five adults that know their names. Five adults that say "hello" to them at church, at the mall, wherever they see them. Five adults that pray for them regularly. Five adults that know their e-mail addresses and encourage them. Five adults that send them care packages when they go off to school. Five adults that say, "That kid is my spiritual responsibility."

We used to have a culture where all adults saw all the kids as their responsibility. We consistently butcher the Old Testament, especially Deuteronomy 6 where God says, teach your children these things. We think God is saying this only to parents, but He's not; He's saying that all of us care about all the kids, all y'all care about all y'all. It is the Church's job to do the work of youth ministry.

But you're probably saying, "My job is to teach SOCL, my job is to plan the retreat, my job is to make sure that the supplies are checked on, and you want me to do 5:1?" Listen closely - It's not that we have to do more, but that we must re-frame our goal. What is your goal? What was your objective in moving into whatever position you have working with youth? What is your goal today in leading the kids God has put under your care? Maybe we need to re-think and bring five people into the lives of our kids; a programmatic strategy for relational assimilation.

Everything we plan, everything we resource, everything we think must have as its goal how to assimilate our kids into the relationship of the Church, as experienced locally, but also expressed globally and historically. If I could isolate one prayer I would

pray for our kids in our Church, it would be one that God would find some adults who would give a rip about our kids. We have so many that have fallen and are falling through our parochial cracks. Perhaps this provides your entrance into deeper ministry. If you want to re-frame your goal, where do you want to go deeper, where do you want to go in your journey, where can you bring your kids into a deeper life in the Church? That's the first step. To achieve assimilation, you must be working toward assimilation as well. You can't lead where you've not gone. If there's no one with whom to have a relationship in church, then you've got to think about where you are. That's a risky, hard thing.

Part of the re-framing is to look at your parish and ask God, "Are there really any adults here that would have compassion and encouragement (Philippians 2, again) for our kids?" A theological framework would say that this is necessary before moving on.

Having decided this, we would need to re-frame our method of discernment. How do we live our lives in union with Christ in the midst of our programs? Traditionally, youth ministry has been a subset of the ministry of education in our churches. What we need to look at in this re-framing is taking the job of youth ministry from education to theology. Remember, we are all theologians when we study and express our relationship to God. There is however, a practical theology that says youth ministry is that which grounds the Church in its practice, holistically, and teaching is a subset of that.

Most practical theologians would describe a process that begins at theory and flows through practice; here's what we think about ministry and then we go and do it. Practical theology has been around for about 100 years, but in the last 20 it has really taken the front seat in showing us how to answer "Where does God show up?" How do we make ministry decisions based on how and where we find ourselves in the world? It's based on what we view as our context. We begin the process of discernment by asking what's really in front of us. We begin by looking at two factors - internal and external. The internal forces that shape us (psychosocial development, family stories, family history). What that means is every kid comes to your program with a story. Every kid comes with baggage, every kid comes with a level of pain. It's like the Verizon commercial - every kid comes to your program with the "Verizon" people.

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So even if you've got five kids, you've got thousands and thousands of voices that are inside a kid's soul. And in order to minister to them, you've got to have some idea that that's going on. That's why you can't talk about spiritual development and divorce yourself from the acknowledgement of the psychosocial tensions in your kids. Those of you who have planned retreats and Convos, or who have ministered for any length of time know this. It's when, in the middle of the retreat, you and one of your kids are taking a break from moving tables or setting up for Mass, and he or she takes the opportunity to say, "I want to tell you about (insert need here)" Now, you may have been wondering about (inserted need)... in this kid's life, but you never had the egress. Now you have the chance. This is real ministry. And that's where the real action is, as you know. We've got to be aware of the narrative of life in truly dealing with our kids.

The other lens, if you will, is the external factors. There's a great book called "Hurt," where the author, Dr. Chapman Clark, actually spent time in the world of adolescents by becoming a substitute teacher in middle and high schools. He used the process of ethnography, because he was tired of hearing how youth were not responding to interviews and surveys. He came to find out that they were able to say more than they were willing to say in interviews and surveys, and that true close observation revealed more. The reason that there is a dearth of information on teenagers is due to parental consent. That's why I want you to put your tongue firmly in your cheek when you read a study about teenagers. For the most part, their research was their interview. The process of the interview is skewed by: Did they like the interviewer? What kind of environment were they in? Did they have "Red Bull" that day? Did they break up with their boyfriend/girlfriend? Were Mom and Dad nice to them this morning? All these factors will change what they say in interviews. I encourage you to check out the book; it's very revealing into the life of the kids you minister to.

It isn't hard to note that cultural forces are out to hurt our kids. I'm not saying that it's as bad in all areas. Perhaps you are blessed with kids that are affirmed and encouraged like mad crazy. But there are situations in our culture that bear watching. For example, the ultimate oxymoron – competitive dancing; it's like hearing about competitive eating. Culture, eth-

nicity, race and class, along with all the other narratives being shot at our kids are all examples of external factors. Your kids, along with their brethren, have many opinions about last year's presidential election, but there have not been calm, serious voices to help them sort it all out. That's just another example of the external forces that come crashing in on our kids. So before you can go to an issue biblically, you have to approach it from the cultural side in finding out what you're dealing with. After you identified the issue, then you go to the Scriptures, and let the Scriptures speak for you. When Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor," it might be possible that He really means it, and how that shapes our ministry. Biblical exegesis is that box that, as we have experienced the issue, becomes the reality of our kids' experience. Then we take the issue they're facing, and look at what the Scriptures teach, in the context of what we have already observed. We include in that Church history, tradition, systematic theology, and then out of this, two things have to happen.

Let's take, for example, student evangelism: What are the psychosocial needs for a kid who's a teenager, roughly 14-20? They have an intense need to be in a relationship with their friends. That intense need comes out of a sense of abandonment from the general culture. Therefore, their friends mean everything to them. In fact, every parent, at some point, is going to hear, "You don't know me. The only people who know me are ... (you hear it coming) my friends." And that's when moms get real pastoral; out of the calm she wishes to have, she inquires, "Did your friends have an epidural?" That may work sometimes. But for the most part, you'll get conflicting answers. Am I loyal to my family or am I loyal to my friends? During adolescence, however, my friends seem safer, because they don't have an agenda. Okay, that's psychosocial.

The environment says, "We really need each other to survive." But the question is still out there, "How do we do student evangelism?" We've got kids who are desperate to survive adolescence. We hear from Scripture, 'go and share your faith'; 'die to self'. So what do we typically do? We come out of biblical exegesis and say, "Go share Christ with your friends." "I challenge you to evangelize your friends." Here's what we say, "We're doing the outreach program with pizza and a video. It's going to be awesome; bring your friends." And it doesn't even cross their minds that this is a huge threat to the social structure

they live every day. It doesn't really cross their minds that to perceive that we're using them for our agenda. It doesn't really cross their minds that we're asking them to do what not many adults in the congregation would ever do; but it's normal in youth ministry. Let's push our kids; let's challenge our kids, let's get them to do this thing called Christianity without really thinking what's going on out there.

And here's where these two other pieces come to play. Kingdom trajectory is the process that should push against how we make decisions, of the things we have already concluded. Kingdom trajectory says, "we have to be pretty darn sure that we're not putting additional pressure on our kids' lives, because Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them." Don't put undue pressure on them just because adults aren't ready to go into the adolescent world. Don't pressure our kids to jeopardize their relationships just so we can do our thing. Kingdom trajectory says that if we really care about our students we go with them to evangelize. There are adults who consider the kids' relationships valuable; and we partner with them in this process - that may be kingdom trajectory.

Let's say you get to an issue such as sexuality, gender relationships, how you treat people you disagree with. Coming out of that, Kingdom trajectory pushes us to say, "Where is God taking us as He brings His Kingdom? (don't we pray that often?) Let's be off the wall, creative, going for this. Kingdom trajectory says that we can't assume where God is taking us without any cultural filters; that there's got to be some biblical answers to where God is wanting to take His Church. There is some biblical antecedent that explains just where God is going. We go back to Scripture to find a way to help re-shape our praxis.

This process hopefully will help to lead you to Scripture to help in re-framing your goal, but also using the second plank to stand on with respect to what's going on in the culture. How does the Bible speak in our context, and the how does the Bible lead us? How do we take practical steps to change; how do we take the task of equipping the saints? (Ephesians 12) The context is this: adults help out in the ministry of the professional. The Scriptures teach 'every person is necessary; every person contributes.' Therefore, kingdom trajectory says this, "God has gifted all His people to serve in His kingdom", and the biblical antecedent is this: The Body is one although made up of many. That's the process.

There are two basic forms of leadership in youth ministry. One says, the head honcho's job is to love and lead kids; therefore, let's get a few people to help us do that. That is the most typical way we do leadership in youth ministry. But when we put that through the biblical process, we see it differently. First there is a "primus," because the Bible has called us to serve together and one another. And out of these relationships, we serve Christ together. That's how this thing works. Another says, concerning adolescent discipleship, we often see faith as rules and there are a small group of disciples. What does the Bible say about discipleship, though? The Bible says this: faith is our calling, and righteousness is God's business. Galatians 5 – the center chapter of all Paul's theology, 'we eagerly await the coming of the Lord's righteousness for which we truly hope.' This is what we do – we try to make kids righteous; we try to make good Christians, because that's what we think being a good Christian is – doing the right stuff. But Paul is saying, 'no, it's for freedom'. Our job is not to be good, for we are incapable of being good in our work, because of our human nature. Our job, then, is to focus on increasing faith; to increase trust in Jesus. God is asking us to increase trust in His Son so that when our kids experience Him they can advance Him in the context of community. See that? And when they trust Him, here's what it looks like: as Paul writes, the fruits of the Spirit occur.

I want to design a bumper sticker – "Fruit Happens." Not everyone starts from the same place. But the only thing that matters is Gal 5:6 – love.

So, I invite you to consider re-framing your goal. And, from that, to develop a strategy to move your ministry forward in the context of kingdom trajectory. There's nothing but an exciting time ahead.

Let's keep this conversation going – if you have any thoughts, let's share. We can be friends on "Facebook," we can e-mail, text message, write, or use that older technology - phone each other. Jesus was always moving His disciples, always moving them forward. In our re-shaping, we won't be able to sit still.

Bishop Stan Bilinski bpbilinski@sbcglobal.net



Central Diocese

Petroskys Celebrate 62nd Wedding Anniversary

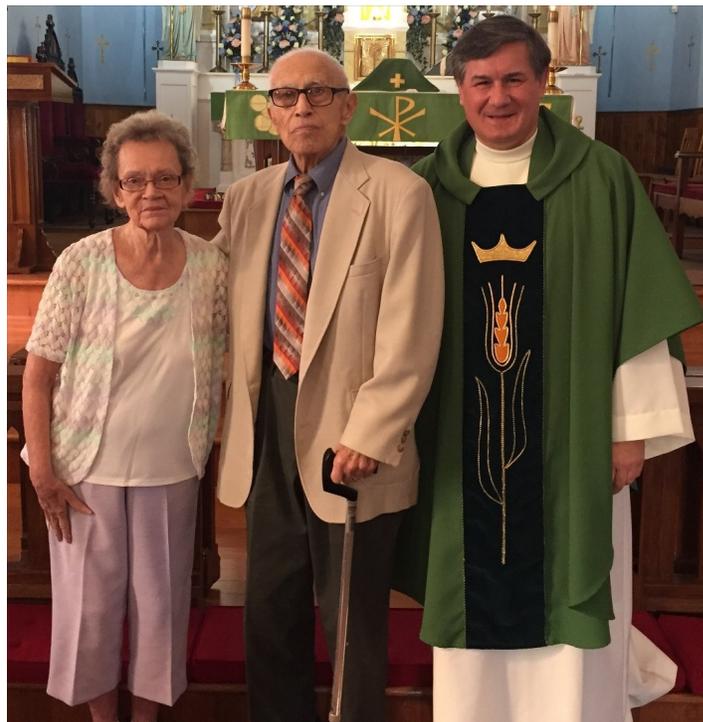
Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish, Dupont, PA

David and Rosemary Petrosky celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary on Sunday, July 29, 2018.

Holy Mass was offered for their intention at 8:00 a.m. at Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish, Dupont, PA. Very Rev. Zbigniew Dawid, Pastor, offered a special blessing during the Mass for the jubilarians.

Mr. David Petrosky is a member of the Supreme Council, Central Diocesan Council and Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish Committee. Congratulations and lots of good health and happy years.

Submitted by Very Rev. Zbigniew Dawid



Shumlas-Voras Wedding Celebration

Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish, Dupont, PA



Dr. Samantha Lyn Shumlas and Dr. Zachary Edward Voras were united in Holy Matrimony on Saturday, August 18, 2018 by Very Rev. Zbigniew Dawid, Pastor of Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish, Dupont, PA.

Dr. Samantha Shumlas of Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish is the daughter of Walter & Stephanie (Bednash) Shumlas. Dr. Zachary Edward Voras of St. Peter Church, Elizabethtown, PA, is the son of Pat & Elizabeth (Sarge) Voras.

Samantha is employed by West Chester University and Zachary is employed by The University of Delaware. They both reside in West Chester, PA.

Congratulations and best wishes to them.

Submitted by Very Rev. Zbigniew Dawid



Eastern Diocese

2018 Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat - "Faith and Family"

Goshen, MA



Nearly 50 youth, adults and clergy from 11 parishes across the Eastern Diocese gathered for a wonderful, inspiring and faith-filled retreat.

The 45th annual Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat was held at Camp Howe in Goshen, MA on August 19 – 23, 2018. The theme for the retreat, "Faith and Family," was again done in conjunction with the Year of the Family across our entire Polish National Catholic Church. Nearly 50 youth, adults and clergy from 11 parishes across the Eastern Diocese gathered for a wonderful, inspiring, and faith filled retreat.

The retreat began with a prayer service on Sunday, August 19, 2018. During the service the American, P.N.C.C. and youth retreat flags were raised. Everyone gathered in the rec hall for the opening session led by our diocesan youth chaplain, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. After a quick overview of the week and a review of the camp rules, Joanne Oliveira led the group with some fun and exciting Ice Breakers. The youth had many laughs as each told the group some fun and exciting facts about themselves, their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and their families.

A special Penitential Service for youth with the Sacrament of Penance was celebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob – the theme for the service was set with the opening song "Forgiveness" by Matthew West. All of the youth and some of the adults went to private confession during this appropriate time of the service.

After giving out the 2018 Youth Retreat T-shirts our camp movie night featured "The Ant Bully" and popcorn. This movie gave a great message not to bully and how, if we all work together, we can overcome. After evening prayer there was some time around the campfire and the card game "spoons." The campers got to experience many creatures during the evening with several field mice looking for food and a few chipmunks finding their way into the cabins.

Monday began with the celebration of Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. During the Mass + Jason Fairclough was remembered in prayer (it was 15 years ago that he lost his life as he traveled

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home from our youth retreat). During his sermon, Fr. Sr. Rob encouraged the youth to serve as examples to others by the way they live their faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

After breakfast Bp. Paul Sobiechowski presented the first session on Joseph and his brothers from the book of Genesis and how mean his brothers were to him; yet God used him to help those brothers later on in life. Bishop taught the youth never to give up on God and to also see the bigger picture of being family. The first activity was led by Bob and Doreen Bradbury and Joanne Olivera. The youth created tiles – one with the Children's Prayer from our P.N.C.C. Prayer Book and others with various images of the Holy Family. All had 2018 Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat on them serving as great mementos from the retreat.

Our second session was presented by Kathy Nemkovich on "Jesus on the family." Kathy had Dylan come forward and list the five people he loved the most and then list them in order of importance. Kathy made the point that Jesus had to come first – even before Mom and Dad; as our Lord said, "My mother and My brothers and sisters are those who hear the Word of God and do it." The participants were then broken up into groups and given some yarn to put together to make something to keep our bishop warm in the cool Goshen mountains because no one really wanted him wearing his Steelers jacket. The groups on their own could not do much but when it was all added together then a beautiful blanket was able to be made for our diocesan shepherd.

After our group picture with our 2018 Youth Retreat shirts Joanne Oliveira led the group in our second activity. The youth were broken up into five groups, each having a specific theme: Christian Values, the Holy Family, Church Family, Home, and Friends and School. Following the individual group activities, all five groups shared values to live by based on our Faith in Jesus.

After lunch the participants enjoyed an afternoon of free time. Activities included climbing, swimming, kayaking, archery, arts and crafts, four-square and much more. The famous Country Store was opened for business and the youth enjoyed their snacks as always! During the afternoon Prime Bishop Mikovsky arrived at our retreat and the excitement spread throughout the camp with amazing speed as our youth welcomed their Prime Bishop.

Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich gave the evening session on The Holy Family. He spoke to the youth about Jesus, Mary and Joseph and how they all said "Yes to God" by doing his Holy Will in their lives. The participants were reminded that our families should be modeled on the Holy Family. The presentation concluded with a beautiful song and video "The Holy Family" by Danielle Rose. The song was then sung by our participants at the concluding retreat Mass of the Holy Family on Thursday.

Joanne led the group in a third activity where they were broken up into groups and had to put verse from the Holy Scriptures on the family into their own words: Colossians 3, John and others. For instance, Proverbs 6:20-23 the youth said "Your parents take care of you and are always with you. Don't rebel against your parents. The Bible wants us listen to, be obedient and respectful of them." The groups then shared their understanding of these important Scripture passages with everyone.

Christian Olympics followed. Thanks to Joanne, Bob, Joanna and Brenda for leading these games of the 45th camp Olympiad: chair basketball, lemon roll, sack races, wheel barrow, dress up and others.

Fr. Adam Piekarczywski led the group in evening prayer and the younger campers were off to bed while the older ones gathered around the camp fire and spent some time star gazing on a crystal clear evening up in the Berkshire Mountains.

Tuesday began with Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich celebrating Holy Mass for Vocations. He spoke about the importance of service for all in the Church but in a special way for those men who are called to serve as priests and deacons. Vocations fliers were made available to our young men and boys.

Community Service was the next morning effort as our youth gave back to 4-H Camp Howe. They did some much needed clean up after several severe storms went through the camp the past couple of weeks. What a great job they did. The youth gave of their time, giving back to the camp for all the camp has done for our diocesan youth program through the past 24 years. Once finished the youth enjoyed many team building activities teaching them the importance of depending on one another and being there for others. Thanks to the great Camp Howe staff for teaching such important lessons of working together and depending upon one another to accomplish a given task. Some great life skills for our youth.

After lunch our youth were able to go out in God's creation and enjoy swimming, kayaking, archery, arts and crafts, the adventure ropes course, four-square and more.

Brenda Richard presented the next session on St. Paul and the Family. Brenda gave an overview on the life and missionary journeys of St. Paul. She focused on the passage from Colossians 3:12-17 as an example for us to always live our Christian lives in this manner. After the presentation, it was off to Williamsburg and the Greenhouse Ice Cream stand where our Youth Retreat participants and the Camp Howe staff enjoyed some ice cream and time in fellowship and fun. Thank You to District 3 of the Polish National Union of America for sponsoring our annual ice cream social during the retreat.

When we got back up the mountain to Camp Howe Joanne led the evening activity. The youth were broken up into two groups and played a word search game. The words were all based on St. Paul writings for how we are to live as family of faith: kindness, patience, faith, obedience, respect, gratitude, forgiveness, trust, humility, gentleness, thankful, sharing, charity and compassion. Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich led the annual candlelight service and with a weather front coming though the winds hit us from every direction. It was a challenge to keep all the candles lit but we did manage to do so with help from each other. The youth then enjoyed some time around the camp fire playing "spoons."

Prime Bishop Mikovsky celebrated Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Christian Family to begin Wednesday at Camp Howe. Bishop Paul and Fr. Sr. Rob concelebrated this Mass.



Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky, Prime Bishop, celebrated Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Christian Family.

Prime Bishop spoke to the participants reminding them that faith is much more than mental ascent, it is our actions – it needs to be lived in our individual families and Church family. After breakfast our next presentation was on Bishop Hodur and the Christian Family. Prime Bishop Mikovsky spoke about the Institution of the Solemnity of the Christian Family in 1914 and what Bishop Hodur said about the importance of the family in Church life and in living a Christian Catholic faith. The youth were reminded of their responsibilities to the individual family, the Church family and the great family of the communities in which they live.

It was then off to Spare Time Bowl for a couple of strings of bowling. Another big Thank You to District 3 of the Polish National Union for sponsoring this bowling trip. The afternoon was spent in free time where the high ropes, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, archery, arts and crafts and foursquare were bustling. Our campers again assisted the Camp Howe Staff by bringing in the docks for the season — a sure sign the fall and football season are finally coming.

After pizza, Fr. Sr. Joe Soltysiak gave the final session of Youth Retreat 2018: Living as a Christian Family today. Fr. Sr. Joe got their attention quickly with a bang and used bricks and various animals to speak about how we need to live as family united in faith in Christ and His Holy Church, each and every day of our lives.

Our cabins then gave their skits on a theme for the retreat. They were "Honor your Parents"; "Mary did you know"; "Jesus in the Temple"; and "St. Paul's rap." The youth showed an understanding of these themes presented during the retreat. We hope and pray they live them faithfully.

Fr. Sr. Rob and Bishop Paul spoke to our youth and encouraged them to sign the "P.N.C.C. Youth Pledge against Bullying." This was recommended in the August 2018 message from the P.N.C.C. Future Direction committee, and it is a great way for our youth to live their faith in Christ in a concrete way and show their love for their families. Several of the participants signed this pledge.

We had our annual bonfire on the final evening of camp. The Camp Howe staff did a great job with skits, songs and stories. S'mores and popcorn popped on the camp fire were enjoyed with the Camp Howe

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(Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat - Continued from Page 19.)

Staff. At the end of the camp fire Charles Vasas personally thanked the camp Howe staff and gave them all a bracelet he made to show his appreciation.

Bishop Paul Sobiechowski began our final day of retreat celebrating Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Holy Family. This Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, Fr. Paul Lukaszewicz and Fr. Adam Piekarczywski. In his sermon, Bishop spoke about the importance of family life and being there for our families. He spoke of the care he was privileged to give his own father in his later years. Thanks are given to Cleric Justin Daviault who assisted at all the Retreat Masses and offered the second reading and to Bob Bradbury who is studying in our deacon program and proclaimed the first readings of the Mass. Thanks also to our altar servers: Dylan, Gaby, Jakeb, Zack, Vicki, Kaylana and Aiden.

At our last meal at Camp Howe for 2018 the participants sang their eleventh and final grace of the retreat to the tune of the doxology: "For food and health and happy days - accept our gratitude and praise - in serving others Lord may we - repay our debt of love to Thee. Amen."

After camp clean up, everyone gathered for our closing session, led by Fr. Sr. Rob. He thanked all the youth for attending, all the chaperones, session presenters and activity leaders for their work for the youth of our diocese. He reminded the youth to live their faith and share their experiences they had with their family, friends and parishes and invite others to join us next year.

The 2018 Camp Spirit Award (that is given each year in memory of Jason Fairclough remembering his camp spirit and looking out for others) was awarded to Jakeb Bradbury from Blessed Trinity Parish in Fall River, MA. His name will be added to the plaque and will be remembered at future Youth Retreats. Congratulations Jakeb!



2018 Camp Spirit Award winner, Jakeb Bradbury

Thanks are given to Bishop Paul, the session presenters, our activity coordinator Joanne Oliveira, our country store manager – Brenda Richard, to our Eastern Diocese Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament Society for their generous annual donation to our retreat, to District 3 of the Polish National Union and to all the chaperones who gave of their time to make Youth Retreat 2018 an outstanding success! Thanks to Natalie Chmielewska and Charles Vassas for their wonderful pictures.

The retreat ended with a prayer service and the lowering of the American, P.N.C.C. and Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat flags. We are excited to announce that Youth Retreat 2019 will again be held at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts beginning on Sunday August 18, 2019 – this will be our 25th Retreat at Camp Howe and our 46th annual diocesan Youth Retreat.

We are excited to announce our next diocesan youth event will be our Winter Youth Gathering/Lock In - Friday, December 28th to Saturday December 29th at Blessed Trinity Parish in Fall River, MA. We will begin Friday afternoon and lock ourselves in at Blessed Trinity and wrap up this winter retreat late Saturday morning. It should be a great time. God bless and we look forward to seeing you all again at Youth Retreat 2019.

Committed in Christ,

Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich - Eastern Diocese Youth Chaplain



2018 Eastern Diocesan Camporee

Holy Name of Jesus Parish, South Deerfield, MA



During the weekend of July 6 - 8, Holy Name of Jesus Parish in South Deerfield, MA, hosted the 5th Annual Eastern Diocesan Scouting Camporee. In keeping with the P.N.C.C.'s "Year of the Family," the theme for this year's camporee was "Our Family Tree."

Participants began arriving Friday afternoon to set up their tents. Bishop Paul Sobiechowski and Father Adam Czarnecki, the chaplain of the Eastern Diocesan Commission on Scouting, along with Mr. Michael Kuchar and Rev. Robert Koerber, host pastor, greeted the participants as they arrived.

After the official greetings and the evening meal, evening prayers were conducted by the campfire by Father Robert Koerber. The rest of the evening was spent in fellowship under a beautiful sky.

In the morning, Father Adam Czarnecki led the group in morning prayers, followed by breakfast.

The first session was conducted by Mr. Michael Kuchar who gave an overview on the topic "genealogy." After a short break, Father Robert Koerber led the second session entitled "Genealogy in the Bible" which traced the roots of the genealogies of Adam, Noah, Abraham and Jesus and explained the importance of these genealogies. Following a short break, Father Adam Czarnecki gave a wonderful presentation entitled "The Family in the Bible," where he emphasized the importance of the family from Holy Scripture. Each session presented provided different insights into this year's theme, "Our

Family Tree."

Following lunch, participants traveled to Historic Deerfield for a private tour of an active 18th century Colonial village. We were entertained by a short video giving an introduction to the establishment of Deerfield and the importance that this village played in the development of our nation. We then had the opportunity to visit many of the buildings. One of the most impressive of our stops was the schoolhouse where we were taken back in time to how school in the 18th was conducted; and we actually read from books of that period. Since we were on a tight schedule, we saw only a portion of Historic Deerfield in the two hours we set aside for our tour. We then returned to Holy Name of Jesus Parish and the rest of the afternoon was spent swimming and enjoying a sunny and warm day.

The evening was a quiet evening, with evening prayers and an enjoyable time by the campfire. A special commemorative patch was created for this year's camporee.

At this time, I wish to thank Bishop Paul Sobiechowski for his continued support of our Scouting Commission; Michael Kuchar, who was instrumental in helping to set the schedule; Father Adam Czarnecki, for his wonderful presentation and his delicious soup; and finally to the participants of this year's camporee. We look forward to next year's camporee.

Submitted by Rev. Robert M. Koerber

Western Diocese

Holy Trinity Parish Celebrates 90th Anniversary - Everyone Welcome to Attend Events Kewanee, IL

On September 15, 2018, Holy Trinity Parish of the Polish National Catholic Church of Kewanee, IL, celebrated its 90th Anniversary. The Pastor of Holy Trinity Parish, the Very Reverend Jerry Rafalko said, "Holy Trinity has enjoyed a long history of serving the spiritual needs of all people who wish to follow Christ in the Catholic tradition."

Holy Trinity was organized in Kewanee in 1928 and immediately became a very important part in the lives of Kewanee's Polish immigrants. Father Jerry has compared the changes in his parish to the societal and demographic changes in the United States: "90 years ago we began our ministry with Polish immigrants and today, we serve people of all races, colors, nationalities and cultures- we are plainly following the teachings of Jesus."

Father Rafalko reminds the community, "The 90th Anniversary of our parish is a special time to open our minds and hearts to God- who always calls us to be brothers and sisters and to build the Church. It is also an opportunity to be open to all people - as clearly expressed by Saint Paul: 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, man nor woman, for you all are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3: 28). This is a time to recall our past, celebrate our present and joyfully look toward our bright future. With the help of Almighty God, the contribution of our ancestors, along with the prayers, hard work, and generosity of our friends and parishioners, we will continue to grow our ministry by including everyone and excluding no one."

The Holy Mass on September 15th was offered for the intention of those who created, built and supported Holy Trinity Parish throughout its existence.

Father Rafalko welcomed the community to join in all of the Anniversary celebrations:

- August 12th Open House from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.: The event included a short community prayer service, a special dedication of the Schulmerich Basilican Carillon that was graciously donated to Holy Trinity Parish by Mr. and Mrs. Jon DeBord, and concluded with a reception and cookout, free door prizes and a historical photo display in the Parish Hall.
- August 26th Family Fun Day from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.: Y.M.C.A. pool party





- September 1st at 2:00 p.m.: The parish entered a 90th Anniversary themed float in the Labor Day parade.

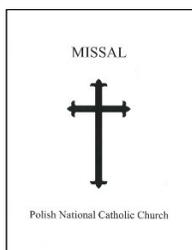


- Every Sunday 9:00AM Mass! After Mass and at scheduled events, the Ladies Adoration Society sold cookbooks with traditional recipes used by parish families for many years.
- September 15th at 3:00 p.m.: 90th Anniversary Mass
 - A commemorative pictorial directory was available to parish members during the anniversary celebration.
 - Every guest received a personalized ink pen commemorating the 90th Anniversary.

“We’re so excited to be part of the celebration to honor our long and rich history! I’m truly grateful that we joined Holy Trinity! It’s like our second family - so much more than a typical parish. We absolutely love it here!”
 ~ 90th Anniversary Committee Member

“May God continue to pour out His blessings upon the people of Holy Trinity, Polish National Catholic Parish in Kewanee, IL for many more years to come.”
 ~Very Rev. Jerry Rafalko – Pastor

Submitted by Very Rev. Jerry Rafalko



P.N.C.C. Missal Now Available in Electronic Format

The electronic version of the P.N.C.C. Missal is now available for purchase by P.N.C.C. parishes or clergy from the P.N.C. C. Book Department. The cost is \$75.00 for the complete Missal on a USB Flash Drive.

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The Synod of our Holy Church is swiftly approaching.

Please keep this church-wide undertaking in your daily prayers – asking God to bless this work and allow it to bear fruit for the building of His Kingdom through our Holy Church.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, Grant us Your grace and blessing, as we prepare to gather together in Holy Synod to seek the Lord Jesus through Your Holy Church. Send Your Holy Spirit upon our Holy Church, that we may be guided by Your Holy Will. Strengthen our bishops, clergy and laity who will gather so that their decisions at Holy Synod may help lead others to Your Son Jesus Christ. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

