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# The Catholic WITNESS

The Newspaper of the Diocese of Harrisburg

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January 21, 2021 | Issue 36

## Diocesan Schools Continue Successful In-Person Instruction; Administrators Credit Resolve, Sacrifice of Staff and Families

By Jen Reed

### *The Catholic Witness*

It's the halfway point of the academic year, and the midterm report on Diocesan schools illustrates a largely successful continuation of in-person education since classes began in the fall.

The doors of the 36 Catholic schools across the Diocese remain open for in-class instruction. Administrators credit the monumental achievement to the resolve and sacrifice displayed by the teachers, staff, students and families of the school communities.

"Collectively, we should feel good, as it is a real accomplishment to have our schools open for in-person instruction in week 19 of the school year," said Daniel Breen, Diocesan Secretary for Education and Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

"The term 'success' can be hard to use, as it is difficult to see any student or staff member sick; but the fact is that we can trace, with confidence, the origin of most of the COVID cases we



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Theresa Strich applies hand sanitizer for Deborah Joseph as she enters her classroom at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Lancaster.

have seen to events outside of school. Our schools have been, and remain, the safest places for students to be. Catholic schools have always been great in establishing rules and in following them; that disciplined culture really helps us in times like these," Breen told *The Catholic Witness*.

It's an effort that began well in advance of the start of the school year, as the Diocese

assembled a taskforce to offer a framework for schools as they returned for in-person learning in the fall.

The taskforce used "Leading with Hope" from The Greeley Center for Catholic Education, a template designed for Catholic schools that addresses Logistics and Planning; Creating and Maintaining Community; Curriculum and Instruction;

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CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Trinity High School's nurse, Terry Kuhn, R.N., monitors the thermal-imaging camera as freshmen Avery Stanback, Elijah Diaz and Patrick Kennedy, Jr., arrive on Jan. 12.

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Promoting Catholic Identity; and Technology Support.

Among the plan's highlights: cleaning guidelines, temperature screenings, contact tracing, classroom settings, face coverings, and how to report presumptive or positive cases.

"While the taskforce provided a solid reopening framework and template, the success of our schools has depended on our principals to adjust the plan to the individual school and to lead the process in that building;

on the teachers, who saw that the school plan was executed daily; and on our school families, whose cooperation was so key to our success," Breen remarked. "It has been a real community effort to get our schools open and to keep them open."

"I think it is a blessing that we have been able to maintain our in-person instruction as long as we have," said Jodi Reagan, principal of St. Catherine Labouré School in Harrisburg.

As a member of the taskforce, Reagan said there

were concerns of whether Diocesan schools would return to remote learning within a month of the start of the semester, "and here we are, almost six months into the school year and we have not had to shut down yet. I contribute this to the diligence and cooperation of our families, staff, and students at following the health, safety, and quarantine guidelines. We pray that the remainder of this school year goes as smoothly and successfully as the first half has gone," she said.

In addition to the overwhelmingly successful continuation of in-person instruction and their mitigation of the spread of COVID, half of the Diocese's schools have seen an increase in enrollment this school year, with several having wait lists for potential families.

"It is true that, at the start of the school year, communities saw our Catholic schools as a big experiment, since public schools were often teaching in a virtual mode. Once they saw that we were operating safely and effectively, new families started to come our way," Breen

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## The Catholic WITNESS

The Newspaper of the Diocese of Harrisburg

The mission of The Catholic Witness is to be of personal and practical help as we try to be loyal and true witnesses for Christ in our daily living, spiritual and temporal, in private and in public.

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Digital subscriptions provided complimentary to all parishioners registered to a parish in the Diocese of Harrisburg. The Catholic Witness (ISSN 0008-8447, USPS 557 120) is published digitally weekly except Christmas/New Year by the Harrisburg Catholic Publishing Association, 4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111.





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said. “I think these families also saw that, from the start, we have tried, selflessly, to provide what our students need. Our students need to be in school as much as possible. It is the best situation in which they can learn the Catholic faith and their academics.”

**A Collective Effort**

Meeting the monumental task of keeping students safe and schools open does not come without enormous effort and sacrifice. It can only be achieved through the determination of faculty, staff, parents and students in following state, CDC and Diocesan guidelines.

Vince Harper, principal of Bishop McDevitt High School, said this resolve has made the school’s efforts successful.

“The staff have dedicated themselves to the instruction of students. They know how



COURTESY OF ERIN DAVIS, BISHOP MCDEVITT

A student at Bishop McDevitt makes use of a hand sanitizing station.

important it is for students to have face-to-face instruction. Despite the fact that they are dealing with the same pandemic issues as everyone else in the community, they’ve come in safely to work with students to try to make things as normal as they can for students,” he said.

“The resiliency that our parents have had with being transparent and informing us of when kids are ill or when there is a possible case has also been critical,” he added. “That gives us the opportunity to respond in order to keep the rest of the students and staff safe, and manage the situations.”

Harper also commended the school’s custodial crew, which “works day in and day out to keep this place pristine and clean. They sanitize every evening to ensure that when students and staff return, every classroom and common area has been disinfected.

They are our unsung heroes in helping minimize any transmission.”

Sister Danielle Truex, IHM, principal of Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Lancaster, echoed Harper’s sentiments, saying the resolve of the school community is the bedrock for success.

“There are no procedures, no rules, no actions that could have made this work without that foundation,” she said. “Our parents, our faculty and our staff have taken the protocols and procedures and put them into place because they love our kids. They have all collectively sacrificed – and it’s been a joyful sacrifice to give our kids the best that we can. Without the collective sense of mission that our whole school shares, we would have never been so successful in this endeavor. I’m so grateful for everyone in this



St. Catherine Labouré School principal Jodi Reagan greets Charolette Peters as students arrive on Jan. 13.

CHRIS HEISEY,  
THE CATHOLIC WITNESS



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community who has sacrificed and followed protocols even when they were difficult, because we see the great benefit of it. Our kids are here, they're happy, they're thriving, and for now, we are living the best possible reality."

Several principals told *The Witness* that keeping students in school continues to be the reward for the tireless efforts of spacing out desks, finding creative ways to use space, setting-up technology for remote learning, installing hand-sanitizing stations, taking temperatures, limiting or cancelling events, wearing masks and continually cleaning everything from desks and doors to recess equipment.

"I will say that the stress of teaching both in person and online, along with having students and staff maintain social distancing, has taken



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

The student body at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Lancaster gathers for Mass on Jan. 8, safely distanced throughout the church. At right is Sister Danielle Truex, IHM, principal.

a toll on everyone," Reagan pointed out. "While it causes burnout a little quicker than a regular school year, the teachers still come in with smiles on their faces and conduct themselves professionally every day. The parents and

students are still arriving to school well prepared each day, and those who are online are also joining class and completing assignments as expected."

"It requires teachers to truly be heroes – flexible, determined, selfless and tireless," said John Cominsky, principal of Trinity High School in Camp Hill. "We're

halfway through the year. Our teachers are asking for time to plan, and we're trying to see they get that. You have to be good to yourself to pull this off, and I say that not only about Trinity, but about all of our schools. People are counting



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Individual desks replaced lunchroom tables at Trinity, ensuring students are physically distanced during lunch.



## SCHOOLS

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on our schools to be open, and, as much as possible, it is business as usual.”

### The Tools for the Task

Diocesan schools follow the mitigation guidelines provided by the state, the CDC and the Diocese, but they’ve also implemented their own ideas and a bit of ingenuity to help the cause.

At Bishop McDevitt, home to 715 students and some 75 staff, new traffic flow patterns were implemented in the hallways and in the cafeteria to help keep students physically distanced.

The school turned to technology as well, with enhanced equipment in the classrooms to allow students learning from home to connect with their class in real time. Activities went the way of technology, too, with live streams of the school’s virtual Christmas concert and the broadcast of school Mass into all classrooms as individual classes take turns participating in person in Finestra Hall.

“We’re trying to have the same activities, just in different ways, so at least the kids are getting some of the normal experience as possible,” Harper said.

At Trinity, its 500 students



Delaney Maguire steps off the bus to start the day at St. Catherine Labouré School.

CHRIS HEISEY,  
THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

they’re most comfortable with regarding their own specific health. If you have a mom or dad or grandparent in your home who is vulnerable, then you learn from home; and what you’re learning from home comes care of a livestream that still connects you to your classroom. We have different options that meet different contexts, and that is all that anybody can really

receive temperature screenings via a newly-purchased thermal-imaging camera as they arrive for the start of each day. Other mitigation efforts there include the set-up of individual desks in the cafeteria so students remain distanced during lunch, and livestreaming capability in the classrooms for those learning at home.

Learning-at-home is an option offered in Diocesan schools. Students might need to stay home because of their own health concerns, or for the health of those with whom they live.

“In terms of safety, we’re in a grand balancing act. The key is the partnership with families,” Cominsky said. “We provide options for families to make those critical choices, given what

ask.”

A new initiative at Sacred Heart School is focusing on students’ emotional wellbeing.

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CHRIS HEISEY,  
THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Sacred Heart recess aide Michael Hauk disinfects a football and other equipment, like Joseph Berdecia’s Frisbee.



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A counselor from IU-13 holds a regularly-scheduled class with middle-school students, focusing on social and emotional health. The school's counselor meets with students in K-5, individually and in small groups, to help them process their emotions.

"From the very beginning, part of the Diocesan plan was to care for the social and emotional needs of our students, because those are a fundamental part of their spiritual life," Sister Danielle said. "Some students have parents who are healthcare workers, and others are feeling the effects of the stress of the adults in their life. We're being extremely intentional in making sure that their social and emotional needs are top priorities. We know that kids can't learn and be academically successful if those needs are not met."

## Strategic Plans

Even with the lengthy list of protocols and guidelines in place, Diocesan schools have not been completely immune to COVID cases. But strategic plans of action have helped alleviate the spread. Among those actions are plans for deep cleaning, contact tracing, distance learning and connection with two volunteer epidemiologists at the schools' disposal.

The schools' taskforce established a protocol for COVID cases early on, with principals reporting cases to the Diocesan Superintendent. From there, consultation with an epidemiologist and an evidence-based approach determine procedures for communication to the school community, cleaning and quarantining. The schools also relay that information to the Board of Health.

"A lot falls on the principal in

these situations, but they have carried the burden well and they deserve a ton of credit," Breen said.

"One helpful and successful practice was a weekly survey of all principals to make sure we had accurate data on all COVID cases and quarantines and related issues," he added. "We then were able to look at that data in light of the situation in the county in which the school is located and make any adjustments to procedures if needed."

According to the Diocesan Education Department, most of the COVID cases in Diocesan schools have been traced to locations other than the schools themselves.

"I would like our school communities to take a moment to realize what amazing work our teachers are doing during this pandemic," Breen remarked. "They are taking care of their own families and naturally have concerns for their own health, but they are the ones who make the school plans work; they are the ones teaching not only in-person but also often teaching at-home students simultaneously. They are the ones who are quickly switching modes of teaching in order to meet everyone's needs. I thank God for them and their remarkable dedication."

A successful first half of the school year has certainly been cause for celebration in Diocesan schools.

"I'm so very proud of all of our schools," Cominsky said. "There is a lot to be thankful for."



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

With safety protocols in place, it's instruction as usual as Michael Creavey teaches freshman Theology at Trinity.

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## SCHOOLS from 6

Who knows what the future will hold, but we are doing everything possible to see that our kids are in school.

“And the students have been fabulous,” he added. “They know they’re not having all the things they normally would, but they have taken it all in stride. Many of them have moved back and forth between in-person and remote instruction as a precaution, and they do it because they are appreciative of the effort to remain open.”

The diligence and resolve of the school communities is something to celebrate, Sister Danielle observed. “Everyone is all in, and that’s why we’ve been so successful.”



COURTESY OF ERIN DAVIS, BISHOP MCDEVITT

A class at Bishop McDevitt High School maintains distance during Mass, which is livestreamed into the remaining classrooms.

“It’s also work digging into, and documenting, because something extraordinary is happening in our schools,” she added. “I feel the foundation of our success has been our community, and I’m sure that if you ask every principal and every teacher

in our schools, they would be able to share an experience that reinvigorated the sense of mission and pride in what we’re providing to our children in Catholic schools.”

*(Learn more about Catholic schools in the Diocese and their safety guidelines at [www.gocatholicschools.org](http://www.gocatholicschools.org).)*

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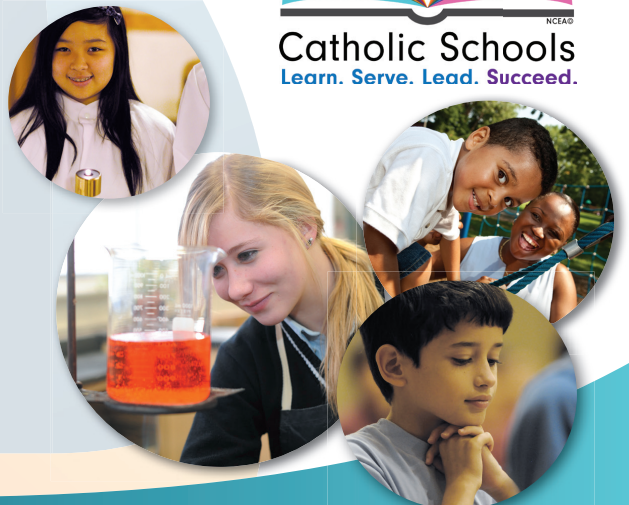
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## U.S. Bishops Release Statement on Biden Inauguration, Express Hope in Working with New President



CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY

### ***From Catholic News Agency Reports***

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released a prepared statement Wednesday afternoon, after President Joe Biden's inauguration.

"Our commitments on issues of human sexuality and the family, as with our commitments in every other area — such as abolishing the death penalty or seeking a health care system and economy that truly serves the human person — are guided by Christ's great commandment to love and to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable," Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in the statement.

He said he is praying that God may grant the incoming president wisdom and courage in pursuing unity, healing, liberty, and equality.

Archbishop Gomez stressed that the role of the Catholic bishops is not to endorse parties or candidates, but to offer principles that can guide consciences.

"Catholic bishops are not partisan players in our nation's politics," he said. "We are pastors responsible for the souls of millions of Americans and we are advocates for the needs of all our neighbors."

The bishops' conference, he said, has worked for years to address a wide variety of issues, including abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, peace and economic development, racism, immigration, poverty, the environment, and criminal justice reform.

"On these and other issues, our duty to love and our moral principles lead us to prudential judgments and positions that do not align neatly with the political categories of left or right or the platforms of our two major political parties," he said.

"On some issues we find ourselves more on the side of Democrats, while on others we find ourselves standing with Republicans. Our priorities are never partisan. We are Catholics first, seeking only to follow Jesus Christ faithfully and to advance his vision for human fraternity and community."

Archbishop Gomez noted that the bishops' conference works with every president and Congress, but added that working with Biden will be unique, since "he is our first president in 60 years to profess the Catholic faith."

The archbishop said he finds hope and inspiration in Biden's personal witness of relying on faith in difficult times and commitment to the poor.

At the same time, he said, "our new President has pledged to pursue certain policies that would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, most seriously in the areas of abortion, contraception, marriage, and gender. Of deep concern is the liberty of the Church and the freedom of believers to live according to their consciences."

Stressing that the bishops must preach the truth of the Gospel even when doing so is unpopular, Archbishop Gomez said that the issue of abortion merits special attention as a grave evil in society.

"For the nation's bishops, the continued injustice of abortion remains the 'preeminent priority,'" he said, adding that "preeminent does not mean 'only,'" and there are a wide variety of challenges and threats to human dignity facing the country today."

"Abortion is a direct attack on life that also wounds the woman and undermines the family," he said. "It is not only a private matter, it raises troubling and fundamental questions of fraternity, solidarity, and inclusion in the human community."

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It is also a matter of social justice. We cannot ignore the reality that abortion rates are much higher among the poor and minorities, and that the procedure is regularly used to eliminate children who would be born with disabilities.”

In the Diocese of Harrisburg Bishop Ronald Gainer also released a statement, saying: “I join with my fellow Catholic bishops today in praying that God will grant our new President and those in his administration the grace to lead our great nation in truth and justice. President Biden is the first Chief Executive of the U.S. to profess the Catholic faith in 60 years. I welcome all opportunities for collaboration and support where the new administration enacts policies that are truly in accord with our Catholic moral teaching. These areas include opposition to the death penalty; and an economy and a health care system that truly serve the authentic needs of the human person.

“At the same time, as Archbishop Jose Gomez, the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has indicated, I will unrelentingly speak the truths of the Gospel and the preeminent teaching of our Church regarding the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, the protection of religious freedom and the true nature of human sexuality and marriage. These principles are consistent with a well-formed Catholic conscience,” Bishop Gainer said.

The U.S. bishops will engage with the president in the hopes of beginning “a dialogue to address the complicated cultural and economic factors that are driving abortion and discouraging families,” Archbishop Gomez said.

He voiced hope that Biden will be willing to work with the Church and avoid expanding abortion and contraception.

“My hope, too, is that we can work together to finally put in place a coherent family policy in this country, one that acknowledges the crucial importance of strong marriages and parenting to the well-being of children and the stability of communities,” the archbishop said. “If the President, with full respect for the Church’s religious freedom, were to engage in this conversation, it would go a long way toward restoring the civil balance and healing our

country’s needs.”

In his inauguration address, Biden called for national unity.

He said that “to restore the soul and secure the future of America requires so much more than words,” and added that “it requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy, unity. Unity.”

Biden also quoted St. Augustine to underline the need for unity in truth.

“Many centuries ago, St. Augustine, a saint in my Church, wrote that a people was a multitude defined by the common objects of their love,” he said. These “common objects” that define Americans, said Biden, are “opportunity, security, liberty, dignity, respect, honor and, yes, the truth.”

He added that “each of us has a duty and a responsibility as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders, leaders who have pledged to honor our Constitution and protect our nation, to defend the truth and defeat the lies.”

Elsewhere in his address, Biden stressed the need to “set aside politics and finally face this pandemic as one nation.” He cited Psalm 30, reminding those that “weep, ye may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

“We will get through this together. Together,” he said. Biden paused for a moment of silent prayer for those who had died in the pandemic.

Coming together, said Biden, will help to heal “a broken land.”

Archbishop Gomez praised Biden’s call for healing and unity in America, saying that such healing is “urgently needed as we confront the trauma in our country caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the social isolation that has only worsened the intense and long-simmering divisions among our fellow citizens.”

True healing can only come from God, the archbishop said, and requires forgiveness and dialogue.

“Christian love calls us to love our enemies and bless those who oppose us, and to treat others with the same compassion that we want for ourselves,” he added.

The president of the bishops’ conference concluded by entrusting the country’s transition to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

“May she guide us in the ways of peace and obtain for us wisdom and the grace of a true patriotism and love of country,” he said.





## **Pro-Life Events Include Diocesan Mass, Days of Prayer and Virtual March**

**By Jen Reed**

***The Catholic Witness***

Whether you're a longtime March for Life participant, a witness for life on public squares, or someone who prays for pro-life intentions at home, late January offers a variety of ways to promote and pray for a culture of life.

A number of activities and days of prayer fill the calendar through the end of the month. Some offerings are in person, and others are virtual – but all of these occasions for prayer and reflection, coinciding with the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion.

### **Diocesan Respect Life Mass**

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, Bishop Ronald Gainer will celebrate the Diocese's annual Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg on Jan. 24 at 9:30 a.m. The Mass is taking place on the fourth day of the national 9 Days for Life Novena, for the protection of human life. The Mass will be available via livestream at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtctCqUbXkM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtctCqUbXkM)

and is organized by the Diocesan Office of Family and Respect Life Ministries.

Also locally, several parishes and pro-life organizations are planning special Masses and Rosary rallies coinciding with the March for Life on Jan. 29. Parishioners can check with their local parish to inquire about any planned events, several of which are included on the Diocesan Notebook section of this week's *Witness*.

### **Virtual March for Life**

Organizers of the national March for Life announced last week the event will take place virtually this year, and the U.S. Bishops' Pro-Life Chair is calling Catholics to prayer.

"Peaceful prayer and witness must and will continue this year—just in a different format," said Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City.

Those who originally planned to attend the March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 29, are invited to unite in prayer beginning on Thursday, Jan. 21, the eve of the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision and the Day of Prayer for the Legal

Protection of Unborn Children.

Organizers for the March announced on Jan. 15 the decision to confine attendance to a small group of pro-life leaders, citing safety precautions surrounding COVID-19 and the recent breach of rioters into the Capitol.

The March for Life Virtual Rally will be shown live on EWTN and online at <https://marchforlife.org/2021-virtual-events>. Coverage begins at 11 a.m. on Jan. 29 and will include inspiring speeches from pro-life leaders, information on how to stay involved in the pro-life movement all year long, and a performance by Christian singer and songwriter Matthew West.

Along with the March for Life, the National Prayer Vigil for Life will be closed to the public, but will be televised by EWTN so millions can participate remotely. The Mass will begin at 10 a.m., and will transition to live coverage of the March for Life.

### **Day of Prayer**

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## PRO-LIFE EVENTS

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More than 60 million babies' lives have been lost – and countless women and men involved have suffered deep wounds – since the 1973 decisions of *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*. However, we have great trust in God's providence. We are reminded time and again in Scripture to seek the Lord's help, and as people of faith, we believe that our prayers are heard.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373, designates Jan. 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children": "In

all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion."

This day provides an opportunity for the penitential practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, for the intentions for a culture of life, and in reparation for the lives lost to abortion.

### 9 Days for Life Novena

In preparation for the virtual March for Life, and

in observance of the annual Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children on Jan. 22, faithful are invited to join in a nationwide novena from Thursday, Jan. 21 through Friday, Jan. 29.

The 9 Days for Life Novena is an opportunity for recollection and reparation in observation of the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. Those who participate in the novena can receive daily intentions, brief reflections, and suggested actions by signing up online at [9 Days for Life](http://9DaysforLife.com).

The overarching intention of the novena is the end to abortion. Participants can share their pro-life witness and invite their social networks to pray on social media with the hashtag #9DaysforLife.

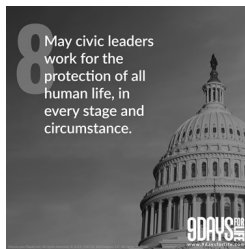
Sponsored by the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 9 Days for Life began in 2013.

For more information on these and other events, connect with the Diocese of Harrisburg and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on their social media platforms, or visit [www.hbgdiocese.org](http://www.hbgdiocese.org) or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

(Page 10 photo from the Diocese's 2019 Respect Life Mass, by Chris Heisey, *The Catholic Witness*.)

## Respect Life Mass

On the 4th Day of the 9 Days for Life Novena, the Diocese of Harrisburg will offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for expectant fathers to lovingly support the mothers of their children in welcoming new life.



### Principal Celebrant Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer

Sunday, January 24, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.  
Cathedral Parish of Saint Patrick • Harrisburg, PA

Live Stream Available: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtctCqUbXkM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtctCqUbXkM)

9 Days for Life Novena, January 21-29. Sign up today at [www.9daysforlife.com](http://www.9daysforlife.com)

The Respect Life Mass is sponsored by the Diocese Office of Family and Respect Life Ministries  
[www.hbgdiocese.org/respectlife](http://www.hbgdiocese.org/respectlife)





## Holy Trinity Students Keep Martin Luther King's Dream Alive with Day of Service

By Jen Reed  
*The Catholic Witness*

Holy Trinity Catholic School in York was a hub of community service on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The entire student body – from PreK to sixth grade – spent the holiday in various volunteer efforts that supported the community and honored King's legacy.

The school's annual Day of Service paid tribute to the civil rights leader and his nonviolent activism for racial equality. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was first observed in 1986, 18 years after his assassination. The federal holiday has become an occasion for volunteer service in King's name.

"Our school has always participated in service projects during Catholic Schools Week, but we decided to establish a full day of activities in celebration of Martin Luther King Day of Service," said Holy Trinity's principal, Kathleen Smith. "This full day of activities is more impactful for the students, who learn about Martin Luther King, Jr. and then see the full scope of what they've done in service as a school community."

The school buzzed with projects on Jan. 18. Students assembled hygiene kits and dinnerware packets to benefit the homeless through LifePath Christian Ministries; packaged birthday cake kits for Catholic Harvest Food Pantry; cooked and assembled breakfast casseroles for Our Daily Bread soup kitchen; created "I Have a Dream" wreathes and posters for local hospitals and nursing homes; and wrote cards to express gratitude for local healthcare workers, police officers and firefighters.

Sixth grader Adonna Farley reflected on Martin Luther King's leadership as her class created "I Have a Dream" posters. Decorating a poster with words associated with King and his legacy, Adonna said, "When we think of Martin Luther King, we look back on what he has done and what he fought for. We share those messages on our posters. He persevered. He was a leader, and he wanted to end segregation. He worked hard for racial equality."

As the Day of Service came to a close, fifth grader Don Gabriel Constant considered the



Adonna Farley, Autumn Boyd, Valeria Velasco create an "I Have a Dream" poster.

projects he worked on.

"All of the service today was in honor of Martin Luther King, to keep his memory alive. It's also to help the community," he said. "We're in school today, and we're doing service projects instead of having the day off. That's a good thing to do for the community. It's important to serve the less fortunate, especially today."

(Learn more about Holy Trinity Catholic School at [www.htcsyork.org](http://www.htcsyork.org).)



JEN REED, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Christian Noll and Guetchine Aristilde put the finishing touches on one of the casseroles for Our Daily Bread soup kitchen.



## Mid Penn and First National Banks Contribute \$265,000 to Diocese's Scholarship Foundation for Catholic School Students

Two local banks presented donations this month to the Diocese's Neumann Scholarship Foundation, which offers scholarship assistance to families whose children are enrolled in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Harrisburg.

The donations were made through the banks' participation in Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship programs, which provide tax credits to businesses that contribute to scholarship organizations, like the Neumann Scholarship Foundation.

On Jan. 13, representatives with First National Bank presented a check for \$200,000 through the Opportunity Scholarship Program. The funds are unrestricted, so that they may benefit students that need assistance the most. The law that established the Opportunity Scholarship Program requires the Neumann Scholarship



Representatives of First National Bank present Diocesan officials with a check for \$200,000 for scholarship assistance to Catholic school students. From left are First National Bank representatives Tony Sacco and Greg Conrad; Diocesan Secretary for Education and Superintendent, Daniel Breen; Diocesan Chief Financial Officer, Donald Kaercher; and First National Bank representative Troy Erdman.



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS Donald Kaercher, Diocesan Chief Financial Officer, and Daniel Breen, Diocesan Secretary for Education and Superintendent, receive a donation of \$65,000 from Jodi Bezanilla of Mid Penn Bank, to support scholarships.

Foundation to give preference to students whose family income is less than 185% of the federal poverty level and who reside in a failing school district.

On Jan. 20, Mid Penn Bank presented a check for \$65,000. The scholarship funds will be distributed to benefit students at Bishop McDevitt High School in Harrisburg (\$20,000); Trinity High School in Camp Hill (\$15,000), and \$5,000 each to St. Theresa School in New Cumberland, St. Joseph School in Mechanicsburg, and St. Catherine Labouré, Holy Name of Jesus, Harrisburg Catholic Elementary and St. Margaret Mary schools in Harrisburg.

For information about the Neumann Scholarship Foundation and

how your business can participate, contact Kim Roche, Director of the Diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development, at [kroche@hbgdiocese.org](mailto:kroche@hbgdiocese.org) or 717-657-4804, ext. 245.



# A Stranger's Lesson in Mercy

By Sister GERALYN SCHMIDT, SCC  
*Special to The Witness*

In October 2015, I published the following story in my column for *The Catholic Witness*:

When I was a postulant, I learned the importance of being aware of the needs of others in a very real way. I was standing in a very long checkout line in a local pharmacy. It was late July and it was pouring rain outside. The rain pounding on the roof of the store could be heard throughout the building.

As the checkout line snaked toward the cashier, I began crowd watching. I was amused by the reaction of the people coming out of the summer rain through the store's revolving door. They would stand briefly in front of the door, shake their umbrella and try to dry off before the coldness of the air conditioner hit them. Those leaving the store were obviously dreading the inevitable as they donned their raincoats, opened their umbrellas and jumped into the deluge.

In the midst of this flurry of activity was an elderly woman with an arm in a cast from her fingertips to her shoulder. She was trying to juggle her casted arm, a very large umbrella, a paper bag filled with various items and her purse. As she stood in front of the revolving door, in the midst of the stream of people coming in and going out, she tried to balance everything, to no avail. I watched as she spun around from her inability to carry everything among the

movement of people around her. I began to wonder why no one stopped to help her. Could they even see her and her struggle?

After I paid for my items, I went up to her and asked, "Do you need any help? Where are you going?" She looked at me with a glance that pierced my being. I knew that look. She was thinking, "Who is this young woman? Why should I trust her?" Apparently, I "passed the test," because she stammered, "I, I'm going to the post office," which was only a block away. I took her package and held the umbrella over her. I loved walking through summer rain, and this was a wonderful excuse! As I walked with her, I asked, "After the post office, where are you going?" She responded by saying that she was going to the town's senior citizens' center for lunch. She was going to take the bus to get there. But the rain was still coming down. I told her, "Wait for me here. Let me get my car. You can't get on the bus in this rain with your package, your casted arm and umbrella."

I walked the several blocks back to my car. When I arrived at the post office, the woman was waiting for me. I opened the car door, helped her get in, put the seatbelt around her and got back into the driver's seat. She turned to me, and time seemed to stand still. She fired, trying to understand, "Who **are** you, **really**? Why would you do this for me? Why do you care?" Choking back tears, she asked,

"Are you my angel?" Chuckling, I explained to her that I was a postulant; that I was going to be a Sister; that I was from three towns

away. I told her my name and she gave me hers. She shared with me her sacred story:

Mary Orlando was 85 years old, and lived in a senior apartment building in town. She had no children and was never married. She was her parents' only child, and when her dad died, when she was 20, she lived with and took care of her mother. She had worked as an administrative assistant to one of the town's CEOs that had their corporate headquarters there. Her mom had only recently died, and lived well to a ripe old age of 105 because of the care she had given to her. She said that she took care of her mom her entire life and wondered if it was all a waste. She had lost all hope because life had become unbearably lonely. She said that she was a "God fearing woman" but began to doubt that God loved her any more. She felt old, alone not loved by anyone.

As I drove her to the senior center, I held her hand, cried and laughed with her. When we arrived at our destination, I



**"Thoughts from a Catholic Evangelist"**



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Bishop Ronald Gainer, who is in a higher-risk category, received the first of two COVID-19 vaccines on Jan. 20 at Penn State Health Holy Spirit Medical Center in Camp Hill. He received the vaccine from Sister Mary Vu, SCC, RN.

“As a religious leader, I think by example I can say that this is important for everyone to do who can,” the bishop said. “Getting the vaccine is certainly important and morally good.”

Information about the Catholic Church’s teachings on the Moral Considerations of the COVID-19 vaccines is available on the Diocese’s website at [www.hbgdiocese.org](http://www.hbgdiocese.org).

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turned off the car so she could finish her story. I asked her to keep me in her prayers and promised her that we would again see each other; if not on this side of eternity, we would meet on the other side. As I helped her out of the car, we stood and she said to me, “You have given me a tremendous gift. You have renewed my sense of hope. I have never met you before, but I feel as if I have always known you. You have been a blessing for me this day!” I wiped the tears falling from her eyes and held her. I traced the Sign of the Cross on her head and kissed her and said goodbye. We never saw each other again. But the memory of her has been etched into my mind. For me, she has become the epitome of what the mystery of mercy looks like.

As I continue my series on the Beatitudes, I now focus on “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” I

found a very interesting blog from St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Mililani, Hawaii, which combines the idea of mercy and COVID. Msgr. Mbinda writes, “In the context of the coronavirus, the message [of mercy] is threefold: 1) Spend more time in prayer, asking for God’s Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world. 2) Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us. 3) Have complete trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive. In brief, God’s name is Mercy!”<sup>1</sup>

For me, these points are the graces and blessings of the pandemic. Remember, God can make wonderful things happen

from tragedy; remember the Cross! Our world, as we remain physically distanced, is starving for mercy. There is a Hebrew word for mercy, “hesod.” “This meaning of mercy is the ability to step into someone else’s shoes, to see things from their perspective, to think with their minds and to feel with their emotions. To be merciful is an intentional act of the will.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, **any** kindness, **any** action done in love for an individual makes the world a better place. He sends us out to share mercy with all human beings even in the midst of a pandemic. This is what we are called to **today**, how we should live **today**. This is true holiness.

Mary Orlando taught me that so many years ago!

<sup>1</sup><https://www.stjohnmililani.org/news/pastors-message/1284-covid-19-and-divine-mercy>

<sup>2</sup><https://woodlandbc.org/daily-devotions/blessed-are-the-merciful-for-they-will-receive-mercy/>



## OBITUARIES

*The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parishes. Please remember in your prayers the happy repose of these recently departed souls and the consolation of their loved ones.*

### Abbottstown

Immaculate Heart of Mary:  
Dianne Giampietro

### Camp Hill

Good Shepherd:  
Lauretana Lubrano  
Grace Letterman  
Maria Renter  
Betty Gall

### Carlisle

St. Patrick:  
Vincenzo Mazzamuto  
Kenneth Kerstetter

### Danville

St. Joseph:  
Debbie Weber

### Elizabethtown

St. Peter:  
Walter Kinsey  
Irvin Brockman

### Harrisburg

Holy Name of Jesus:  
Marie Clover  
Irvin Brockman

### St. Catherine Labouré:

Mary Faith Bushick  
Rose LaVia  
Nana Lewis  
William Logan  
Joseph Rokita  
Elizabeth Schell

### Hershey

St. Joan of Arc:  
Donald DiClemente  
Tony Ercole  
Anthony Bosak

### Lebanon

St. Cecilia:  
Craig Bamberger  
Mary Reb

### McSherrystown

Annunciation BVM:  
Jeffrey Smith  
Mary Lawrence

### Middletown

Seven Sorrows BVM:  
Jean Egenrieder

### Mount Carmel

Divine Redeemer:  
Robert J. Balitchik  
Elizabeth M. Veach  
Daniel R. Rossi  
Michael Bucher, Sr.  
Jean Mahalik  
Anna (Ridilla) Bartol  
Eugene Glowacki  
Helen E. Switay

### New Cumberland

St. Theresa:  
Dorothy Askey  
Thelma Culhane  
Rose Murphy  
Bud French  
Elizabeth Toniola

## Deceased Clergy

*Please pray for the following clergy who died in January during the past 25 years:*

Father Michael Homola, 2003  
Deacon Ralph Runkle, 2005  
Father Wallace E. Sawdy, 2006  
Msgr. Francis Kumontis, 2009  
Father Thomas F. Langan, 2012  
Father C. Robert Nugent, 2014  
Father Raymond Orloski, 2016  
Msgr. Mercurio A. Fregapane, 2017

### York

St. Joseph:  
James Boyle  
Patricia "Patti" Bria  
Grace Pressel  
Mary Wisniewski  
Carolyn Krepps



### Sister Hildegard Grogan

Sister Hildegard Grogan, 87, died in Assisi House in Aston, Pa., on Jan. 20. She had been a professed member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia for 64 years.

Sister Hildegard was born Mary Magdalen in Philadelphia. She entered the Congregation in 1954 and

professed her first vows in 1957.

She earned an R.N. degree from St. Joseph Hospital in Baltimore, a BSN from Duquesne University, and an MSN in Medical/Surgical Nursing from the Catholic University of America.

Sister Hildegard ministered for 34 years in

the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. For 24 of those years, she served at Neumann University in Aston as a professor, as coordinator of the Gerontology Department of Continuing Professional Studies, and as director of the Lifelong Learning Center.

During four years of ministry in the Diocese of Harrisburg, she served at St. Joseph Hospital in Lancaster and as a caregiver in Lebanon. Sister Hildegard also served for 15 years in the Diocese of Wilmington, and five years in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. She moved to Assisi House in 2017 and served in prayer and hospitality ministry until her death.

Private services will be held in Assisi House on Jan. 26. Burial will be in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery, Aston. Donations in her name can be made to the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014.

# DIOCESAN NOTEBOOK

## Masses & Prayer Services

**The Lancaster Region of the Order of Malta will sponsor its annual Sanctity of Life Mass, Jan. 28 at 7 p.m.** The Mass will be livestreamed from St. John Neumann Church in Lancaster. Father Allan Wolfe, chaplain of the Lancaster Region of the Order of Malta, will be the principal celebrant. Concelebrant and homilist will be Father Joseph Howard, pastor of St. Joseph Parish. To livestream the Mass, visit [www.orderofmaltafederal.org/sanctity-of-life-mass](http://www.orderofmaltafederal.org/sanctity-of-life-mass).

Financial contributions will benefit A Woman's Concern, a pro-life pregnancy center in Lancaster, <https://www.friendsofawc.com/support/make-a-donation/>.

**The Respect for Life Ministry of Holy Spirit Parish in Palmyra will hold a local March for Life event in Palmyra on Jan. 29.** Meet in the main parking lot at the church at 11 a.m. Participants will pray the Rosary while walking to the town square. At the square, the group will offer a pro-life witness for 30 minutes before processing back to the church. The event will pray for the unborn, voice our opposition to abortion, stand up for life and support our faith. Participants may bring snacks or

refreshments. For information, contact Art Bond at 717-383-8583 or [abond702@comcast.net](mailto:abond702@comcast.net).

## Retreats & Pilgrimages

**Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2022 with Father Michael Reid**, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Hanover. Father Reid will lead a group of 24 pilgrims on an active and spiritual tour of the Holy Land, Jan. 31-Feb. 11, 2022. The 12-day itinerary organized by Select International Tours includes Mount Tabor, Nazareth, Cana, Galilee, Tabgha, Magdala, Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Mount Carmel, Caesaria Maritima, Bethlehem, Shepherd's Field, Jericho, Baptism Site, The Dead Sea (with optional visit to Masada), Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, St Anne's Church, and Ein Karem. Land and Air cost is \$3,695; a deposit of \$500 is required by Oct. 3, 2021. Flights depart from and return to Newark International Airport. For a brochure and other information, please contact Father Reid at 717-637-4625, ext. 113.

## Education & Enrichment

**The documentary "Pray, the Story of Patrick Peyton"** will be shown on Feb. 14 at 2 p.m. at the Allen Theatre, 36 E Main St., Annville. The documentary highlights the life

of Father Patrick Peyton, who promoted praying the Rosary and who coined the famous phrase, "families that pray together, stay together." Each ticket is \$10; only 150 tickets will be sold in order to comply with Covid-19 regulations. Tickets are on sale now on the theatre website: [www.allentheatre.com](http://www.allentheatre.com).

**"Conquering Toxic Femininity with Mary, Mother of God"** with Dr. Carrie Gress, a two-part Benedicta Enrichment Seminar Online, Jan. 28 and 29 from 7:30-9 p.m. Register at [www.womenofgrace.com](http://www.womenofgrace.com). "Queen of Militants" by Emil Neubert, S.M., S.T.D., fall 2021 study. For more information on either offering, contact Chris Arnold at [carnold@womenofgrace.com](mailto:carnold@womenofgrace.com) or 717-379-6041.

**Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Evangelization Speaker Series continues** with "Incorporating Beauty and Culture into the RCIA," Jan. 25 from 7-8:30 p.m. via Zoom. Discover how to organically incorporate the aesthetics of our faith into RCIA. The presenter is Patty Fertal, a certified RCIA catechist through Franciscan University of Steubenville. She has been the RCIA Director at St. Peter Parish in Elizabethtown. Register at [https://hbgdiocese.formstack.com/forms/speaker\\_series](https://hbgdiocese.formstack.com/forms/speaker_series). Register by



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Jan. 22 at noon. Registration is free, and free-will offerings are appreciated. The monthly series is presented by the Diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

**St. John the Baptist in New Freedom is hosting a 12-week Surviving Divorce program** which brings hope and healing to those who have experienced a broken marriage. Program begins Feb. 3 at 6:45 p.m., with sessions on Zoom. It includes 12 video presentations featuring a psychologist, priests and personal testimonies from Catholic men and women. Topics covered include shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage. Program is based on the teachings of the Church and is open to anyone who needs comfort, counsel, and clarity after separation or divorce. For information, visit <http://www.catholicsdivorce.com>. A \$25 fee includes the Surviving Divorce Personal Guide and all program materials. Please register for our program by Jan. 27 by contacting facilitators, Deb Cousin at [deb.cousin@verizon.net](mailto:deb.cousin@verizon.net) or Pat Smith at [dontel972@aol.com](mailto:dontel972@aol.com). You will be given instructions on how to get your personal guide, and other pertinent information.

**Events & Fundraisers****Crusader Girls Spring Softball registration in Lancaster is now open.**

Assembling teams for 8U, 10U, 12U, and 14U for the spring 2021 season. All home games are played at St. Leo the Great in Rohrerstown. As a feeder program for LCHS, the program accepts girls from any parish in Lancaster County. The registration link can be found at <https://stleos.weshareonline.org/CrusaderSoftballRegistrationSPRING2021>. Registration deadline is Feb. 12. The Crusader program seeks to instill in the girls a foundation of faith and teamwork. Although we put competitive teams on the field, we also recognize that softball does wonders for the girls involved! It's a great workout, improves self-esteem, is good for a girl's mental health, promotes muscle development, lays the groundwork for successful interpersonal skills, and develops leadership skills. We anticipate indoor practices beginning in March. Need more information? Contact Ed Krow, Crusader Softball Coordinator, at [ed@edkrow.com](mailto:ed@edkrow.com).

**St. John the Baptist School in New Freedom, Open House** on Jan. 31 from 12:30-2 p.m. If you or someone you know is interested in a faith-based education for the 2021-2022 school year, this is the open

house you'll want to visit. We'd love to show you all we have to offer from small class sizes to rigorous academics. All Diocesan, CDC and Department of Health guidelines will be followed during this event. Please contact the office at 717-235-3525 with any additional questions, or check us out on our Facebook page [@stjnschool](https://www.facebook.com/stjnschool) or on our website at [www.stjnschool.org](http://www.stjnschool.org).

**Job Openings**

**Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Harrisburg is seeking a full-time Financial Assistant** in their Administrative Office. This position requires a mature, detail-oriented individual with above average keyboard skills, excellent organizational and interpersonal skills with the ability to understand and follow instructions and work independently. Must be proficient in Microsoft applications, most especially Word, Outlook and Excel. Must have an adequate background in business and bookkeeping or accounting. Please send résumé to: Catholic Charities, attention Carole Klinger, 4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111, or via e-mail to [Cklinger@cchbg.org](mailto:Cklinger@cchbg.org).

**Holy Name of Jesus School in Harrisburg has an immediate opening for a full-time computer teacher and school IT person.** Candidates

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must possess academic excellence and a dedication to educating the whole child. Applicants for this position must be adept at developing lessons for Computer Technology. The IT position would include but not limited to network, hardware, database system, security, software programs, and technology support to faculty and staff. Teachers in the school work cooperatively to meet the needs of students. Candidates are to send their résumé to Sister Rita at [sisterrita@holynameofjesus.com](mailto:sisterrita@holynameofjesus.com) or call Sister Rita at 717-657-1704.

**Undefeated Courage is seeking nurses to staff its mobile ultrasound unit.** Shifts available M-F 8am-4pm, FTE: PRN with no maximum hours. Hourly rate: \$22. PA RN license is required for this position. Must be trained in limited obstetric abdominal/transvaginal ultrasound or open to training. The mobile unit will be deployed to abortion clinics to change the way abortion-minded women look at their pregnancy. The mission of Undefeated

Courage is to help women choose life for their baby and themselves. Undefeated Courage is a sidewalk advocacy organization in Central Pennsylvania that provides prayer, pregnancy testing, education on pregnancy, referral to local pregnancy care centers and other social/legal services outside of abortion clinics at no cost or judgement. A free ultrasound is an obstetrical tool used to evaluate the health of the pregnancy and can be a method for abortion-minded women to make informed decisions about their pregnancy after reviewing their ultrasounds. Visit <https://www.undefeatedcourage.org/employment.html> for more information and an application.

**St. Joseph Parish in Lancaster is seeking to**

**hire a faithful and creative person who will provide administrative and secretarial support** to our pastor and other staff in advancing the Mission and Vision of our parish to become and to make disciples of Jesus Christ. In addition, this position includes the responsibility for implementing and maintaining a comprehensive parish communication and engagement plan. Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Publisher), social media, and website maintenance, is required. Experience with databases is preferred. If you are interested in learning more about this part-time position, please contact Deacon Peter Jupin at 717-397-6921 or [deaconpete@stjosephslanc.com](mailto:deaconpete@stjosephslanc.com).

**To report suspected abuse of a minor, please follow these two steps:**



1 Call the toll-free PA Child Abuse Hotline at **1-800-932-0313**



2 Report suspected abuse of a minor by a church official, employee or volunteer by calling the diocesan toll-free hotline at **1-800-626-1608**

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE WITH BOTH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE DIOCESE.**

Email: [ReportAbuse@hbgdiocese.org](mailto:ReportAbuse@hbgdiocese.org)



Diocese of Harrisburg  
Youth Protection Program [www.YouthProtectionHBG.com](http://www.YouthProtectionHBG.com)

