



The Forward

Letter from the Bishop

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This is a season of graduation. Many of us have attended graduation ceremonies, and now it's time for graduation parties. Graduation usually marks an end and a beginning. I want to share with you my most recent experience of graduation.

It's official. I graduated from the College for Bishops three year residency program for new bishops. Bishops in my class, the class of 2008 (even though we were elected in 2007), finished four weeks of formation over the course of three years. We spent considerable time re-

reflecting on the office of Bishop, analyzed case studies from our work, explored episcopal leadership, and, perhaps most importantly, developed relationships that will be important for mutual accountability in the years to come. Our class even includes two bishops from Canada whom I have come to know and respect.

I think I'm glad it's over. It marks an end to a particular time of formation and transition for me and, in some ways, for the diocese. Learning the basics of how to function as a bishop has been a real challenge. So many people think it's like being a parish priest only in a larger setting. Nothing could be further from reality. The gifts and skills required for leadership

as a bishop are almost entirely different. As a class of bishops, we struggled together to learn about this new call and to be open to receive the grace given us in our ordination as bishops. I think that I am beginning to understand this new reality and way of being.

Formation as a bishop, like any of our vocations, is lifelong. Graduation from this course of formation means a new beginning and a continuation of learning, and growing, and developing as a bishop and leader. Sometimes I wish we could learn all there is

to know in four easy one week sessions, but that would take away the fun.

I thank you, the people of this diocese, for the opportunity to spend time in formation (even if you didn't know about any of this). I appreciate your patience and understanding as I continue to learn to be your bishop and as we pray and discern together the vision and direction for our diocese.

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessings,

+ Sean



One Church of miraculous expectation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ equipping transformational leaders for transformational ministry through our missionary outposts — our congregations.

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Diocesan Picnic at Waldameer

This summer, the diocese will once again gather at Waldameer for our annual picnic. This great opportunity for worship, fellowship and fun will be held on Sunday, June 21, 2009. Registration will begin at 10:00 AM and the Eucharistic will be held at 11:00 AM. The bishop will preach and celebrate. It is hoped and expected that those coming to the picnic should also attend the worship service.

Tickets are \$15.00 per person, which includes food, rides, and the water park, and is a savings of \$11.75 off of the regular price. Tickets must be bought in advance and can be reserved through your church. Reservations from the churches must be to Fr. Denny at Trinity, New Castle, by noon on Monday, June 7th.

Proceeds will be placed in a scholarship fund for Camp Nazareth 2011.

If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Dennis Blauser at 724-654-8761 or at frdenny@earthlink.net.



Update from the Diocesan Health Team by the Rev. Adam Trambley

On May 8th, fifteen leaders from around the diocese gathered at St. John's in Franklin to learn about identifying and utilizing spiritual gifts in our parishes and the diocese. Participants received a general overview on the spiritual gifts resource *The 3 Colors of Ministry* and how using spiritual gifts contributes to church health. A variety of methods were discussed for incorporating spiritual gifts work into the on-going life of a parish. In addition to leading spiritual gifts identification seminars, those present learned how to develop ministry descriptions, how to do one-on-one mentoring with people to discuss their spiritual gifts, and how to identify leaders who can help make gifts orientation and identification a reality in the life of a parish. This gifts training also provided necessary resources for helping participants lead spiritual gifts identification workshops throughout the diocese.



The Diocesan Health Team also proposed to Diocesan Council a set of expectations for those participating on Diocesan committees and other bodies. Since our Diocese's current minimum factor is *Convincing Lifestyles*, the health team felt that a good step toward health would be formalizing the ways we want to act toward each other as we go about our diocesan business. Most of the expectations could be considered a combination of common courtesy and best practices. Some of these expectations include being a person of integrity,

starting and ending meetings on time, being prepared and participating fully in meetings, following through on tasks, and having access to e-mail at least a few times each week. These simple but important actions can help us lovingly and effectively live out our faith as we do the work of the Diocese.

If you have questions or are interested in more details about our Diocesan Health Team or Natural Church Development, please contact Father Adam Trambley at 724-347-4501 or at atrambley@gmail.com.

Upcoming Ordinations

Please join us for some upcoming ordinations.

The Rev. Rebecca Lash and the Rev. Joann Piatko will be ordained to the priesthood on Sunday, June 6 at 4:00 PM. The ordinations will take place at the Cathedral of St. Paul, Erie. Clergy should vest in white.

We ask for your prayers for those being ordained as they embark on their new ministries.

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If you have news, story ideas, or pictures that you would like to share with the diocese, please contact Vanessa at the Diocesan Church Center at 814-456-4203 or at vbutler@dionwpa.org.

Pieces from Our Hundred Year History

Editor's note: The Diocese is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary this year. In honor of that, there will be pieces in each Forward that come from past newsletters. The first edition of a diocesan newsletter appeared in November 1915 under the title "The Diocese of Erie." Since 1915, the newsletter has been published off and on under different names.

"A God Guided Diocese" by The Rt. Rev. William Crittenden (from the April 1955 issue of "Forward in Erie")



The early Christians were characterized by a certain quality of life which literally "turned the world upside down." More than that, it gave them the courage and sustaining endurance to face all the persecution and calamity which afflicted them. There were many reasons why they had this quality. Their deep humility, their abounding faith, their self-giving love and sacrifice for each other and for all whose lives they touched—all of these were contributing factors. Most important of all, however, was the supreme fact that the Holy Spirit which had entered their lives during the Pentecost experience, possessed them completely. Their lives were spirit-filled and God-guided. The Comforter had come, as our Lord had promised, to lead them into all truth.

Too often in our organized church life, decisions are made with no apparent attempt to find God's will. Naturally, Executive Committeemen, Vestrymen, and leaders of other parish groups must use all their mental abilities and imagination if they are to provide the right kind of leadership for the fellowship of Christians for whom they are officially responsible. But although their decisions are sometimes vitally involved in the spiritual lives of the congregation, too often God's guidance is not consciously sought. The result is, too frequently, that church life exists as a club or social group with some religious overtones rather than triumph as a redemptive fellowship deeply concerned with human souls.

God's guidance involves constant prayer, not only as individuals, but as organized groups. It involves continuous Bible study to determine how our Lord interprets God's will. It involves complete yielding of ourselves and realistic dedication and utilization of our time, talent, and money for God's purposes as they are revealed by our Lord.

It is my earnest hope that, throughout the Diocese, each organized parish group seriously take to heart its position of spiritual leadership and strive earnestly through prayer and Bible study to seek God's guidance. The Erie Diocese CAN become a spiritual powerhouse, transforming individual lives, helping mightily in God's redemption of our sinful human natures. It WILL become such, if we follow the example of our Lord's first disciples. The early Christians were spirit-filled and God-guided. They triumphed over sin, the world and the devil. We share their glorious heritage.

Nine Reasons for Modern Tithing (from the October 1954 issue of "Forward in Erie")

- It guides us by providing us with a method of intelligent giving.
- It helps us by freeing our Church leaders from a preoccupation with money for the more important task of ministering to people
- It places us all, rich and poor, on an equal footing before God.
- It helps us by enabling our Church to speak not about money in a begging attitude but about responsibility in a dignified manner.
- It shows us in a concrete manner the everyday meaning of real gratitude to God for the many things he has given to us.
- By making us responsible with a fixed percent of our income, it teaches us responsibility in the handling of all our possessions.
- Like all truly Christian living, it brings to us the joy of an honest and important participation in God's work in this world.
- It places us within a mighty tradition because it has Scriptural authority.
- It helps us to see that all of living, even the making of a personal budget and the spending of money, can be done to God's glory.

Don't forget that God doesn't take any vacations, and he'll be expecting to see you every Sunday in a church -somewhere-this summer.

- from the June 1950 issue of "The Pastoral Staff"

The Forward

Local Diocesan Mission Summer Opportunities by the Rev. Holly Davis

Helping Hands of Venango County at St. John's Church in Franklin is a ministry which serves to create awareness of systemic poverty in the Appalachian region of Northwestern Pennsylvania. Volunteer mission teams or teens and adults are offered the opportunity to study generational poverty while working side by side with community residents, business leaders, and our brothers and sisters in Christ to improve the living conditions of the impoverished in Venango County.



If you are interested in volunteering to work with other Episcopal groups from Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio and Oklahoma, donating funds toward supplies and equipment, or housing missionaries, please contact St. John's, Franklin (814.432.5161). Mission teams will be at St. John's: 20-26 June, 24-30 July, and 12-19 August. Mission teams are offered the opportunity to study generational poverty while working side by side with community missionaries. Helping Hands of Venango County is a partnership of St. John's Church and Venango County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services. HHVC: Transforming Community!

Concert of Prayer Scheduled at Trinity Memorial, Warren

Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen. --Ephesians 3:20,21



Prayer is one of our most important resources as Christians. When we take the time to spend with God, to communicate our needs to God, and open ourselves up to God's power working in us, amazing things happen in our lives.

The scripture quote above describes how much more the Holy Spirit is able to do working through us than we can comprehend otherwise. These verses are often said at the close of Morning and Evening Prayer, so that we can glorify God each day for the amazing things accomplished when we and our brothers and sisters in Christ offer ourselves to God's purposes.

A *Concert of Prayer* is a time for individuals to come together as the body of Christ and pray for ourselves, our churches, our community, and the world. It is an environment where people from different groups, congregations, backgrounds, and traditions can come together in a meaningful, dynamic, spiritual experience in prayer with the living Christ.

Following the concert we will gather for fellowship in our parish dining room for a time of reflection and breaking bread together.

The next Concert of Prayer will take place at Trinity Memorial, Warren, on Saturday, June 19th at 3:00 PM. Please join us.

Bishop Sean's Visitation Schedule

June 6th - St. John's, Franklin

Visitations will resume on September 12th.



St. John's

Diocesan Treasurer Office Hours

Bob Armstrong, our diocesan treasurer, will now have office hours at the Diocesan Church Center on Wednesdays from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM. In addition to his normal duties, he will be assisting with various projects at the Diocesan Church Center and our churches. If you have questions for or would like to discuss anything with Bob, please call the Diocesan Church Center on Wednesdays.



Reminder - Annual Audits are due to the Diocesan Church Center by September 1st!