Commitment to the Youth
Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky, Prime Bishop

During the XVI General Synod in October 1982 in Scranton PA the following resolution was passed, “That the last Sunday in August be set aside for the Youth of our Church and that a collection be taken for that purpose.” Ever since this Synod the Polish National Catholic Church has taken this time of year to focus our attention on the youth of the Church.

I suppose that this time of year makes sense in today’s world since the summer is a time when the young have off from school. The very young spend this time home for summer vacation. This is often the time of year when families go on vacation trips. In my family these trips were always of both a fun and educational nature. We would go to visit places where we could learn about American history and visit museums and it would also be a fun time as well at the pool or at the beach.

As the students get a little older, this summer time becomes one in which they begin to learn about the world and the work force. I certainly remember the many summer jobs that I had during my high school years and early college years. I worked in construction, in a grocery store and a copy center and several more. In each of these jobs I learned valuable lessons about life and also about finances.

And of course then the young, during the years when they graduate from high school or college, begin to find their vocation in the world. This vocation regards not only their work life, but also where they might live and their family life. The Church also prays that some of the young men will realize their call of a vocation to the ordained ministry. While certainly things may change in our lives over the course of many years, it is oftentimes during these formative years that our path in life is set, even if it is only at the beginning.

But we now must ask the question here, what of the spiritual life of the young members of our Holy Church as they go through all of these times of growth and change? How can we truly make this time of the year a special one in which we reach out to the young and focus attention of the issues they face and the trials that they encounter.

I want to begin by taking a look at the Constitution and Laws of the Polish National Catholic Church. I know that many will think that this is a strange place to start. The Constitution speaks about how we run our parishes and church and what are responsibilities are. But our responsibilities are exactly the point I am trying to get to. In Article II, the Constitution addresses the rights and duties of members of the Church. It contains sections on our prayer life, our (Continued on Page 3.)
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attendance at the corporate worship of the community, that is, Holy Mass, and our reception of the Sacraments. It is the fourth section though that is of interest here. It states: “Spiritual duties are: worship, love and obedience to God. A member of this Church expresses such acts of worship, love and obedience towards God by (4) the proper rearing of children and the good examples of parents and guardians, through pastoral preparation in school and in Church.

Our Constitution lays out that as Polish National Catholics we have a sacred obligation placed upon us to care and nurture the youth of our families and of the Church. It states that this obligation takes on responsibilities in four specific areas: proper rearing, good examples, pastoral preparation in school and pastoral preparation in Church.

The definition of “rearing” is “to bring up and care for (a child) until they are fully grown, especially in a particular manner or place.” These words should all be meaningful in regards to our focus on the youth of the Polish National Catholic Church. We are first to “bring up” the young. This implies that we will walk together with them. We won’t just tell the young what they should do or demand that they go a certain way in life, but rather that we will bring them along with us in our faith journey in the Church. Now in order for this to be a reality, each of us must, of course, already have an active and mature spiritual life. We must not only attend Church and receive the Sacraments, but we also must be people who pray, people who act rightly and people who live rightly and piously. We are called to bring up these youth in a particular manner and this manner is the Christian Catholic way of life, with its understanding of the need to attend Holy Mass and receive the Sacraments as well as an understanding of the requirements of our Lord in living a good and holy life.

This of course brings us to the next item, to be a good example. We begin with the quote from the Book of Proverbs: “Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.” (Prov 22:6) This says to us that the example of others can be a powerful factor in our lives and especially in the lives of the young. I can certainly say this of my own life as well, the examples of many people, first of all my parents but also others such as parishioners at my home parish, teachers I had as a very young person and even those who were influential for the development of my priesthood were a powerful example to me. Each of them added a facet to my ongoing spiritual life and the way in which I live out my Catholic faith, both as a bishop and priest, but also as a believer in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

This reminds us that as people who are committed to the youth, we all must be careful concerning the example that we portray. This work is not only the work of parents and guardians, but the work of each and every one of us. So first and foremost we must be aware of the example that we show to others, especially to the youth, but this is also only a first step. The Scripture tells us to “train the young.” This means that our example must be more intentional. We must not only show a good example to others, but rather we must extend that example to include others in it.

It is here that we really must show our “Commitment to Youth.” And this commitment cannot just be for one Sunday or one week a year. While it is nice that we put a day aside to honor the work and life of the youth of our Church and while it is certainly helpful to collect funds to help support the youth programs of the Church such as Convo, the more important matter is that we strive to make the youth an ongoing and continuing part of everything we do as a Polish National Catholic parish and as individual believers. This means that we should involve them in worship as we would anyone else within our parish communities. This means that we encourage them to speak at our parish meetings that we may take their concerns to heart, make sure their voices are heard and their needs are met. This means that we share with them the ongoing Catholic faith that is lived, not only within the four walls of the parish church, but at each and every moment of life. That we pray with them, work with them, enjoy time with them, share our life and our all with them.

In this way we can live by and are guided by the words of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew: “At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, ‘Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in My name receives Me.’” (Matthew 18:1-5) Jesus reminds us of the special care that we should have for the young and we also know that He went out of His way to bless them. Again from the Gospel of Matthew we read: “The children were here. It states: “Spiritual duties are: worship, love and obedience to God.”

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What is a Sacrament?

Most Rev. John Swantek, Prime Bishop Emeritus

We often hear the word Sacrament in the Sunday sermon, we see it in articles in *God's Field*, and hear it in some presentations. Perhaps many of us heard the word Sacrament for the first time when we began to prepare for the receiving of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation. We also heard this word in the School of Christian Living classes.

The definition of a Sacrament in the *Catechism* is not too clear for the average person and it is quite difficult for many to understand. The *Catechism* states; “A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of God's invisible grace, instituted by Christ for our sanctification and salvation.” For most people a Sacrament seems to be something holy which is very important for all, but many are not exactly sure what it is. Even the parish priest often finds it difficult to explain it to younger members of the Church.

In the booklet *Our Faith*, Bishop Hodur wrote a short essay about Sacraments. In this essay there are three definitions for a Sacrament. The first states that a Sacrament is a sign, “an external manifestation of uniting man with God.” This definition reflects St. Augustine’s teaching about what a Sacrament is. I will address this later in this article. Bishop Hodur's second definition is the one in the *Catechism* we use today, while the third definition states that “every action of Christ, every act of His expressed will directed towards the gaining of man for his salvation, was a Sacrament.” He then gives a listing of those Sacraments.

A definition in an early Church catechism edited by Father Stanley Zawadzki sheds a little more light on what a Sacrament is: “Sacraments are specific actions that unite a person with God.” As did Bishop Hodur's first definition, Father Zawadzki's states quite clearly that a Sacrament is an action - a ritual - that unites a person with God. Many centuries earlier, St. Augustine (354-430) taught that a Sacrament is a sacred sign which moves a person from this visible world to the invisible reality. This sacred sign brings us into union with God. In *Teaching Sacraments to Youth*, a work written for teachers of young people, Richard Reichert wrote: “A Sacrament is a guaranteed opportunity for encountering Christ through ritual celebration.” If the ritual is celebrated, one meets Christ. A Sacrament is like an iceberg. There is a part that we see, but there is a greater part that we do not see. When we see the top, we also know that there is a larger part which is not observed. This is the message that the definition of a Sacrament is telling us. There is something we experience and there is a reality which we do not. When we observe the ritual, ceremony, the sign, being celebrated by a bishop or priest, this informs us that this is an encounter with our Triune God; the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Let us now look at the definition of a Sacrament as it is found in the Church catechism. “A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of God's inward and spiritual grace Instituted by Christ for our sanctification and salvation.”

A “Sacrament is an outward and visible sign.” A sign is something that we can experience. We can see it, hear it, or touch it. It tells us something. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the pouring of water on the head of the child as the celebrant says: “John, I baptize you in the name of the Father...” is something seen, heard and felt. The pouring of the water and the words said by the priest are the outward signs; something we see and hear. The bishop anointing the forehead of the individual with Holy Chrism while saying: “Nicholas, I sign you with the sign of the cross...” are the visible signs of the Sacrament of Confirmation. During Mass the celebrant takes the white host and says: “This is my Body.” The white host and the words said over it are the outward and visible signs of the Holy Eucharist. They are like the tip of the iceberg; we see the Host but we do not see the Body of Christ which becomes present in this outward sign. The signs are similar to the tip of the iceberg which we perceive, but we also know that there is more to the iceberg that we do not see. Likewise, we see the outward signs of the Sacrament, but our faith informs us of the holy reality which is not seen.

“Of God's inward and spiritual grace.” As we know from our catechism days, there are two kinds of grace, sanctifying and actual. Grace is a free gift from God, merited by our Lord, Jesus Christ. As we discuss the Sacraments, we will pay special attention to sanctifying grace, “which makes the soul holy and pleasing to God and enables us to share in the life of God Himself.” This means that in grace God Himself becomes present in the individual. When we receive
one of the Sacraments, the grace of the Holy Spirit causes a special effect in our soul. Christ Himself ministers to us through the Sacraments. As we speak about the grace received in the Sacraments we are now speaking about that part of the iceberg which we do not see. This is why it is important to know the teachings of our faith which we first learned when we were going to catechism class and School of Christian Living. When we see the sacred sign or action we know that something holy, beautiful and unseen is happening to that individual. Jesus is ministering to him or her.

“Instituted by Christ” simply means that the Sacraments have their origin in Jesus Christ; the Sacraments are in the Church because Jesus wills them directly or indirectly. It must be realized that, through the Sacraments, our Lord affects us when we turn to Him. As we read the New Testament, we will find all the Sacraments mentioned.

“For our sanctification and salvation.” Sanctification is that state of holiness which is caused by the presence of God in the individual. This holiness is caused by the Holy Spirit Himself. Salvation is preserving “the soul for the purpose for which God has created it.” One is saved when one is permanently united with God.

For the first 1200 years, there was no one listing of the Sacraments. Among his list of Sacraments, St. Augustine also listed the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, Blessed Salt, and others, while Hugh of St. Victor listed 18 Sacraments. Many of those that were listed as Sacraments would be called sacramentals today. There were many definitions of Sacrament in the first millennium. It was not, however, until the 12th Century that Peter Lombard drafted a list of seven Sacraments that eventually came to be accepted in both the Eastern and Western Churches.

Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders are Sacraments that can be received only once. These Sacraments cause a permanent effect on the soul and they should not be repeated.

The Church also classifies the Sacraments as Sacraments of the Living and Sacraments of the Dead. Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Holy Unction, Holy Orders, Matrimony and Word of God are the Sacraments of the Living. They can only be received when one is in a state of grace, when God is present in the soul.

Baptism and Penance are Sacraments of the Dead. Sacraments of the dead are administered to one who is not in a state of grace; God is not present in the soul. When one is baptized, one is reborn to a new life of grace and is united with God. The Sacrament of Penance is administered to one who had been baptized and may now be in a state of sin. The action of the Holy Spirit removes sin and restores one to a state of grace in which God becomes present again in the soul.

St. Paul taught that the Church is the Body of Christ of which Jesus is the Head and all the baptized constitute the body. In other words, the Church is actually our Lord, Jesus Christ, present today in another form or mode. As we know the Sacraments are celebrated within the Church and we can truly say that they are the actions of Christ. Through them our Lord continues to minister to all, to you and me, in various moments in our lives, just as He did over 2000 years ago. To go to the sacraments is to go to Christ, because He is the Chief Minister.

It is in this bringing of the youth and welcoming them that we provide the pastoral care to them in both school and church that is spoken of in the Constitution. This care is not only the physical care that we provide to the young in meeting their bodily needs but with the realization that a relationship with Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are as vital a matter as any other need. We must make sure at every moment, in school, at home, in Church, on the playground or at work that the relationship to Christ and His Church plays a role. Everything is connected to our Christian Catholic life as believers and this is something that we must not only model for others, but especially for the young, we must guide them through active pastoral care, leading them along with us in our faith journey.

It is then up to us to make sure we do not prevent the youth from coming to Jesus, rather we must encourage them and lead them on this journey to our Lord. And then the words of Proverbs will become true for them, “Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.”
Eastern Diocese Polish National Catholic Church Youth Commission

A recent publication of the Eastern Diocese is all about the youth activities held in their diocese over a four-year period. It covers ten events: two Winter Youth Gatherings, three Acolyte Retreats, four Youth Retreats and CONVO 2016. It is not just a listing of attendees and activities. It is replete with photographs of events and the attendees. If a picture being worth a thousand words is correct, then this book is 210,000 words long, because there are two hundred and ten photographs in all!

The full title of this publication is Eastern Diocese P.N.C.C. Youth Commission: Newsletters of Diocesan Youth Events From the Sept. 2012 Diocesan Synod to the Oct. 2016 Diocesan Synod. This 68-page book is both a great remembrance of these events and an inspiration for future planners and attendees. It was compiled by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, Chaplain.

Two Winter Youth Gatherings are included, the first, held on Friday, December 28, 2012 and the second held on Saturday Jan. 3, 2015. Both gatherings were held at Holy Trinity Parish in Webster, MA. Ten parishes were represented by 53 youth, adults, and clergy in 2012 and 12 parishes were represented by 74 youth, adults, and clergy in 2015. At both gatherings there were presentations and times for recreational activities. At the 2015 Winter Youth Gathering the attendees enjoyed an afternoon of bowling. In addition, Fr. Frederickson, who is a fire chaplain, arranged for a tour of a local firehouse.

The highlight of the 2012 Winter Youth Gathering was Bishop Paul Sobiechowski’s history of St. Nicholas. He described his visit to the North Pole and its workshop, and finally exclaimed that Santa met Mrs. Claus at a United Choir workshop!

At the 2015 Winter Youth Gathering, a re-creation of a seminary class on the Solemnity of Epiphany was conducted by Bishop Stanley Bilinski with Seminarian Calvo played by Lauren Sittard, Seminarian Krusieniak played by Eric Nemkovich, and Seminarian Nemkovich Jr., played by Fr. Michał Gitner. Another presentation covered the origin of the Feast of Epiphany, how it was celebrated in the East and the West, and how it is celebrated today in the P.N.C.C. This was followed by a matching game with questions and answers on cards to ascertain how well the presentation was understood.

The book describes four one-day annual Acolyte Retreats, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th held in the Eastern Diocese. In 2013, it was held on Saturday, June 8th at Saint Joseph, in Westfield, MA. In 2014 it was held on Thursday, June 26th at Blessed Trinity in Fall River, MA. In 2015 it was held on Tuesday, June 30th at Our Saviour Parish, in Woonsocket, RI. In 2016 it was held on Friday, June 2, 2016 at Divine Providence in Norwich, CT. Each had between 50 and 55 acolytes, adults and clergy in addition to Bishop Paul Sobiechowski. The Retreats included presentations, visits and recreational activities. The visits and recreational activities included: going to swim in a boy’s and girl’s club pool in Westfield, MA; a visit to Battleship Cove with its decommissioned USN ships; a visit to Purgatory State Park in Sutton, MA; and a visit to the Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, CT. The Morning Star youth band from the Divine Providence Parish in Norwich, CT played at some retreats.

The sessions at the retreats included: how to serve during Mass, history of the catholic practice of Corpus Christi and its importance and celebration in the Church today by Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak; Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich spoke about Baptism and its great importance in the Church; Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak had a presentation on the message and teaching of St. John the Baptist; Fr. Henryk Wos gave a presentation on St. Paul and his relationship with the other apostles during Jesus’ three year ministry; Fr. Robert Koeber gave a talk on serving at the altar with reverence; Fr. Sr. Rob spoke about St. Paul, his conversion from Saul to Paul, and his life and service to the Church; Fr. Henryk Wos gave a presentation on St. Peter, using portions of Peter’s letters in the New Testament.

Acolytes were given a revised The Acolyte Manual. Fr. Robert Koeber provided a handout with an altar servers prayer, a dress code, proper vesture and some rules to follow.

In 2016 the Eastern Diocese conducted its 43rd Youth Retreat. This book tells about those held in 2013 [40th], 2014 [41st], 2015 [42nd], and 2016 [43rd]. The highest attendance was at its 40th in 2013, with 103 youth, adults and clergy from 11 parishes. Others ranged from 40 to 60. All of these five-day Retreats were held at Camp Howe in Goshen, MA; they began on Sunday and ended on Thursday. Each had its own theme: 2013 - ‘Through
the Years’, 2014 - ‘I Believe in God’s Word’, 2015 - ‘#regenerate 2015’, 2016 - ‘Reverence: Walk His Way’. The Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat has its own flag; it can be seen in a photograph taken at the 2016 Youth Retreat. Each Retreat starts with a prayer service and raising of the American Flag, the P.N.C.C. flag and the youth retreat flags. This is followed by an ice breaker, led by Joanne Oliveira, to get the attendees to know one another.

At the 40th Youth Retreat, 30 alumni from 1970s, 1980s 1990s and 2000s were welcomed to the Camp Night Reunion. Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich gave a Power Point Presentation of photographs of past Youth Retreats; it brought back memories and laughs and was an inspiration to see the effect attendance had on their lives. Commemorative Water bottles were given to all. Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich presented a plaque, signed by all the youth, to Mike and Maryann Zarek for their years of love and service to the Youth Retreat program. Cards were signed and given to Bishop Thomas Gnat and his wife, Kathryn, and to Prime Bishop Emeritus Robert Nemkovich and his wife, Florence, for their years of service to the Youth Retreat Program. A Crystal Recognition Award was given to Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich for his attendance at all 40 youth retreats. At the 40th retreat, the Morning Star youth band from Divine Providence, Norwich, CT played at the closing Mass on Thursday. The 2013 Youth Retreat saw a watermelon smashing show performed by Gallagher, aka Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak. Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich conducted the annual candlelight services under the stars.

During the opening Masses, Jason Fairclough was remembered in prayer for the camp spirit and helping others that he exhibited at Youth Retreats. Jason Fairclough died while returning home from the 30th Youth Retreat in 2003. A Camp Spirit Award plaque was established in his memory and, every year, a camper who exhibits camp spirit is named and his or her name is put on the plaque: In 2013 it was awarded to Ian Gonyea, Our Saviour Parish, Woonsocket, RI. In 2014, it was awarded to Ryan Bucko, St. Joseph’s Parish, Westfield, MA. In 2015, it was awarded to Natalie Chmielewksa, Divine Providence Parish, Norwich, CT. In 2016, it was awarded to Karina Tenus, St. Casimir’s Parish, Lowell, MA.

Time for recreational activities was provided every day. These include swimming, canoeing, rock wall climbing in a gym (15 feet to almost 50 feet), kayaking, archery, arts and crafts, four square, an annual football game and other sports. A break for ice cream courtesy of PNU District 3 was also a feature of these Retreats. Camp fires are also a part of the program. The camp fire was augmented by the guitar of Tom Zarek who led songs from the past, including Country Road, and Blowing in the Wind. Zarek’s World Famous Country Store was open for business at all retreats. In 2016, Some bears, obviously attracted by the fun-loving people, appeared in 2016 at Camp Howe; they can be seen in the photographs. Team-building exercises were conducted by the Camp Howe staff to teach the importance of working together and trusting one another to reach certain goals.

The campers helped the Camp Howe staff at these retreats: in 2015, the youth helped paint tables. The 2016 Community service project was clearing brush around the 4-square area and taping and painting the outline of the 4-square box neon green, and bringing in the docks for the season.

At the 2015 and 2016 Retreats, the campers took a trip to the Berkshire East Mountain Coaster which provided fun and thrills for all, with speeds close to 35 mph. Movies and videos were also a part of the Youth Retreats; at the 40th, the video was “Jesus Christ Superstar,” the 41st had the movie “Mr. Bean’s Holiday,” the 42nd had the movie “Sister Act” and at the 43rd campers watched a “A Re-Enactment of the Life Of Bishop Francis Hodur.”

The campers broke into four groups at the 2016 Retreat to make prayer blankets. Two of these blankets were given to clergy: one to Bishop Thomas Gnat, Bishop Emeritus of the Eastern Diocese and one to Fr. Jan Wilczek.

The 43rd Annual Eastern Diocesan Retreat was Fr. Sr. Rob’s 20th retreat as Youth Chaplain. The Retreats included talks, presentations, interactive activities with the campers, brainstorming sessions and skits by the campers.

The 2013 Retreat included: a talk by Prime Bishop Mikovsky on the second stanza of the Hymn of the P.N.C.C.; an interactive construction of an altar out of stone and the importance of encountering Christ at the altar led by Fr. Gitner; a presentation on the history of the P.N.C.C. and the Union of Scranton by Fr. Sr. Rob; and skits prepared by each cabin about the importance of being a P.N.C.C. member.

The 2014 Retreat included the following presentations: Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak on Mr. Bean’s meeting and skits prepared by each cabin about the importance of being a P.N.C.C. member.
the prophets Amos, Baruch, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah highlighting how they corrected the people when they were not living God’s word as they should be; Fr. Randy Calvo talked about the Psalms and their importance to the Jewish people then and now to us; re-enactments of several of the parables of Jesus, such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Talents, the Sower and the parable of the ten bridesmaids, five of whom had batteries for their cell phones and five did not, was led by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich; Fr. Robert Koerber gave a talk on St. Paul, his life and writing, and he gave each attendee a copy of a booklet with the information so that they could have it at their fingertips; Fr. Michal Gitner gave an impassioned presentation of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus with the participation of almost all of the youth, bringing the scriptures to life. A brainstorming session was held by attendees to come up with different ways that they could live Christian values on a daily basis with their peers. A trivia game was played by the attendees where the questions ranged from the scriptures to the P.N.C.C. trivia. The first session, led by Kathy James, followed by a prayer by chaplain Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, who spoke of the importance of the Eucharist and the Holy Mass; Fr. Michal Gitner gave a talk on Reverence for Yourself as a Child of God focusing on lyrics of Mercy Me’s song Flawless on the importance of the sacrament of reconciliation; Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak gave a presentation on Reverence in the Christian Family, using three skits, with the Goofus and Gallant families, one at dinner, one going to church, and one on vacation; Fr. Henryk Wos gave the final presentation, ‘Being Reverent to God and Church in Today’s World’. The campers went on a nature hike led by Bill Gerardi, a member of Holy Name of Jesus Parish, South Deerfield, MA. The campers also made a booklet entitled Reverence Remembered for themselves for their future reference.

The events at CONVO 2016 are also included in this book, because it was held in the Eastern Diocese at Saint Anselm College, Manchester, NH, from Monday, July 25 to Friday, July 29. CONVO is a Church-wide youth gathering. More than 140 youth, adults and clergy attended this CONVO. The theme of this year’s CONVO was “I AM.” All of the presentations focused on different aspects of the theme. Prime Bishop Mikovsky’s sermon at the opening Mass reaffirmed the idea that the youth of the Church have an important role to take the message of Jesus into their communities.

CONVO 2016 opened with the song I AM by Eddie James, followed by a prayer by chaplain Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, who spoke of the importance of the P.N.C.C.’s Year of Reverence. He also mentioned that July 25th was the 5th anniversary of the Union of Scranton.

An ice breaker, developed by Joanne Oliveira, got everyone acquainted. The first session, led by Kathy Nemkovich, ‘I AM the Light of the World’, focused on youth, following Jesus, being the light to help others whenever possible. Her talk concluded with the
story of Welles Remy Crowther’s last actions on earth in saving others in the New York City South tower collapse on 9/11, while wearing a red bandana. Red bandanas were given to all attendees.

The second session, ‘I AM a Good Shepherd’, given by Fr. Robert Frederickson, reminded the youth that the Good Shepherd went out of his way to find one who was lost and that they must be mindful of the many false prophets they would encounter in their lives. Small group sessions were held by the campers to discuss the two previous sessions.

A community service project was conducted to help Liberty House, a place that gives support to Homeless Veterans and others in need. This charity was recommended by Bishop Paul and Karen Sobiechowski. The attendees were asked to bring toiletries, gift cards and food to CONVO. They did an outstanding job and were helped by some parishes. More than 50 bags and boxes were collected as well as over 100 gift cards and hundreds of dollars. The CONVO participants broke into 15 groups to make prayer blankets. After they were prayed over by the makers, these were also given to Liberty House.

The third presentation was ‘I Am the Door’ by National Youth Chaplain Bishop Stanley Bilinski. He stressed the importance of getting that safe haven in which Jesus is the door that protects us and makes us safe. The presentation was followed by small group sessions to discuss it.

A special 30-minute presentation of the life of Bp. Hodur, prepared by Joanne Oliveira, Kathy and Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, based on the History of the P.N.C.C. prepared by your School of Christian Living. The presentation was professionally video taped and is available on You Tube.

Karen Sobiechowski led the CONVO with a Taize prayer service.

The fourth presentation, ‘I AM the Bread of Life’, was given by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. He spoke about the Eucharist, using a dramatization of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. The presentation was followed by small group discussions.

Skits about the Christian Family and Reverence were prepared and presented by small groups. The skits will be put on You Tube.

The fifth presentation, ‘I AM the True Vine’, was given by Fr. Jason Soltysiak. His presentation began with a series of songs from the 70s, 80s 90s and to-day which use the words ‘I AM’. The National United Choirs (NUC) gave a talk on the importance of music to the Church and also announced the recipients of 2016 NUC Music Scholarships. The NUC also donated backpacks to all attendees.

The PNU CEO, Irene Jugan, and CFO, John Andrzejewski, spoke to the CONVO and distributed sunglasses to the attendees and cash to those who answered questions from the PNU Education and Youth Commission. The Morning Star youth band from Divine Providence Parish, Norwich, CT, provided music for the Mass at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Manchester.

Joseph Quirbach, St. Casimir’s Parish, Lowell, MA, was presented the God and Country Scouting medal after the Mass. After lunch, all attendees headed for Canobie Lake Park for their roller coasters, water plunge, Yankee cannon ball, the Boston Tea Party, the Rain and other rides.

The National United Youth Association had their annual meeting on Thursday. This included election of diocesan members of the board for the next two years.

The sixth presentation, ‘I AM the Way’, given by Fr. Michał Gitner, used the gospels to show that Jesus took a radical way that challenged the established norms. He used clips on the life of St. Francis of Assisi.

A Passion Portrayal, under the direction of Fr. Michał Gitner, and performed by the CONVO youth, began with the Last Supper, continued through the arrest of Jesus in the Gethsemane garden, the trial before Pilate and walking the way of the cross. The attendees sang and recorded ‘We Are Family’ and a ‘Come as I AM’ dance was held for all participants.

The final session, ‘Who Do You Say I AM’, was conducted by Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky. It was a review of the various sessions of the week and important words of Jesus that were the focus through the week.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if every diocese produced a book memorializing and highlighting their youth activities?

Joseph Francis Seliga
Chair, P.N.C.C. Commission on History and Archives
Focus on Youth in August

P.N.C.C. Future Direction Committee
Most Rev. Anthony A. Mikovsky, Prime Bishop
Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich Jr., Chair

August is a special month in our holy Polish National Catholic Church because we focus on our Youth. This year, Youth Sunday is celebrated on August 27th.

As we continue in our Year of Commitment, what is our commitment to our youth? Do we keep them in our prayers? Do we support them in their efforts to live and spread the faith to their peers? Do we encourage them to have important roles in the ministry of our parish? Do we equip them with tools to learn and cherish our Christian Catholic faith?

Remember what our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, said about the youth (Mark 9:33-37):

Then they came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house He asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then He took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not Me but the One Who sent Me.”

There are also the words from the First Letter to Timothy (4:12-16):

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Here are some prayers to offer for our youth:

Opening Prayer from the Mass for Youth (2006 P.N.C.C. Missal):

Let us pray. Almighty and Eternal God, keep in Your tender care the youth of Your Holy Church, that they may understand those things which are in harmony with Your Holy Will. Create in them a spirit of true happiness in Your service, that they may be followers of Your Holy Word now and in the days to come. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Youth (2010 P.N.C.C. Prayer Book):

Let us pray. Loving and kind Father, because You created us in Your image and likeness and determined that one generation should follow another in order to continue life, keep in Your tender and steadfast care the youth of the Church. May they come to know and understand that true happiness can be attained when they live in harmony with Your teaching. May they, like our Lord and Savior in His youth, grow “in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.” Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
National and Western Diocesan Commission for SOCL Meets

St. Mary’s Parish, Parma, OH

The National and Western Diocesan Commission for the School of Christian Living met at St. Mary’s Parish, Parma, OH on June 21-22, 2017. The commission met to further formulate lessons and ideas that will be brought forth in the coming months in the Polish National Catholic Church. The parish was blessed with the presence of three bishops: Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky, Bishop Stanley Bilinski, and Bishop Paul Sobiechowski. Fr. Sr. Jaroslaw Nowak and Fr. Charles Zawistowski attended, as well as other various board members. Mass was celebrated by Prime Bishop on Wednesday evening, the 21st.
Who Am I? - A Women’s Conference

Women just love to come together to talk, laugh, cry, share a recipe, or perhaps seek advice. Often times we simply want to see a smile, feel a hug, and know that we have a friend. In today’s world, we tend to overload our daily schedules with so many activities, which only results in overwhelming stress and a loss of direction. We lose sight of who we are and where our life’s journeys are headed. Worst of all, we might not realize that help is needed to get us back on track.

We have all been on both the giving and receiving end at some point in our life, but we may also miss calls for help. To that end, the National United Women’s Societies for the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the P.N.C.C. is sponsoring a women’s conference entitled “Who Am I?” The National Board considers the conference a gathering, a getaway, a retreat, and an event all wrapped together to provide a venue for our women to learn, rediscover, and discuss topics that impact our daily lives.

The conference is open to all women of the P.N.C.C., and is not restricted to members of the ANS societies. We encourage our women to invite their sister, daughter, niece, neighbor or friend to attend with them as well, even if they are not a member of the P.N.C.C. The conference is being held in Erie, PA from Wednesday through Saturday, October 18 – 21, 2017, at the Erie Courtyard Marriott and Bayfront Convention Center.

We are honored to have Dr. Donna Yarri, Professor of Theology at Alvernia University, as our conference leader and keynote speaker. Dr. Yarri joined the Alvernia faculty 17 years ago and has earned numerous awards for research and teaching excellence. She is a researcher and educator in the areas of religion and science, medical ethics, religion and popular culture, social justice, and ethical treatment of animals. She has presented papers at numerous conferences and has published several articles and three books.

During the course of the conference, Dr. Yarri will lead us through a three-part journey relating to “caring of oneself,” “caring of family” and “caring of the Church and community.” Each conference day is filled with a variety of lectures and activities as well as ample breaks in between sessions. The words of the day will be – Relax, Reflect, and Reconnect – allowing you to attend as many sessions as you wish over the three days.

The National Board is excited to bring this conference to our Church women and we pray you will plan to attend. Conference information, forms and brochures have been sent to all P.N.C.C. parishes and ANS societies. The conference schedule and registration form can be found on the P.N.C.C. website and in the spring and summer editions of the Polka. We look forward to seeing you in Erie!

Conference Registration Fee:
$200.00 per person (includes meals) after Aug 15, 2017
Hotel Room Rate:
$396.63 for 3-night stay; rate for single and double occupancy

Our Retreat Master – Dr. Donna Yarri

Dr. Donna Yarri is a Professor of Theology at Alvernia University, where she has taught for seventeen years. She is the first recipient of the NEAG endowed professorship at Alvernia University, which recognizes significant research and teaching excellence, and has also received the Christian R. Lindback award for excellence in teaching. She does research and teaching in the areas of religion and science, medical ethics, religion and popular culture, social justice, and the ethical treatment of animals. She has presented papers at numerous conferences, and has several published articles, as well as three book manuscripts: The Ethics of Animal Experimentation (Oxford, 2005), God, Science, and Designer Genes (co-authored with Dr. Spencer S. Stober, Praeger, 2009) and Kafka’s Creatures (co-edited, Rowman and Littlefield, 2010).
“Who Am I?”
A Women’s Conference
Sponsored by the National United Women’s Societies for the
Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Polish National Catholic Church

Day 1 – Wednesday, October 18, 2017
3:00 p.m.– 6:00 p.m. – Conference and hotel check-in
   Dinner – On your own
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. – Conference welcome and overview
   Myers-Briggs exercise

Day 2 – Thursday, October 19, 2017
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – Morning Prayer – Breakfast
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – “Self-care: Me, Myself and I”
   Dr. Donna Yarri
11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – “The Dangers of Stress”
12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. – Lunch
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. – Activity Time
   Join a roundtable discussion
   Personal meditation – Simplicity
2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. – Journaling – suggested topics relating to the conference theme will be provided
4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Activity Time (choose from the following)
   Yoga class – Zumba class – whirlpool
   Group or individual walk
5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. – Dinner
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. – Pray the Rosary
   Panel Discussion – your questions concerning the Church

Day 3 – Friday, October 20, 2017
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – Morning Prayer – Breakfast
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – “Caring for Family” – Dr. Yarri
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – Activity Time – Short story book club
   Group discussions
11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – “Family Impact of Addiction and Enabling”
12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. – Lunch
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. – Activity Time – share your talents
   Coloring, painting, knitting, 
   Crocheting, writing, singing, cooking
2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. – “Care for the Community” – Dr. Yarri
4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Activity Time – choose from the following
   Yoga class, Zumba class
   Whirlpool/swimming, group or individual walk
5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. – Dinner
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. – Activity Time – Movie with discussion
   Fun and reflection

Day 4 – Saturday, October 21, 2017
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – Morning Prayer – Breakfast
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – “Putting It All Together” – Dr. Yarri
10:00 a.m. – Departure
"The Mission Continues." These were the words expressed by Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Bishop of the Northeast American Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, when on Saturday, July 15th, they officially took the property which formally housed St. Pius X Seminary and later Fatima Retreat Center of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Scranton, located in Dalton, PA. The center is now to be known as Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center.

The Malankara Orthodox Church was organized by St. Thomas the Apostle when he arrived in India in 52AD. St. Thomas ministered to that Church until his martyrdom in 72AD. Metropolitan Zachariah referred to the members of the Church as the children of St. Thomas.

The former facility had served the Scranton Diocese first as a Seminary from 1960 until 1982. It remained empty until the Fatima Retreat Center was moved there from Elmhurst, until it closed in 2010. The Northeast American Diocese began talks with the Scranton Roman Catholic Diocese about purchasing the property four years ago. After much work the property which sits on 350 acres stretching over three townships in the Abington Heights area north of Scranton. Was sold to the Malankara Church.

Many officials of the Church, lay and clergy, were present for the dedication. As well as many of the faithful from all parts of the diocese which stretches from Ontario, Canada to South Carolina.
The Celebration was heightened by the presence of Catholicos-Patriarch, His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Paulos II., came from India to lead the Service of Dedication.

Holy Transfiguration will serve not only as a retreat center, but also as a seminary for the training of priest for their Church. The Seminarians presently study at St. Tikhon’s Seminary, South Canaan, PA and St. Vladimir’s Seminary, Yonkers, NY. That is why both Metropolitan Zachariah & the Catholicos spoke of the continuing of the mission of the center for the spiritual uplifting of the faithful as well as educating clergy.

Both bishops thanked Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop Ordinary of the Scranton Diocese for making it possible the sale of the property to them.

Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky, along with Rev. Fr. Carmen G. Bolock, Ecumenical Officer for the Central Diocese were invited to the celebration. Unfortunately Prime Bishop was unable to attend, and so Fr. Carmen represented our Church. There were many other Ecumenical clergy present. Fr. Carmen got to speak with both Catholicos Paulose, and Metropolitan Zachariah who are both familiar with our Church, and hope to be able to work together.

Metropolitan Zachariah said that in conversation with Fr. Carmen that eventually the center of the diocese which is in Muttontown, NY will be moved to the retreat center. We welcome the faithful of the Northeast American Diocese to our area.

An Open House and Tour of the Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center will be conducted on September 9th and September 23rd. For more information, go to neamericandiocese.org/news.851/open-house-tours-at-htrc-sep-9-sep-23.aspx.
As part of the parish’s Future Direction program focused on community service, The P.N.C.C. of the Holy Trinity and Saint Joseph Parish in Linden, NJ funded and prepared lunches for the needy and homeless in NYC, Newark and Irvington, NJ in collaboration with the Bridges Outreach Organization in Summit, NJ.

The items for the lunches were purchased through the generous donations of the following parish members: Warren & Joann Downey, Ken & Ann Matz, Michael & Mary Mietlicki, Barbara Muccia, Lou & Charlotte Scerbo, Scott & Eleanor Shamy, Florence Sibilski and Marianne Rejterada.

Following Mass on July 23rd the lunches were prepared by the following parish members: Zak Alba, Joann Downey, Warren Downey, Adam Kanu, Aloysius Kanu, Anastasia Kanu, Donald Kanu, MD, Nicole Kanu, Stanley Kanu, Viktoriya Kanu, Mary A Gorgol Mietlicki, Michael R. Mietlicki, Barbara Muccia, Gloria Pierce, Florence Sibilski, Eleanor Shamy and Scott Shamy.

This is the second of four community service projects planned for 2017. This community event was sponsored by the Young Adult Group that was formed by the students of the 2015 Confirmation Class with a mission to take the Light of Jesus into the world. Kenneth E. Matz is Chairman of the Parish Committee. Father Jan Kosc is Pastor.

Submitted by Michael R. Mietlicki
“Dupont Weekend” in Waymart

Holy Mother of Sorrows Parish sponsored “Dupont Weekend” which serves as a spiritual, recreational and fraternal activity to help unite the members of our congregation. The event was held at the Bishop Hodur Retreat and Recreation Center in Waymart, PA on August 11-13, 2017.

Parishioners and friends enjoyed the beautiful scenery and serenity of this place. Many people went hiking, swimming, horseback riding, golfing or just relaxed. The highlight of the weekend was the celebration of the Holy Mass in the chapel on Saturday, followed by a family-style dinner in the pavilion. About 60 parishioners and friends of our church attended.

Submitted by Very Rev. Zbigniew Dawid
41st ANNUAL HARVEST FESTIVAL

"Dożynki"

SUNDAY

September 10, 2017

Holy Mother of Sorrows

212 Wyoming Avenue

Dupont PA

From 11 AM till 8 PM

Blessing of the Harvest Wreath at 2 PM

Joe Lastovica & Polka Punch
from 3 to 6 PM

Polish and American food all day long:
potato pancakes, haluski, goląbki, pierogi,
wimpies, clam chowder, kielbasa, etc.

Big Raffle, Jar Game, Instant Bingo, Craft
P.N.C.C. Seeking National Media Relations Manager

At the April 2017 Supreme Council Meeting, a recommendation from the Future Direction Committee was approved to establish an Office of News and Media Relations. The objective of this Office is to increase the visibility of the P.N.C.C. throughout the United States and Canada through press releases, tapping the appropriate social media outlets. These releases will focus on the P.N.C.C.’s distinct Catholic perspective, including its unique Solemnities, national events, community outreach efforts and the official statements of the Prime Bishop.

To support this vital program, applications for a National Media Relations Manager are currently being accepted. This is a volunteer position. To express your interest in this position, please submit your resume, contact information and a writing sample to the Office of the Prime Bishop. Email: secretarytopb@pncc.org prior to September 15, 2017.

Job Description

Summary
Responsible for development and execution of external communication plans and messaging for the P.N.C.C., based on information provided by the Office of the Prime Bishop.

Primary responsibilities

- Prepare external communication content, including press releases, press kits for the media, social media postings and related materials based on information provided by the Office of the Prime Bishop. Media includes traditional and current social media avenues.
- Develop and maintain a listing of external media resources and appropriate contact information.
- Develop and maintain a calendar of external communications for the P.N.C.C.
- When necessary, act as a media spokesperson for this media on behalf of the P.N.C.C., under the direction of the Office of the Prime Bishop.

Qualifications

- BA/MA degree in Marketing, Advertising, Communications, English or a related discipline
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Tactical understanding of all primary social media platforms; solid business experience with social media including blogs, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Proactive, reliable, responsible and accurate with an attention to detail
- Self-motivated with a positive and professional attitude
- Ability to meet deadlines
From the Office of the Prime Bishop
History & Archives Commission

In order to facilitate the work of the P.N.C.C. Commission on History and Archives as well as to have an accurate record of the work and life of every diocese, parish and society of the Polish National Catholic Church, we request all dioceses, parishes and societies that publish any materials related to its life or work to please send three copies (or at least one) to the National Church Archives. The address is given below.

P.N.C.C. Commission on History and Archives
National Church Center
1006 Pittston Avenue
Scranton, PA 18505

The History and Archives Commission also accepts any materials regarding the history of the parishes or any priests of the P.N.C.C. The materials include: meeting notices, agendas, minutes, books, booklets, hymnals, anniversary journals, reports, SoCL materials, liturgical materials, pamphlets, parish bulletins, etc. If you have any questions or concerns about what to send or if the History and Archives Commission would be interested in your materials, please call the Office of the Prime Bishop and (570)-346-9131.

Through A Child’s Eye

Dear God,
I bet it is very hard for you to love all of every body in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it.

Nan

Dear God,
I am American. What are you?
Robert

Dear God,
Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other if they had their own room. It works with my friends.
Larry

Dear God,
I think about you sometimes even when I’m not praying.
Elliott

Dear God,
If you give me a golden hair like Apollo. I will give you anything you want except my money or my chess set.
Michael

Dear God, If you watch in Chanukah or Easter, I will allow you my new shoes.
Mickey

Dear God, Thank you for the baby brother but what I please for was a Puppy.
Joyce

Dear God, In Bible times, did they really talk that division?
Jennifer

Dear God, I just want to know when Christmas and Easter. That’s not good in here now.
Shane

Please write back and write with your family during Christmas and Easter.

Website of the P.N.C.C.: pncc.org
Official P.N.C.C. Facebook Page: PNCC1