



Holy Trinity

Herald Tribune

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Grace Upon Grace: Fr. Wilke Begins His Pastorship

Dear Friends,

It's been a wonderful first few months here at Holy Trinity Parish with all of you! Thank you for the generous, kind, and warm welcome!

As I begin as your Pastor, a few words of introduction: First, I am Father Mark Wilke and it is a great honor to be your Parish Priest. I attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, MD, for six years to prepare for priestly ordination. On June 1, 2013, I was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

As a Priest, over the past 12 years, I have had a variety of assignments. Most recently, I served as Pastor of St. John the Baptist, New Freedom. In every assignment the Lord has blessed my days with 'grace upon grace' and renewed within me a deeper understanding of both Divine Providence and Divine Mercy.

Also, it is quite humbling to be the successor of Msgr. Daniel Mitzel. In addition to his many good works and pastoral leadership here at Holy Trinity Parish and Our Lady of the Angels Catholic School, and throughout his 44 years of priestly ministry in parishes of the Diocese of Harrisburg and various apostolates, Msgr. Mitzel was a mentor and spiritual director to many priests. And, I, like many of our seminarians and priests, was assigned to him as a part of my training for priesthood during my time as a seminarian. Of note, both of us are from St. Joseph Parish, Dallastown. As we enter the year 2026, I would ask that you continue to pray for



Msgr. Mitzel, that he will be counted among the saints in heaven.

In closing, it is a tremendous privilege for me to be your Parish Priest. All of you are in my daily prayers and, in your kindness, I ask that you would keep me in your prayers.

Let's keep each other in prayer,

Fr. Wilke

Restoring Holy Trinity's Stained Glass Windows

By John Nikolaus

As Holy Trinity Catholic Church nears the 100th anniversary of its dedication in 1929, we are reminded of the extraordinary gift entrusted to us by the parishioners who built this magnificent house of worship. At the time of its dedication, a local newspaper described the church as “a magnificent structure of stone rising majestically on Cherry Street... one of the finest edifices in Eastern Pennsylvania.” One visiting church official famously called it “a cathedral in a village.” Nearly a century later, our church remains a place of profound beauty, prayer and grace, built to the glory of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Among its most striking features are the stained-glass windows that illuminate our worship space. Crafted from the finest English antique glass, these windows depict beloved saints and sacred biblical scenes. Their artistry, craftsmanship and theological richness have inspired generations of parishioners.

Yet, like the church itself, these windows are approaching 100 years old—and time has taken its toll.

A Century of Wear: Why Restoration Is Urgent

For nearly a century, the windows have received little comprehensive restoration. Environmental exposure has led to loosening panes and deterioration of the lead came that holds the glass together. In several windows, especially the clerestory windows high on the west side of the church, water intrusion during heavy rains has caused plaster dust to fall onto the pews, an unmistakable sign that the windows' structural integrity is weakening.

One of the most concerning issues is out-of-pane bowing, a condition in which the windows bulge or curve out of their original flat plane. This occurs naturally over decades as lead fatigues and materials expand and contract. Standing beneath certain windows and looking upward, the curvature is clearly visible.

In addition, many of the exterior protective coverings are cracked or broken, allowing water to damage nearby stucco walls, wood ceilings and architectural details. Beyond their beauty, the windows play a vital role in protecting the church's structure. Their restoration is not only an aesthetic need, it is a matter of stewardship and preservation.

A full restoration would require removing each window, repairing and reinforcing the lead came, restoring damaged glass and thoroughly cleaning the artwork so that these sacred treasures may continue to shine for generations.



*Let God's Light
Shine Through*



Assessing the Scope: Studies, Costs and Parish Support

In 2024, the Parish Building and Grounds Committee began the process of identifying qualified stained-glass restoration firms. Restoring all of Holy Trinity's windows is estimated to cost more than \$1.5 million, which surpasses the church's original 1929 construction cost of \$400,000. At that time, the windows themselves cost \$13,250.

Recognizing the magnitude of this undertaking, the late Msgr. Daniel Mitzel sought and received approval from the Diocese of Harrisburg to conduct a feasibility study. Kirby-Smith Associates, Inc., a firm specializing in spiritually grounded fundraising for Christian churches, conducted the study in early 2025.

The results were clear: Parishioners overwhelmingly support restoring the stained-glass windows. Additionally, the study also indicated that a capital campaign would likely raise approximately one-third of the total project cost.

With this guidance, parish leadership evaluated which windows were in the most urgent need of attention and determined that the project should begin with the west wall of the church, which faces the rectory. Because restoration requires extensive scaffolding, completing the work in phases is the most efficient and cost-effective approach.

Moving Forward: A Path Toward 2029

Following the passing of Msgr. Mitzel, the project paused to allow Fr. Mark Wilke time to become familiar with the parish, its finances and priorities. With Father Wilke's support and the recommendation of the Parish Finance Council, documentation has now been submitted to the Diocese of Harrisburg for review by the College of Consultors at its January 28, 2026 meeting. We hope to soon receive approval to formally launch a capital campaign dedicated to this restoration effort.

In anticipation of this effort, the parish has formed a Capital Campaign Committee and is inviting parishioners with experience in fundraising, grant writing or stained-glass restoration to consider serving.

Honoring the Past, Safeguarding the Future

This restoration project is more than a repair effort, it is an act of gratitude and faith. Just as the original parishioners sacrificed to build a church worthy of God's glory, we now have the opportunity to preserve their legacy and ensure that Holy Trinity remains a beacon of beauty and faith for the next century.

We humbly ask for your prayers, your support and your discernment as we move forward. May the light of Christ continue to shine through our stained-glass windows and through each of us as we carry our faith into the future.



The Nativity of Jesus



The Flight Into Egypt

New Cemetery Plot Prices to Ensure Long-Term Care

By Paul Resch

The parish has updated cemetery plot prices to ensure the long-term care of Holy Trinity Cemetery located at 625 S. 9th St. Single plots are now available for purchase at \$2,400 in the center circle and \$2,000 elsewhere. Previously, plots were sold only in groups of three at \$500 per plot in the center circle and \$400 elsewhere.

The Parish Finance Council approved this adjustment after reviewing cemetery pricing within the Diocese of Harrisburg and comparing rates with local for-profit cemeteries.

A portion of each sale supports the perpetual care fund, which provides long-term maintenance of the grounds. The remainder covers operating costs such as grass cutting, tree trimming and wages for a part-time caretaker. These funds will preserve the beauty of our cemetery for generations.

Holy Trinity Cemetery is in excellent condition, its well-kept grounds reflecting the respect owed to those buried there—including nine parish priests—and the dedication of our parish staff and community.

While cemetery finances are currently stable, long-term sustainability requires additional support. Annual maintenance exceeds \$20,000, and strengthening our financial foundation is essential to ensure perpetual care.

The price increase is a responsible step toward protecting parish ownership. Without adequate funding, cemeteries can fall into disrepair or financial insolvency, as seen in several parishes where the Diocese of Harrisburg had to assume ownership, resulting in the loss of local stewardship.



Holy Trinity is committed to avoiding that outcome. Updated pricing, careful oversight and proper funding of the perpetual care fund will help ensure our cemetery remains a place of dignity, reverence and faith for generations.

Policy on Outstanding Balances

During the review process, several plots were found to be only partially paid under the previous pricing. With the support of Fr. Mark Wilke, the Finance Council has established the following policy:

All outstanding balances must be paid by December 31, 2026. After that date, plots will revert to parish ownership, with refunds issued as appropriate. Under the new policy, full payment is required at the time of purchase.

The parish will make every effort to contact individuals with outstanding balances. This announcement, along with quarterly bulletin notices throughout 2026, serves as official notification. For questions or more information, please contact the parish office at (717) 684-2711.

Learn Why the Church Honors the Body: Catholic Teaching on Burial and Cremation

The Church has always treated the human body with profound reverence, honoring it as a temple of the Holy Spirit and a sign of our hope in the resurrection. Curious how this shapes our approach to burial, cremation and emerging technologies for the care of earthly remains? Scan the QR code to read the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' statement *On the Proper Disposition of Bodily Remains* and learn how our faith guides these sacred decisions.



Cemetery Chapel Receives Stunning Interior Restoration

By Paul Resch

The Holy Trinity Cemetery Chapel has been beautifully restored thanks to the dedication, craftsmanship and stewardship of volunteers led by parishioner Joe Dietz and volunteer Alex Alers. Over more than three months last fall, volunteers worked with care and reverence to restore the chapel's interior—ensuring that this sacred space continues to welcome generations of parishioners as they gather for prayer services to remember the faithful departed.

The restoration required extensive plaster repair on both the ceiling and walls, work made possible through scaffolding generously donated by Cimarron Properties. Once the structural repairs were complete, volunteers turned their attention to restoring the chapel's beauty in a way that reflects its purpose as a house of prayer and a place where the faithful encounter Christ in word and symbol.

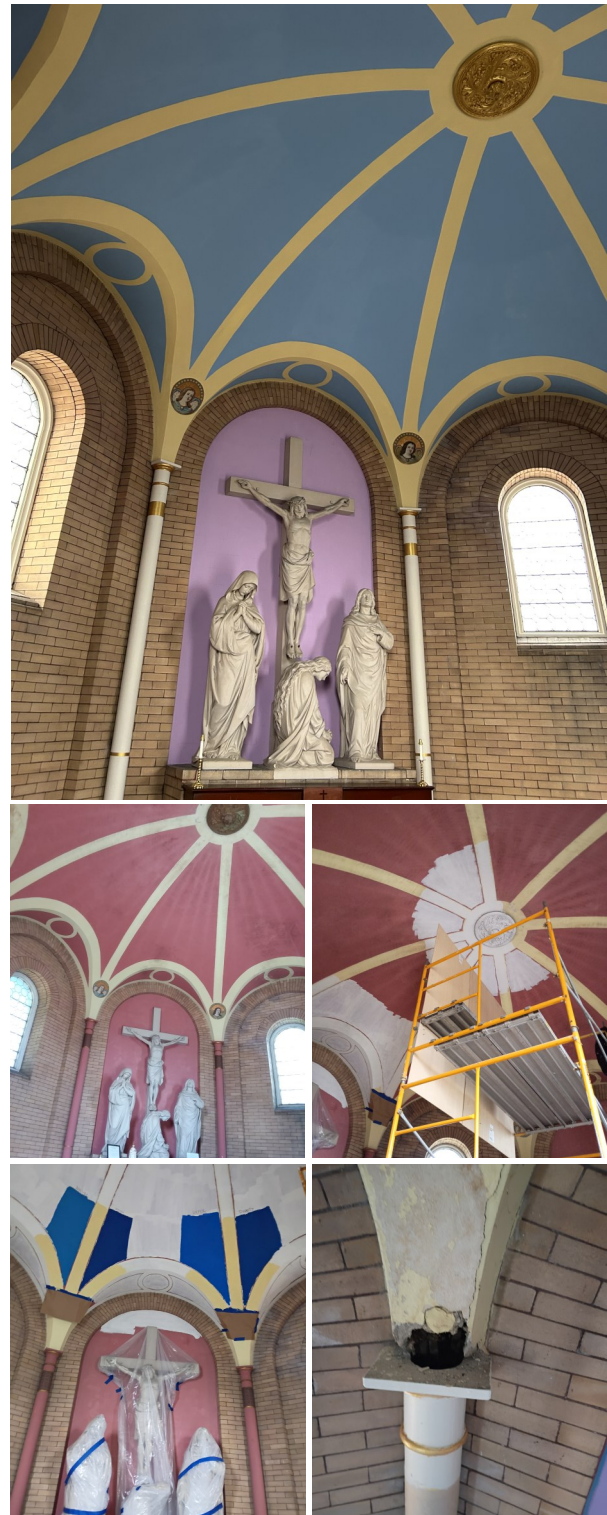
The ceiling—previously a rose color marked by decades of weathering—has been transformed into a celestial blue, symbolizing the heavens above. The walls behind the altar and statues were refreshed in lilac. Eight corner columns were painted white with metallic gold highlights. The ceiling medallion was also painted gold.

The work was completed just in time for the All Souls Day Prayer Service on November 2, allowing parishioners to gather in a beautifully renewed space to remember the faithful departed.

The cemetery chapel continues to play an important role in parish life. It serves as the site of Memorial Day Mass, an All Souls Day Prayer Service and as a place for the Rite of Committal when weather conditions prevent graveside gatherings. The restoration follows other improvements in recent years, including the installation of a copper colored roof and the painting of the entrance doors in 2024.

The chapel's story stretches back more than 160 years. In 1865, just five years after Holy Trinity Parish was founded, Fr. William Pieper purchased three acres on Barber Street to establish a parish cemetery. Until then, local Catholics were buried at St. Peter's Cemetery.

The last known interior painting occurred in 1956, when volunteers began their work in



September and completed the project in time for the chapel's reopening on All Souls Day.

The latest restoration stands in continuity with their efforts—another chapter in the long tradition of parishioners offering their gifts to ensure this sacred space remains dignified, beautiful and worthy of the mysteries celebrated within it.

Sacred Images and Shrines That Shape Our Worship

By Teresa Weisser
Archives Committee

Since the current Holy Trinity Church was dedicated nearly 100 years ago, a number of statues and religious images have been added to enhance worship in the church, often reflecting the canonization of saints or the development of new devotions that did not exist or were not well known when the church was constructed. The statue of the Infant of Prague and the Divine Mercy image in the sanctuary provide visual reminders of important truths about Christ and, in the latter case, are associated with the parish's devotion to Jesus, the Divine Mercy. At the back of the church, the former baptistry contains shrines to St. John Neumann and Our Lady of Fatima honoring, respectively, the founder of Holy Trinity Parish, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as she appeared to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal, in the early 20th century.

The original Infant of Prague statue was a wedding gift from a Spanish princess to either a cousin or a daughter (accounts vary). Eventually the statue was entrusted to the Carmelites at the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Prague, now part of the Czech Republic. Left behind and severely damaged when the Carmelites were forced to flee the monastery during an invasion in 1628, the statue was recovered from a pile of rubble and repaired after one of the Carmelite priests heard the Infant promise His blessings if the statue's hands, which had been destroyed, were replaced. Since that time, numerous miracles have been attributed to the intercession of the Divine Infant. While Holy Trinity's version of the Infant of Prague statue is made of plaster, rather than of the carved wood and fabric of the original, the symbolism associated with the statue is the same. The Infant of Prague, wearing a crown and liturgical robes, carries a small globe topped by a cross, signifying the worldwide kingship of the Christ Child. His right hand is extended in a blessing with two raised fingers symbolizing the two natures of Christ and the folded thumb and last two fingers touching each other recalling the Trinity. Holy Trinity's Infant of Prague statue was placed in the sanctuary during a major renovation in 1948. The votive light which burns in front of the statue was donated by the family of the late Mrs. Pauline Grab who had a particular devotion to the Infant of Prague.

The large Divine Mercy portrait displayed on the right side of the sanctuary is the visual representation of a devotion which came to Holy Trinity in late 1993 or early 1994. Based on the writings of St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun who kept a diary documenting the revelations that she had received, the Divine Mercy message emphasizes that God wants us to recognize that His love for us is greater than our sins so that we will trust in Him, receive His mercy and extend it to others. The Divine Mercy image is based on a vision during which St. Faustina saw Jesus clothed in white with his right hand raised in blessing while his left hand touched the area near His heart from which rays of red and white, symbolizing blood and water, emanated. During the vision, Jesus asked St. Faustina to create an image of the vision with the words "Jesus, I trust in You" added as a signature, promising that souls who venerate the image will not perish. The Divine Mercy devotions were introduced to Holy Trinity Parish after parishioners Ken and Rose Kurjiaka returned from a pilgrimage to sites associated with the



Infant of Prague



Divine Mercy

Divine Mercy devotions in Poland led by two priests of the order of Marians of the Immaculate Conception. One of those priests, Fr. Kazimierz Chwalek, MIC, came to Holy Trinity to promote devotion to the Divine Mercy at Sunday Masses early in 1994. Since that time, the parish has prayed the Divine Mercy Novena each year beginning on Good Friday and ending on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Sunday after Easter. The Divine Mercy chaplet is prayed in the church prior to daily Mass each weekday morning and after the evening Stations of Cross during Lent. The current Divine Mercy image in the sanctuary was donated by Mr. Jim Weber during Fr. Stephen Kelley's pastorate. It replaces an image donated by Mr. and Mrs. Kurjiaka.

The St. John Neumann Shrine in the back of the church honors the Bishop of Philadelphia who founded Holy Trinity Parish. Born in Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic, in 1811, John Nepomucene Neumann studied for the priesthood in his native country but was refused ordination, along with the rest of his class, because there were too many priests at the time. Learning that the United States needed priests, he journeyed to New York where he was ordained and served for four years. He then joined the Redemptorist Order and did missionary work in Maryland, Virginia and Ohio, where he was particularly successful in working with German immigrants. Consecrated Bishop of Philadelphia on March 28, 1852, he founded numerous churches throughout the Philadelphia Diocese, which then included Lancaster County. On the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, June 10, 1857, then-Bishop Neumann, who had come to Columbia to confirm candidates at St. Peter Church, noted in his diary, "Germans want their own church." This notation marks the beginning of the history of Holy Trinity Parish. One hundred twenty-five years later, on September 26, 1982, the parish dedicated a shrine in honor of the bishop who had been canonized in 1976. The shrine is located in the former baptistry which was repurposed after the baptismal font was moved to the altar as a result of a change in liturgical norms.

The shrine to Our Lady of Fatima, also located in the former baptistry, recalls the appearances of Mary to three shepherd children, Lucia dos Santos and Francisco and Jacinta Marto, in Fatima, Portugal between May and October 1917. During the course of her monthly appearances, Our Lady encouraged the children and, through them the world, to repent and perform acts of reparation for sin, to pray the Rosary daily as an instrument of world peace and to practice devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On the day of the final apparition, October 13, 1917, the crowd gathered at the site of the apparitions, witnessed what has come to be known as the Miracle of the Sun, during which the sun was reported to dance in the sky and appear to fall toward earth, a fulfillment of the shepherd children's prediction several months before that a miracle would occur on that day. Holy Trinity's statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the crown which she wears was donated to the church by the late Mr. Ken Swartz, a parishioner and active member of the Blue Army, now known as the World Apostolate of Fatima, an organization that promotes the Fatima message.

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St. John Neumann



Our Lady of Fatima

New Life in the Church: Signs of Hope in Jubilee Year

By Faith Murphy

Director of Religious Education

"Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5).

A Call to Hope

The Papal Bull, *Spes Non Confundit*, announcing the Jubilee of the Year 2025, reminds us of this compelling truth of our faith: Hope does not disappoint. As we come to the close of this Jubilee Year of Hope, may we reflect on the reason for our hope as well as continued signs of hope.

In this document, Pope Francis appeals to the universal human experience of hope. He explains, "In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring." As Christians, our hope is not affixed to earthly goods or pleasures to come, but rather, our hope is in Christ. Christ is the reason for our hope. The theological virtue of hope directs the desires of our hearts to the source of our happiness—Christ himself.

The virtue of hope carries us especially through times of hardship. In *Spes Non Confundit*, Pope Francis reflects on the image of the anchor as a symbol of hope: "The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death." This message of hope in the resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel.

Signs of Hope

Pope Francis called for the Jubilee Year to be an occasion for the baptized to respond to the urgent need for evangelization. A recent



Candidates and their sponsors after their Reception into Full Communion, Confirmation and First Eucharist on May 4, 2025. Chamaine DeLeon, Deacon Henry Reese, Robin Chedester, Betty Mahan, Amy Rutter, Carol Reisinger, Fr. Samuel Dubois, Jocelyn Dress, Elyse Smith, Jordan Stark and Heidi Nikolaus.

headline in The Catholic Herald reveals a significant trend in evangelization: *More Americans joining Catholic Church than leaving for the first time in decades*

This is certainly a sign of hope, as increasing numbers of adults are approaching the Church for the Sacraments of Initiation through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, nationwide.

This increase of adult conversions to the Catholic faith has certainly been felt locally as well. The number of adults who completed the Sacraments of Initiation at Holy Trinity in 2025 surpassed many prior years. This should spark joy and continued hope for our parish community for a few reasons. These new members strengthen our parish community and bring enthusiasm to our parish life. We should also share in the joy of these new members, as they continue to experience their newfound hope in the fullness of Christ in the Catholic Church.

Those Who Found Hope

This past year marked the completion of the preparation of two Catechumens. The term Catechumen refers to an unbaptized adult in

preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation. In April 2025, these two Catechumens received the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil at Holy Trinity.

Also completing preparation in 2025 were two adults who were baptized in the Catholic Church as infants, but did not receive catechesis for the Sacraments of Confirmation or Eucharist. These two Candidates received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist from Bishop Timothy C. Senior. In addition, eight non-Catholic Christian adults completed preparation for Reception into Full Communion, and received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

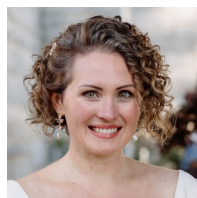
What drew these individuals to the Catholic Church? The discernment process for each individual is unique.

Robin Chedester, a Candidate who was received into the Catholic Church in May 2025, shares what drew her to the Catholic Church. She explains, "When I was bouncing around from church to church, denomination to denomination, I found the one consistent thing was always the Bible. I would listen to SiriusXM and then go to a non-denominational church service and they're using the same lessons following the same liturgical calendar. When I did some research and found that the entire Mass is all scripture based, I was absolutely 100 percent home, knowing that this is where I was meant to be."



Robin Chedester

Kate Keyser, a Candidate who was received into the Catholic Church in October 2025 describes her discernment in these words, "The continuity and consistency along with deep, rich tradition and profound reverence and focus on communion and the Eucharist is what drew me to the Catholic Church."



Kate Keyser

Let us be inspired by the ways God has guided the newest members of our parish in

INITIATIONS AT HOLY TRINITY

2025: 12

2024: 4

2023: 2

CATECHUMENS vs. CANDIDATES

Individuals who have never been baptized and are preparing to enter the Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil

Individuals who have already been validly baptized in another Christian tradition and are preparing to enter full communion with the Catholic Church through Confirmation and Eucharist

this Jubilee Year.

Continued Hope

This year at Holy Trinity, interest in the process of Christian Initiation continues to grow. Three unbaptized adults have begun the discernment process. These individuals are invited to begin the period of the Catechumenate through the Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate, celebrated on January 11 at the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Additionally, five adults baptized in the Christian faith have begun discernment and preparation for the remaining Sacraments of Initiation. These individuals are invited to be strengthened by the Rite of Welcome for Candidates on February 8 at the 10:30 a.m. Mass.

Please pray for these Candidates and Catechumens, as well as other inquirers in the beginning stages of discernment. *Lord, You desire for all to know the hope that is found in You. Please continue to outpour Your grace upon those who seek You.*

May the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Hope bring us hope surer still. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, please contact Faith Murphy by email at ocia@holytrinitycolumbiapa.com

OLA Adopt-A-Parishioner Project Continues to Share Joy

By Paul Resch

Our Lady of the Angels Catholic School continues its long-standing Adopt-A-Parishioner project, a beloved ministry of kindness that connects students with homebound or ill parishioners from both Holy Trinity and St. Peter Catholic churches. Throughout the school year, each classroom “adopts” a parishioner and sends monthly cards, notes, drawings and handmade crafts—small gestures that make a big difference.

Recently, Michelle Detz’s second grade class created scarecrow and turkey crafts for Esther Kissinger, a resident of Misericordia Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in York. Esther is one of many parishioners who receive these heartfelt surprises, reminders that their parish family holds them close in prayer and friendship.

Teachers witness the impact of this ministry every year: “The responses from family members about this project are overwhelming,” shared third grade teacher Kathy Barninger. “The adoptees look forward to hearing from the students. Preschool adopted my aunt and uncle, Frank and Margaret Barton. They are thrilled when Mrs. Carr drops something off at their home.”

The program has been a tradition at OLA for years, and its mission is simple: once a parishioner is adopted, they remain adopted until they pass away. This continuity creates a beautiful



bond between generations, one that families deeply appreciate. “In many cases, the families of these adopted individuals have shared how much joy the kids’ messages have brought their loved ones,” said Principal Holly Maher. “When new parishioners are adopted, Sr. Anna and our teachers use their knowledge of the parishes to suggest names for adoption.”

Through crayons, construction paper and the sincerity of a child’s heart, OLA students continue to remind our parishioners—young and old—that they are loved, remembered and part of a vibrant community of faith.

Convent Sold, Home of Sisters of St. Francis Since 1979

The former convent at 548 Cherry Street has been sold. Since 1979, the residence served as home to several vowed women of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a community of Catholic women dedicated to living the Gospel in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare.

Just a block from the church, the house was most recently occupied by Sister Anna Cosgrave, who has since moved to an apartment in downtown Columbia.

The sale was managed by parishioner Jeff Seibert, associate broker with Keller Williams Realty. The property was listed on October 1 for \$165,000. Within five days, it attracted multiple showings and three written offers, ultimately selling for \$176,000 due to competitive interest. The transaction closed on November 14.

Seibert represented both buyer and seller and generously donated his full commission to the parish, providing an additional \$9,580 in net proceeds.

Proceeds from the sale will benefit the parish in the 2025–26 fiscal year, with 65% directed toward operating expenses and 35% placed into the parish savings account held at the Diocese of Harrisburg.



Parish Generosity Brings Christmas Joy to 150 Children

We are deeply grateful to everyone who donated a gift bag to support children in our community. Thanks to your generosity, more than 150 gift bags were collected and placed at the front of the church.

On November 24, parishioners delivered the bags to The Salvation Army of Lancaster, where they were distributed to children in time for Christmas. Each gift bag was filled with items such as toothbrushes, shampoo, toys, hats, socks, crayons, pens and pencils—simple gifts that brought joy and hope to many young hearts.

Maj. Lynette Reel, Community Care and Outreach Coordinator for The Salvation Army, shared that with the help of community partners like Holy Trinity, they were able to provide gloves, hats and coats to 4,029 underserved children this year.

This outreach effort has a rich history. More than 40 years ago, parishioner Darlene Herman and the Girl Scouts began the project by sending gifts to children in need in Honduras. In later years, the donations were directed to families in Appalachian communities in West Virginia. Our Lady of the Angels and Religious Education students joined in the mission, expanding its impact. In recent years, the tradition has continued locally through support for The Salvation Army of Lancaster.



Children Discover God's Promise As Numerous as the Stars

By Faith Murphy
Director of Religious Education

At Vacation Bible School, held July 21-25, students found themselves among the stars as they learned about God's promise to Abraham, our Father in Faith. This year's theme was Promise: God's Covenant with the Patriarchs.

God promised Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. Students enjoyed singing and dancing to "Father Abraham" throughout the week, as they discovered that we are all descendants of Abraham through faith in Jesus. Each day, students learned about the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and repeated that "God always keeps his promises!"

This joyful week was enjoyed by nearly 75 students in pre-K through 6th grade. Students came from St. Peter, Holy Trinity and other parishes. This week was made possible by 25 student volunteers from Columbia Catholic Youth Ministry. The teens performed Bible story skits to teach each night's lesson, led singing and dancing and helped in the classrooms and stations. The whole week was led by 15 amazing adult



volunteers.

We look forward to another exciting Vacation Bible School to be held July 20-24, 2026!

Health of Body, Mind and Spirit

By Deacon Jim Doyle

We have long recognized that as human beings we exist on three different planes: body (physical), mind (cognitive or mental and emotions/heart) and spiritual (intellect and will). And these are all interconnected even when we do not realize it.

When we have a headache or other physical pain, we take the proverbial "two aspirin". If that doesn't work, we may call the doctor to make an appointment (an act of willingness). If the physical difficulty is particularly significant, we may need to go to the hospital or even have an operation.

But do we know how to handle the psychological pain which may accompany the physical or even spiritual pain? The "two aspirin" solution is to talk with someone else about it, to verbalize and share what is going on. In some cases, just an honest conversation about the thoughts and feelings involved can serve to resolve pain. "A trouble shared is cut in half" – and sometimes that alone is sufficient to alleviate acute distress. If not, then action should be taken to visit a medical doctor (who may prescribe medication to help alleviate some physical symptoms) or a therapist who can address cognitive or emotional patterns that cause distress. Some therapies are available to address even deeper issues involved for example with abuse, trauma or even physical injury. As with physical ailments, deeper psychological conditions or addictions may require hospitalization and rehabilitation as well.

While all physical and mental sufferings may pose spiritual challenges or suffering (e.g., "Why, God, is this happening to me?"), there typically will be emotional and sometimes even physical suffering generated from spiritual issues, particularly guilt (whether personal guilt or presumed guilt as a result of another person's actions). Our spiritual discomfort may be simply a lapse in our charitable dealings with another person or, more seriously, neglect in following God's law in some way. For these serious matters, whether intentional or even unintentional, we need to speak to a priest in confession. Such spiritual situations will likely also involve also some emotional pain, even when



Columbia Catholic Mental Health Ministry

the discomfort is of purely spiritual origin, such as dryness or distancing from God. For these situations, instead of taking two aspirins, we should speak with someone else as well as take ourselves to prayer — sincere prayer, prayer of contrition — and establish a firm resolution to making amends to other people involved. Pastoral counseling or spiritual direction can help guide a person to work on resolving other purely spiritual discomforts such as poor prayer habits, distractions, dryness in prayer — or just laziness (spiritual sloth).

The keys to all of these areas of health in body, mind and spirit are: (1) having the knowledge and willingness to take appropriate action and (2) having someone knowledgeable who will listen and accompany the person through their pain and through whatever therapy is required.

It is for this purpose the Columbia Catholic Mental Health Ministry was established two years ago in order to enable our community to engage in these discussions and to walk with those who suffer in order to live richer spiritual, mental and physical lives. If you'd like to explore this topic further or learn more about CCMHM and the services we offer — including spiritual accompaniment — please contact the ministry at ccmentalhealthministry@gmail.com or call/text me directly at (717) 343-1102.

The Columbia Catholic Mental Health Ministry — a joint effort between St. Peter and Holy Trinity Catholic Churches — provides spiritual support, community and education for individuals experiencing mental health challenges and their families. While not a replacement for professional mental health treatment, the ministry seeks to address the stigma surrounding mental illness and create a compassionate space for healing.

Music Enhances Christmas Liturgical Celebrations

One of the greatest joys of the Christmas Liturgies is the music—the carol singing, the added instruments, the special choir pieces and the select ensemble works, the purpose of which is to pull us more deeply into the liturgical celebration—with satisfaction and transformation.

Prior to the 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve liturgy, the choir dressed in blue and white robes processed up the side aisles to the front of the church while singing “Hodie Christus Natus Est”. Standing by the creche, they sang a plainchant, “Unto Us a Child Is Born”.

The assembly and choir next sang the Polish carol, “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”. Accompanied by flutist, Emily Shank the choir sang the 18th century Italian carol, “ You Come Down From the Heavens”. The Prelude concluded with Max Reger’s “The Virgin’s Slumber Song” performed by soprano soloist and cantor Amanda Balsavage.

During the Preparation of Gifts, the choir sang “Christmas Sanctus”, mirroring the Eucharistic Acclamation: Holy, Holy, Holy.

Throughout the Mass, the sung prayers, acclamations and carols were accompanied by instrumentalists: Abbigail Barninger, Brady Schoelkoph, Nikolaus Schoelkoph—trumpets; Matt Samley—clarinet; and Emily Shank—flute.

LITURGIES WITH CHOIR

The choir will offer special liturgical seasonal music at the 10:30 a.m. Mass on the following dates: February 1, March 1, March 29 (Palm Sunday), April 5 (Easter Sunday), May 3, May 24 (Pentecost) and May 31 (Most Holy Trinity).

MUSIC MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Music ministry is comprised of choir, cantors and instrumentalists. Any parishioner of high



FRONT: Brady Schoelkoph, Nikolaus Schoelkoph, Abbigail Barninger, Emily Shank and Matt Samley. **MIDDLE:** Ann Helwig, Beth Fry, Patti Fischer, Amanda Balsavage, Regina Fisher, Brittany Siegfried, Mary Elizabeth Helm, Pat Byard and Betty Mahan. **BACK:** Paul Resch, Bernie Wickenheiser, Michael Helwig, Mike Horoschak, Mike Helwig, Andy Gotwols and Mark Fischer.

BELOW: Three Generational Vocal Trio—Brittany Siegfried, Mary Elizabeth Helm and Beth Fry—with Director of Music Ministry/Organist Bernard Wickenheiser.



school age and adult who may be discerning service in music ministry is invited to contact Director of Music Ministry/Organist, Bernard Wickenheiser at bwickmusic1@aol.com, (717) 855-3291 or (717) 252-5731.

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

A Legacy of Faith, Family and Music

In Step with Penn State Blue Band Member Nikolaus Schoelkoph

By Paul Resch

Few young musicians manage to weave together their faith, family heritage and artistic passion as seamlessly as Nikolaus “Nik” Schoelkoph, a first-year civil engineering major at Penn State and a proud member of the Blue Band. Yet for Nik, music has never been just an extracurricular activity. It has been a calling shaped by family, tradition and a deep connection to Holy Trinity.

Rooted in Holy Trinity: A Family Story

Nik, 19, is the son of Les and Monica Schoelkoph and the oldest of three brothers: Brady, 15, and Greysan, 12. His family’s ties to Holy Trinity run generations deep. His mother, a lifelong parishioner, grew up in the parish, and his father joined the parish after their marriage.

All three boys were baptized at Holy Trinity by Fr. Christopher Sahd, a childhood friend of Nik’s mother. That friendship, stretching back to Holy Trinity School and Lancaster Catholic High School, brought Fr. Sahd back to baptize the Schoelkoph children, marking the beginning of their sacramental lives in the church.

The family’s connection is also reflected in his first name—Nikolaus. His mother’s maiden name, Nikolaus, is well known in the parish. Carrying that name, he says, is both an honor and a responsibility: “Having a name with so much meaning pushes me to be the best version of myself, accomplish my goals and make an impact beyond myself.”

A Trumpet, a Calling and a Dream

Nik began playing trumpet in fourth grade, inspired by the soaring brass he heard at Christmas and Easter Masses. That early spark grew into a deep love for music, nurtured through years of involvement at Hempfield High School—marching band, jazz band, concert and symphonic ensembles, county festivals and leadership roles including drum major.

His musical journey reached a defining moment during childhood visits to Penn State football games. Watching the Blue Band parade into Beaver Stadium, he felt a dream forming.



Brady and Nik Schoelkoph at Christmas Eve Mass.

One day, a few trumpet players invited him over to talk, a small gesture that made the dream feel real.

Last summer, after months of preparation, two rounds of auditions and intense summer camps, Nik heard his name called on the Blue Band roster.

“It was one of the most memorable moments of my life,” he recalls. “I knew so many people were rooting for me.”

Today, he is one of 69 trumpet players among the 315-member ensemble, performing at home games, select away games, postseason events and special university functions.

A Brotherly Ministry of Music

While Nik’s Blue Band accomplishments shine brightly, his musical roots remain firmly planted at Holy Trinity. This year marks his



second year playing trumpet with the choir, a ministry he describes as spiritually grounding and musically transformative.

“It gives me a way to connect with the Lord on a deeper level through music. Being able to give back to the Church through something I love is so special.”

On Christmas Eve, the moment became even more meaningful when his younger brother Brady, also a trumpet player, joined him for the 7:30 p.m. Mass. Their duet was a beautiful testament to the Schoelkoph family’s shared faith and musical gifts.

College Life: Faith, Friendship and Balance

Transitioning to college brought challenges—large classes, demanding rehearsals and the pressure of earning a spot in the Blue Band. But Nik found his rhythm. He discovered a community of Catholic friends who attend Mass together, helping him stay grounded in faith.

Academically, he is pursuing civil engineering, drawn to problem-solving, design and the opportunity to create structures that make a real impact. He is also considering future architectural studies.

Lessons from a Tumultuous Season

Despite the Nittany Lions’ roller-coaster year in which head coach James Franklin was fired and the team lost six straight games, Nik says the Blue Band’s energy never wavered.

“We reminded ourselves that the players are our classmates. Those were the times they needed our support the most.”

The season taught him the value of consistency, resilience and showing up even when circumstances are tough—lessons he carries into every part of his life.

A Whiteout to Remember

Among all his performances, one stands above the rest: the Whiteout game against Oregon on September 27.

“Seeing over 110,000 fans all in white from the field was incredible. The energy was unreal.”

It was a moment he had dreamed of since childhood—and one he will never forget.

Looking Ahead

Though unsure which branch of civil engineering he will ultimately pursue, Nik hopes for a career that blends technical skill with human connection. He also plans to stay involved in baseball, a sport he played throughout his youth and high school years.

Advice for Young Musicians

Nik encourages the youth of our parish to embrace every opportunity:

“You never know what experiences could shape your future in ways you can’t yet imagine. Put yourself out there—you’ll grow, you’ll meet amazing people, and doors will open.”

A Young Man Living His Gifts

From Beaver Stadium to the choir loft at Holy Trinity, Nikolaus Schoelkoph embodies gratitude, dedication and the joy of using one’s gifts for something greater. His story is one of family legacy, faith-filled service and the courage to pursue a dream with heart and humility.

And for those who know him—family, parishioners, teachers and friends—it’s clear that this is only the beginning of a remarkable journey.



Nik, Brady and Greysan at Beaver Stadium.



Holy Trinity Connection Shines in Janson Park Playground Reopening

A joyful crowd gathered on September 30 to celebrate the grand reopening of Janson Park and its newly renovated playground. For more than a century, Janson Park has reflected the generosity and faithful stewardship of Holy Trinity parishioners, beginning with the Janson brothers, who donated the land and established the Janson Foundation in 1924 to ensure its lasting care. Today, the foundation's volunteer Board of Directors—made up entirely of Holy Trinity parishioners, including Fr. Mark Wilke—continues that legacy of stewardship, preserving a beloved neighborhood park for future generations. The playground was made possible through a \$141,500 state grant and generous donations. Brick sponsorships are still available at <https://jansonfoundation.org/donate/>

Holy Name Society Retreat
Use your TALENTS +0 9101:49 GOD

January 24th, 2026
Time 8 AM to 1 PM

SEE WHAT GOD CAN DO THROUGH YOU
 Provide for your family and serve the Church.
 A retreat to find your place to
 Holy Trinity Church and Parish Hall
 Lite breakfast and lunch provided
 Retreat Leader: Fr. Richard Groff

\$10 per person tickets available at Church offices
 Open to all men 8th grade and up
 sponsored by the Holy Name Societies of Holy Trinity & Saint Peter Parishes

Spaghetti
 Free Community Meal
 Holy Trinity Parish Center, 409 Cherry St.
 12:00 PM
 For all who would benefit from a nourishing meal and friendly company, no RSVP required. Dine-in only as our goal is to enjoy a meal in fellowship with one another.

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