



The Forward

Letter from the Bishop

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Excellence. There is something about excellence that is compelling. Watching the Olympics over the past few weeks made me even more aware of the power of excellence. The athletes who compete in the Olympics have worked toward a standard of excellence that is almost impossible to imagine. Think of the years of physical conditioning that it takes to compete in these events. I was huffing and puffing just watching the cross country skiers move effortlessly up and down hills over miles of terrain. A figure skater who strives for mediocrity can hardly learn the skill or skate with the speed necessary to jump (as high as one needs to dunk a basketball) and attempt a triple salchow and then land on her feet. This kind of excellence takes years of hard work and tremendous sacrifice.

There is something about excellence for the sake of the Gospel that is even more powerful and compelling. We are called to a kind of excellence in our proclamation of the Gospel and in our practice of the faith. The kind of transformational work that we engage demands an excellence born of faith grounded in the practices of the Church. This takes years of submission to processes of formation which include worship, prayer, the regular study of scripture, receiving the sacraments, and giving toward the work of the Kingdom.

Excellence is one of the principles we are embracing as a diocese as we engage in mission strategy. Caring enough about our worship and formation that we engage them with excellence will have a direct impact on our mission. Our congregations, along with congregations of other dioceses and churches, have amazing clarity about a

desire to grow in numbers and bring more young people and families into relationship with God and the Church. Where we often balk in that effort is when it comes to the sacrifice and dedication necessary to achieve excellence in our endeavors.

Are we willing to do whatever it takes to achieve excellence in our congregations—to dedicate the time and effort necessary to worship and formation? This does not mean working harder doing what we are already doing. This means focusing our time on the Christian practices that matter. I doubt that an Olympic figure skater spends a significant portion of her time mastering the slalom ski course. Yet in our congregations we spend a significant amount of time on matters or at events that are interesting but do not sharpen the gifts we need to be effective in mission and evangelism. Sometimes, I think we need a 'stop doing' list in our congregational life.

Working toward a standard of excellence in mission requires significant effort and will be key to the successful evangelism that the Gospel compels us toward and that we seem to articulate well when we desire to reach out and grow. There are people looking for a relationship with God and a place to become disciples. Our congregations can be that place. Embracing a standard of excellence will be one way to make our desire become a reality.

Let's get to practice.

Blessings,

+ Sean

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

The Forward

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

At the end of last year, our diocese took another Organic Quality Management survey, with excellent results. The minimum factor we had been working on for two years, *Functional Structures*, had improved dramatically. The work we have all been doing has allowed the ways that we organize our common life to move from a weakness to one of our strengths! Congratulations to everyone who has been involved in any of our diocesan efforts to organize how we work more effectively.



The results of this latest survey showed that our new minimum factor is *Convincing Lifestyles*. *Convincing Lifestyles* is a parallel on an organizational level to evangelism at the parish level. The degree to which we exhibit a convincing lifestyle is the degree to which our life together has an energy, an excellence and an authenticity that would draw others into it. *Convincing Lifestyles* looks at three different areas:

- How well do we live out our Christian values when outsiders come in contact with us?
- How well do we live out our Christian values in our interactions with each other?
- How strongly do we see our work as work being done for the Lord, being done with enthusiasm and excellence?

Over the next few months our diocesan health team will be looking for ways to make our lifestyle more convincing. If all of us ask ourselves these questions about our own work, and then try to live the answers out in better ways, we will continue the improvements in our diocesan health we have been experiencing.

For more information about *Convincing Lifestyles* or our Organic Quality Management process, please contact Adam Trambley at atrambley@gmail.com or 724-347-4501.

Collection for Haiti

Our churches have been diligently collecting money to send to Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) to help with the rebuilding efforts in Haiti following the devastating earthquake. To date, the diocese has collected \$42,724.77 to be sent to ERD. Thanks to all of you for your generosity!

Time to Rename the Diocesan Newsletter?

Since 1952, the diocesan newsletter has been called some variation of *Forward*. There has been *Forward*, *Forward in Erie*, *Moving the Church Forward* and, currently, *The Forward*. The editor was wondering if it might be time to rename the newsletter, to better reflect who and where we are as a diocese.

If you have an opinion as to whether or not we should change the name of the newsletter, please call or e-mail at 814-456-4203 or at vbutler@dionwpa.org. If you think we should rename the publication and you have an idea of what that new name should be, please pass along your ideas.

It is not definite that we are renaming *The Forward*. If the majority of people like the name of the newsletter, then the name will stay. However, if most think it's time for a change, then we will explore our options.

Thank you in advance for your input and participation!

Save the Date for Diocesan Convention 2010

The one hundredth annual Diocesan Convention will be held November 4-6. Please note that there will be events on Thursday evening, in addition to our normal Friday and Saturday schedule. More details will be coming.

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

Pieces from Our Hundred Year History

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

From "The Church Year" by The Rt. Rev. Rogers Israel (from the January 1916 issue of "The Diocese of Erie")

The Church Year is a unit. The various parts are interlocked with a definite purpose. It is a guide for the individual Churchman in the study of the Scriptures and in the development of life and character. It presumes that the Christian realizes that the present life is a preparation for a greater and broader sphere of usefulness. It also presumes that every Christian so desires education and training in spiritual things that he will willingly and gladly accept the guidance and teaching of the Church.

Like every other system of education it can but offer the means; it cannot force the individual to make use of the method. Consequently many of our people have fallen into the habit of emphasizing, by more or less rigid observance, one or more parts of the system and ignoring the others. Our desire is, by this article, to urge upon the attention of all Christians the wonderful assistance the Church Year may be in its unity and entirety to the steady growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Advent, properly observed, leads us through the contemplation of the seriousness of existence here and hereafter directly to the manger. From the birth of our Lord we are led through His life from infancy to maturity. The Epiphany Season reveals to us the universality of His salvation and prepares the way for the study of the years of His active ministry leading with gentle steps through the weeks preceding Lent to the consideration of His humanity, tempted in all points as we are, unto His passion and crucifixion. The sadness and horror of Holy Week are irradiated and glorified by His Resurrection, celebrated on Easter Day. The Great Forty Days after Easter, when with His disciples we meet Him again and again in personal and most intimate relations, again prepares the way for His glorious Ascension. Then follow the ten days of anxious waiting for the fulfillment of His promise, and Whitsunday, with its soul-stirring incident of the coming of the Holy Ghost, inspires us for the long Trinity Season in which we are instructed for many weeks in his teachings.

Mother Church has thus set forth a method for the training and education of her children which cannot be ignored nor carelessly used without great loss to them. I wish each Christian in the Diocese of Erie might secure a Church Calendar from his Rector and day by day read the lessons and the appointed Prayer Book Scriptures. I am sure that the time thus given would return a thousandfold in health of body, peace of mind, and spiritual acquaintance with God.

I urge upon all in the Diocese of Erie, both young and old to begin at once in this season to follow day by day the life and teachings of Our Lord. A year of this regular systematic training and education of the soul, and mind, and body, will bring a harvest of strength, and purity, and spiritual life, otherwise impossible.

Shall we not then as Bishop, and priests, and people, avail ourselves of the inestimable and unequalled privileges provided by the Church in this blessed system and see if we cannot patiently, gently, humbly acquire that character which will cause all men to say, "These have been with Jesus and have learned of Him?"



Facts About the Diocese of Erie (from the December 1915 issue of "The Diocese of Erie")

- Our Diocese comprises 13 counties.
- The territory comprises 9,152 square miles.
- This is the only Diocese in the State having a Cathedral.
- During the past Canonical year there were 455 confirmations.
- The number of communicants reported is 8,470 or less than one to every square mile in the Diocese.
- There are 63 parishes and missions in the Diocese.
- The annual parochial disbursements for last year were \$111,501.84
- The total expenditures of the Diocese were \$130,431.69.
- The total valuation of Church property in the Diocese is \$1,045,475.12.
- The number of Sunday School scholars in the Diocese is 3,607.
- The Sunday School offerings last year totaled \$3,512.75.

The Forward

Diocesan Summer Camp

Diocesan Summer Camp will be held this year from June 13-19.



Every summer for over 30 years young people in grades 2-12 gather at Camp Nazareth, an Orthodox camp near Mercer, Pennsylvania, for a week of Diocesan Summer Camp. The camp is staffed each year by a group of approximately 25 adults from around the diocese who are committed to providing the best camp experience possible. An average of 130 young people participate in activities that include worship, small group discussions, team building, swimming, softball, and a wide variety of additional activities. This summer camp program is one of the most positive experiences offered in our diocese. It is its own tradition here and has impacted the lives of many of our young people over the years. More and more we see those who were once campers returning to be counselors. Diocesan Summer Camp truly encompasses the best of who we are as a diocese, a community knit together by our faith and our shared experience that is Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Information on registration will be sent out in the coming months.

Acolyte Vestments Available

The Church of the Holy Spirit, Erie, has acolyte vestments available for any church that may need them. The vestments include red cassocks and white cottas and they are in good condition.

If your church is interested in the vestments, please contact Fr. Richard Elberfeld at relberfeldjr@roadrunner.com or call him at 814-452-4040.

Chrism Liturgy

The annual Chrism Liturgy held in conjunction with the ELCA Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod will be on Thursday, March 25, at 11:00 AM. The service will be at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Hermitage, PA.

Clergy are to vest in cassock, surplice, and white stoles.

Clergy, please let Vanessa know if you will be attending the liturgy. You can contact her either by e-mail (vbutler@dionwpa.org) or by phone (814-456-4203).



Bishop Sean's Visitation Schedule

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| March 7th | - Holy Cross, North East |
| March 14th | - Holy Spirit, Erie |
| March 28th | - Redeemer, Hermitage |



Redeemer, Hermitage

Diocesan Council Reminder

Diocesan Council will meet on Tuesday, March 16th at 7:00 PM at St. John's, Franklin. Council members, please let Vanessa know whether or not you can attend.

Save the Date for Waldameer Picnic

The Diocesan picnic at Waldameer Park and Water World will be held on Sunday, June 20. More details will be coming as we get closer to the date.