

# NEWS FROM THE CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## PASSING

**Michael Novak** – philosopher, journalist, novelist, diplomat, and author of more than forty books on the philosophy and theology of culture – died on February 17, 2017, at age 83. He was a native of Johnstown, whose family later lived in McKeesport and Indiana, PA. At age 14, he entered the Holy Cross seminary at Notre Dame University, earning a B.A. from Stonehill College (1956) and a S.T.B. from the Pontifical Gregorian University (1958). He was best known for his book *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982), which defended capitalism as a morally superior system. He gave the keynote address in his hometown for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1889 Johnstown Flood. His brother, Father Richard Novak, C.S.C., was killed amid political upheaval in Bangladesh in 1964.

**John Steranko** of Mt. Lebanon died on February 14, 2017, at age 97. A native of Pittsburgh's South Side, he graduated from Carnegie Tech in 1954 and became a noted Byzantine Catholic Church architect. His works included St. Mary Byzantine Church Educational Center in Trauger (Westmoreland County), PA.

**Msgr. Paul A. Lenz** died on May 14, 2017. Born in 1925 in Gallitzin (Cambria County), he was ordained a priest for the then-diocese of Altoona in 1949. In addition to several pastoral assignments, he taught at St. Francis University in Loretto and Mt. Aloysius College in Cresson. He became a member of the board of trustees of both the Catholic University of America and the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. For 31 years, he served as director of the Black and Indian Mission Office, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and the Catholic Negro-American Mission Board, retiring in 2007. In 2005, the Vatican appointed him as vice-postulator of the cause for canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, who was canonized in 2012. In 2007, Pope Ben-

edict named him a Prothonotary Apostolic with the title of Rev. Monsignor. His funeral mass was celebrated in St. Demetrius Church in Gallitzin, with burial following in St. Patrick Cemetery in Gallitzin.

**Rev. John W. Kelly, C.Ss.R.**, died on May 22, 2017 at age 93. He entered the Redemptorist preparatory seminary in North East (Erie County), PA at age 14 after attending St. Philomena School in Pittsburgh. Francis Cardinal Spellman ordained him a priest in 1951. His parish assignments included serving as parochial vicar and later as administrator *pro tem* of St. Philomena in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill (1990-1993). In 2010, at a gala banquet in New Orleans, he was inducted into "The Order of Seelos Witness" – the highest order accorded by the National Seelos Shrine, in recognition of his support for the cause for canonization of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R. (1819-1867) who served in Pittsburgh (1844-1854). Fr. Kelly delivered several lectures for the Catholic Historical Society: "St. John Neumann, Parish Priest at Old St. Philomena's Church 1842-1847" (October 1992) and "Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R." (October 2001). He was also the brother of long-time Society Board Member Regina Kelly.

**Archabbot Paul R. Maher, O.S.B.**, tenth Archabbot (1983-1990) of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, died on June 29, 2017 at age 91. Following his retirement, he served as archivist 1996-2009.

**Robert E. Rambusch**, an internationally known liturgical artist, stained glass designer, and one of the four nationally recognized pioneers of liturgical design renewal, died on May 23, 2017 in New York City at age 93. Rambusch was involved in the restoration of 24 cathedrals – including St.



Peter's Cathedral in Erie under Archbishop John Mark Gannon in the 1950s – and hundreds of churches and monasteries in North America. He did post-graduate work in Paris with Fr. Marie-Alain Couturier, a close associate of artists Henri Matisse and Fernand Léger, who shaped his approach to religious art and worship space. Believing that social justice and charity were principal virtues, Rambusch began work with Dorothy Day in the Catholic Worker Movement in 1948, and was also active in the Catholic Interracial Council. He served on the Arts and Architecture Commission of the Archdiocese of New York. His family's multi-generational involvement in Catholic art and architecture is recounted in two works: Sigurd Rambusch's *A History of the Rambusch Family* (1965) and Charles Dana Linn's *Rambusch in Manhattan: Four Generations of an American Company* (1999).

**William P. Garvey** of Erie died on August 9, 2017. The native of Oil City received his B.A. in History from Gannon University in 1957 and then joined North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh as a history teacher. He also taught at Duquesne University, receiving his M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of Pittsburgh. Garvey joined the faculty of Mercyhurst College in 1962, becoming president in 1982 – a position he held for 22 years. He transitioned the school to co-educational and opened 18 buildings including the campus of Mercy North East in a former Redemptorist seminary. He later founded the Jefferson Educational Society of Erie in 2008. His many historical publications included his recent *Erie, Pennsylvania Mayors: 150 Years of Political History*.

## PERSONS

**Joseph T. Makarewicz, Ph.D.**, has stepped down from the Board of Directors of the Catholic Historical Society. He joined the Board in 1984, when the Society resumed operation after a period of dormancy. His initiation of Oral History Workshops facilitated interviews with

individuals whose recollections of local Catholic history preserved that information for future generations of historians and researchers. He served as Director of the Pennsylvania Ethnic Heritage Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh. “Joe” will remain as a consultant to the Society, particularly on ethnic history. The Catholic Historical Society is grateful for his many years of committed service.

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission has published a second article by **John C. Bates**, Secretary of the Society, in its publication, *The Recorder* (Volume 3, Issue 3 – March 2017). The article is entitled “Shared History: Byzantine Catholics in New Jersey & Western Pennsylvania” and is accessible on line at <http://blogs.shu.edu/njchc/files/2010/The-Recorder-March-2017-Newsletter-Full-Text-Version-PDF.pdf>.

**Aleksander J. Schrenk**, who contributed articles to *Gathered Fragments* as the Society’s “Roman Correspondent” during his years at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh by Bishop David A. Zubik on June 24, 2017 in St. Paul Cathedral. In September, he returned to Rome to complete graduate studies.

## EVENTS

The 6<sup>th</sup> **Nationwide Juried Catholic Arts Competition and Exhibition** was held in the Saint Vincent Gallery at St. Vincent College in Latrobe from October 30 through December 4, 2016.

On November 4, 2016, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year celebration of **Maxo Vanka’s** 1941 murals was held in **St. Nicholas Croatian Church in Millvale**. The evening included singers, poetry by historian Charles McColester, and readings. New lighting was unveiled for four of Vanka’s 1937 murals – *Crucifixion*, *Pieta*, *Croatian Mother Raises her Son for War*, and *Immigrant Mother Raises Her Sons for Industry*. The next stage of the murals conservation project will focus on the 1941 *Battlefield Scenes*.

The 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of **Blessed Karl of Austria** (1887-1922) – last emperor of Austria and king of Hungary – was celebrated on April 1, 2017

at St. Titus Church in Aliquippa (Beaver County) with a Traditional Latin High Mass and veneration of a First Class Relic. A luncheon and conference followed, with two speakers addressing the topic: “The Legacy of Blessed Karl in Modern Hungary: The Social Reign of Christ the King.” Knights of Columbus Woodlawn Council 2161 sponsored the event. Information on Karl’s life and cause for canonization appears at [www.emperorcharles.org](http://www.emperorcharles.org).

June 13, 2017 marked not only the feast of St. Anthony of Padua but also the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of **St. Anthony Chapel** on Pittsburgh’s Troy Hill. The chapel contains one of the largest collections of relics (more than 5,000) in the world. Father Suitbert G. Mollinger, pastor of the adjacent Most Holy Name of Jesus Church, financed construction and commissioned life-size statues depicting the Stations of the Cross for the chapel’s walls. The chapel was restored in the 1970s.

In late June 2017, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities – still referred to locally as the **Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale** – listed their historic **Mount Alvernia** Motherhouse and its 25-acre campus for sale. The order came to Pittsburgh in 1865, starting a hospital for German immigrants in the Lawrenceville neighborhood. The Motherhouse, constructed in 1900, once housed 350 sisters. The order’s St. Francis Health System merged with UPMC in 2002, and Mount Alvernia High School closed in 2011, following the sisters’ gradual withdrawal from parish elementary and high schools. The Millvale community joined a union of Franciscan communities in 2007. The remaining Millvale sisters will relocate prior to the anticipated sale in 2018.

Two archivists for the Newman Archive at the Oratory in Birmingham, England, presented a lecture entitled *The Archives of*



*Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman: Preserving and Promoting the Heritage of a 19th-Century Priest and Theologian Through 21st-Century Digital Scholarship*. The completed digitization of the archives of John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890) involved more than 200,000 items. The event was held at Duquesne University on October 16, 2017, and was sponsored by the National Institute for Newman Studies, which is located in Oakland and was the subject of an article in the 2016 *Gathered Fragments*. Newman, one of the pivotal theologians of the modern era, was beatified in 2010.

## TOURS, PILGRIMAGES, AND EXHIBITS

**Sacred Heart Church** in Pittsburgh’s Shadyside neighborhood conducted an Advent Tour of the famed church – “Artistic Riches that Inspire” – on December 18, 2016. The tour included carved statues of the apostles under the roof’s lofty wood tresses, vibrant red stained glass windows, and unique stone carvings. The church also conducted a Lenten tour of the building on April 2, 2017.

**The Heritage Center of the Diocese of Greensburg** opened an exhibit titled “Petals of Love – The Rosary in Art and Faith” on May 13 in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions of the Blessed Mother at Fatima. The exhibit displayed unique rosaries and imagery pertaining to the 20 mysteries of the Rosary. Society Board Member **Dennis Wodzinski** is Director of the Center and Archivist of the Diocese of Greensburg.

St. Paul Cathedral in Oakland hosted the **relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina** on May 9. The Capuchin priest (1887-1968) was baptized Francesco Forgione in Pietrelcina, a village in the province of Benevento in southern Italy. To pay for the youth’s education as a priest, his father Grazio Forgione immigrated in 1899 to Mahonington near New Castle in Lawrence County, where he worked as a farm laborer for several years. The father stayed with a cousin and sent money home every week. The future saint entered the Capuchin order at age 15, taking the name Pio. He was ordained a priest in 1910 at age 23. Known as having miraculous powers (including

healing, bi-location, levitation, prophecy, the gift of tongues, and the ability to read hearts), he bore the stigmata – the five wounds that correspond to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus. The stigmata remained with Padre Pio until his death. Pope John Paul II canonized him in 2002.

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation conducted several tours to area Catholic churches and sites: (1) April 29 – “Hazelwood Urban Hike: Memorable Places and Recent Changes” which included **St. Stephen Church**, (2) July 8 – “North Side Urban Hike: Historic Churches, Commercial Districts, and Allegheny Commons” which included **St. Peter Church** (former cathedral of the Diocese of Allegheny), (3) July 29 – “Squirrel Hill Bus Tour: the Presence of the Past” which included the home of famed Catholic architect **John T. Comès** that he designed, and (4) September 16 – “Churches and Art in

Greensburg, PA” which included **Blessed Sacrament Cathedral**, designed by architect Comès. In 2016, PHILF awarded the Comès residence a Historic Landmark Plaque. PHILF, through its **Historic Religious Properties Program**, awarded financial grants in 2017 to **SS. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary** (opened in 1950) on Pittsburgh’s North Side and to **Holy Spirit Church in Millvale** (designed in 1914 by John T. Comès).

**OTHER**

The **St. George Church Preservation Society** has been formed in an effort to save the now-closed Allentown neighborhood church, which closed in 2016. The group maintains a website at [www.stgeorgepreservationsociety.org](http://www.stgeorgepreservationsociety.org) and has a Facebook page.

The **Archives and Records Center of**

the **Diocese of Pittsburgh** moved in June to the former St. Martin Church in Pittsburgh’s West End.



**UPDATES TO PREVIOUS ISSUES OF GATHERED FRAGMENTS**

The 2016 *Gathered Fragments* included an article on the history of the **Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri** in Pittsburgh’s Oakland district. Deacon Peter Gruber, a member of the Oratory noted in the article, was ordained a priest on May 20, 2017.

The same *Gathered Fragments* issue contained a list of officials of St. Paul Seminary. Father Thomas A. Sparacino was appointed rector of St. Paul Seminary effective July 10, 2017.

*Gathered Fragments* has provided a yearly update to its original article in the 2014 issue entitled “The Catholic Bishops of Western Pennsylvania.” Additional research has identified another bishop who was educated in Western Pennsylvania. This brings to 150 the number of bishops who were natives of, educated in, or served in Western Pennsylvania. The latest prelate to be added to the list:

**René Arnold Valero**

Born: August 15, 1930 in Manhattan, NY (Archdiocese of New York)  
 Educated: Sacred Heart Mission House High School, Girard (Erie County), PA: 1944-1948  
 Ordained a priest of Brooklyn: June 2, 1956 by Archbishop Thomas E. Molloy in St. James Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY  
 Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn and Titular Bishop of *Vicus Turris*: October 4, 1980  
 Ordained Bishop: November 24, 1980 by Bishop Francis J. Mugavero in the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Brooklyn, NY  
 Retired: October 27, 2005

The following will update information as to these prelates:

**Edward James Burns**

Appointed Bishop of Dallas: December 13, 2016  
 Installed as Bishop of Dallas: February 9, 2017 by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, M.Sp.S., in the Cathedral Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dallas, TX

**William Charles Skurla**

Resigned as Apostolic Administrator of Parma (Ruthenian): June 24, 2017