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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 75, Number 12

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

JULY 1, 2020

SUMMER SCHEDULE

The *North Country Catholic* is now on summer schedule and will print every other week. The next edition will be July 15.

Follow Me: Address to graduates

Bishop Terry R. LaValley addressed graduates of Immaculate Heart Central in Watertown:

"Graduates, know that wherever you find yourself in years to come, you are connected in a sure bond of love with your Church. When things go great, celebrate with your parish family, when you find yourself feeling alone and hurting, turn to your parish family."

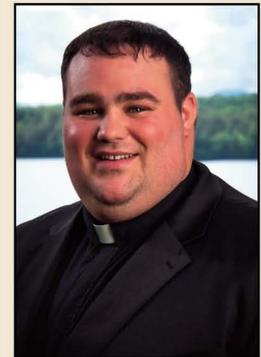
FULL STORY, PAGE 3

CELEBRATING TOGETHER



William Joseph "Liam" Jones, a student of Augustinian Academy in Carthage, celebrated his First Communion on June 27 at St. James Minor Church in Carthage. (Inset) William Joseph is pictured with Sister Mary William Argy, after whom he was named, on the day of his First Communion and her 70th jubilee.

SEMINARIAN SUMMER ASSIGNMENTS



Matthew Conger, a seminarian for the Diocese of Ogdensburg, is on summer assignment at St. Bernard's Church in Saranac Lake, where he is learning some of the day-to-day tasks involved in running a parish. Read about the summer assignments of Conger and seminarian Leagon Carlin in this first installment in an ongoing series.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

God listens to saints and sinners, Pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Everyone lives a life that is often inconsistent or a "contradiction" because people can be both a sinner and a saint, a victim and a tormentor, Pope Francis said.

No matter what one's situation is, people can put themselves back in God's hands through prayer, he said June 24 during his weekly general audience.

"Prayer gives us nobility; it is able to protect one's

relationship with God, who is the true companion along humanity's journey, amidst thousands of hardships in life, good or bad, but always with prayer," he said.

The audience, livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace, was the pope's last general audience talk until Aug. 5, according to Vatican News. His Sunday Angelus address was to

continue throughout July, however.

With the start of summer vacation for many, the pope said he hoped people could have a peaceful moment of rest despite the ongoing restrictions "connected to the threat of infection from the coronavirus."

May it be a time of "enjoyment of the beauty of creation and a strengthening of ties with mankind

and with God," he said in greetings to Polish-speaking viewers and listeners.

In his main talk, the pope continued his series on prayer and reflected on the role prayer played in the life of David – a young shepherd whom God called to become king of Israel.

David learned early in life that a shepherd takes care of his flock, protects them from danger and provides for them, the pope

said.

Jesus, too, is called "the good shepherd" because he offers his life for his flock, guiding them, knowing each one by name, he said.

When David was later confronted for his terrible sins, he realized he had become a "bad shepherd," someone who was "sick with power, a poacher who kills and loots," the pope said.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dropping 'truth bombs'

I call them "truth bombs." Truth bombs get dropped on us when someone – often a trusted friend, mentor, counselor, confessor or family member – points out a truth we might not want to hear. Truth bombs generally reveal to us some personality defect, sin, poor decision or moment when we weren't the best version of ourselves.

I haven't always reacted well when truth bombs have been dropped on me. I get defensive. I get angry.

They're bombs because they can explode our self-image, and they can hurt. It can be hard to face the worst

parts of ourselves.

Generally, though, after prayer and reflection, I see that I needed the truth bombs to level me. I realize there are parts of myself I don't want to acknowledge, encounter or try to fix.



Darcy L. Fargo

Several months ago, I was approached by a couple of acquaintances who were concerned with the way one of my friends was behaving. They asked me to talk to my friend.

I sat down with my friend a short time later.

"You're sort of acting like a jerk about (a particular topic), and it's really not a good look for you," I told my

friend.

I braced myself for the defensiveness and anger I likely would've displayed in that moment, but that wasn't how my friend responded.

"Thank you for letting me know," he said. "You're right." I was stunned by his response. It showed a maturity and ability to self-reflect that I don't yet possess, and it set an example for me to follow.

I've thought about that incident a lot over the last several weeks, as I've had numerous truth bombs dropped on me by various people. When the bombs explode, and I feel myself getting defensive, I try to remember, "thank you for letting me know."

I still don't like truth

bombs, but I've been trying to react better to them. When one is dropped on me, I may make a face that shows my irritation, but I try to keep quiet and process what I've been told before reacting, and I generally realize the person is right.

While truth bombs can hurt, they are also a gift and a blessing. I know with certainty that God has put people in my life to help me be the best version of myself, the version He's calling me to be. To do that, I need to see clearly where I need to improve, and sometimes others, through the grace of God, see that better than I do. I'm blessed that they're trying to help me be better.

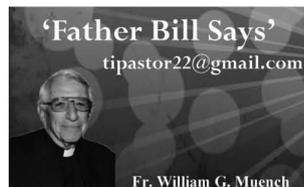
Bombs away!

Three saints for our present time

Today, I would like to share with you three of my favorite saints. As the Church's liturgical year comes to the end of the month of June, these saints have special feast days. In addition, I believe that these saints are great patrons for these present times in our country and world.

First, there is St. John the Baptist. On June 24, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Birth of St. John the Baptist. This feast day is also a holiday in Quebec. In addition, I am thinking of the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Apostles (June 29). I do believe these three saints are rather important for our time, thinking of the pandemic and all the disturbing divisiveness in our society.

When it comes to St. John the Baptist, I am certain that you know the story. What I want to call to your attention is St. John the Baptist's vocation. John the Baptist was called by God to prepare the world for the coming of



Fr. William G. Muench

Jesus, the coming of the Messiah. At this time, we are all called to be John the Baptist. All of us – priests, deacons, religious sisters, lay men and women – are called to the vocation of a John the Baptist and to prepare this world to again find the presence of the Lord and discover how important it is to bring Jesus into the minds and hearts of people. As he preached along the River Jordan, John the Baptist constantly encouraged people, telling them they could be better than they were. I believe that this staying home, this staying apart from others, has kept many of us from growing spiritually. Now is the time for us to get into that John the Baptist vocation of bringing others closer to the Lord.

This is our opportunity to lead others to a better life, to make our world a better place.

St. Peter was the fisherman who became one of the Twelve. Peter was Jesus' best friend, I think. Peter became the bold, unafraid leader of the early Church. The interesting thing – actually, the rather surprising thing – is that Peter was the one who seemed to fail often. He denied he even knew Jesus when Jesus was arrested. He always seemed to say the wrong thing, yet he became the surprising and very powerful leader of the early Church. We are called to be leaders in this Catholic Church in our time, a Church that needs good leaders, even surprising leaders like Peter.

And St. Paul was a powerful missionary who took Jesus' message to an unprepared people. Paul was completely surprised that he would become the world's greatest missionary. He was knocked

off his horse and became an apostle, and he transformed his life and transformed our Catholic Church.

Like Paul, we must be ready for the surprises that come to us, especially now at this rather unusual time. I believe God constantly has surprises for us, opportunities to do something special – I like to call them our miracles – as we transform our lives, as we become missionaries like St. Paul, although our mission is right here at home.

One more thing to add here: The interesting thing is that all three of my saints are martyrs. They were so dedicated to God and the mission of Our Savior that they gave their lives for the Lord. Please remember, being a martyr does not mean just dying for God. For most of us, it truly means living for the Lord Jesus, ready to sacrifice for our God, ready to accept whatever life will bring so that we can truly bring Jesus to our world.

FOLLOW ME

Graduates, you are connected to the Church

Editor's note: The following is Bishop Terry R. LaValley's address to the Immaculate Heart Central Class of 2020. It was delivered at an outdoor graduation celebrated June 26.

Ever since the beginning of this pandemic we heard the phrase, "We are in this together." I couldn't help but think of the image that St. Paul gives us of the Church as the Body of Christ: when one member hurts, we all hurt, when one member celebrates, we all rejoice. By virtue of our baptism, we are sisters and brothers in Christ. Although we've had to do some serious social distancing and isolating, we have learned during these trying times, haven't we, just how connected we are with one another?

Just think about what we've been doing to help others such as food drive-throughs. With patience and kindness, we have become more conscious of the health of others, so we wear a mask and observe social distancing guidelines. We've seen and experienced the ways that people go the extra mile for us – on-line classes and how we observe special events: drive-by birthday celebrations and graduations, as well as outdoor graduations.

I've seen, too, how hurt people are when we don't feel connected such as when a family can't have a funeral Mass in church inviting everyone. We see people donating their blood, health care workers working unbelievable hours and cheering COVID-19 patients on as they

leave the hospital, recovering from the virus. We've seen people at home making face masks for others. These are just a few examples of how we experience our connectedness.

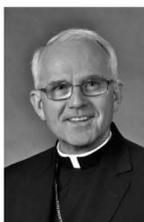
Even before the virus invaded our space, IHC has provided an environment for you, our graduates, to experience what it means to build up and support this Body of Christ. You've grown in knowledge of the wonders of God's creation in and outside the classroom.

You have been participants and leaders not only in academics and sports, but in *Faith Community Service*. You support a girls' school in Africa and serve at tables at special events in the area. You've been connecting long before the corona virus arrived and will be long after the dreaded disease is history.

Graduates, know that wherever you find yourself in years to come, you are connected in a sure bond of love with your Church. When things go great, celebrate with your parish family, when you find yourself feeling alone and hurting, turn to your parish family. No matter where you travel or end up calling 'home,' there is a Catholic parish waiting to welcome you. Be a participant not a spectator.

Live and share the Good News and enjoy the blessings God has in store for each of you. As the English poet John Donne once penned,

*No person is an island entire of itself,
Every person is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.*



**Bishop
Terry R.
LaValley**

*If a clod be washed away
by the sea,
Europe is the less,
As well as if a promontory
were,
As well as any manor of
thy friend's,
Or of thine own were.*

*ishes me.
Because I am involved in
humankind.
And therefore never send
to know for whom the bell
tolls;
It tolls for thee.*

Any person's death dimin-

*ishes me.
Because I am involved in
humankind.
And therefore never send
to know for whom the bell
tolls;
It tolls for thee.*

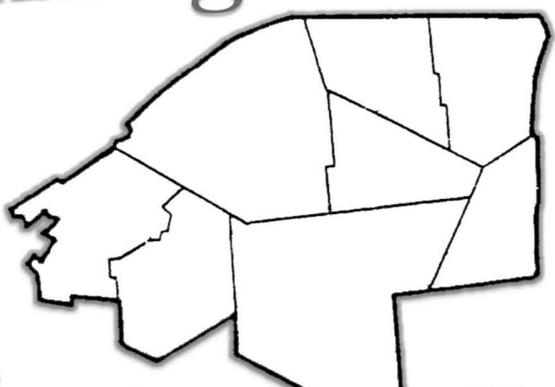
Congratulations to our seniors here at Immaculate Heart Central as you cap

off a most challenging final year of high school. Thank you to Mr. Charlebois, our faculty and staff who have truly been heroes of flexibility, creativity and just plain hard work to keep us all connected. Congrats to our proud parents and family members. God Bless you all!

The Diocese of Ogdensburg

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Sharing our Stories



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The Diocese of Ogdensburg covers an area of 12,036 square miles. With such a large area to cover *The North Country Catholic* allows us share our stories of faith with one another. The NCC is able to provide:

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Summer assignments help train seminarians

Editor's note: This article is the first installment in a series featuring the summer assignments of the seminarians of the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

By Colleen Miner
Contributing Writer

Summer assignment help expose seminarians of the Diocese of Ogdensburg to various parts of the priesthood and parish life, and it can be a critical part of the seminarians' discernment process.

LEAGON CARLIN

Leagon Carlin, who is about to enter his third year of Theology in the fall at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, is assigned to the "Catholics along the AuSable River," the Catholic Community of Holy Name and St. Matthew in Au Sable Forks, the Roman Catholic Community of Keeseville, and St. Margaret's Parish in Wilmington.

With the current rapid and inconsistent situation, Carlin's duties



Leagon Carlin

change each day. A few things that are consistent are: lecturing and serving at Mass, assisting in verifying and updating Cemetery records, and making Communion calls (with proper precautions, of course).

Carlin also accompanies Father Kris C. Lauzon when he administers anointings and helps with various other tasks around each of the churches, from gardening to minor maintenance. In addition, Carlin lends a hand in the parish offices.

"The most unexpected



Matthew Conger

and ever-changing of my regular tasks are those related to the current Pandemic," said Carlin, 23, a native of Plattsburgh. "We have spent quite a bit of time roping off pews and marking seats, making and hanging signs, filling bottles of hand sanitizer and disinfectant. Then, each day after the liturgy, I sanitize the pews, door handles, and more."

Whether assisting Father Lauzon or one of the staff with some task, or in conversations with the people of the parishes, Carlin hopes to be able to lighten, not increase, the burden with his presence and participation.

"All of us have unique gifts and areas of strength, and I hope to put my whole self into the tasks and opportunities offered me in this assignment, utilizing those gifts and strengths that I have been given to be constructively involved in the community, forming open and positive lines of communication, building relationships, and offering a different point of view," he said.

Carlin noted that the summer assignment is part of the process of the formation for the Priesthood. The accompanying experiences are an important part, as they are

structured in such a way that if a seminarian really enters into it and opens his heart and mind to the process, he can recognize that God is indeed calling him to this vocation, and identify the parts of himself which need to be more configured to Christ in order to properly live it.

The greatest areas that Carlin hopes to grow and learn in the context of this Summer Assignment are in the practical "day-to-day" work of parish life and operation, and in the essential work of orienting his personality to be a bridge, and not an obstacle, to Christ.

"It is very helpful for me to get all the experience possible in the practical operations of a parish, the 'business side,' since I would not consider myself to be naturally gifted in that area," he said. "It is also very necessary that I learn, through the context of the parish and rectory life, the parts of my personality that are perhaps still a bit rough...There are ways to order pieces of my personality so that they make me more approachable, genial, and able to 'be Christ' to the people He has given me to love."

MATTHEW CONGER

Seminarian Matthew Conger is spending the summer at St. Bernard's in Saranac Lake. Carlin said his duties at St. Bernard's in Saranac Lake have varied due to the Covid-19.

"They've taken on a different form" said Conger, 28, of Ogdensburg, who is preparing to enter his fourth year of Theology studies at Christ the King Seminary in Buffalo and will be ordained a transitional deacon in August. "The most important duties that I have been able

to help out with is getting the Church ready to welcome back the faithful."

Conger said it was helpful to see how much preparation went into making sure that the church is a safe place for people to return.

Other duties include learning how things work in the office.

"There is so much to learn, and with full-time parish life fast approaching for me, it is beneficial to see how to run the office properly," Carlin said. "Father Martin (Cline) has been helpful in his approach in teaching me how to document and write out proper certificates for the faithful who need those records. This is something that they don't teach you in the seminary."

Conger sees this summer as "an excellent opportunity to learn from the pastors who have been leading their flocks for a long time."

Conger believes that "it is essential to the ministry in the Church, that we must be as present to the faithful more now than we ever were before. We have been separated for quite some time now, so just to let them know that we are still here and that they are still just as important to us as they ever were."

Conger is trying to "learn the most from Father Martin; he has the experience of being an excellent and faithful pastor to the people he serves. I hope that I can learn a lot from him and how he is with the community and those he works with. He is an excellent example of what a good and holy pastor should look like. This is what I hope to learn from this summer assignment."



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Attention Joyce Giroux.

- Questions? 315-769-5911.

Familiar face named St. Bernard's principal

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

SARANAC LAKE – Though St. Bernard's School is losing a long-time principal to retirement, a familiar face has assumed the administrative role.

Raymond Dora, a St. Bernard's alum who came out of retirement after nearly 40 years in public schools to serve as the Catholic school's principal, is resuming his retirement after serving St. Bernard's for nearly 10 years. Dora is handing the torch over to St. Bernard's alumna and teacher Andrea Kilbourne-Hill.

Dora assumed the helm at the school at a time when it was struggling with enrollment. During his tenure, enrollment increased dramatically.

"We went from 42 students to 85," Dora said. "Though we've dropped a little since."

Dora said the increase in enrollment was achieved by planning and engaging parents and the community.

"We had to come up with a five-year plan," he said. "We got everyone involved. Parishioners were involved, parents were involved, staff was involved. We had numerous meetings basically to decide if the school could continue or not. We really had tremendous support in those meetings. We'd have a meeting with 150 people coming to express their views. At those meetings, we got to hear from folks who thought the school was more of a burden on the church than a help to the church, and we got to hear from people who really supported the school. The support was overwhelming. We had a kindergarten class of 24, and



Andrea Kilbourne-Hill

things went forward."

That class of 24 kindergarten students included Kilbourne-Hill's daughter.

"Having that large and very involved kindergarten class definitely helped," Kilbourne-Hill said. "It kind of indoctrinated those parents to be advocates for the school and know that they needed to step up."

Dora said the school also evaluated how it was raising funds.

"We certainly had to start looking at finances," he said. "We set some benchmarks for enrollment. More enrollment means more tuition. We set benchmarks for advancement and fundraising. With those benchmarks, we had to look at what our fundraisers were and go from there. We had a few very good fundraisers and a lot of little ones. The hope was maybe to be able to move aside the little food sales and small fundraisers and do some big ones. We always kept some of the small ones, which also help."

Currently, the school has 61 students enrolled for the fall. Both Dora and Kilbourne-Hill noted some of the decrease can likely be attributed to the coro-



Raymond Dora

navirus pandemic.

"We had three or four people looking at kindergarten right at the time we closed down," Dora said. "We have not been able to get back in touch with them."

"A few families have immune issues or live with people with immune issues, and they're waiting to see what's going to happen and what it's going to look like," Kilbourne-Hill said. "We have a handful of those types of families – waiting and seeing. We learned a lot in the last three months of online learning. It's something we're going to get ahead of. We want to make sure we can provide education to families that may not be comfortable sending their kids to school yet. We want to keep them involved in the school and involved in the parish but alleviate their fears."

"On the positive side of that, I think we have our size in our favor," Dora said. "You certainly have less exposure sending your child to St. Bernard's School than to public school, number-wise."

Regardless of class size, Dora said he has always tried to focus on individual students and their needs, and he sees a sim-

ilar focus in the school's staff.

"My mission has always been to look at the students in front of me and see who they are and where they are and to try to move forward from there," Dora said. "I always tried not to just do the same thing I did last year. I certainly tried to understand the children, where they're from and what background their brining to the school. I try to understand their difference and try to understand why they're acting or doing what they are and move forward from there. I guess I would say I try to look at the individual student, and I do think that's something the teachers here at St. Bernard's School do well. They understand that all the kids aren't the same or don't have the same supports and background and so on, and see what's going to work best for them."

For her part, Killbourne-Hill, a Princeton graduate and former member of the U.S. National Hockey Team who won a silver medal at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, said she plans to continue building on the foundation laid by Dora.

"One thing I definitely want to bring as I step into this spot: have trust and faith in who you work with," she said. "Ray's been a great servant-leader in the sense that he's said, 'This is what you all need to do, and I trust that you're going to be able to do it, and if you need help, let me know, and if you need resources, let me know.' That's really nice to have, and I don't think that always happens in the teaching profession. There's a lot of micromanaging."

Kilbourne-Hill said she'd also like to help further build on the relationship between the school and the parish.

"My biggest goal is to firm up the parish and school connection," she said. "We're right across the parking lot. Traditionally, we go to church every Wednesday. The parish supports us. The families that come to St. Bernard's, they really feel like it's their school, and they have a lot of pride and ownership in that, and I would love for everyone in the parish to have that same feeling. There's so many things we could tap into. If you look around at any one time at Mass, so many people have gifts to offer that we haven't tapped into with the students. And it goes the other way, too. When the students send cards to, for example, Meals on Wheels, it brightens days and weeks. Making those connections stronger is one of my primary goals."

St. Bernard's Pastor Father Martin E. Cline says he feels the transition between the principals will be a smooth one.

"I'm very excited," Father Cline said. "It's sad news to announce Ray is going, but most gentleman his age are enjoying retirement not leading a Catholic school. I could tell he was ready."

Father Cline noted that an administrative change can sometimes cause upheaval in schools, but he says he anticipates no such issues with Kilbourne-Hill assuming the administrative post.

"The community will hear Andrea Kilbourne-Hill's name and say, 'that's where we want our kids.' The community knows her dedication and hard work."

Environmental Stewardship

What's on your list?

During these past months since the pandemic, have you noted any difference in the amount of trash your household generates in a week?

As Americans, we create lots of garbage, and we pay to haul it away. In a recent article "Reduce your trash footprint in 2020," written by Yvona Fast, a North Country author, notes that we produce an average of five pounds of trash each day for a total of 222 million tons of waste each year, more solid waste per capita than any other country in the world. According to Elizabeth Royte, science writer for Outside, the New Yorker, and other magazines, this is just the "front end." "For every barrel of waste we put on the curb, there's 71 barrels of waste generated upstream in manufacturing this stuff." This includes waste from commercial farms, mines and industrial waste.

Out of the total waste Americans create, 20% is yard waste like grass clippings and garden weeds in the summer and bags of raked leaves in fall. Another 8.9% is food waste, like vegetable scraps and peelings. An additional 35% is paper and cardboard. By composting yard waste and food waste, we could reduce our waste by 29% while improving garden soils with compost.

Composting only makes sense and is part of the life cycle nature teaches us. Nothing goes to waste in God's design! Garbage becomes a rich ingredient to enhance the soil for plants and your garden.

There are several ways to construct a compost container. Search on your computer for composting and find one that fits your needs and location. If you don't have any place outside to compost, check out red worms for composting that can be done within your house.

One important way that we can reduce our own trash footprint is becoming more aware of how much food we throw away each day. Find ways to reduce that amount by cooking less, giving away extras and investing in a composting project. Reducing our garbage can be one way of showing our gratitude for the precious bounty we receive from God. It can also be a way of taking care of creation.

Rest in Peace

This week marks the anniversary of the deaths of the following clergymen who have served in the Diocese of Ogdensburg

July 1 – Rev. Norbert Callahan, M.S.C., 1909; Rev. William A. O'Connor, 1922; Rev. P. Leon Legault, 1991

July 2 – Rev. Richard A. Gleason, O.S.A., 1939; Rev. Denis F. Finnegan, 1951; Msgr. John A. Stone, 1964; Msgr. Francis J. Connors, 1977; Rev. George A. Lemieux, 1993; Rev. John M. Crable, 2012

July 3 – Rev. E. Leonard Murphy, 1954

July 4 – Rev. Joseph L. St. Jacques, 1952

July 5 – Rev. Paul F. Ledermann, 2016

July 6 – Rev. Armand Baron, O.M.I., 1936

July 7 – Rev. Felician Fehlner, O.F.M. Conv, 1952

July 9 – Rev. John Rogers, 1887; Rev. Joseph H. Emard, O.M.I., 1924

July 10 – Rev. Mary Ignatius Grom, 1936; Rev. John F. McNamara, 1971; Deacon Victor Fisher, 1999; Rev. James A. Delbel, 2013

July 12 – Rev. James Salmon, 1835; Rev. John J. Brennan, 1881; Most Rev. Albert Pascal, O.M.I., 1920

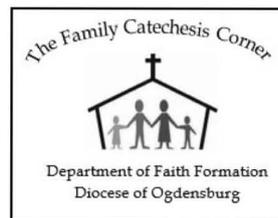
July 13 – Rev. George Garand, 1941

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If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terri-ann Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terriannyanulavich@yahoo.com Phone: 518-651-2267 days; 518-569-0612 evenings; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; ccarrara@rcdony.org Phone: 315-393-2920 ext. 1340. If you have a complaint of suspected sexual abuse or related misconduct by the bishops, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at 800-276-1562 or www.Report-BishopAbuse.org.

Teach the faith at home

By Jessica Hargrave
Contributing Writer



The Department of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Ogdensburg is dedicated to keeping the light of faith alive in your home. Since the COVID-19 pandemic brought religious education and faith formation programs to a standstill in March, the department has been offering tips on the diocesan Facebook page every week to keep the faith formation in our families going.

With the proper tools and resources, parents can lead their children to learn and love the Catholic faith which will allow them to go out and share it with the rest of the world. If you need guidance, the Department of Faith Formation wants to light that flame for you. The North Country Catholic will regularly feature one resource on at-home in a series called "The Family Corner for Catechesis."

There's no denying that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenging

time for ministry. Religious education is facing its own challenges since the diocese announced in March there would no longer be public Masses or church events. Classes and sacramental preparation programs were halted. In some cases, parishes furloughed their religious education leaders, while most, who are volunteer teachers, faced their own pandemic problems. Although churches are now able to hold Mass at a limited capacity and with social distancing plans in place, uncertainty remains as to when groups can once again gather safely is uncertain.

As faithful families question the future of parish religious education, Western Region Director of Faith Formation, Catherine Russell said nobody knows for sure when religious education can resume, but with this uncertain time comes opportunity.

"This is a wonderful time to get back to who is the primary person responsible for passing on the faith," Russell said. "That is the family. So, for me the key question becomes how can the parish, the catechetical leader, the catechist reach out and support the family?"

Not wanting children to fall behind in their preparation to receive the sacraments, some catechetical leaders decided to go in a different direction, at-home catechesis. Understandably, parents may reply, "I'm not a teacher,"

when told they are now their child's primary catechist.

However, parish catechetical leaders are doing what they can to ease the overwhelming feeling by making packets for parents to pick up at parishes, mailing activities to kids and offering online resources.

One of those resources, Catholic publisher Our Sunday Visitor (OSV), has adapted to the changing needs of parents by offering free, simple, and effective home session plans for paying curriculum users. This month, Joseph White, director of Catechetical Resources at OSV, announced their new webpage called "Faith at Home." On that webpage, parents and catechetical leaders will find resources for at-home catechesis, including multi-age family session helpers. This plan allows families to have one meeting that integrates all their children, regardless of where they are in faith formation. This option can be a relief for families dealing with "digital fatigue" from online schooling or families with a lack of devices. Also on the "Faith at Home" webpage, you'll find diverse resources including over 40 games that can be printed and video playlists for each grade, creating a blended learning experience.

Russell wants to remind families and catechetical leaders that if assistance is needed with at-home catechesis, they can reach out to the Department of Faith Formation. The Diocese of Ogdensburg's Department of Faith Formation also offers free catechesis resources under the Faith Formation webpage of www.rcdony.org.

Bishop's Public Schedule

July 1 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

July 2 – 9:45 a.m. – Episcopal Council Meeting at Bishop's Residence

July 4 – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

July 5 – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

July 7 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

July 9 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

July 11 – 11 a.m. – Private Jubilee Mass and Celebration of the Sisters of St. Joseph at the Motherhouse in Watertown

July 12 – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

July 15 – 11 a.m. – Pontifical Mission Society Board Meeting at Bishop's Residence

Reflecting on the patience of St. Joseph

Editor's note: In May, Bishop Terry R. LaValley consecrated the Diocese of Ogdensburg to St. Joseph. To celebrate that consecration, the NCC will be featuring occasional columns highlighting St. Joseph.

By Ceil Johnson
Plattsburgh



St. Joseph's Corner

When I was asked if I would write a reflection on St. Joseph's virtue of patience, I googled "reflection" and its various meanings. One definition in particular struck a chord: "communicating your response to thoughts and feelings." So that's what this reflection is – St. Joseph and patience, my thoughts and feelings. Trying to write this reflection, I gave more thought than usual to St. Joseph's life and his patience (usually I just ask him to take care of my request and trust him to intercede for me).

When I think of St. Joseph, my thoughts invariably turn to my own father and one brother, who happened to be born on St. Joseph's feast day. My father was always loved, respected by and loving to his family. He was always there for us, and he passed those traits down to his five sons. Dad's patience was not inexhaustible, but with ten children, a farm, and an outside full-time job, it was beyond commendable. I'm sure St. Joseph guided him often.

The Bible doesn't give us much information on St. Joseph's day-to-day activities. It's usually suggested he was a carpenter, and I think of his patience with Jesus in teaching him his craft and how to use his tools. My dad could do most anything and taught us to do so many things (not always with great pa-

tience...). As with most children, Jesus must have sometimes tried St. Joseph's patience with a child's inattention and wanderings.

I thought about the Bible's first mention of his betrothal to Mary and then learning she is pregnant. Most would have immediately censured her and set her aside. Joseph patiently waited for guidance, listened and believed that he should take Mary as his wife into his home. *St. Joseph, help me to discern the right course of action.*

His patience must have been sorely tried by his family and neighbors. *St. Joseph, help me to remember that when I'm tempted to pass on gossip or judge someone else.*

Then obedient to the law, he and Mary set out for Bethlehem to register for the census. I think his patience must have been tried sorely on that trip and he must have wondered if God was really guiding him, as we so often do ourselves. Then to find

he could not give Mary and his son the shelter and care they deserved, he patiently trusted God would give them what they needed. *We usually ask God for what we want rather than what we need. God, give me patience to wait for your word rather than wanting a response now!*

Again, we think of his patience and trust in God's direction to protect and take his family to Egypt into the unknown and waiting patiently until the angel told him to return to his own land. It could not have been easy to build a new life in a strange country with a wife and newborn son. *St. Joseph, give us patience and help us to adjust to this unknown future.*

I think of Jesus disappearing for three days and the fear Joseph and Mary must have felt, then the joy when they found him safe in the temple, and the patience St. Joseph had in allowing his human Son to "go about His Father's business..."

It's said Pope Francis has

a statue of a sleeping St. Joseph, and that the Pope slips his written prayer requests under the statue. The Holy Father is quoted as saying, "you know you just have to be patient with these carpenters. They tell you they'll have a piece of furniture done in a couple weeks and it ends up taking a month...But they get the job done and they do it well. You just need to be patient." I love that anecdote. It makes St. Joseph even more approachable in my prayers.

St. Joseph, give me patience when I spill the milk because my fingers don't work the way they used to, when that yo-yo doesn't wait his turn, isn't wearing his mask, I can't get to Mass and receive Communion in person, when

I'm waiting in line while the clerk chats with the person in front of me..., please St. Joseph, make haste to help me.....I need you now!

When I reflect and pray to St. Joseph, I somehow feel he's closer, right next to Jesus and Mary and will intercede for me as my own father would. He understands me. Even now as Patron of our Diocese, Bishop Terry R. LaValley asks us to turn to St. Joseph as our "Mirror of Patience and Pillar of Families."

St. Joseph, Pray for us here in our Diocese of Ogdensburg.

Action step: Place a picture or statue of St. Joseph in a place of honor in your home. Consecrate your family and loved ones to St. Joseph.



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Advocates: Order advancing religious freedom was needed

WASHINGTON (CNS) – President Donald Trump's executive order on religious freedom issued in early June lays out a strategy for expanding U.S. support for international religious freedom that the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has been urging, said the chair of the commission.

"USCIRF has long called on the U.S. government to develop an overall strategy for promoting religious freedom abroad, as well as country-specific action plans, and we welcome the fact that this executive order requires the State Department and USAID to do exactly that," Gayle Manchin said June 24 in a statement to Catholic News Service.

"We also appreciate the express reference to U.S. officials working for the release of religious prisoners of conscience, which is a high priority for USCIRF," she added.

On June 2, Trump signed the order to promote and advance religious freedom across the globe.

"Religious freedom, America's first freedom, is a moral and national security imperative," the order said. "Religious freedom for all people worldwide is a foreign policy priority of the United States, and the United States will respect and vigorously promote this freedom."

The State Department and USAID have 180 days since the order was issued to develop a strategy to prioritize international religious freedom in the planning and implementation of U.S. foreign policy and in their foreign assistance programs.

"The secretary shall, in

consultation with the administrator of USAID, budget at least \$50 million per fiscal year for programs that advance international religious freedom, to the extent feasible and permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations," Trump's order said.

It directs departments and agencies that fund foreign assistance programs to ensure "faith-based and religious entities, including eligible entities in foreign countries, are not discriminated against on the basis of religious identity or religious belief when competing for federal funding."

Among other provisions, the order also calls for integrating international religious freedom into U.S. diplomacy; requires State Department employees complete training on international religious freedom issues at least once every three years; and says the secretary of state and the USAID administrator must advocate, "when appropriate," for U.S. international religious freedom policy in bilateral and multilateral forums.

It also asks that the heads of U.S. agencies when meeting with their counterparts in foreign governments – in coordination with the of U.S. secretary of state – raise concerns about international religious freedom "and cases that involve individuals imprisoned because of their religion."

When Trump issued the executive order, Tony Perkins, the commission's vice chair, applauded the president "for continuing

to prioritize international religious freedom as a national security imperative and a foreign policy priority."

"This executive order encourages swift action by the U.S. government to hold accountable foreign governments that commit severe violations and substantially increases U.S. economic assistance to support programs that advance religious freedom around the world," Perkins said in a statement.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is a bipartisan body created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. It reviews the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations and makes policy recommendations to the president, the secretary of state and Congress.

As the month of June opened with the president's focus on international religious freedom, it came to a close with a focus on these issues by the U.S. Catholic bishops. They declared the week of June 22-29 as Religious Freedom Week and called on Catholics to "pray, reflect and take action" on religious liberty in the United States and abroad.

Before Trump signed his executive order at the White House, he and first lady Melania Trump paid a brief visit across town to the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Northeast Washington. They marked the 41st anniversary of the start of St. John Paul's pilgrimage to his native Poland, the pontiff's first trip to that country and where he repeatedly addressed religious and political freedom.

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Asylum at the border is 'effectively over,' El Paso bishop says

WASHINGTON (CNS) – After visiting a group of pregnant migrant women on the Mexico side of the border, Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, issued strong words June 25 about the Trump administration's "Remain in Mexico" program and other restrictive immigration measures, saying that turning away those seeking asylum in the U.S. amounts to sending them to their death. "During World War II, the United States thought it had learned after we felt the guilt of having returned a boat filled with Jewish refugees back to the extermination camps of Nazi Germany," he said referencing the ocean liner MS St. Louis, a ship with more than 900 Jewish people forced to return to persecution in Europe in 1939. "But today we send those who have escaped back into the hands of narco-trafficking gangs, ignoring the very laws we had written," the bishop said. Today, he said, the U.S. has essentially put an end to asylum under the Migrant Protection Protocols, or "Remain in Mexico" policy, which forces asylum-seekers to stay on the Mexico side of the border until their cases are adjudicated in immigration court. Add to that, Bishop Seitz said, the fact the Trump administration has used Title 42 of the U.S. Code governing the "Public Health and Welfare" to instruct Border Patrol agents to expel anyone caught trying to enter the U.S. instead of processing them under existing immigration law.

Abuse allegations against late bishop found credible

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (CNS) – The Diocese of Springfield has released a report submitted by retired Superior Court Judge Peter A. Velis documenting his investigation into a claim of sexual abuse by the late Springfield Bishop Christopher J. Weldon and his finding the claim to be "unequivocally credible." The report also covers how the diocese handled this complaint and opportunities for improvement on handling future abuse allegations. The full report was released June 24 on the diocesan website, www.diospringfield.org, concurrent with a news briefing presented by Velis and Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski at the Bishop Marshall Center and via livestreaming on the diocesan website. Bishop Weldon, a native of the Archdiocese of New York, was installed as the fourth bishop of the Springfield Diocese March 28, 1950, and served until his retirement in the fall of 1977. He died March 19, 1982, at age 76.

U.S. priest finds his niche working in Bangkok with the poor

BANGKOK (CNS) – Redemptorist Father Joe Maier, 80, opened his first school in Bangkok's market-side slum district of Klong Toey in a swine slaughterhouse more than 40 years ago. So it is not surprising when he explains that he comes from the "wrong side of the tracks" in his native Seattle. For that is largely where he has stayed for the bulk of the past 49 years since he settled in Bangkok after being sent by the Redemptorists to Asia on mission business. He has built a large network of schools that tend to the poor in the heaving capital whose population, including surrounding towns, is now approaching 15 million. He also has set up shelters for abused girls and a hospice for people living with HIV/AIDS, all under the umbrella of the Mercy Centre, which he set up in 1973 with Sister Maria Chantavarodom of The Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate. Father Maier told Catholic News Service he joined the Redemptorists as a young man, disaffected with life after a tough upbringing.

Trump foster care order backs faith-based agencies

WASHINGTON (CNS) – President Donald Trump June 24 called for creating partnerships between state agencies and public, private, faith-based and community organizations "to help keep families together and, when that is not possible, to find children forever families."

His support for faith-based agencies' involvement in foster care and adoption services was among a number of provisions included in an executive order he said was meant to "enhance our child welfare system and promote permanency for children in the foster care system nationwide."

"All children deserve a stable, supportive and loving home in which to grow, thrive and realize their full potential," Trump said.

To create these partnerships, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is authorized under the executive order "to develop guidance for states on best practices for effective partnering with faith-based and community organizations, aimed at improving outcomes for children and families."

HHS also can hold states "accountable for recruiting an adequate number of foster and adoptive families for all children." Trump's order also allows HHS to collect and publish localized data "that can be used to aid in the development of community-based prevention and family support services and in the recruitment of foster and adoptive families."

Other provisions in Trump's executive order calls for improving resources provided to caregivers and those they care for. "To accomplish this,"

HHS said it "will increase the availability of trauma-informed training, support guardianship through funding and grants, and enhance support for kinship care and for youth exiting foster care by evaluating barriers to federal assistance."

A third component in Trump's order has to do with improving federal oversight "over key statutory child welfare requirements."

Trump's inclusion of faith-based agencies in his executive order comes some months after the U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case during its next term next term to determine if the city of Philadelphia can exclude a Catholic social services agency from the city's foster care program because the agency does not accept same-sex couples as foster parents due to Catholic teaching supporting traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

The case, *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, takes its name from Sharonell Fulton, a foster parent who joined in the lawsuit against the city along with another foster parent, Toni Simms-Busch.

The issue of "freedom of conscience in adoption and foster care" happened to be highlighted on the fourth day of the U.S. bishops' Religious Freedom Week, June 22-29. The bishops' designated the issue as the focus for June 25.

While more children wait to be placed in families in this country, the bishops' said in a June 25 reflection, "a growing number of cities will not work with faith-based agencies that refuse to place children in

situations that violate the agencies' religious beliefs, such as with same-sex couples or unmarried heterosexual couples."

As a remedy to this situation, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act, which has been proposed in the House and Senate. The measure would prohibit the federal government, and any state that receives certain federal funding, from discriminating against agencies on the basis that they decline to provide services that conflict with their religious beliefs.

A friend-of-the court brief filed June 3 by the USCCB filed June 8 with other faith groups in *Fulton v. Philadelphia* said Catholics have been involved in caring for the orphaned since the early church and in the beginnings of the church in America.

"This history, and the theological basis that animates it, together make clear that providing foster care represents a core religious exercise for Catholics," it said.

The USCCB said it was motivated to join in the brief by its "interest in religious freedom and the rights of faith-based organizations and their adherents."

"The conference submits this brief because it raises the important question whether churches and other religious organizations can continue to provide critical human services, as organized communities of religious adherents have done for centuries, without surrendering their religious beliefs," it said.

Vatican: Catechesis is about relationships

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Teaching the faith is a work of evangelization meant to lead people to a deeper relationship with Jesus and not just impart information, said the updated "Directory for Catechesis."

The directory, released by the Vatican June 25, lists the goals and essential elements of catechesis and is meant to guide the drafting of national catechisms and catechetical directories that take into account specifics of the local culture and the needs of Catholics at different ages and stages of life.

Previous versions of the directory were approved in 1971 by St. Paul VI and in 1997 by St. John Paul II.

The directory was released in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and French; the English and other translations were still being prepared as of June 25.

The updated content, according to the foreword, responds specifically to Pope Francis' 2013 exhortation, "Evangelii Gaudium" ("The Joy of the Gospel"), and to the 2012 meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization.

Like the previous versions, the directory insists on catechetical programs that teach the basics of Christian faith: God's love for each person; salvation in Jesus Christ; belief in the Trinity; and "the definitive call to gather scattered humanity into the church," bringing people into communion with God and fostering unity among them.

While the 1997 directory insisted parishes provide suitable catechesis for members with physical or developmental disabilities, the updated directory expands the discussion to preparation for the sacraments.

"Persons with disabilities are called to the fullness of sacramental life, even in the presence of serious ailments," it said. "The sacraments are the gifts of God and the liturgy, before being understood rationally, is meant to be lived. Therefore, no one can refuse the sacraments to persons with disabilities."

The revised directory also includes expanded sections on catechesis tailored for migrants and refugees, for immigrants and for people who are incarcerated.

Because the faith is lived in human communities, it said, catechesis must take into account the challenges and problems of the societies in which Catholics live and should draw on Catholic social teaching, which applies Gospel values to social, political and economic questions.

"Catechesis participates in the church's challenge to oppose processes centered on injustice, exclusion of the poor and the primacy of money in order to be a prophetic sign" of promoting a full and dignified life for all people, it said.

The new directory also significantly expands the 1997 directory's entries on ecumenism, relations with Judaism and relations with other religions.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Finding refreshment in dark times

Summer is here! And it's just so good to enjoy longer days and brighter evenings. At the same time, the prospects of another summer under the shadow of the coronavirus, the persecuted Christians in so many countries, floods, fires and cyclones cast a dark cloud over our joy. We need to listen carefully to the first reading from



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

Zechariah. It can refresh our spirits. The vision of the King of Peace coming to abolish all fighting is a

cause for hope. And, of course, it's more than a dream since we are children of the Covenant. God has promised us a time of peace. We must never give up on the dream of our founding fathers and mothers.

After all, our country was founded on a dream. Otherwise we would not be celebrating the Fourth of July this weekend. Their dream is very like God's dream, His Providence. We are all entitled to be dreamers. We

July 5

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

READINGS

Zechariah 9:9-10

Romans 8:9, 11-13

Matthew 11:25-30

must never give up hope that God's dream of peace will come true. It's His plan! There's nothing wrong with the American dream. It's based on reality of God's dream, so whatever we dream and work for in America is based on his principles of life. Why are politicians so unwilling to give life a chance? God gave us a

chance before we were ever born!!

How do we help make His plan come true? By speaking out and not being afraid or timid of our Catholic principles, and by living in the Spirit, as our second reading explains. As members of Christ, every good individual action strengthens the whole body. We need to faithfully pray for peace, respond with serene charity to the many frustrations and "downers" in our lives, and influence others to do the same. Living in the Spirit will reduce our tendencies to live in the flesh and all its tempta-

tions. It's called choosing the narrow door.. Of course, we live in the flesh – from hugs to hot dogs – but it's so easy to let our desires get out of hand. More prayer, more getting out of ourselves to think of other people brings lightness of heart and freedom of Spirit. When we're scared and think that it's just too hard, think of the Lord's words in today's Gospel: "Come to me all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you." In other words, Jesus says to us, "Here, give it to me. I'll carry it for a while." Just listen to the Spirit.

CALLED TO SERVE

Aug. 1 ordination to be 'a grand day'

'Tis the season for ordinations. Apologies to the composer of "Deck the Halls" in 1862. Here is a fun fact, that Christmas Carol was penned 10 years before Pope Pius IX formally created the Diocese of Ogdensburg. Planning is already underway for the sesquicentennial anniversary of the diocese on February 16, 2022. You can be certain you will hear more about that in coming months.

Back to ordinations. June is the traditional month for men to be or-

daind transitional deacons and priests. In a lot of dioceses, June is when permanent deacons are ordained too. Deacon Greg Kandra in Brooklyn keeps track of these events on his popular blog, "The Deacon's Bench." In the last several weeks, Deacon Kandra reported that 19 men were ordained permanent deacons in Colorado Springs, another six were ordained in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Newark, New Jersey was going to welcome 23 new deacons in late June, but

that ceremony was postponed for the time being because one of the candidates was diagnosed with COVID-19.

The thought of postponing an ordination is not like calling a rain delay in baseball. Sure, the soon-to-be deacons will get to proclaim their allegiance to their Bishop "with the help of God" eventually, but a lot of planning and arranging has gone into the original date for these men, their wives and families, not to mention the

Archdiocese of Newark staff. Pray for everyone involved.



Deacon
Kevin Mastellon

We have some ordinations scheduled for St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg on August 1. Two men who are transitional deacons will make their final priestly vows. Two seminarians will be ordained transitional deacons and one man will be ordained a permanent deacon.

This seems as good a time as any to explain the difference between a transitional and a permanent

deacon. The short answer is, there is no difference. A deacon in the Latin Catholic Church is a deacon. We label some men as transitional because their vocation is to become a priest. All their formation has been directed to that goal. They will spend at least a year in a pastoral assignment before the bishop calls them to be ordained a priest.

If a deacon is labeled permanent, it is because God has called him to the vocation of deacon. All his formation is directed to that permanent state. On August 1, Bishop LaValley will preside as two men become priests and three become deacons. It will be a grand day for the Church of Ogdensburg.

Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown. He is the Director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg

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Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSI, Director
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mbrett@rcdony.org

Being a missionary from home

During this time of pandemic, we are all learning to do more and more from the comforts of our homes. Even as things begin to open back up, we will still look to do more at home.

One of the many things you can keep in your life is God, and you can keep him in your life anywhere.

Here are a few pointers on how you can be a Missionary from home.

Pray: Set up a time every day to have a conversation with God. Throughout the day, talk to Jesus. Simply say an Our Father or even the prayers that the angels taught the children in Fatima, "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love you. I ask you pardon of you for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love you." These little prayers will draw our hearts and minds closer to God.

Bring love and joy to the family: Spend time with your parents, brothers and sisters. Pray together, eat meals together, play games together and laugh together, etc....

Make holy the work that God has given each of us: All the work we do throughout the day at home whether it be work, schoolwork, chores, games, etc.... do it with love and offer it to God. St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "Do small things with great love..."

Be mindful of the upcoming diocesan collection for the Missionary Projects of the Diocese of Ogdensburg. Our theme this year is:

*Maybe we cannot be together,
but together we can make
all the difference...*

Continue to be a missionary. Be a missionary from home. God bless us all.

Please remember "The Society for the Propagation of the Faith" when writing or changing your Will.
www.rcdony.org/mission

OBITUARIES

Clayton – Robert I Frailey, 75; Private services to be held.

Croghan – Robert J. Mattimore, 82; Mass of Christian Burial June 25, 2020 at St. Stephen's Church; burial in St. Stephen's Cemetery.

Dannemora – James N. Fleury, 72; Memorial Mass to be held at St. Joseph's Church.

Malone – Catherine Jean Murphy, 59; Graveside Services June 26, 2020 at St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Massena – Abraham Leo Francis, 56; Funeral Services at Donaldson Funeral Home; burial in St. Lawrence Cemetery, Kanatakon.

Ogdensburg – Richard Sherry, 44; Memorial Mass to be held June 22, 2020 at Notre Dame Church.

Plattsburgh – Charles G. Laravia, 81; Mass of Christian Burial June 27, 2020 at Our Lady of Victory Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Donald F. Ryan, PHD, 89; Mass of Christian Burial June 22, 2020 at Our Lady of Victory Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Saranac Lake – Joshua Lee Collins, 40; Mass of Christian Burial July 2, 2020 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery.

St. Regis Falls – Robert Crinklaw, 80; Private Mass of Christian Burial to be held June 24, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Ticonderoga – Carmine M. Gijanto, 88; Mass of Christian Burial June 23, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Ticonderoga – Dorothy Anne (Sullivan) O'Brien, 86; Mass of Christian Burial June 25, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Parish Cemetery.

Watertown – Cheryl "NU" (Peterson) Cooley, 73; Funeral Services to be held June 23, 2020 at Reed & Benoit Funeral Home; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

'The only place I found God'

Darcy Fargo
Editor

WATERTOWN—After a journey of faith that took her through various Christian denominations, Anne Seegebarth said she has found her home and her identity in the Catholic Church.

"I am a Presbyterian, Baptist, non-denominational, Lutheran, Episcopal Catholic," Seegebarth said. "I was raised Presbyterian. I went to a Baptist church in high school. I was active duty Army and attended non-denominational services when I was in the military. I married my husband and became Lutheran. I had problems with the Lutheran church and became Episcopalian. Along my journey there, I felt something was missing."

Seegebarth said she then spent a summer "church shopping."

"I went to the community church across the way, and I went to a Bible church," she said. "I went to a Methodist church. I attended different serv-



ices in a few different churches. The only place I found God was at the Catholic church."

While she said the other churches she attended were friendly and inviting, Seegebarth said she felt God's presence profoundly inside the doors of her local Catholic church.

"God was there," she said. "It was a feeling I got. I knew he was there. I couldn't say that about the

other churches. Something was missing. They were friendly and faith-filled, but something was missing."

Seegebarth said attending RCIA and learning about Jesus being physically present in the Eucharist cemented her belief that God was present in the Catholic Church.

"The Episcopal Church was sacramental, but even

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'The only place I found God'

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then, there were times they didn't have the Eucharist, and they don't believe in the real presence," she said. "When I made my RCIA journey and realized that Catholics believe it's the real presence, I discerned on that. I came to realize and believe that yes, this is the real presence."

Prior to entering RCIA, Seegebarth said she relied on her faith to carry her through her divorce and raising two sons with developmental disabilities.

"My faith has gotten me through a divorce and helped me raise two sons with special needs on my own," she said. "I could not have – I don't like the word patience – but I couldn't have the ability to do what I've done without my faith. It allows me to see God in all the little things and to see the times God has put wonderful people in my life to help me on my journey. I remember praying fervently to God when I was about to go through my divorce. I prayed that he was save my marriage. But he didn't. I know now that if God had saved my marriage, I wouldn't have the close loving relationship I have with him that I have now. He said 'no' to my prayer so I could have



Anne Seegebarth

a better relationship with him."

Seegebarth said the Cursillo movement and the friends she made through it have been instrumental in giving her strength and helping her continue growing her faith.

Cursillo, which translates to "short course," is a lay movement that helps individual nurture their relationships with the Lord and share that relationship with others.

"The first time I went on a Cursillo weekend was May 2002," she said. "It was through the Episcopal Church. My best friend, Deb, knew I was struggling

with my divorce. She said I needed to go on a Cursillo weekend. I had every excuse under the sun why I couldn't go. Best friends being best friends, she had the application filled out and basically said, "sign here," and she took it. She took me down to the weekend. During those four days, I became so close to God."

On the Friday night of Seegebarth's Cursillo weekend, organizers held a healing service.

"After the service, they invited anyone up who wanted healing, and they dismissed everyone else," she said. "For probably a half hour or more, I sat in the chair fighting with myself. It was like the angel and devil, one on each shoulder. I was thinking 'I need to go up,' then 'no I

don't. I'm fine.' I finally went up. I asked for healing of heart for my children and myself over the divorce. I felt God's love enter into my heart and take all that pain and anguish away. I have never had anger or any other negative emotion related to the divorce since."

Now actively involved in the Diocese of Ogdensburg Cursillo movement, Seegebarth said her Cursillo small group – a group of Cursillo participants who meet regularly to share faith – helps her stay grounded in her faith.

"A small group is a group of loving friends," she said. "We're all Cursillo Catholics helping each other on our Catholic walks. Each of us has a different walk, but we help each other, we support each other, and we're there for each other. Yesterday, I had something happen that had me upset. I picked up the phone and called one of my small group members to talk me off the ledge. And she did."

While she said participating in Cursillo helps her share her faith, Seegebarth noted that she tries to live her life as a witness.

"I try to live my faith every day of my life and every minute of my life," said Seegebarth, who works on Fort Drum. "Everyone in the office knows I'm Catholic and a practicing Catholic. I try very hard not to swear. When you work through the military, it's pretty common to hear sentences in which every other word is a swear word. My col-

leagues have come to realize I don't appreciate that. They have changed because they know I'm a person of faith, and I don't like it."

She also said she continually turns to God to try to discover his path for her.

"I pray about God's will," Seegebarth said. "There's many times God puts things in my life that I can say only happened because it was God's will."

For example, Seegebarth said a series of events occurred that led her to the orientation for Formation for Ministry, a program that helped her further develop her relationship with the Lord.

"That program strengthened my faith," she said. "It helped me to understand a lot of the pieces of my faith. It helped me to understand that I do have charisms I received from God, what those charisms are and how to best utilize them."

After the Formation for Ministry program, Seegebarth made a full circle, beginning to teach the same RCIA program that brought her into the Church.

"I think I have a different perspective than a lot of catechists," she said. "I know some of the questions I had when I was in the RCIA process. I try to teach the answers to those questions. I think it helps me connect with the individuals going through that process. When they hear I was in their seat at one point, they sort of let the walls down."

While she remains on her faith journey, Seegebarth said her Catholic faith has become critical to who she is, and she doesn't see that changing any time soon.

"My faith makes me me," she said. "It's that simple. If I don't have my faith, I'm not me."

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