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Mary, Joseph and the Child Jesus are depicted in a Nativity painted by Benedictine nuns in Madrid. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil commemorating the birth of Christ and ends with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 13. (CNS/Art Resource/Album)

NORTH
COUNTRY
CATHOLICBox 326
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The hope of Christmas

All plans for a cheery "hooray-it's-almost-Christmas" column were dashed with the first news reports out of Connecticut on Friday.

The horrifying massacre of little children, who were just sitting in their tiny desks, counting down the days till Santa, was incomprehensible.

How could anyone kill innocent babies?

How are we supposed to react?

How could a loving God allow it to happen?

I would bet that every mother in the world has shared a piece of the broken hearts of those 20 mothers over the past couple of days and every father lived a bit of the agony of those 20 fathers.

My own babies are in their

30s; on Friday night they all went back in time to their first-grade selves.

This time of year we remember and rejoice at the birth of a Baby who forever changed the world.

In my mind, there's no better way to celebrate than to wait in joyful anticipation for a baby of your own and that's what our family gets to do this year.

We already know that the arrival of Molly and TJ's little girl will change our family forever. She will transform the lives of her parents and everyone who cares about them.

We love this child – overwhelmingly - months before we see her face.



Mary Lou
Kilian

It is only because we love so much that we grieve so much for others who lose children, aged five or 50.

Already there are plenty of theories about what could impel a 20-year-old to carry out such a slaughter but we'll never have all the answers.

And, in this world, we'll never have all the answers about God.

The gift of free will – to live in a loving relationship with God or not - comes with a price since there are those in the world who will choose "not."

That means people will inflict indescribable pain on others and God will not step in.

This is very difficult to accept at times like this but the alternative would be meaningless – a forced love is no love at all.

But, our faith gives us the

confidence to know that God is with us in the inevitable times of suffering.

This week we celebrate the Son he sent to save us, which means that even in the darkest of times, we are not alone.

We have hope.

And that's what Christmas is all about.

God bless us everyone.

CORRECTION

Father Douglas Lucia's address was omitted from the list of priests' addresses in the Dec. 12 issue of the *North Country Catholic*.

Father Lucia may be reached at St. Mary's Church, 68 Court St., Canton, NY, 13617.

The NCC apologizes for the mistake.

FATHER BILL SAYS...

Faith... the best Christmas gift of all

My thoughts about Christmas in a Year of Faith:

This year we are all challenged to live out our faith in such a way that we pass that faith along to others.

I am thinking of this today as I prepare an Advent prayer service for the regular Confirmation class.

I hope that this prayer service will be an invitation and encouragement to make prayer acceptable for these students. I want them to take up the challenge to become people of prayer, that they will not just say prayers but truly be *prayerful* people.

I am aware that this must all begin with God. Prayer will only make sense to these high school students, if they have faith in God.

These young people have studied about God before. They have received First Communion and, we hope, Mass has been part of their lives.

However, I do not know if they have truly established a rela-

tionship with God. Only then will their faith be strong in their lives.

Faith is a gift – a gift that is ours through Baptism in which we are immersed in the death and resurrection of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Jesus needs the test of experience.

Faith is a gift. These young people know of gifts – like presents at Christmas and birthdays - but, they have been gifted in other ways, much like God's gift of faith to them.

I am thinking of the gift of love that is evident in the sacrifices that their parents make for them.

I am also thinking of the gift of a dedicated teacher or coach

who gives of themselves to make their students better people.

These are truly gifts.

And God gives us the gift of faith, the faith to live with confidence through the Spirit and love of Our Lord.

This is a faith that guides us to make good decisions, to live better lives, to truly make the world a better place.

A good and strong faith – that is constantly strengthened each day – can give each one of these students the power to make them outstanding people.

I believe that we need a good prayer life that will strengthen our faith and give us a close and good friendship with our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Finally, I know that the best demonstration of the power of faith is by pointing out to them examples from real life.

My first thought is the many wonderful people I have known who have experienced difficult, dreadful, challenging experiences that could easily have de-

stroyed them, like a terrible illness or the death of a loved one. After, they explain to me "if wasn't for my faith, I could not have made it."

However, these are usually older folks – they may not impress the students.

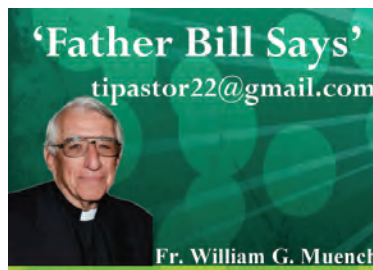
So, I will mention the wonderful, faith-filled young people, I have known who have accepted challenges with strong faith.

I am thinking of the young people who are involved in the Mission of Hope or those I have met in South America, who volunteer a year or two after college to work in a mission program or those I know right here in town who have accepted a task in their parish or community.

These are real people – real young people.

They demonstrate a strong and alive faith. They are inspiring people and I hope they will inspire our young Confirmation students.

These faith-filled young people certainly inspire me.



'Father Bill Says'
tipastor22@gmail.com

Fr. William G. Muench

FOLLOW ME

Peace is God's gift to us

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Peace Be with You!

These words of greeting that we hear at every Mass are the first words that Jesus spoke to the disciples in Jerusalem when He appeared to them after His resurrection from the dead (*Luke 24:36*).

Bishop LaValley's message for Christmas 2012

Yes, our risen Lord, whose birth we now celebrate with profound gratitude, hope and joy, desires peace and unity among us.

In the midst of this greeting from the Prince of Peace, still another Christmas is upon us where we find our world far from peace. Hopes for reconciliation on the global scene seem so remote. Nationally, leaders become entrenched in their ideologies and a divided nation suffers. For too many of us, particularly during the holidays, we become painfully aware of fractures and division within our own families.

Peace is a fruit of faith. Peace is communion with God.

Through our own earnest efforts to grow in our relationship with Christ during this *Year of Faith*, we can become peacemakers who inspire others by our example.

Such efforts might include: daily recitation of the Rosary for Peace; spending a Holy Hour each week before the Blessed Sacrament for the innocent victims of violence; celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and seeking forgiveness for personal sins that work against peace and unity; making Fridays a day of Penance for Peace by abstaining from meat; taking the time to become more knowledgeable about those who suffer oppression; or including in your prayer intentions at Mass, a special petition for peace and strong families.

Our Church has a rich treasury from which we can draw to help us work toward a lasting peace. I hope and pray that you and your family will avail yourselves of these treasures of our Church and make Christmas 2012 a time of renewed

hope and grace.

May the Christ Child lead you and your loved ones along the path of peace. With outstretched arms from the manger and then later from the Cross, God reaches out to us in peace and wants us to reach out to one another.

Peace is God's gift to us; our gift to God is to make peace with one another. Let us join the angels in song: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth!"

A blessed Christmas and peace-filled New Year to you and your family!

Faithfully yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg

Priests retirement plan benefits 46 priests

By Michael J. Tooley
Diocesan Fiscal Officer

The 36 retired priests of the diocese who currently receive pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund (PRF) will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes in the Christmas collection.

Also, ten priests age 70 and older who remain active in their ministry in the Diocese of Ogdensburg are receiving partial retirement benefits.

One hundred percent of the Christmas Collection proceeds given to each parish is contributed to the Priests' Retirement Fund. While your gift helps pay pensions to retired priests, it will also help the diocese make provisions for pensions for other priests as they retire in the future.

Actuarial studies are performed annually to assure the diocese is preparing for its future obligations to retired priests. The firm of

Frank J. Walters and Associates has determined that adequate provisions are being made in 2012-13 to fully fund the Plan.

Proceeds from the Christmas Collection in each parish is contributed to the Priests' Retirement Fund.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese currently pays monthly pensions to 36 retired priests and 10 active priests eligible for a partial retirement benefit.

Estimated pension payments in this fiscal year amount to \$724,510.

Effective July 1, 2012, retired priests in the diocese received an increase of \$30 per month in their pension benefit.

It is the diocese's intention to provide a pension increase in every year in which the diocese is able. Ninety-five percent of the cost of health insurance for retired priests is also funded through the PRF.

Retired priests of the dio-

cese receive pensions from the Social Security system. Because priests' income is typically modest, their Social Security pensions are not large and most rely heavily on pensions from the diocese for a good portion of their financial support.

The value of the investments of the Priests' Retirement Fund increased over a one-year period from \$9,817,014 on June 30, 2011, to \$9,941,245 on June

30, 2012.

As of November 19, the value of investments has increased to \$10,363,768.

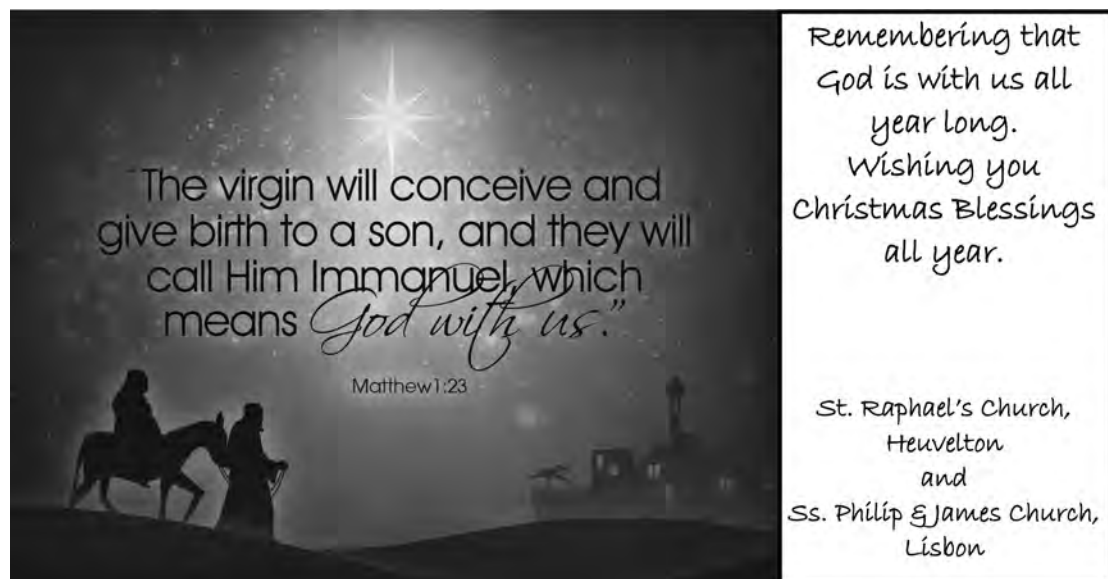
The diocese's Investment Advisory Committee, diocesan administration, and the investment portfolio's investment managers are closely monitoring and assessing the current situation.

The Diocese of Ogdensburg is confident that the markets will eventually stabilize and that the Plan's in-

vestment portfolio will again yield positive returns.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese is also assisted through extraordinary gifts. Information about gift opportunities to benefit the Priests' Retirement Fund is available from the Development Director of the Diocese, Scott Lalone.

He can be reached in Ogdensburg at (315) 393-2920 or through e-mail to slalone@dioogdensburg.org.



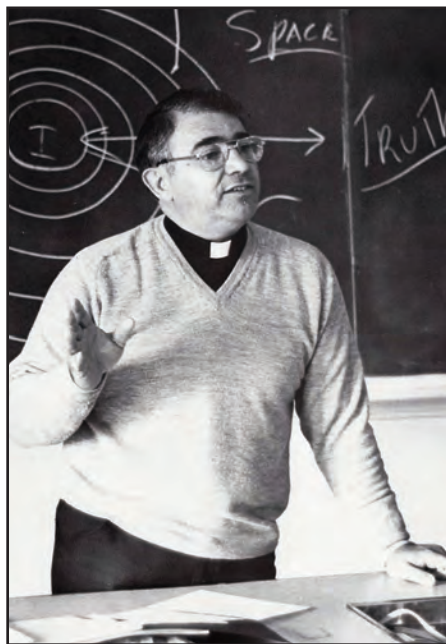
Remembering that
God is with us all
year long.
Wishing you
Christmas Blessings
all year.

The virgin will conceive and
give birth to a son, and they will
call Him Immanuel, which
means *God with us.*

Matthew 1:23

St. Raphael's Church,
Heuvelton
and
Ss. Philip & James Church,
Lisbon

YEAR OF FAITH.. STORY OF FAITH



Msgr. Peter Riani, who retired in 2012, looks back on the growth of his faith beginning during his Keeseville childhood. He is shown, from left, on his May 25, 1955 ordination day, in a Wadhams Hall Seminary classroom, (where he spent many years of his priesthood including service as rector-president from 1974 to 1982) and in a recent photo.

Exploring faith

By Msgr. Peter Riani
Retired priest, Diocese of Ogdensburg

*With the dawning of this Love and
the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

These lines from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* describe for me, an eighty-three year old, fifty-seven year priest of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, my life of faith.

My early years were immersed in the externals of the Roman Catholic faith – prayers, the sacraments, the liturgy of the Mass, etc. The small village of Keeseville had two Catholic churches – still does – locally known as the “French” church (John the Baptist) and the “Irish” church (Immaculate Conception). Our part of the Riani family lived a stone's throw from the Irish church (!) right next to the Pastor, even to sharing the same driveway.

One of my first recollections of the living faith was learning to read the inscription over the sanctuary of Immaculate Conception, “Where Your Treasure Is, There Also Will Your Heart Be. (Lk. 12:34)” and loudly announcing my new-found ability to the congregation. As a result I was sent across the yard after Mass to apologize to Father John Bent, the Pastor, for talking in church.

He received me kindly and said, “You know, Peter, if you want to talk in church you will have to become a priest.” I was four years old.

There were six of us living in our bungalow home. My younger brother and I were in the bed-

room farthest from the one bathroom. One night as I made my way there, I passed the open door of my parents room and, glancing in, I saw my father on his knees at the side of the bed praying. That image has stayed with me all of my life.

He was a model for me in many ways and, as the oldest, I had the privilege of working with him in our family business. I never once heard him say an unkind word about anybody.

He was a choir director for special occasions at church and I remember him at Christmas midnight Mass standing me, a seven year old, up on a chair in the choir loft to sing “Silent Night” in my boy soprano.

When I was nine, a new priest, Father Francis Cornelius Aloysius Cornish was assigned to our parish. To put it mildly, this personal friend of Brother Andre and fiery preacher was the major focus of the faith for me and for many until his death at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City in 1960.

I served his early morning daily Masses for years and most of his famous 75-minute Holy Hours every Sunday evening.

Suffice to say that regular Confession with him was a valuable experience in conscience formation for a teen ager.

Between Father Cornish and the Sisters of Mercy who were my teachers in Grades 1-8 in our parish school, I was reminded regularly that I should think about going to the seminary after High School. However a girlfriend and my ambition to become a scientist distracted me and I left home at 17 to enter Union College in Schenectady where I experienced the first real challenge to my faith.

All of the familiar support systems dropped away and I was on my own.

Surprisingly, after some false starts, this situa-

tion led to a new and fresh place of faith in my life. I realized one day that I sorely missed the morning Eucharist and I began to attend the nearby John the Evangelist Church when my class schedule permitted.

I took a bit of kidding from my three roommates, especially from the Catholic one, but the little statue of the Sacred Heart, given to me by Father Cornish, that I had on my desk seemed to speak for me.

Within a couple of months I left Union and, on the advice of the Rector of Wadhams Hall, went back to High School and took the Latin courses I needed to enter that seminary-college in the fall.

Here, happy though I was in general, my faith took what I thought was a nose dive in my sophomore year.

I set up a meeting with one of the priests on the faculty and I told him that I was losing my faith in the Eucharist and doubted that there was anything in the tabernacle but a few unleavened bread wafers.

He told me to relax and spend extra time just sitting in the chapel every day.

It was a dark and lonely struggle for weeks but slowly it dawned on me that the Eucharist was an incredible Gift of God's love not the conclusion of an equation!

This brings us back to the quotation at the beginning of these few thoughts. The many years between 1948 and 2012 have been for me the living out of these words of the poet that, with the “dawning of this Love” of God and the “voice of this Calling” given by so many wonderful people, I have not nor will I “cease from exploration.”

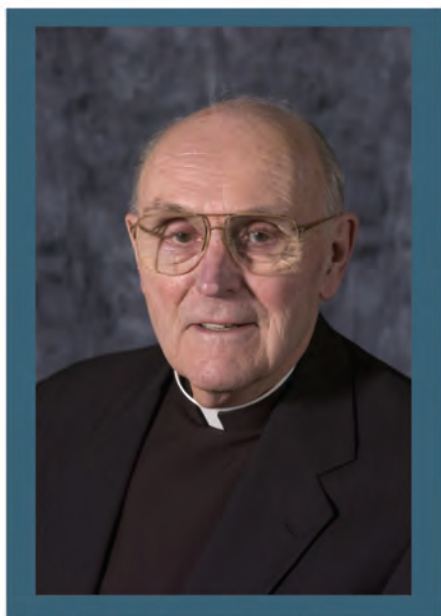
And I trust deeply that the “end of all our exploring” will indeed be to “arrive where we started” and in God's good time “know the place for the first time.”



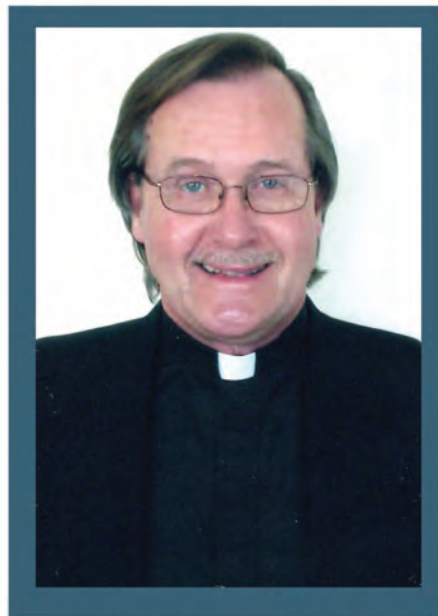
*Christmas
Collection*

A gift to the Christmas Collection in your parish helps to support our retired priests.

GOD BLESS OUR 2012 RETIREES



Msgr. Robert L. Lawler



Rev. Paul J. Kelly



Msgr. Peter R. Riani

Funeral held Dec. 4 for Servite Sister Anne Mercier

OMAHA, NEB. — A Mass of Christian Burial for Service Sister Anne Mercier, 94, was held Dec. 6 at the Servants of Mary Convent.

She died Dec. 4 and was buried in the Servants of Mary Cemetery.

Sister Anne was born April 25, 1918 in St. Anselme Quebec, Canada.

She entered the Ser-

vants of Mary Motherhouse, Omaha, June 16, 1940.

Among her assignments through the years, Sister Anne was stationed at St. Mary's Elementary in Massena from 1944-46 and at Holy Family High School from 1960-1971 teaching music and French.

Sister Anne celebrated her 70th year

in religious life on July 10, 2012 at Our Lady of Sorrows Convent in Omaha. She was fluent in French (her native language), Spanish and Italian.

Sister Anne was stationed in Rome at the Generalate of the Servants of Mary London/Cuves as a translator and archivist 1976-1980.

She is survived by numerous Canadian nephews and nieces and the Servants of Mary.



Sr. Anne Mercier, OSM

The Office of Evangelization
of the Diocese of Ogdensburg
wishes you and yours

a Joyful Christmas and a Blessed New Year

Like us on Facebook:

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*In unity our parishes, the Church of the Visitation,
St. Andrew's, and St. Raymond's pray*

*that the miracle of that
first Christmas*

*renew your heart
with Joy*

From the Catholic people of Norfolk, Norwood, and Raymondville

Bishop's Schedule

Dec. 19 — 12 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg

Dec. 20 — 12 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg

Dec. 23 — 8 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg;
2:30 p.m., Christmas concert at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg

Dec. 24 — 4 p.m., Christmas Vigil Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg

Dec. 25 — 12 a.m., Christmas Vigil Midnight Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg;
9 a.m., Christmas Day Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Diocesan Central Offices will be closed in observance of Christmas beginning 12 p.m. Dec. 21 will re-open for business Dec. 26 at 8:15 a.m.

Rest in Peace

Dec. 20 — Rev. Luke Harney, 1892; Rev. Jean B. A. Barette, O.M.I., 1955

Dec. 21 — Rev. Charles A. Grady, O.S.A., 1981

Dec. 22 — Rev. Edgard Thivierge, O.M.I., 1975

Dec. 23 — Rev. John B. P. Honorat, O.M.I., 1862

Dec. 24 — Rev. Jean Claude Leonard, O.M.I., 1868

Dec. 25 — Rev. Patrick Lyons, 1911; Rev. Oswald L. Bentley, 1940

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy Rev. James Seymour at 315-393-2920 or the **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terriane Yanulavich, Adult & Youth Counseling Services of Northern New York, PO Box 2446, Plattsburgh, NY, 12901; e-mail: aycsnn@yahoo.com; Phone: 518-569-0612; Fax: 518-425-0401

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg has scheduled sessions for Protecting God's Children for Adults. Pre-registration online is required in order to participate. Participants may pre-register at www.virtus.org by selecting the registration button and following the directions. Further information is available from Atone-ment Sister Ellen Donahue, 315-393-2920, ext. 403.

Upcoming programs:

Jan. 24 - 7:30 p.m., SUNY Potsdam

Attention Snowbirds
going south for the winter!

Notify our office so you don't miss a single issue of the *North Country Catholic*! Call (315) 608-7556 with your winter address.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!!!

Advent Calendars, Wreaths & Candles, Books & Prayers
Christmas Nativities, Cards, Music, DVDs, Ornaments
Rosaries, Statues, Angels, Jewelry, Art, Icons, Children's Gifts
St. Andre, St. Kateri and St. Marianne Cope Items
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HOLIDAY HOURS!
M-F 9:30a.m.-5:30p.m., Sat. 9:30a.m.-3:30p.m.
Peaceful Dove Books & Gifts 518-561-5083
164 Boynton Ave. Sq., Plattsburgh, N.Y.
Shipping Available!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR JESUS



The children of Carthage Augustinian Academy presented their annual Christmas concert and pageant Dec. 11. Shown above, the kings visit Joseph, Mary and Jesus. From left are Christopher Kiser, Eric Isenecker, Manuel Viveiros, Ellyse Suh and Ronen Gold.



Georgia and Emeline Barton of St John's Church in Lafargeville rode on a parish float sponsored by St. Mary's, Clayton, and St. John's for the recent Christmas parade in Clayton.



Students of Seton Catholic Central in Plattsburgh decorated doors for Advent for a school contest. Shown in front of a teacher's door are, from left, Julian Breyette, Elizabeth Fisher, Jamyla Willette, Brian Murray and Mitchell Doorey.



St. Hedwig's Parish in Houseville is offering an exhibit of Christmas Crèches from around the world for viewing Dec. 23 and 30 and Jan. 6, after the 11 a.m. Mass and from 1 p.m. to 3. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

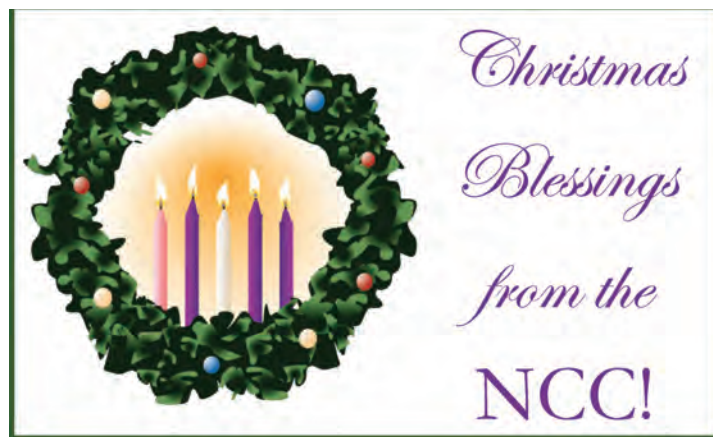


The Roman Catholic Community of St Alexander's in Morrisonville and St. Joseph's in Treadwells Mill sponsored a St. Nicholas Festival Dec. 2 at Jubilee Hall at St. Alexander's. A free spaghetti dinner was served and the children and young at heart had the chance to make candles, frost their favorite sugar cookies, make a gingerbread house and take a horse drawn wagon ride to sing Christmas Carols throughout the town. Above, Daniel Fountain, age seven; and Julia Fountain, age there, sit on St. Nicholas' lap.



Office of Family Life
Office of Natural Family Planning
Office of Pre-Cana

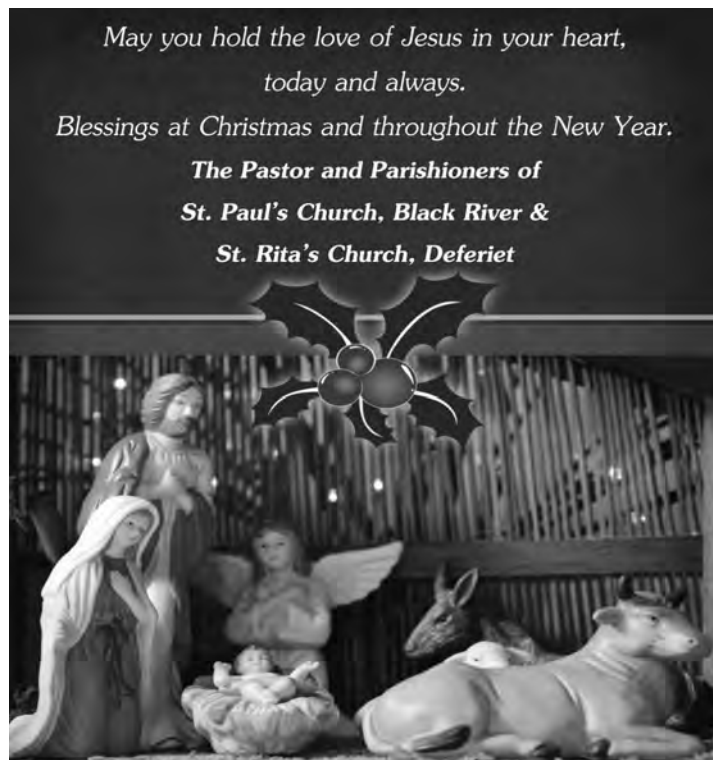

www.dioogdensburg.org



*May the blessings of that first Christmas
be yours this season and always.*



From the Staff of the Development Office
Scott Lalone, Valerie Mathews, Renee' Grizzuto



CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Pope asks Catholics to read Bible, recall history of God's saving love
VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Urging Catholics to "pick up the Bible" and read it during the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI said the Scriptures recount the story of God's love for humanity and the steps he took throughout history to save all men and women. "That which enlightens and gives full meaning to the history of the world and of the human person began to shine in the grotto of Bethlehem. It is the mystery we soon will contemplate at Christmas: our salvation in Jesus Christ," the pope said Dec. 12 during his weekly general audience. A 100-member delegation from the Mexican state of Michoacan was among the 4,500 visitors and pilgrims at the audience; artists and craftspeople in the state created the Nativity scene already decorating the stage of the audience hall. With the audience being held on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Michoacan delegates and others waved banners with the famous image. Also present were cardinals, bishops, priests and laypeople from North, South and Central America who were celebrating the Guadalupe feast day during in a Vatican congress marking the 15th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops for America. Pope Benedict said the word "advent," which means "coming" or "presence," in ancient times was used to refer to the official visit of the king or emperor to a certain province. "For us Christians, Advent indicates a wonderful and moving reality: God himself has crossed the threshold of heaven," the pope said. With the birth of Christ, "he is the king who came down to visit this poor province, which is earth, and gave us the gift of his visit, assuming our flesh, becoming human like us."

Speaker says sharing faith, watching people 'come alive' is 'amazing'
FAIRFAX, Va. (CNS) -- The Catholic Church's new evangelization effort is all about encountering Christ, then sharing that encounter with others, said Curtis Martin, president and founder of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, at a prayer breakfast Dec. 5 at George Mason University in Fairfax. In his keynote talk, Martin, who serves as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, said it is in that encounter where one can discover the fullness of his or her vocation and then become empowered to share the Catholic faith -- evangelize -- with others. "Evangelization is just a big long essentially Greek word for sharing good news, but it seems to throw us off somehow," Martin said. "It is an amazing thing to share the faith with somebody and watch them come alive." First launched at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., the fellowship is present in the form of 361 missionaries on 74 campuses in the United States, including George Mason and, as of this fall, the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg. The missionaries' job is to befriend students, help these students develop personal relationships with Christ, then to send them forth to evangelize others. This model, Martin said, is one that extends beyond the boundaries of a college campus. "What's being done on a college campus can, ought and needs to be done everywhere," he said. Inspiring others to evangelical action was a main motivating factor in holding the breakfast, which was the first of its kind, said Rachel Brehm, the fellowship's stewardship and special events manager. "We wanted everyone to feel empowered to go out after this breakfast to do their own evangelization -- to say, 'There's something I can do today or tomorrow. Now I know what I am called to and how I can do that,'" Brehm told the Arlington Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Arlington Diocese. "We wanted the whole community to be a part of that."

Priests near school shooting quick to offer assistance

NEWTOWN, CONN. (CNS) -- As law enforcement officers tried to piece together the Dec. 14 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School that left 20 children and seven adults dead, priests from nearby parishes rushed to the scene to comfort families and staff.

According to early reports, a man with multiple guns entered the K-4 school soon after 9:30 a.m. and began shooting. Children, administrators and teachers were said to be among the dead. The suspected gunman also was reported dead inside the school.

The award-winning school has more than 600 students, according to the website of an organization called Great Schools.

Brian Wallace, director of communications for the Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport, told Catholic News Service that Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of nearby St. Rose of Lima Parish, was at the school almost immediately.

"It's likely there are members of the parish affected," he said.

When the enormity of the tragedy became apparent, Wallace said, all the priests in the greater Danbury area began reaching out, "at the most intimate and painful level," to meet with families. "They're on the ground and in the hospital," he added.

Wallace said counselors from Catholic Charities -- some of whom provided assistance after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in nearby New York -- would be helping with trauma counseling in the community.

Message from Pope Benedict

The Vatican released the following statement Friday night:

"The Holy Father was promptly informed of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown and he has asked me to convey his heartfelt grief and the

assurance of this closeness in prayer to the victims and their families, and to all affected by the shocking event.

"In the aftermath of this senseless tragedy he asks God, our Father, to console

all those who mourn and to sustain the entire community with the spiritual strength which triumphs over violence by the power of forgiveness, hope and reconciling love."



ST. MARY'S CAR RAFFLE



Early Bird
drawing for \$500
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NCC

Religious liberty likely to remain big issue

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Defending religious liberty was a top priority this year for the U.S. Catholic bishops, who repeatedly spoke out against threats to its existence.

Much as they did the year before, the bishops in 2012 spoke out consistently against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' mandate requiring most religious employers to pro-

vide free coverage of artificial contraception, sterilization and abortion-causing drugs in their insurance plans, even if they are morally opposed to such coverage.

The mandate, put in place in August 2011, has a narrow exemption for employers who object to providing these services on religious grounds, namely if they

serve or hire people primarily of their own faith. It does not include a conscience clause for employers who object to providing coverage.

The HHS issue took center stage early this year when the Obama administration announced Feb. 10 that it would leave the definition of an exempt religious entity but would shift the costs of contraceptives from the pol-

icyholders to the insurers.

But the Catholic bishops and other religious leaders rejected the change, saying it failed to ensure that Catholic individuals and institutions would not have to pay for services that they consider immoral, because many dioceses and other Catholic entities are self-insured. At a congressional hearing, now-Archbishop William E. Lori,

who head the Baltimore Archdiocese and is chairman of the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, said the ongoing debate over the mandate demonstrated a need for enacting conscience protection into federal law. The bishops have repeatedly said the mandate is a restriction on religious liberty because the requirement violates church teaching.



May the Spirit of Christmas be with you throughout the year!

With peace and blessings,
The pastor and parishioners of
St. Mary's, St. Theresa & St. Joseph's
(Evan's Mills, Theresa & Philadelphia)



"HE WILL BE GREAT
AND WILL BE CALLED THE
Son OF THE MOST HIGH.

THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE
THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID, AND HE
WILL REIGN FOREVER; OVER JACOB'S
DESCENDANTS HIS KINGDOM WILL

NEVER END."

LUKE 1:32-33

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Blessed New Year!

St. Mary's, Fort Covington
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St. Patrick's, Hogansburg

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RESPECT LIFE

Home for the holidays

By Kathleen M. Gallagher

Director of Pro-Life Activities, New York State Catholic Conference

I recently spent two very hectic days in New York City on business. The days were long and full, the hotel bed uncomfortable, and the streets jammed with taxi cabs and delivery trucks determined to go nowhere fast. Don't get me wrong -- the city is beautiful this time of year, all the sidewalks truly dressed in holiday style, with shoppers hustling and busting about. But it's crowded, really crowded, and the pace is frenetic. I found myself relieved as I drove northward over the bridge and headed home.

That evening my husband and I walked to a Christmas tree lighting in the Stockade neighborhood of our small

city, Schenectady, just to the west of Albany.

The Stockade is a historic Revolutionary War district which has evolved into a tight-knit eclectic community. Joe and I strolled the quiet sidewalks, peeked through the windows of homes from the early 1700's, and admired their festive decorations and garlands. We watched the "town crier" ring a giant bell as he walked through the streets calling the townsfolk out: "Tree lighting! Five o'clock! Meet at the Indian statue!"

A small group of neighbors gathered, holding candles. An Episcopal minister with a booming voice and an English accent blessed the tree -- in Latin. "The light of Christ has come. Hallelujah," he prayed, and we all

repeated.

A man played the accordion and led us as we sang "The First Noel" and "Joy to the World."

Then the switch was thrown and the large evergreen lit up the darkness. Well, part of it did, anyway; a big bunch of branches on the left side seemed to be lacking bulbs.

No matter. Our hearts were warm and our spirits high.

It was my "Christmas Moment," when the essence of Christmas came rushing into my body, penetrated the center of my being and swelled my heart with gratitude. I was so thankful to be home!

I was so blessed to have had a safe journey, to be joined with my husband, to be anxiously anticipating our children's arrival for the



Kathleen Gallagher

holiday. There truly is no place like home.

This Christmas, I am praying for all those who cannot physically be home for the holidays:

- The men and women in our nation's military forces, who sacrifice both ordinary and extraordinary moments with their loved ones in order to serve our nation.

- People who have no home to go to, who live on the streets, under bridges, in barns and cardboard boxes.

- Families who have been displaced by Hurricane Sandy, who've lost all their possessions and need to start over in rebuilding their homes and their lives.

- Those who are hospitalized with illness or injury, whose absence is mourned by those who love them.

- Those who, for whatever reason, feel unsafe in their own homes.

- Those who are incarcerated, who beg for mercy, forgiveness and one day, a homecoming.

Home isn't necessarily an address you can map out with coordinates. It's where your heart and soul reside. It's that feeling of sanctuary that comes from knowing you are loved.

Jesus himself didn't have a home when he was born. It was his family, the shepherds and angels, and the wise men who greeted him who became his shelter.

Let's try to be the refuge that others need this Christmas Season. Send a greeting to a soldier in Afghanistan. Make a donation to the folks hit by the hurricane downstate. Bring some home-baked cookies to a lonely man in a hospital room. Help them to feel at home. 'Cause there's no place like home for the holidays.

Merry Christmas!



Christmas Blessings



Our Lady of Lourdes
Schroon Lake



Saint Joseph's Church
Olmstedville

Fr. Richard Sturtz



"A scene so peaceful in the night, the starry sky is soft and bright...
As God's Own Son has come to Earth, may we behold His wondrous birth!"



On behalf of missionaries and the people they serve in the mission lands,
we wish you a joyous Christmas!

The Pontifical Mission Societies of the
Diocese of Ogdensburg, Inc.



Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director
Molly McKee Ryan, Secretary

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Christmas: time for joy, gratitude, sharing love

How many times have we said to a small child, "Now, close your eyes and don't peek!". Then, as we bring out the birthday gift he has wanted so badly, we say, "Now, open your eyes!"

What joy we experience as we hear his gasp of delight, and see his eyes sparkle and dance!

How happy God must have been to hear the cry of joy from Elizabeth as she greeted her cousin Mary in today's Gospel.

Elizabeth's joy doubled as

John the Baptist leaped in her womb at the presence of the unborn Jesus.

Both Micah and Luke proclaim that, through a woman, the Saviour of the world will appear on earth.

When Mary traveled to the hill country to aid her cousin, both women, filled with the Holy Spirit, reveal the greatest miracle the world has ever known.

Elizabeth is the very first in Scripture to announce that Mary is the Mother of

the Redeemer, and she proclaims her blessed because she has believed what God said he would do in her.

And Mary, also through the Holy Spirit, sings, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord...from now on will all ages call me blessed...the Mighty One has done great things for me."

The Fourth Sunday of Advent is always a happy one, and even more so this year, since on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, the liturgy begins with violet vestments

Then, on the very next day, everything changes!



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

DEC. 23

Fourth Sunday of Advent

READINGS

Micah 5:1-4a

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

The Church puts away the violent, and dons white and gold vestments to celebrate the Christmas vigil.

There is only one proper response—joy, gratitude, and sharing love with everyone around us. Let both body and spirit sing, for

God has broken into his world once more to repair the damage done by satanic forces masquerading as religion, as well as the confusion of our leaders and the weak faith and paralyzed hearts of many good people.

May all whom we visit this Christmas recognize in us, as Elizabeth did in Mary, a bearer of the Divine Child, ready to give birth to God's love in our hearts this Christmas.

May we be eager to help it grow in those around us during the New Year through prayer and action.

OUR READERS WRITE

Thank you lighting the candle of hope

Thank you so very much for your editorial on Observing Advent. I was excited to hear at first that this Year of Faith was also seeking to celebrate the achievement of the Second Vatican Council. And then I saw little else at the parish level. For a while I thought it was going to be just lip service to what occurred 50 years ago but I again draw hope that it will herald the re-awakening of the Church that Pope John XXIII envisioned. Pope John asked that we open the windows to air out our faith and its implications. If we are totally honest, the Church has allowed the cobwebs to gather in the corners again and in the midst of declining vocations, it has been distracted from recognizing that our hope and glory is each other. With the closing of churches some Catholics are feeling abandoned by the clergy and once the clergy departed, they stopped going to Church. They did not recognize that they have a stake in this as well and they can be part of the solution.

For me the council movement was and can be a pivotal force to appreciate what Church is. We learned that Church is not the sole action of clerics but it is the whole assembly God's people in their pilgrim journey here on earth. In its fundamental act of worship, the Church is all of us exercising a role in the worship of God and in building the community of faith. That carried over to social action. Sadly for some reason that has gotten lost at places. It has been my experience that in some places it is still thriving. I frequent many churches in my travels and especially in the Southwest, finding Catholic communities where the Church thrives and grows because of the changes that Vatican II promoted. I'm heading to Tucson and elsewhere for Christmas and look forward to rejoining with those communities where the Spirit is fully effervescent and the effect is catching and comforting. Sadly that is not always the case up here but that can change. Thank you for lighting that candle of hope. Hopefully soon we can sing with the psalmist: Bless the Lord, my soul; with all my being, bless his holy name!

MOST GRATEFUL
GEORGE TREJOS
HANNAWA FALLS

FOR THE JOURNEY

A list, not just for Christmas

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

I am a list maker, a devotee of the "to do" variety.

Although I try not to let my list rule my life, I find it keeps me organized: setting goals and keeping them. I'm a visual person who finds it helpful to be reminded in print of my priorities.

I have to guard against obsessiveness, however. Once, when my son Mike was young, he taught me something important about my list that I've never forgotten.

As I berated myself at day's end because I hadn't gotten nearly all my "to do's" done, Mike looked at me with the wisdom of a 5-year-old and said, "Mommy, maybe you put too many things on your list." I brushed away a tear and had to agree with him. A son's lesson: Don't be hard on yourself.

This Advent, I've found a way to incorporate my list into a desire to delve more deeply into Ignatian spirituality. St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, is known for the Spiritual Exer-

cises, widely popular today. Numerous websites, including www.ignatianspirituality.com and Creighton University's online ministry site, abound with helpful information.

A fundamental part of Ignatius' teaching is the "examen," which he urged his Jesuits to do twice daily. The word may remind us of an examination of conscience, but that would miss the mark.

The examen is not so much about our sinfulness, but rather noticing God's presence in our daily life.

The examen is a prayerful reflection on my day, in which I look back and see where God moved me, where I felt God's presence and responded, or where I may have missed an opportunity to respond wholeheartedly. What consoled me? What caused me sorrow? It becomes a way of discerning God's will and movement in our lives.

Ignatius urged us to seek God in all things. Unlike some who withdrew from the world, Ignatius found God alive and at work around us. He urged his followers to seek the presence

of God in the midst of daily life. The examen causes us to pause in our busyness and reflect on this presence.

So, for Advent, I made a list of goals. This included a daily examen. But I listened to the echo of Mike's advice -- my list does not come with penalties or reasons to criticize myself. My list comes with invitation, and each day that I do the examen, and perhaps some of my other goals, is a day I give thanks.

The poet Mary Oliver said this about prayer: "Pay attention." The examen creates a habit of paying attention, a habit that seeps into our whole day. Jesuit Father Dennis Hamm at Creighton University called the examen "rummaging for God: praying backwards through your day."

Recently, I gave a presentation to a group on the moral failings of the death penalty, and in the audience was a friend who has a son with Down syndrome. When I mentioned how often we execute mentally challenged individuals, even after a Supreme Court ruling prohibiting it, I realized that

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



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AT THE MOVIES

THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

First published in 1937, Catholic author J.R.R. Tolkien's children's novel "The Hobbit, or There and Back Again" has proved so popular in the decades since that it has never gone out of print.

With "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" (Warner Bros.), director Peter Jackson provides movie audiences with an epic 3-D screen version of the opening part of Tolkien's widely beloved work.

In this first installment of a trio of prequels to Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, also based on Tolkien's fiction, a homebody hobbit (Martin Freeman) is reluctantly convinced by a wizard (Ian McKellen) to accompany and aid a group of dwarves (led by Richard Armitage) in their quest to recapture their ancient stronghold, a storehouse of fabulous wealth long ago conquered by a rampaging dragon.

The heroism of ordinary people and the potential for



CNS PHOTO/WARNER BROS.

Martin Freeman stars in a scene from the movie "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey."

everyday goodness to subdue evil are the primary themes of the long, combat-heavy adventure that follows.

As the titular character proves his mettle, the corrupting effects of power are also showcased through his encounter with a cave dweller (Andy Serkis) who is obsessed with - and spiritually enslaved by - a magical ring.

Not for the easily fright-

ened or those with short attention spans, Jackson's sweeping journey across Tolkien's imaginary world of Middle-earth is an upbeat outing suitable for all others. Much bloodless action violence, some mild gross-out humor.

The Catholic News Service classification is A-II -- adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned.

A list

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

my friend was crying softly.

The very idea of such cruelty toward the mentally challenged had brought her to tears. Ignatius felt tears were indicative of God moving us, and I felt this movement clearly through her tears.

I found myself reflecting on this moment in my examen.

How do I discern what this means? I don't know yet. I just know that with the help of the examen, clearly written there on my to-do list, I will pay attention to how God may be moving me to act.



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"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

*Christmas Blessings from the
Priest and Parishioners of Notre Dame Church,
Ogdensburg*

Jesus
THE REASON FOR THE SEASON
Merry Christmas!
The Catholic Community of Burke & Chateaugay

CLINTON

LECTIO DIVINA

Ellenburg – Our Lady of the Adirondacks House of Prayer will be having *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading), every Friday.

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

Features: Meditation on the following Sunday's readings and Rosary

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Plattsburgh – Eucharistic Adoration is held throughout the year every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Place: St. John's "Holy Family" Adoration Chapel, downstairs

Time: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Theme: "The Eucharist completes the restoration begun in the Crib. Make merry therefore on this beautiful day, on which the sun of the Eucharist is rising. Let your gratitude never separate the Crib from the Altar, the Word made flesh from the God-Man made Bread of Life in the Most Blessed Sacrament." (St. Peter Julian Eymard)

Contact: call 518-561-5083 or email us at Sjohnsadoration@aol.com

PRAYER MEETING

Plattsburgh – A weekly prayer meeting will be held every Wednesday (except the first Wednesday).

Time: 7 p.m.

Place: St. Peter's Church, St. Brother Andre' Chapel.

Features: Prayers and songs of praise, y devotional prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet/Novena

SOAKING PRAYER

Ellenburg – Our Lady of the Adirondacks House of Prayer have soaking prayer.

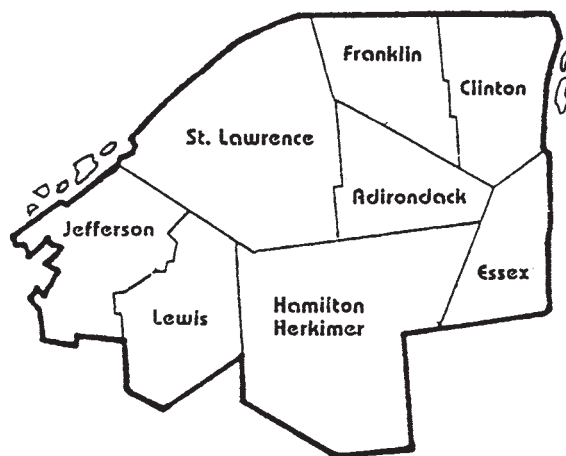
Date: Every 3rd Monday.

Time: 10 a.m. to 11

Features: Participants are immersed in prayer with individual prayer time

SOAKING PRAYER

Plattsburgh – Soaking Prayer is offered every second and fourth Wednesday of



The North Country Catholic welcomes contributions to "Around the Diocese".

Parishioners are invited to send information about activities to:

North Country Catholic, PO Box 326,
Ogdensburg, NY 13669; fax, 1-866-314-7296;
e-mail news@northcountrycatholic.org.

Items must be received in the NCC office by the Thursday before publication.

the month under the direction of the Living Water's Healing Ministry.

Time: 10 a.m. to 11:30

Place: Upper room at St. Peters

Features: A quiet prayerful environment, to be soaked in God's love

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Keeseville – The Keeseville Altar Rosary Society will sponsor a Sunday weekly Adoration of The Blessed Sacrament.

Time: 1 p.m. to 4

Place: Immaculate Conception Church

MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP

Sciota – Monthly prayer group to be held second Friday of the month.

Time: 2 p.m.

Place: To be determined, contact Nancy Monette at 561-8225 for details

Features: praying the Rosary, The Divine Chaplet, centering around creative prayer and music. Our prayers are offered for the sick in our parishes.

FRANKLIN

CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Fort Covington – St. Mary's Church is

celebrating the Birth of Our Savior before midnight Mass with snack, prayer and music.

Date: Dec. 24

Schedule: 10:30 p.m., Christmas cookies & treats; at 11 p.m. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; at 11:30 p.m. the Choir will present Christmas Carols before midnight Mass.

JEFFERSON

LIFERIGHT MEETING

Watertown – Liferight of Watertown will hold its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the Month.

Time: 4 p.m.

Place: 312 Sherman St.

Features: The office has videos, books and educational materials which may be borrowed. Topics covered: infanticide, assisted suicide, euthanasia and chastity.

Contact: Phone 315-788-8480; website: www.liferight.org.

LEWIS

CHRISTMAS WAFER-OPALTEK

Houseville – The Polish Christmas Wafer or *opaltek* is available from St. Hedwig's Church.

Cost: \$3 per packet.

Features: *Opaltek* is part of a Polish, Lithuanian and Slovak custom that is observed during the Vigil of Christmas (Wigilia). After the first star is visible, family and friends gather around the dinner table to share the wafer, which symbolizes the presence of Christ, the Newborn Child. The *opaltek* is sent and shared all over the world as a symbol of

love, unity and forgiveness, wishing God's blessing this Holy Night.

Contact: 348-6260.

INTERNATIONAL CRÈCHES

Houseville – St. Houseville's Parish is presenting an exhibit of Christmas Crèches (Nativities) from around the world

Dates: Dec. 23 and 30 and Jan. 6

Time: after 11 a.m. Mass and between 1 p.m. and 3.

Features: See the universality of Christ and Christmas through the eyes of many different cultures. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

Contact: 348-6260.

DIVINE MERCY DEVOTIONS

Houseville – Divine Mercy Devotions for the month of January will be held.

Date: Jan. 6

Time: 3 p.m.

Place: St. Hedwig's Church

Features: Vespers, (Evening Prayer), Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament, The Divine Mercy Chaplet and Benediction.

ST. LAWRENCE

FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

Massena – St. Mary's Church is holding a special rosary to mark First Saturday

Date: Jan. 5

Time: 3:15 p.m.

Features: Rosary to Our Lady of Fatima in reparation to Her Immaculate Heart and for World Peace will be prayed followed by a 15 minute private meditation on the Glorious Mysteries. Confessions begin at 2:45 p.m. and the Saturday Vigil Mass is at 4 p.m.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Ogdensburg – The Knights of Columbus Council 258 will be holding their annual Children's Christmas Party.

Date: Dec. 22

Time: Noon to 2 p.m.

Place: K of C Hall

Features: Food, games, visit from Santa around 1 p.m.

Contact: Call the clubrooms with ages and number of children at 393-7990.

SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP

Canton – The Surviving Spouse Friendship and Support Group meets the first Thursday of the month.

Time: 9 a.m.

Place: Best Western University Inn

Contact: Lita Maroney at 379-1650

FISH FRIES POSTPONED

Ogdensburg – The K of C Council 258's

Friday Night Fish Fries are suspended from Nov. 23 until Jan. 11.

NOVENA FOR MILITARY

Ogdensburg – Notre Dame Church is holding a Weekly novena for the safety of U.S. military personnel

Date: Tuesday evenings

Time: 6:30 p.m.

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Massena – St. Mary's & St. Joseph's will have a Benediction and Adoration every Friday.

Time: 9 a.m. to Noon

Place: St. Mary's Family Room

HOLY HOUR FOR VOCATIONS

Ogdensburg – St. Mary's Cathedral holds a monthly Holy Hour to pray for Vocations.

Date: Thursday before the First Friday

Time: 8 p.m. to 9

Place: Deacon Winter Chapel

Features: Nocturnal Adoration continues through the night

DIOCESAN EVENTS

LESSONS AND CAROLS

The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble will give three performances of a Festival of Lessons and Carols:

Schedule:

- Dec. 21 at 7:30 pm at Notre Dame Church in Malone

- Dec. 22 at 7:30 pm at St. Peter's Church in Plattsburgh

- Dec. 23 at 3:00 pm at St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid

Features: The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE), conducted by Andrew Benware, is a mixed chamber choir of professional and amateur singers: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. NAVE's Festival of Lessons and Carols follows the traditional model of those performed annually on Christmas Eve at King's College Chapel in Cambridge, England. The customary format is built around nine short Bible readings from that trace the story of the fall of humanity and the promise of a Messiah to the birth of Jesus. Anthems, carols, and hymns are interspersed throughout

Cost: Suggested donation of \$10.

Contact: 518-293-7613 or send a message by e-mail to hillholl@hughes.net

DIOCESAN ECUMENICAL SERVICE

Carthage – The annual diocesan Ecumenical Service has been planned.

Date: Jan. 13

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Place: St. James Church

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The Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Inc.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director
622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669
(315) 393-2920; fax 1-866-314-7296
mbrett@dioogdensburg.org

Advent-Christmas reflections

From the Director's Desk
Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ,
Diocesan Mission Director

Sister Cindy Sullivan, BVM, a native of Massena and missionary in Quito, Ecuador sends her greetings to the North Country. Below is an excerpt from her annual letter to her fellow friends in the Missions.

"Well it is that season again, Advent, the coming, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Lord at Christmas. The theme of readings and teachings during Advent is often to prepare for the second coming while commemorating the First Coming of Christ at Christmas. For all too many of us it becomes a time of hurried shopping, wrapping, decorating, parties and not enough time to get all things done. Thanksgiving gets pushed aside so quickly and we are off and running until the patient waiting gets thrown out the window.

At the Working Boys Center we try to maintain our perspective and get the families to enjoy the expectant waiting. We have our advent wreath and explain the significance of each candle, the colors, the circle and the greenery. We also have our Jesse tree with the ornaments to remember who will come from the root of Jesse, and our Savior's ancestry. The children love placing the many symbols on the tree throughout Advent. We also have the novena each evening before Christmas. I love this activity with the families. We have carols, readings and some quiet time to watch the children and their faces as they gaze upon our large crèche with so many animals, shepherds and roadways all leading to the manger where soon baby Jesus will appear. They know that Christmas is not about gifts...it is about celebrating His birthday. We will have Christmas parties, and Christmas day we have a sit down dinner for all of our families... complete with chicken, but our main celebration is celebrating His coming into our lives.

I guess the devil is thrilled that we get caught up with so many activities that we don't seem to have the time to just be quiet, still and reflect on the importance of this event. It almost has become something that people dread with shopping, lines, spending, wondering if it is the "right" gift or will they like it, etc.... So my friends, once again this year I encourage you to try to really take some time to reflect on this incredible happening. A baby is born to us. This baby is going to save each one of us. He deserves that we take the time to REMEMBER, CELEBRATE and REJOICE in HIS coming into our lives."

On behalf of Molly and myself, the Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Inc., would like to take this time to wish all of you a very, Blessed Christmas.

OBITUARIES

Adams - Karen J. (Murphy) Dutton, 73; Funeral Service Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Cecilia's Church; burial in Rural Cemetery.

Canton - Donald J. Ames; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Brick Chapel Cemetery.

Canton - William L. Sanderson, 72; Funeral Dec. 11, 2012 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Hermon Cemetery.

Croghan - Mary Emma (O'Brien) Tabolt, 90; Funeral Services Dec. 11, 2012 at Scanlon Funeral Home; burial in St. Stephen's Cemetery.

Croghan - Catherine I. (King) Zimmer, 88; Funeral Services Dec. 21, 2012 at St. Stephen's Church; burial in St. Stephen's Cemetery.

Harrisville - Dennis G. LaDuc, 81; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Francis Solanus Church; burial in St. Francis Solanus Cemetery.

Heuvelton - David W. Link, 59; Funeral Services Dec. 11, 2012 at St. Raphael's Church; burial in Hillcrest Cemetery.

Hogansburg - Jacqueline J. "Butchie" Francis, 66; Funeral Dec. 14, 2012 at St. Regis Church; burial in Kateri Cemetery.

Massena - Helen Anne (LaRue) Mullarney, 91; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at Church of the Sacred Heart; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Morrisonville - Linda M. (Reyell) Bodette, 65; Funeral Services Dec. 11, 2012 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Morristown - Mildred W. Wroblewski, 86; Funeral Services Dec. 11, 2012 at St. John's Church; burial in Sunnyside Cemetery.

Plattsburgh - Rita I. (Brown) Cable, 94; Funeral Services Dec. 14, 2012 at St. Peter's Church; burial in St. Mary's of the Lake Cemetery, Cumberland Head.

Plattsburgh - David Keith Stanley, 53; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2012 at St. John's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Port Henry - Ronald N. Murdock, 47; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in South Moriah Cemetery, Moriah.

Port Leyden - Stephanie Meus Millick, 98; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Martin's Church; burial in Wildwood Cemetery, Lyons Falls.

Port Leyden - Dorothy (Doody) O'Brien, 80; Funeral Services Dec. 14, 2012 at St. Martin's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Potsdam - Virginia (Vernatter) Grant, 65; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2012 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Potsdam - Patricia Jane White, 75; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Mary's Church.

Redford - Andrew "Andy" T. Fecteau, 85; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2012 at Church of the Assumption; burial in parish cemetery.

St. Regis Falls - Randall N. "Randy" Aiken, 62; Funeral Services Dec. 14, 2012 at the Hammill Funeral Home; burial in Sand Hill Cemetery, Dickinson.

Saranac Lake - Teresa R. (Ryan) Eshelman, 91; Funeral Services Dec. 11, 2012 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Rose Cemetery, Alder Brook.

Tupper Lake - Mary G. Rogers, 69; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2012 at St. Alphonsus Church.

Watertown - Salvatore C. Coniglio, 87; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2012 at St. Anthony's Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Watertown - Marjorie E. (Neillis) Daly, 83; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2012 at the Reed & Benoit Funeral Home, Inc.

Watertown - Mary Louise (Teubner) Lydon, 93; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2012 at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Watertown - Timothy S. McManimon, 47; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2012 at St. Patrick's Church.

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YOUNG CATHOLIC VOICE

Are you ready to receive him?



Tracy Leonard

By Tracy Leonard
NCC contributing Writer

Have you ever experienced an intense passion or longing for something; a strong, persistent yearning or desire that is accompanied by confident expectation of its fulfillment?

Perhaps this desire and search is the reason or source of hope for a future good.

This thing we yearn for may be difficult, but not im-

possible to obtain if we depend on God.

This longing, anticipation and hope are possibly a familiar feeling in your heart this Christmas season as you anxiously and expectantly await the birth of our humble savior Jesus Christ; priest, prophet and king.

What are you doing to prepare for Him?

Are you ready to receive Him?

As we contemplate the incarnation, or the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh as Jesus Christ, may we openly prepare our hearts to welcome Him.

Weeks before Christmas, many of us are consumed by the commercialism of

the holiday season.

We are decorating our homes, baking cookies, writing letters to Santa and searching for that perfect gift that will bring incredible joy.

Perhaps we need to take a step back.

Let us decorate not just our homes, but our lives with works of charity and designated time of contemplation and prayer.

Let us write letters to those we love.

Help us, Lord, to see Santa Claus as one who embodies the spirit of giving and unselfish love.

Take time. Reflect within.

Are you like Elizabeth's baby in the womb who

leaps for joy at the sound of Mary's greeting?

Are you like the shepherds crossing the field, bringing your poverty, humility and simple openness for the joy of the Lord?

Or are you like the wise, knowledgeable and wealthy magi bringing your gifts of unselfish love to the king?

Whether you are like John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb, a shepherd, or magi, you are called to follow Gabriel's command- "do not be afraid!"

Find hope and joy in Simeon's blessing which tells us that the Christ child would be "a light of revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32).

This was one of the first indications that Jesus came for all people, of all nations, of all races, and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

This is your command - follow Him this Christmas season and be a light to the world which so desperately needs His love.



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May the blessings of Christmas be upon you and your family all year long!

St. John the Baptist Church, Madrid &
St. Mary's Church, Waddington

Christmas Schedule

Confessions:

St. John the Baptist Church - Sat. Dec. 22 3:30 p.m. to 4:15

St. Mary Church - Sun. Dec. 23 Noon to 1 p.m.

Christmas Eve Masses:

St. Mary's Church - Mon. Dec. 24 4:30 p.m.

St. John the Baptist Church - Dec. 24 7 p.m.

Christmas Morning Mass:

St. Mary's Church - Tues. Dec. 25 10:30 a.m.



Christmas Blessings

Episcopal Delegate
Office of Safe Environment



The Song of the Angels:
"Glory to God in the highest and on earth, Peace."
~ Luke 2:14

Christmas Blessings on you and your family.

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