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# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DEC. 23, 2015

## CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS



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Mary and the child Jesus are depicted in a 17th-century painting by Il Sassoferrato. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.

## Bishop opens Door of Mercy

Bishop Terry R. LaValley opened the Holy Door of Mercy at St. Mary's Cathedral Dec. 13 marking the beginning of the diocesan observance of the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy.

In his homily for the occasion, he said, "With the opening of our Door of Mercy followed by the solemn procession at the start of Mass, we are reminded of the Church's ongoing pilgrimage toward Jesus Christ and our response to His invitation,

"Follow Me" ...

"There is a rich symbolism in crossing the threshold of a doorway to mark a new life, a fresh start, the transition to a renewed relationship with God," the bishop said. "Advent, a new Church year, is about freshness, starting anew, forgiveness...."

"Passing through the Holy Door symbolizes our desire in Christ to leave behind any attraction to sin and to open our hearts to His gift of mercy and reconciliation..."

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### READY FOR SAINTHOOD



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## Consecrated to the Blessed Mother

After participating in a 33 day retreat centering on Father Michael Gaitley's book *33 Days to Morning Glory*, more than 50 people from St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid and St. Bernard's Church in Saranac consecrated themselves to the Blessed Mother Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Father John Yonkovig, pastor of St. Agnes, said Father Gaitley's book is based on five strong figures within the church that give insight into Mary. The Catholic Church has a long tradition of Marian devotion as she is a role model, a pattern of all Christian living, he said.

### Keeping Christ in Christmas

Peru Knight Joseph Purtell has chaired his council's "Keep Christ in Christmas" poster contest for the past 25 years

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### Around the Diocese

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NORTH  
COUNTRY  
CATHOLIC

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## BISHOP LAVALLEY'S MESSAGE FOR CHRISTMAS 2015

## Christmas: festival of God's infinite love

## Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

*"Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy."* (*Misericordiae vultus*) With these words, Pope Francis announced to the world the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. Mercy is a special power of God's love whose manifestation is needed in our present-day world more than ever. In the present moment humanity seems unable or unwilling to trust in that power. Some believe that through the power of violence, terror and hatred, one can intimidate others to bend to their will.

Mary, upon entering the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth, magnifies the Lord with all her being for "His mercy," which "from generation to generation" is bestowed on those who fear Him. This is the time of year when we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, whose life was steeped in compassion and tenderness. Our God's unconditional love and boundless mercy became flesh and bones in the Person of Jesus Christ so that we might touch and see God's compassion for every one of us.

As we gaze at the Babe in the manger, we get a glimpse of the power of the love and mercy of the Father; a love more powerful than death, more powerful than sin. Our God took on human flesh, walked the dusty roads of life to show us what that love looks like and what such mercy can accomplish. Through His lifestyle and through His actions, Jesus became the model of merciful love for others. With God's mercy – vengeance, hatred and injustice do not have the last word.

Christmas is the festival of God's infinite love and mercy, the festival of tomorrow's possibilities, the festival of our salvation—truly a time of hope for all people. It is in this moment that the

faithful of our Diocese continue to respond to the universal call to holiness. Today, in spite of the darkness that envelops so much of our world, we do not give in to discouragement. Rather, like Mary, we yearn to embrace the power of God's love and mercy.

In light of our own encounter with the God-Child in the stable and, like the shepherds of that holiest of nights who lived in a violent and troubled world, we humbly invite others to: **Find your home in Christ: Renew Faith, Nurture Hope, Discover Love.** To these same shepherds angelic choirs announced God's peace and pointed to the proof of God's hope for the world which could be found in the One who wore swaddling clothes in a manger and later a loin cloth on a cross. God has rescued us from the power of darkness! That's the message for every ear to hear and heart to embrace!

May the Christ Child bring you and your loved ones the Gift of Love, the Blessing of Hope and the Promise of Peace. A blessed Christmas and joy-filled Jubilee Year of Mercy!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg

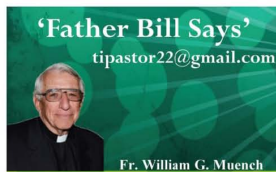
## Christmas, St. Joseph and place of mercy

Each year at Christmas time, I have been telling the same story. You have to understand the story is about the most exciting day of my life. I am sure I have told you this story before: Susan and Paul invited me to be with them at the birth of their second child; his name is Will. Will is now a freshman in college so I've told the story for many Christmases. I have not forgotten any of the details of that day. It was a special time for me.

The world has changed a great deal since the day of Will's birth. This world continues to be plagued with war, violence and much hatred. I wish I was smart enough to offer the world's leaders a solution so that the future will be filled with peace. However, I haven't caught up with them.

This time of violence has resulted in the dreadful situation of huge numbers of displaced people – migrants wandering this world to find a peaceful place to live.

The Christmas story reminds me that Mary and Joseph were



migrants away from home when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. They were far from home. It makes for an interesting question: would we have accepted them without a visa into our country?

I have watched the news about these migrants and kept up to date about their stories. It is rather obvious that they are very uncomfortable and uncertain about their future. This made me think of St. Joseph's situation as he had to figure out what to do. He was away from home and had the responsibility for his wife and a new born baby.

This all came to mind this morning. I stopped at the store for a newspaper and the guys having coffee had all sorts of questions. They were

wondering why there wasn't more information about St. Joseph. They were very curious about him.

I know the Gospel story doesn't tell us much about St. Joseph's situation. I did agree with the guys that it would have been interesting to know more about St. Joseph. I was rather impressed that they were so concerned about St. Joseph. I am absolutely certain that that first Christmas day was rather busy for St. Joseph. Of course, this would be just the beginning for St. Joseph – a time of the challenges of protecting his family. He had many decisions to make and there would be many things to understand.

Throughout the centuries of the Catholic Church, a strong spirituality has developed around St. Joseph. He is the protector – the protector of the Savior of our world and the Blessed Mother.

Many religious communities have chosen St. Joseph as their patron and protector. I immediately think of our Sisters of

St. Joseph here in the Diocese of Ogdensburg. These Sisters have been such an important part of the life of our diocese. I have had the privilege of working with many of the Sisters of St. Joseph in various parishes and schools. So, I take this opportunity to wish a Happy Christmas to our Sisters of St. Joseph and I offer them my gratitude for all they have done for me and all of us in the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

Now, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a Happy Christmas and all the best for a Peaceful New Year. This will be quite a year for us, Catholics, as we celebrate Pope Francis' Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis has challenged us all to make this a year of love and forgiveness, a time to bring God's mercy more alive in our own hearts so that we can bring that Mercy to all those we meet to our world. Our task this year is to make our world a better place, a place of love, a place of Peace, a place of forgiveness, a place of Mercy.

FOLLOW ME

# Door of Mercy is opened

Bishop LaValley's homily for the Opening of the Holy Door to launch the diocesan observance of the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy, Dec. 13 at St. Mary's Cathedral

Doors serve a practical purpose in any house of worship. They also have deep religious symbolism in the Church.

The first of the ancient minor orders was that of a doorkeeper, a porter, who before his ordination was urged by the bishop to use his words and example as spiritual keys to close the hearts of the faithful to the devil and open them to hearing and fulfilling the word of God.

Of course, you know well the porter who was canonized a saint not long ago, the doorkeeper, the Miracle Man of Montreal, St. Brother Andre Bessette. First at Notre Dame College in Montreal, then at St. Joseph Oratory, this humble, sickly man opened the door and warmly welcomed all those seeking healing for themselves or loved ones. Perhaps members of your own family were blessed by his presence.

With the opening of our Door of Mercy followed by the solemn procession at the start of Mass, we are reminded of the Church's ongoing pilgrimage toward Jesus Christ and our response to His invitation, "Follow Me," who am rich in mercy.

There is a rich symbolism in crossing the threshold of a doorway to mark a new life, a fresh start, the transition to a renewed relationship with God. Advent, a new Church year, is about freshness, starting anew, forgiveness.

Passing through the Holy Door symbolizes our desire in Christ to leave behind



PHOTOS BY BETTY STEELE

Bishop Terry R. LaValley opened the Holy Door at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg Dec. 13 marking the beginning of the diocesan observance of the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy. His homily for the Mass is printed here.

any attraction to sin and to open our hearts to His gift of mercy and reconciliation Pope Francis tells us: "The Holy Door will become a Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope."

Each of us sinners is invited to move from a life that's centered on self to a life that's more centered on God. We can't make it happen, of course, but if we make a start on this journey we can be sure that God will meet us on the way.

Let me suggest a few things that might be helpful for the journey.

The first thing is to reflect upon the life of Jesus and get to know Him as a real person. Jesus told Philip:

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn.14:8). Pope Francis, in announcing this Jubilee of Mercy, reminds us that Jesus is the Face of the Father's mercy.

This year we want to gaze even more deeply at the face of Divine Mercy, Jesus Christ. We can do that by opening up the New Testament regularly and, in our imagination, seat ourselves in a quiet corner close to where Jesus is, and watch and listen to Him, for instance, as He shows and tells you about the Father's tender love and boundless mercy in the parable about a son's return home, an older brother's reaction and a father's unconditional love and compassion.

Imagine you are there when the woman, a public

sinner, washed the Lord's feet with her tears, this woman who loved much.

Little by little you'll get more comfortable with Jesus' tender and merciful presence.

A dialogue may even get started between the two of you as you gaze upon His Face.

Secondly, tell Jesus you want to help build a community of love and truth and justice on our earth, that you desire to be a bridge builder and peace maker through your willingness to forgive and show mercy.

Through it all, discipline yourself and be willing to work at this task, and wait for it to produce fruit.

Wait for God. Sounds like an Advent theme, doesn't it?

Those of us who are older can remember a time when our faith was supported by an elaborate religious structure - devotional practices such as forty hours, benediction, Marian devotions, abstinence on Fridays and special prayer days such as All Souls.

Now that these things are less in evidence than before, we are faced with the question: Was our faith merely in those comfortable and familiar structures, or did we actually reach out to the holy and mysterious God behind them?

Two thousand years ago, John the Baptist gave some predictable advice to those who asked for it, but he also pointed them forward towards a Person, whose face reflected the very love and mercy of our Father, who was about to enter their lives in a new way.

That's what Advent should be doing for us, too - looking forward with great hope and joy.

Let each of us resolve, as we begin the journey of this Jubilee Year of Mercy, to become more merciful in our own lives so that we can go out to others bringing the goodness and compassion that we have found in our God.

There is a tremendous need for tenderness, reconciliation and healing in our hurting world.

Pope Francis wants our parishes to become "islands of mercy in a sea of indifference." Particularly during this Year of Mercy, each time we pass through the threshold of this sacred space, let us not forget that we are a pilgrim people, ever on the move, one step at a time, yearning for healing and forgiveness in a world darkened so much by hatred and terror.

Let there be peace on earth, let it begin here-deep within me. Lord Have Mercy on us all!

*St. Agnes in Lake Placid is site for Consecration to Mary on Dec. 8*

# 'The answer is Our Lady'

By Kristina Dean  
Staff writer

**LAKE PLACID** -- After participating in a 33 day retreat centering around Father Michael Gaitley's book *33 Days to Morning Glory*, more than 50 people from St. Agnes Church and St. Bernard's Church in Saranac consecrated themselves to the Blessed Mother on her Dec. 8 Immaculate Conception feast day.

After noticing "a division in the world", organizer Christina Carlson felt the solution was consecration to Mary, the Blessed Mother.

The St. Agnes parishioner and mother of five originally began thinking of it for the parish's Women of Faith ministry, but after attending a diocesan conference on forming intentional disciples, she felt it needed to be offered on a broader basis and eventually it grew to include both parishes.

"The answer is Our Lady," Mrs. Carlson said. "She can change hearts. She melts hearts and shows people the way to her son."

"I started thinking of how to make disciples," she said. "There is a supernatural grace that needs to come into play to move people beyond just going to church."

## Blessed Mother's grace

The Blessed Mother's grace and guidance was a common theme in the retreat, Mrs. Carlson said. One example was through Marcia Bugbee, religious education director at St. Agnes, who suggested praying the Rosary every Tuesday after Mass, starting in June specifically to prepare hearts for consecration and unity.

"I do think that was probably one of the biggest things where the graces came in through that prayer," Mrs. Carlson said. "It changed us from having the retreat in



PHOTOS BY ZACK LEADER  
Dr. Maura Fehlner led a retreat "33 Days to Morning Glory" which preceded the Dec. 8 consecration..

just the women's group to the larger parish, and to having all these people placed specifically where we needed them.

"It was just amazing how everything came together," she said. "It all fit in really well. You know Our Lady's hand was there. Everyone was working so well together. She brought the perfect combination of talents to make it a successful retreat."

## Recharged and excited

One of those talents was Dr. Maura Hearden Fehlner, who teaches theology for Desales University as well as St. Joseph's College of Maine.

According to Mrs. Carlson, St. Agnes pastor Father John Yonkovig suggested Dr. Fehlner, who acted as the large group leader and master of ceremonies.

The theology professor said the experience was inspiring.

"I left every session feeling recharged and excited," she said. "It was just so good to get to know the people in my small group. Their insights helped me to learn more, it was mutually beneficial. It



Father Thomas Higman blessed Jesse Izzo and Father John Yonkovig blessed Jesse's father, Bill Izzo, with oil brought from National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge Massachusetts.

was so well put together. She (Mrs. Carlson) just did a fantastic job."

One particular topic Dr. Fehlner addressed was the idea of Mary as a mediator between ourselves and Jesus, a subject with which some were struggling, Mrs. Carlson said.

In her lecture, Dr. Fehlner said she likened God to a mighty ocean, too vast and powerful for a human. Without help, we'd be crushed by His immense power. But because He loves us, He willingly limits himself, and becomes incarnate in Christ, she said.

"Christ is like a river designed to enter our dry parched land and bring us the waters of life," she said. "I can approach the river, stick my face in the water and drink it up."

"It's still kind of hard, though," Sr. Fehlner said. "Because God is so generous, he creates this beautiful, perfectly proportioned glass I can use to bring water from the river to my lips. That glass is like Mary. Mary is this perfectly beautifully designed vessel of grace that God uses to help us receive."

not have a strong foundation in Marian theology. This strengthened them, and gave them another look at Mary."

The pastor agreed Mary's grace was present as "tremendous motherly qualities" evident in the education and informing of the retreatants and in childcare that was available during the retreat.

One image that struck him was of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who in the book discussed Jesus's words of "I thirst" as he was suffering on the cross. Jesus was speaking not just of physical thirst, but of his love for us.

"That captured people's imagination. His thirst, his love for us," Father Yonkovig said. "Those kind of images were enlightening and encouraging for people who may not have a strong devotion to Mary, but the session brought them closer to Jesus which is Mary's purpose and goal."

## Support for families

Each night prior to the retreat, a light meal was provided to participants after Mass at St. Agnes school, allowing for fellowship. This was one of the suggestions of the forming disciples retreat, Mrs. Carlson said. She wanted to help couples attend, especially those with children, so childcare was available as well. Both the meal and childcare were provided especially through Fr. Yonkovig's help, she said.

"It's hard for parents, and it's tough on a school night, trying to get there and back let alone paying for childcare. Sometimes with married couples one of them stays home with only one getting to go, so it's really nice when both can go," she said.

Father Thomas Higman, parochial vicar of St. Bernard's in Saranac Lake and Dr. Fehlner's husband, John, also aided the retreat.

## Long tradition of Marian devotion

Father Yonkovig said Father Gaitley's book is based on five strong figures within the church that give insight into Mary. The Catholic Church has a long tradition of Marian devotion as she is a role model, a pattern of all Christian living, he said.

"It allows us to tap into the mystery of the Blessed Mother, both her humility and her strength. Marian spirituality is part of every Christian, for some stronger than others," he said. "Some people who came really did

# CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Catholic kids of all ages get into the spirit



Saint Nicholas visited with students of Augustinian Academy in Carthage to celebrate the Feast of Saint Nicholas. Pictured here is St. Nick with the pre-kindergarten students.



The creation of the Christmas fruit baskets for local veterans involved every student and teacher from Nursery through Grade 6 at St. Mary's School in Canton. Pictured around the 22 crafted baskets are the fourth grade students John Friot, Ben Hill, Brianna Lacomb, Jacob Rosales, Luke Huber, Ava Hoy, Faith Christy and Karley Breen



With winter fast approaching and temperatures slowly dropping, protection from the cold becomes a necessity in Northern New York. St. Peter's Catholic Church in Hammond has annually offered a solution for residents in need of warm clothing. On Nov. 19, St. Peter's Altar Rosary Society opened its parish center to over 100 residents from surrounding areas to select new and lightly worn coats of all sizes. Coats are usually donated by parishioners and local Hammond residents but this year Peebles in Ogdensburg also donated a large assortment of coats and various other cold weather items like sweaters, shirts and blouses. David Simmons, Peebles manager, generously provided the items knowing that the cause was a worthy one. This year's coat drive exceeded expectations because of Peebles' support. Coats that were not selected were turned over to the Hammond Food Pantry for distribution throughout the winter season. At left, Simmons, and Peebles employee, Christina Montroy take a break from loading winter clothes for coat drive.




The children of SS Philip & James Church in Lisbon held a cookie decorating party and then brought cookies to the Lisbon ICF residents. They also brought toys to donate for Toys for Tots as seen in this picture. Front, from left are Keely Wilhelm, Jocelyn Wilhelm, Olivia Hitsman and Harry Scott; back Megan Wilhelm, Connor Bell, Allison Bell and Ellie Hitsman.

# Gathering for lay ministers is set

**PERU** – An informational meeting for the newly established Eastern Regional Commissioned Lay Minister's Association (ERCLMA) will be held Jan. 15 at 6 p.m. at St. Augustine's Parish Center. The organization was founded to offer spiritual renewal, education and support for commissioned lay ministers in Clinton, Essex, Hamilton and Herkimer deaneries, whether active or not. Spouses, pastors and deacons are welcome. The guest speakers will be

Deacon Patrick Donahue, D. Min., director of the diocesan Formation for Ministry Program, who will speak on "Lay Ministry Today" and Father Scott Seymour, pastor of the Roman Catholic Community of St. Alexander's and St. Joseph's in Morrisonville on "The Importance of Lay Ministry in our Parishes". Registration may be made through Jeannie Grizzuto at the Formation for Ministry Office, email, [jgrizzuto@rcdony.org](mailto:jgrizzuto@rcdony.org) or phone, 315-393-2920, ext. 1413.

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*Support And Pray  
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## THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS


WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Eternal Father, we lift up to you these and all the priests of the world. Sanctify them. Heal and guide them. Mold them into the likeness and holiness of your Son, Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. May their lives be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen <small>(With ecclesiastical approval)</small>	Mass Rosary Fasting Day Offering Eucharistic Adoration Offering of Sufferings Divine Mercy Chaplet Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him
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 A donation to help support THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS will be appreciated.  
 The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests is graciously underwritten by:  [www.myvocation.net](http://www.myvocation.net)

### Bishop's Schedule

**Dec. 24** – 4 p.m., Vigil of the Christmas Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Dec. 25** – 12 a.m., Christmas Vigil Midnight Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
 10:50 a.m., Christmas Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg

**Dec. 26** – 4 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Dec. 27** – 11 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Dec. 29** – 10:50 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg

**Dec. 31** – 4 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 1** – 9 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 3** – 8 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 5** – 12 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 6** – 10:50 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

### Rest in Peace

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

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

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

**Dec. 26** – Rev. Aloysius Hyacinth McMahon, 1936

**Dec. 27** – Rev. Hollis David Burns, 1936; Rev. Henry Gilbeau, O.F.

M.Conv., 1978; Rev. Wilfred L. DeRoche, 2013

**Dec. 28** – Rev. Nicolaus Burtin, O.M.I., 1902; Msgr. John M. Waterhouse, 1995; Rev. Eugene J. Beaudet, 2004;

Rev. Howard P. McCasland, 2010

**Dec. 29** – Rev. John A. Mullen, 1887

**Dec. 30** – Rev. Jean B. Lemerrier, 1863; Rev. Sam D'Angelo, O.S.A., 1961; Deacon Victor Demers, 2003

**Dec. 31** – Rev. Joseph Butler, 1894; Rev. Benedict Granottier, 1930; Msgr. Clarence A. Kitts, 1949

**Jan. 1** – Rev. Earl Leo Taylor, 1974

**Jan. 2** – Rev. Henry William McFadden, 1978; Deacon Robert J. LeClair, 2009

**Jan. 3** – Rev. A. J. M. Viau, 1966; Rev. Hilary Neal, O.P., 1986

**Jan. 4** – Rev. James Edwin O'Haire, 1877; Rev. Michael Walsh, M.S.C., 1977; Rev. Charles E. Chase, 2011

**Jan. 5** – Rev. Louis LeBrett, O.M.I., 1903; Msgr. Dennis E. Lynch, 1979;

Rev. Raoul J. Poirier, M.Afr., 1997

### Announcement

The Diocesan Central Offices will be closed in observance of Christmas beginning 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 23 and will re-open for business on Monday, Dec. 28 at 8:15 a.m. The offices will also be closed Jan. 1.

### To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact:

**Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terrianne Yanulavich, Adult & Youth Counseling Services of Northern New York, 413 Ryan Road, Churubusco, NY, 12923; e-mail: [terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com](mailto:terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com) Phone: 518-483-3261; or Father James Seymour, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy at 315-393-2920, ext. 1340

### Environmental Stewardship

#### Who is this Word that pitches his tent among us?

It is no coincidence that the celebration of Christmas comes during the darkest time of the year.

On the winter solstice, celebrated on December 22 in the northern hemisphere, we all long for the return of longer days of sunlight and the promise of new life that it brings with it.

We, as Christians, also long for the light of the Son of God to bring the light of new life and hope into the darkness within our hearts and into the darkness around us.

On Christmas Day we read with a profound sense of wonder: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God. Through Him all things came to be...All that came to be through Him and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race: the light shines in the darkness, the darkness has not overcome it." (Jn 1:1,4-5)

We pray in the Angelus that this "Word became flesh and dwelt among us." "Who is this Word who pitches His tent among us?"

Our awareness of the immensity of Creation has expanded beyond our wildest imagination with the help of the Hubble telescope and other instruments that explore the Universe.

We realize that our whole galaxy is but one of billions of other galaxies. The more we discover about the enormity of the Universe created by God, the more we are filled with wonder that God had chosen to become incarnated in our midst. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

As we pray before the Nativity this Christmas, let us ponder the magnificence of the skies and the earth and the mystery of the Creator's unbounding love made flesh in the form of a tiny baby.

### NO PAPER NEXT WEEK

The next issue of the *North Country Catholic* will be dated Jan. 6. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the NCC staff!!

Upcoming sessions:  
**Dec. 30** - 6:30 p.m., St. Stephen's Church, Croghan  
**Jan. 5** - 4 p.m., St. Peter's Church, Plattsburgh



**The Real Reason why we Celebrate CHRISTMAS**

**C**hristians celebrate the birth of their Savior on this glorious night,  
**H**eaven was lit up by one star; which was truly a magnificent sight.  
**R**ejoicing the Three Wisemen bringing gifts for the new born king,  
**I**ncredible gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh was what they would bring,  
**S**o they journeyed far and wide to find where the Messiah would be,  
**T**hey came upon the Stable in Bethlehem in the town of Judea, and they all did agree.  
**M**ary and Joseph and Baby Jesus were in the Manger, when the three Wisemen arrived,  
**A**nd thousands of years have passed; yet this story of Christ's birth is still alive.  
**S**o " Jesus is the Reason for the Season".... Keep **Christ** in **Christmas**... Wish Everyone  
 a Merry **Christmas** and a Happy New Year!

If you take the first letter of each sentence it will spell out "The Birthday of Our SAVIOR!"

**CHRISTMAS (The Day of Christ's Birth)**

Written by Barbara J. Morris 11-16-2014



*This Christmas....*

**"Embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity,  
 Especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important . . ."**

*-Pope Francis*



**This year, please remember the Missions with prayer and sacrifice.  
 Merry Christmas!**

**Pontifical Mission Societies, Inc.  
 Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director & Molly McKee Ryan, Bookkeeper**



*May the Christmas joy fill  
 your hearts the whole year  
 and may 2016 be a year of  
 mercy for you.*



**The Catholic Churches of Christ's Light  
 St. Mary's of the Fort, St. Joseph's, St. Francis of Assisi, Our Lady of Fatima, St. George's and St. Patrick's**

## Holiday Schedule for ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Canton, New York

Tuesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Sacrament of Penance  
from 4:00-5:00 pm and 6:30-7:30 pm

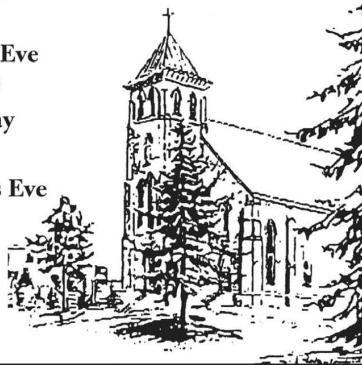
Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve  
Masses at 4:00 pm; 6:00 pm; 10:00 pm

Friday, December 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Day  
9:00 am - Mass only

Thursday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, New Year's Eve  
5:00 pm Vigil Mass

Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016,  
New Year's Day

(Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)  
9:00 am & 11:15 am Masses only



For the past 25 years Joseph Purtell has served as chairman of St. Augustine's Knights of Columbus Council 7273's Keep Christ in Christmas Poster Contest. Here, he checks on Remi Beauharnois as she works on her poster.

## Keeping Christ in Christmas

By John Ryan  
Contributing Writer

PERU – During a period in history when many people are absorbed in the secular aspects of Christmas Season, Joseph Purtell has been exposing young people in his community to the religious nature of the season.

For the past 25 years Purtell has served as chairman of St. Augustine's Knights of Columbus Council 7273's Keep Christ in Christmas Poster Contest.

The Keep Christ in Christmas Poster Contest is a Knights of Columbus international program that began in the 1960's. Several thousand K of C councils conduct the program annually for children ages 5 to 14.

This year the Peru youth judged to have the best poster will receive a special honor; their poster will be featured on St. Augustine's Pastor Father Alan Shnob's 2016 Christmas card.

Before the children arrive at St. Augustine's Parish Center to draw their posters, Purtell and his helpers place

Christmas cards portraying the Christ Child on each worktable.

"Sometimes they start off drawing Santa," he said. "We explain Christ to them and they quickly understand." After having conducted the contest for so many years Purtell has many memories.

"I get to see the children grow and now I see their children," he said. "It's wonderful!"

Purtell said 2015 would be his last year leading the contest. He explained, "My wife Judy and I have 16 grandchildren living as far away as Florida and the Carolinas. We want to visit them more often. If I can't commit, I'd rather not chair the program. If I'm here, I'll be happy to help."

Coincidentally the Peru Knights are in the process of reviving their Columbian Squires Circle, a youth group open to boys and young men ages 10 to 18.

Purtell said, "I hope the contest can be passed on to the Squires. They conducted our contest in the 1980's. It would be a great activity for them."



*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





Margaret Champagne, a Seton Catholic Central cross country and track standout, recently signed a letter of intent to compete for the University of New Hampshire in Durham, which competes at the Division 1 level. She is shown, center, with her parents David and Kathy Champagne; members of the Seton cross country team and athletic director Mary Forbes.

## Seton athlete signs letter of intent

By Shawn Ryan  
Staff writer

PLATTSBURGH - Seton Catholic Central cross country and track standout Margaret Champagne signed a letter of intent recently, to attend and compete for the University of New Hampshire in Durham, which competes at the Division 1 level.

The move by Champagne establishes a Champagne dynasty at New Hampshire. Champagne's mother, and Seton's cross county coach, Kathy Champagne was a record setting runner at the school herself. She was a member of the class of '84.

Champagne decided at the end of October that New Hampshire would be her first choice, after visiting the school over the summer.

The University of New Hampshire, she said, was not even on her RADAR screen until her mother suggested a visit.

"I visited the campus and I really liked it. Plus they have a lot of options for majors, so that went into [the decision], because I don't know what I want to major in yet," she said. "I'm really excited to have my decision over with and just relax my senior year."

"I'm very excited, her father David Champagne said. "Margaret has worked hard for five years to get to this place, so we're very proud of her."

Margaret is the third sibling from the Champagne family to excel in Section VII cross country, and continue running at the college level. Her sister Mary Kate and brother Michael competed for Providence College and Iona respectively.

With her signing, Margaret accepted a \$25,000 scholarship, which will cover her tuition at UNH.

David credits the cross country program at Seton for much of the Champagne's success over the years.

"I want to thank the school for all the support they've given Margaret," he said. "I don't think she'd be where she is without their support. If you want to excel in running, come to Seton."

"You've done a fantastic job for us, and we're sure you'll do a fantastic job at UNH," added Seton Catholic Athletic Director Mary Forbes.

Margaret will compete in indoor track this winter, before finishing out the high school chapter of her running story competing for the Knights in outdoor track.

Joy.  
Hope.  
Peace.  
Love.

This is what we're made of.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year  
from Your Friends at Fidelis Care.

Fidelis Care is sponsored by the Diocesan Bishops of New York State.

## Christmas Blessings

*St. Joseph who protected the Holy Child in your care bless all those who have worked to keep the children safe in our diocese.*

OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT 2015

# Miracle approved to make Mother Teresa a saint



CNS PHOTO COURTESY CATHOLIC PRESS PHOTO

Pope Francis has approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata, thus paving the way for her canonization. She is pictured with an ailing man in an undated photo.

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Pope Francis has approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata, thus paving the way for her canonization.

Pope Francis signed the decree for Blessed Teresa's cause and advanced three other sainthood causes Dec. 17, the Vatican announced.

Although the date for the canonization ceremony will be officially announced during the next consistory of cardinals in February, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Vatican office organizing the Holy Year of Mercy events, had said it would be Sept. 4. That date celebrates the Jubilee of workers and volunteers of

mercy and comes the day before the 19th anniversary of her death, Sept. 5, 1997.

The postulator for her sainthood cause, Father Brian Kolodiejchuk of the Missionaries of Charity, said the second miracle that was approved involved the healing of a now 42-year-old mechanical engineer in Santos, Brazil.

Doctors diagnosed the man with a viral brain infection that resulted in multiple brain abscesses, the priest said in a statement published Dec. 18 by AsiaNews, the Rome-based missionary news agency. Treatments given were ineffective and the man went into a coma, the postulator wrote.

The then-newly married man's wife had spent months praying to Blessed Teresa and her prayers were joined

by those of her relatives and friends when her dying husband was taken to the operating room Dec. 9, 2008.

When the surgeon entered the operating room, he reported that he found the patient awake, free of pain and asking, "What am I doing here?" Doctors reported the man showed no more symptoms and a Vatican medical commission voted in September 2015 that the healing was inexplicable.

St. John Paul II had made an exception to the usual canonization process in Mother Teresa's case by allowing her sainthood cause to be opened without waiting the usual five years after a candidate's death. He beatified her in 2003.

The order she started - the Missionaries of Charity - continues its outreach to the "poorest of the poor."

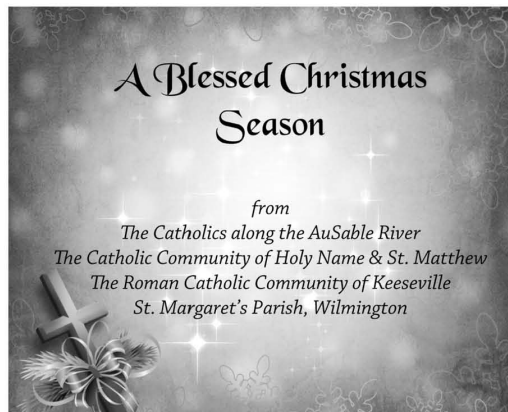
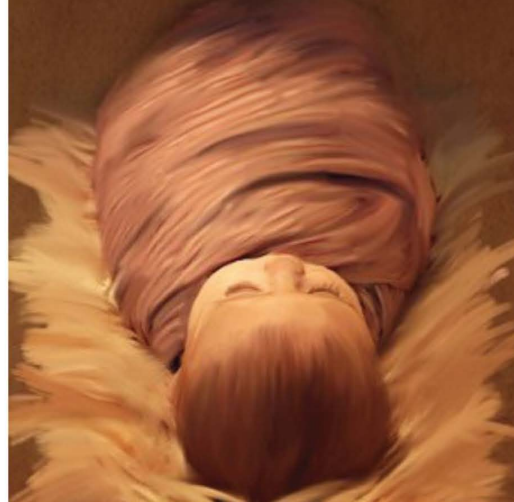
Among the other decrees approved Dec. 17, the pope recognized the heroic virtues of Comboni Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli, an Italian surgeon, priest and missionary who dedicated his life to caring for people in Uganda, where he also founded a hospital and midwifery school before his death in 1987. His father ran the highly successful Ambrosoli honey company.

The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of De La Salle Brother Leonardo Lanzuela Martinez of Spain (1894-1976) and Heinrich Hahn, a German surgeon.

## St. Ann and St. Joseph Gratefully Celebrate the Birth of Christ.

Fr. Adrian recognizes with hope and love all who help to give birth to Jesus in ministry throughout the year.

Merry Christmas and God's blessing on the New Year!



Warm up with a subscription to the North Country Catholic and find out what is happening with the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

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# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Religious leaders decry notion of limiting Muslim immigration to U.S.

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- In response to suggestions made by some Republican presidential candidates in the wake of the terror attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, that the United States refuse entry to Muslim refugees or that U.S. mosques be surveillance targets, several religious leaders have rejected the idea. "We underplay the fact that the pregnant Mary and her husband, Joseph, were turned away from the inn. We forget the slaughter of the Holy Innocents - and that the infant Jesus was spared their fate only through the hurried flight into Egypt where the Holy Family lived for years as what today we would call 'political refugees,'" said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami in a Dec. 13 op-ed article in the Miami Herald. "Today there are more than 60 million refugees and internally displaced persons living in our world -- the greatest number since the end of World War II. Close to one-third of these people are from Syria and Iraq. And most are surviving in desperate circumstances. And, truth be told, many fail to survive at all," Archbishop Wenski added. "Yet, in spite of this profound suffering, many here in our country would shut our doors in the faces of those looking for a safe haven. We cannot give in to our fear and retreat into the mindset of a 'fortress America,'" he said.

## Creche is reminder God saves people with love, not force, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Seeing baby Jesus in the Nativity scene reminds people that Christ uses humility and love to save the world, not impressive force or a magic wand, Pope Francis said. "God does not love powerful people's imposing revolutions in history, and he doesn't use a magic wand for changing the situation," he said Dec. 18, meeting the people who donated the centerpiece of the Vatican Christmas decorations in St. Peter's Square. "Instead, he makes himself small, he becomes a baby, in order to draw us in with love, in order to touch our hearts with his humble goodness, in order to shake up those who race to accumulate the false treasure of this world," he said. The northern Italian province of Trent donated the life-sized Nativity scene, and three small towns in Germany's Bavaria region donated the 82-foot spruce fir. The tree was lit and the scene officially unveiled during an early evening ceremony in the square Dec. 18. The painted ceramic tree ornaments were made by child cancer patients from a number of Italian hospitals.

## In Peace Day message, pope addresses death penalty, debt, migrants

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis called for abolishing the death penalty worldwide, lifting the burden of debt on poor nations, global aid policies that respect life and revamped laws that welcome and integrate migrants. He urged individuals, communities and nations to not let indifference, information overload or pessimism discourage them from concrete efforts "to improve the world around us, beginning with our families, neighbors and places of employment." Building peace, he said, is not accomplished by words alone, but through the grace of God, a conversion of heart, an attitude of compassion and the courage to act against despair. The pope's multifaceted plea came in his message for World Peace Day, Jan. 1. The message, which was delivered to world leaders by Vatican ambassadors, was released at the Vatican Dec. 15. The message, titled "Overcome Indifference and Win Peace," contained a three-fold appeal to the world's leaders.

# Bishop encourages young adults to use digital media to spread the good news

By Mike Krokos  
Catholic News Service

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) -- Digital media offers the Catholic Church another opportunity to spread the good news of the Gospel, which is what faith calls Catholics to do, Vermont Bishop Christopher J. Coyne recently told a national gathering of young adults in Indianapolis.

"The church has done this from the beginning, using whatever means of communications that we could, from the letters of (St.) Paul to the printing press, to radio to television, and now to the Internet and digital media," he told nearly 300 young adults. "The church has seen these things as tools to spread the good news."

Bishop Coyne heads the Diocese of Burlington, Vermont, and is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Communications. He was a keynote speaker during the National Catholic Collegiate Conference, which is open to people ages 18-25.

The collegiate conference was co-sponsored by the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association and the National Federation for Youth Ministry.

In his Nov. 21 talk, titled "Sharing the Good News: Using Social Media and Other Forms to Evangelize," Bishop Coyne, called digital media a "neutral tool. It's the content that makes things different."

That content, he continued, is more than just the Internet, it's websites and videos, blogs, podcasts, images and text.

"It is also social media, like Twitter, and Instagram, and GooglePlus and LinkedIn, and Periscope and Meerkat," Bishop Coyne said. Meerkat is a new mobile app through which users can broadcast

on their phones to anyone else using Meerkat.

## Bishop Coyne will be a featured speaker at the diocese's 2016 Vocation Summit "INSPIRE" set for Sept. 25 in Lake Placid

Content also includes text messaging, livestreaming, FaceTime and Skype. "It is global and it is local. It is fast, instant, intense and gigantic. More than 1 billion people are on Facebook," he noted. "More than 100 million people use Instagram every month, there are 304 million monthly active users on Twitter, and there are almost as many cellphone subscriptions -- 6.8 billion -- as there are people. There's only 7 billion people."

Why does the Catholic Church need to be present in digital media?

"Because we have to be if we want to go out and spread the good news," he said. "It's where Catholics and potential Catholics can be found."

Bishop Coyne, who blogs and also can be followed on Twitter @bishopcoyne, offered an example of how digital media played a key communications role during Pope Francis' recent visit to the U.S.

The USSCB, he said, set up social media platform rooms in all three cities the pope visited -- Washington, New York and Philadelphia -- that were manned by 20 to 25 volunteers and some professional staff.

"What they did all day long was they were in the room with their computers, and they were just basically paying attention to what was going on on Twitter, what was going on on the USSCB hashtags, what was going on in terms of Facebook," he noted.

Over the six-day period, Bishop Coyne said, the USSCB team produced nearly 2,500 pieces of social media content, including 62 real-time videos in English and Spanish, which resulted in 18.5 million content impressions.

"That's 3,000 impressions per minute. That's people coming to check it out, looking at it," he noted. "During the week, the English and Spanish Facebook page posts reached 8 million people, and engaged a half million of them."

"They had 1.65 million video views, (and) they had 5.1 billion tweets and retweets using their hashtags."

Pope Francis' visit, he added, "clearly shows that the use of digital media as a means to spread the good news is not just a possibility but is in fact a reality."

Bishop Coyne asked the young people to "use the creativity you already possess and the tools you already have to be digital missionaries, fiber apostles, and cloud evangelists."

He also encouraged them to sow seeds of goodness, "saying only the good things that men and women truly need to hear, things that will really lift them up. You never know how the seeds will grow, but that's not your worry. You're just the sower. You just spread the good news."

St. Therese of Lisieux, who was known for her "little way," would be a good patron saint for those involved in digital media, he added.

"Much of the time you will spend in digital media," Bishop Coyne said, "is in the small moments: e-mails, tweets, posting pictures, links to videos and websites, answering questions. They're small moments. But they're small moments to love."

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

# A celebration of family life by our Church

Once a year, the Church celebrates family life. It holds up the example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Today's Gospel focuses on a stressful experience in their lives when Jesus was twelve years of age. Despite the fact that Jesus was divine, he shows himself to be a normal teenager when he fails to tell Joseph and Mary where he will be for a couple of days. Even more surprising, he doesn't bother to ask their permission.

Like many a young boy of that age, his thoughtlessness causes hours of pain to his parents. When they finally catch up with him, and gently scold him, Jesus calmly replies, "Did you not know that I had to be in my

Father's house?"

As Zechariah had prophesied, at that moment a sword of sorrow pierced Mary's heart as she realized what lay ahead.

Even here, we notice that the essential bonds of love and obedience were quickly re-established. The Gospel tells us simply that "he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them...."

In the first reading, we hear about a joyful birth—that of Samuel.

After years of prayer, Hannah and Elkanah are granted a son. Her hymn of praise is very much like Mary's ("My soul doth magnify the Lord").

As soon as Samuel is weaned, the mother fulfills her promise and gives him up to the Lord's service at

the shrine at Shiloh.

The lesson for families is clear: trusting in the Lord bears fruit. Children are a gift from God, and they always belong to God. Parents do not own their children. They are guardians who are responsible before God for their education and upbringing.

The second reading gives a great recipe for successful family relationships. What makes a family "holy"? Just love one another and keep the commandments! Of course, simple answers like that are the hardest to accept! Our families would find their disagreements, stressful relationships, and resentments that spoil the joy of family harmony so much easier to solve by imitating the faith and loving trust of the Holy Family.

Some years ago, Pope Benedict taught that many of our economic, social, and political problems are a re-

DEC. 27

## Feast of the Holy Family

### READINGS

1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Luke 2:41-52

sult of the absence of strong family life.

Virtues such as honesty, generosity, and loyalty are first learned and practiced in families that are obedient to the Creator's commandments. The habits thus engrained in individuals flow naturally into the public life of society.

Pope Benedict calls the family "the primary vital cell of society." We cannot then separate the private world of family life from the success or failures of the public life of money and power - the economy, business practices, politics, and the way

that nations treat world poverty, joblessness, the environment, and immigration. Today, we also have the horrible effects of families broken by war, often forced to flee their homes. Millions of refugees living in camps throughout Europe are a colossal problem for the countries of the world.

In just another week, we will celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, an event which aroused the jealousy of a cruel earthly king. In turn, this forced the Holy Family themselves to become refugees in Egypt.

In the New Year of 2016, the Year of Mercy, may all families open their hearts and homes to the wider human family, thus following the urgent pleas of Our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

The long-awaited final report of the recent Synod on the family will have much to inspire us about healing and preserving our families.

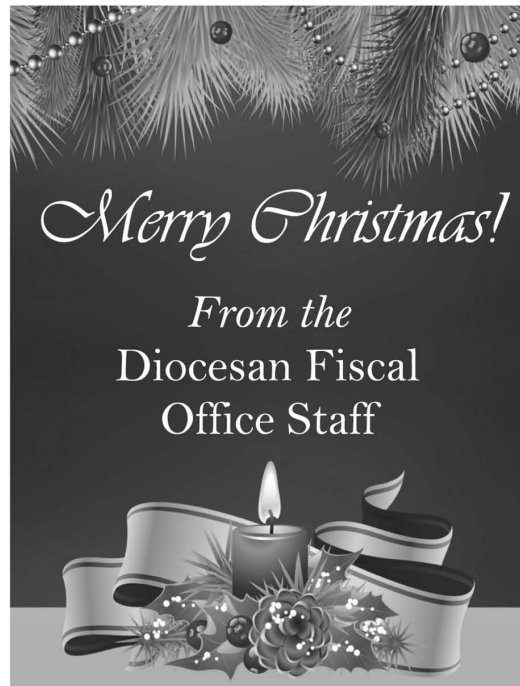


Monsignor  
Paul E.  
Whitmore



The Catholic people of the  
Parish of the Visitation  
and St. Raymond,  
and St. Andrew's Church  
together with  
Msgr. John Murphy  
& Fr. Andrew Amyot  
offer  
**Christmas  
Greetings**  
to our brothers  
and sisters in  
faith throughout  
the diocese.

Through the grace of God may this season bring new joy,  
renewed hope, and the Peace of Christ for which we all long!



AT THE MOVIES

# STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

By John P. McCarthy  
Catholic News Service

With "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" (Disney), the most popular series in film history resurfaces after a 10-year hiatus.

This is the seventh installment in the franchise as well as the first feature in a planned third trilogy. Like its predecessors, it's essentially a family-friendly piece of entertainment, with only interludes of peril and combat barring endorsement for all.

At the controls is J.J. Abrams, creator of the television show "Lost" and the man who rejuvenated another iconic science-fiction franchise via 2009's "Star Trek." Hiring Abrams was a smart decision, not least because the savvy director -- who also co-wrote the script with Lawrence Kasdan and Michael Arndt -- could bring a steady hand to the project and allow producer George Lucas to concentrate on selling Lucasfilm to the Walt Disney Co.

Few risks were taken, particularly on the technical side. The visuals aren't novel or awe-inspiring, but they're sufficiently well-crafted to transport viewers where they need to go.

The primary objective seems to have been to safely pass a beloved and lucrative property from one generation to the next. This applies to the behind-the-scenes talents (as mentioned above), the fan base and the cast of characters. Abundant humor and the introduction of a pair of compelling new heroes, both portrayed with irrepressible vitality, are the keys to a successful hand-off.

Thanks to an accessible plot, "Star Wars" neophytes, if they exist, won't find themselves adrift in a forbiddingly alien galaxy, however far away. And there's enough complexity and allu-



CNS PHOTO/DISNEY

Chewbacca, played by Peter Mayhew, and Harrison Ford star in a scene from the movie "Star Wars: The Force Awakens."

sive layering to satisfy those fully immersed in the saga.

"The Force Awakens" takes place 30 years after Episode VI, "Return of the Jedi." Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill), the last warrior battling on behalf of the chivalrous Jedi Order, has exiled himself.

His twin sister, Leia (Carrie Fisher), the general leading the Jedi-friendly Resistance (successor to the Rebel Alliance), wants to find him. So, too, does the First Order, an army in the service of the Dark Side. Masterminded by Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis), this sect is bent on killing Luke and forestalling a Jedi uprising.

Leia sends her best fighter pilot, Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac), to the barren planet Jakku to retrieve information on Luke's whereabouts. When Poe and his droid BB-8 separate during a skirmish, the spheroidal machine meets a young female scavenger, Rey (Daisy Ridley), and a disaffected First Order Stormtrooper called Finn (John Boyega).

With the First Order mounting another attack, Rey, Finn and BB-8 commander a familiar looking, rusted-out freighter lying in a desert junkyard. Since this turns out to be the Millennium Falcon, it's not long before that vessel's famed commander, Han Solo (Harrison Ford), and his furry co-pilot, Chewbacca (Peter

Mayhew), appear. (Droids C-3PO and R2-D2 make brief appearances later.)

The good guys' principal antagonist is Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), a descendant of arch-villain Darth Vader and a disciple of Snoke's who's so torn between the upright and evil sides of the conflict that he has terrible anger issues. More ominously, First Order has a new, highly destructive weapon that makes the Death Star of earlier chapters look like a child's toy.

The action builds to a gripping lightsaber duel in a snowy forest that ends all too quickly. Abrams never dawdles, which, as a rule, is a virtue. Yet, because he's not a great visual stylist, his staging and framing often lack artistic flair.

This makes viewers long for Abrams to linger over sequences that do have more panache. His focus, however, is on lucidity and character development. When it comes to the movie's look, he sticks to the "Star Wars" template. On balance, that's a more than

acceptable trade-off.

If there are moments you suspect you might be watching the cast-reunion special of an old TV show - John Williams' majestic music counters that feeling to a degree - it's largely attributable to how stiff and weather-beaten Ford and Fisher appear.

That's not ageism. It's a criticism of the pair's acting and, more positively, a result of the contrast between their turns and the fresh, energized performances delivered by Ridley and Boyega. The senior duo can't help seeming supernaturated in comparison.

It's doubtful that a movie has ever been more widely or intensely anticipated. Fueled by marketing ploys, a

publicity avalanche and a glut of merchandise, this frenzy can obscure some of the things that have made "Star Wars" such a cherished and enduring cultural hallmark.

They include: entertaining story lines about the perennial struggle between good and evil; lovable heroes and hiss-worthy villains, both drawn with mythic characteristics; an integrated science-fiction vision; riveting chases, battles and action set-pieces; and the celebration of classic values such as courage, honor, and fealty.

Early on, Ray and Finn buck themselves up by repeating the same line, "I can do this. I can do this." Perhaps an awareness of the utility of self-confidence and the necessity of trying your hardest are the best takeaways from "The Force Awakens." By displaying these qualities themselves, director Abrams and his team get the job done -- and then some.

The film contains much stylized fantasy violence. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II -- adults and adolescents.

The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."*

LUKE 2:13-15

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year  
Matrimonial Tribunal, Office of Canonical Affairs



**ADIRONDACK**

**LESSONS, CAROLS**

**Lake Placid** - The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE) will give a performance of a Lessons and Carols

**Date:** Dec. 27

**Time:** 4 p.m.

**Place:** St. Agnes Church.

**Features:** Anthems, carols, and hymns illuminating the Christmas story along with community readers and congregational singing in the tradition of King's College, Cambridge. NAVE, under the musical direction of Andrew M. Benware, is a mixed chamber choir of professional and amateur singers that performs choral music from a variety of periods and styles with harmonies of four to eight parts.

**Price:** Admission is a suggested donation of \$10.

**Contact:** drew.benware@gmail.com or on Facebook

**CLINTON**

**RECITAL TO BENEFIT MISSION**

**West Chazy** - A concert to benefit the North Country Mission of Hope has been planned

**Date:** Dec. 29

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

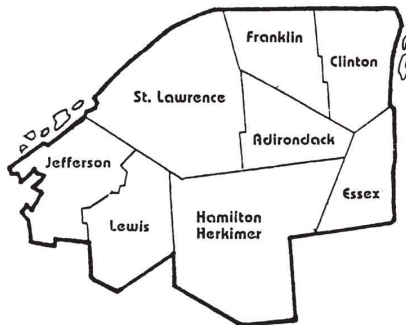
**Place:** St. Joseph's Church

**Features:** Enjoy songs of the season featuring Megan Frederick on the piano

**St. Jude Novena**

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, adored and glorified throughout the whole world, forever and ever, Amen. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude helper of the homeless, pray for us. Say prayer 9 times a day for 9 days.

KM



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.

and Cole Denton singing. Megan will be asking for donations for the North Mission of Hope. She will be traveling on Mission to Nicaragua in February 2016 and is required to pay for her expenses. She is also collecting gently used toys (all ages- no batteries), summer clothes and shoes (all sizes), sheets, light blankets, and towels, or good condition household items and tools..

formance of a Festival of Lessons and Carols

**Date:** Dec. 26

**Time:** 7:30 p.m.

**Place:** St. Peter's Church.

**Features:** Anthems, carols, and hymns illuminating the Christmas story along with community readers and congregational singing in the tradition of King's College, Cambridge. NAVE, under the musical direction of Andrew M. Benware, is a mixed chamber choir of professional and amateur singers that performs choral music from a variety of periods and

**LESSONS, CAROLS**

**Plattsburgh** - The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE) will give a per



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styles with harmonies of four to eight parts.

**Price:** Suggested donation of \$10.

**Contact:** drew.benware@gmail.com or on Facebook

**LEWIS**

**DIVINE MERCY DEVOTIONS**

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

**Date:** Jan. 3

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Place:** St. Hedwig's Church

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

**Contact:** 348-6260.

**INTERNATIONAL CRÈCHES**

**Houseville** - An international exhibit of Christmas Crèches-Nativities is set

**Place:** St. Hedwig's Church.

**Dates:** Dec. 27 and Jan. 3,

**Time:** The display may be viewed after the 11 a.m. Mass or from 1 p.m. to 3 on the above dates, or by appointment.

**Features:** The exhibit is free and open to the public.

**Contact:** 348-6260.

**POLISH CHRISTMAS WAFER**

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

**Cost:** \$3 per package plus postage.

**Features:** The Christmas Wafer of OPLATEK 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 OPLATEK, which symbolizes the presence of LATEK, the Newborn Child. The OPLATEK is sent and shared with family and friends all over the world as a symbol of love, unity and forgiveness while wishing God's Blessing on each other.

**Contact:** 348-6260.

**ST. LAWRENCE**

**FIRST SATURDAY DEVOTIONS**

**Raymondville** - First Saturday devotions of Communion of Reparation to be held.

**Date:** Jan. 2

**Time:** 10 a.m. with Rosary and confession during Rosary; 10:30 a.m. Mass

**Place:** St. Raymond's Church

**DIOCESAN EVENTS**

**ECUMENICAL SERVICE**

**Plattsburgh** - Bishop LaValley will preside at the diocesan Ecumenical Service.

**Date:** Jan. 17

**Time:** 2:30 p.m.

**Place:** St. Peter's Church

**DAYS OF DISCERNMENT**

**Potsdam** - Discerning men are invited to come together & consider the call the Roman Catholic Priesthood.

**Dates:** Jan. 17 & 31; Feb. 14 & 28; March 13; April 3 & 17

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Place:** St. Mary's Rectory

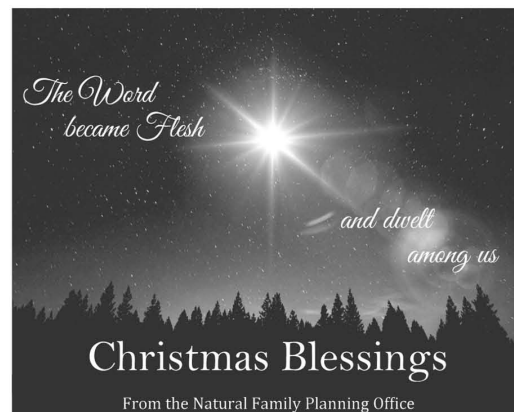
**Features:** Reflection and vespers.

**Contact:** Your Catholic Campus Minister or Father Howard Venette, pastor @stmariestpatrick.net, 315-265-9680; Father Douglas Lucia, frdougl@twcny.rr.com or Father Bryan Stitt, diocesan vocation director bstitt@rcdcony.org



*God gave His greatest gift to us  
on that first Christmas Day  
and may the wonder of it  
always guide and light your way...  
MERRY CHRISTMAS!*

*St. Patrick's Church  
Colton*



*The Word  
became Flesh*

*and dwell  
among us*

**Christmas Blessings**

From the Natural Family Planning Office



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

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

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

# Wonder and awe of the Lord

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

The Christmas Season is a time of "Wonder and Awe of the Lord" for us. Listening to Advent Scripture readings, we are left to ponder in wonder of the many years of preparation

for God's people with patience and impatience awaiting the arrival of the Savior, Jesus.

All who heard of the birth of Jesus were in awe at the fulfillment of a long awaited promise.

No doubt, Mary and Joseph were in awe when in their listening to and following God's



call, they experienced the birth of Jesus, that First Christmas.

Thinking of people in extreme generosity amazes me as I believe people hear the call of God within their hearts.

They have responded to local charities with financial assistance, donated gently used clothing and supported food pantries.

As I was reflecting upon the generosity of people in our north country, my thoughts had me hoping that my friends in developing countries would have enough food for all families on Christmas Day.

Just then, an email came from Sr. Cindy Sullivan at Working Boys Center in Quito, Ecuador thanking us for the opportunity to speak in St. James, Carthage and St. Mary's, Copenhagen on behalf of the center through the Missionary Cooperation Plan last summer.

In gratitude, Sr. Cindy said that her wondering about the reality to have chicken for Christmas Dinner is now a reality for her large family.

Can you think of a time you prayed in wonder?

Christmas' good news of long ago and of today amazes us. It will take some effort to keep the good news in our hearts for another year.

Let us ask Jesus, Mary and Joseph to keep our "Wonder and Awe of the Lord" alive in our giving hearts.

Molly and I wish you a Blessed Christmas to you and your loved ones.

Please remember "The Society for the Propagation of the Faith" when writing or changing your Will.  
<http://www.rcdony.org/mission-office.html>

## OBITUARIES

**Brasher Falls** — Donald P. Hoag, 92; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2015 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

**Ellenburg** — Maurice "Fred" Brunet, 85; Funeral Services Dec. 14, 2015 at St. Edmund's Church.

**Lowville** — Dr. Eulogio H. Rectra, Jr., 77; Funeral Services Dec. 21, 2015 at St. Peter's Church; burial in west Lowville Cemetery.

**Massena** — Mary E. (VanGorden) Balaban, 71; Funeral Services Dec. 21, 2015 at Sacred Heart Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

**Massena** — Pauline S. (Demers) Louey, 94; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2015 at Donaldson Funeral Home; burial in Fairview Cemetery, Dickinson Center.

**Moers Forks** — Roger Garrand, 90; Funeral Services Dec. 14, 2015 at St. Ann's Church; burial in Whispering Maples Memorial Mausoleum, Ellenburg Depot.

**Norfolk** — Nancy L. Kinney, 76; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2015 at Buck Funeral Home; burial in Visitation Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** — Anna "Eve" (Deloney) Dishaw, 89; Funeral Services Dec. 19,

2015 at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

**Plattsburgh** — Wilfred J. Gonyea, 88; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2015 at St. John's Church; burial in Whispering Maples Memorial Gardens Mausoleum.

**Plattsburgh** — Michael J. Marvel, 46; Funeral Services Dec. 19, 2015 at St. John's Church.

**Potsdam** — Otto Ernst Czerepak, 72; Funeral Services Dec. 19, 2015 at St. Mary's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Schroon Lake** — Agnes (Karkoski) Harris, 87; Funeral Services Dec. 18, 2015 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church.

**Watertown** — Sharon A. (Sanford) Doldo, 71; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2015 at St. Anthony's Church; burial in Grove Cemetery, LaFargeville.

## \*Guide Light Essays\*

Inspirational Commentary  
[guidelightessays.blogspot.com](http://guidelightessays.blogspot.com)

\*Hosted by Holly Middleton\*



### The Miraculous Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus, in the past I have asked for many favors. This time I ask you this very special one. Take it Dear Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in our merciful eyes it will become your favor, not mine. Amen KM

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth, Peace" ~ Luke 2:14

Wishing your family a peaceful and blessed Christmas!

St. Mary's Church, Potsdam



RESPECT LIFE...THE YEAR OF MERCY

# Immersion in a pool of love

By Kathleen M. Gallagher  
Director of Pro-Life Activities  
New York State Catholic Conference

A wise priest once told me that "mercy is where love meets suffering." That's a pretty profound definition. I've pondered it often, even meditated on it, but I'm not sure I really understood it until I recently saw a letter from Calvary Hospital in the Bronx.

Calvary is an acute care specialty hospital providing palliative care for advanced cancer patients. The hospital's executive medical director sent a letter to lawmakers expressing opposition to the legalization of assisted suicide.

In the letter, the medical director acknowledges that many patients being admitted to Calvary initially request a decisive action to end their lives. But, he says, within 24 hours, the request is never made again. Why? The reason, he says, "is the immersion of the patients in a pool of love which makes all symptoms endurable."

Those words stopped me



CNS PHOTO/MAX ROSSI, REUTERS

A woman touches the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica after Pope Francis opened it to mark the inauguration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy at the Vatican Dec. 8. Here, Kathleen Gallagher reflects on what it means to live a life of mercy during this Holy Year.

in my tracks. They enveloped my senses. I could feel the warmth and welcome of that love as it wraps around each individual person upon entering the hospital, accompanying them through every minute and every step of their suffering.

And that's when I really understood what Pope Fran-

cis is talking about when he asks us to live a life of mercy during this Holy Year.

This is precisely what we are called to do: immerse others in a pool of love. Meet people where they are. Express solidarity with those who are hurting. Open our hearts to offer compassion.

It's easy to get over-

whelmed, disheartened, even frightened when we view the world as it's presented on the nightly news. But when we view it through the lens of our faith, the answers to vexing societal problems become readily apparent:

- How do we fight terrorism and persecution, both at home and abroad? With love.

- How do we forgive those who have committed horrible crimes? With love.

- How do we console the victims of gun violence? With love.

- How do we show charity to our neighbors living in poverty? With love.

- How do we demonstrate compassion to the dying patient? With love.

- How do we comfort those addicted to drugs? With love.

- How do we offer alternatives to abortion? With love.

Each one of us can contribute to making the world a more loving and merciful place. Mercy starts in the home, where families are called to be sources of mercy.

So during this Christmas Season of parties, dinners and family gatherings, here are my "Notes to Self," which I offer as friendly suggestions:

- Have patience with Grandma.

- Invite the nasty neighbor over for egg nog.

- Put down the cell phone and listen.

- Pray for my political adversaries.

- Forgive Uncle Bill.

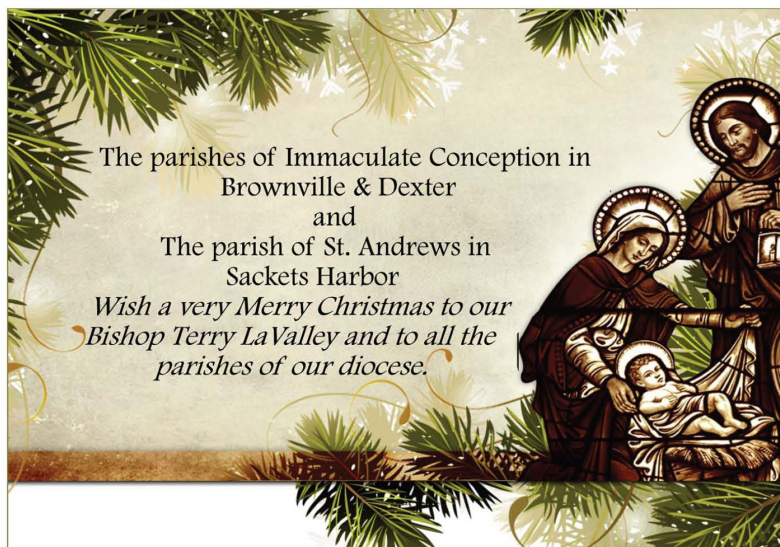
- Stop criticizing.

- Seek pardon.

- Immerse those around me in a pool of love.

Truly, mercy is where love meets suffering. The mercy of God is transformative. He is Mercy. He can transform pain and suffering into goodness and joy.

And He has come, Alleluia!



The parishes of Immaculate Conception in  
Brownville & Dexter  
and

The parish of St. Andrews in  
Sackets Harbor

Wish a very Merry Christmas to our  
Bishop Terry LaValley and to all the  
parishes of our diocese.

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