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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 71, Number 31

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DEC. 14, 2016

'Hold fast to light of hope'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Christian hope is not the same as being optimistic about the future, but is knowing that whatever dark or frightening things are going on in one's life, God is there offering protection and light, Pope Francis said.

Holding his general audience in the Vatican audience hall decorated with Nativity scenes and Christmas ornaments from the state of Queretaro, Mexico, Pope Francis announced Dec. 7 that he was beginning a series of audience talks about

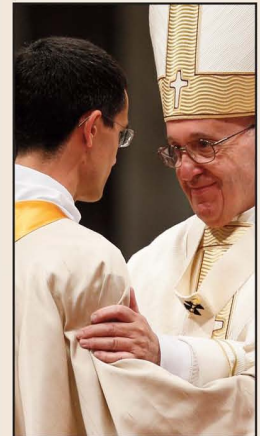
hope. Especially during Advent and in preparation for Christmas, he urged people to read the second half of the Book of Isaiah, "the great prophet of Advent, the great messenger of hope."

The audience began with a reading of Isaiah 40, which

starts: "Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God." Isaiah not only proclaims God's love and fidelity, but calls on those who still have faith to offer consolation to others and help them "reopen their hearts to faith."

PRIESTLY FORMATION

Guidelines are released



CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

Pope Francis greets a new priest during the ordination Mass of 11 priests in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 17. The Catholic Church needs holy, healthy and humble priests, and that requires prayers for vocations and the careful selection and training of candidates, said the Congregation for Clergy. Updating 1985 guidelines for preparing men for the Latin-rite priesthood and ensuring their continuing education, training and support, the Congregation for Clergy Dec. 7 released "The Gift of the Priestly Vocation," a detailed set of guidelines and norms for priestly formation.

FULL STORY, PAGE 11

Back to school... just for a visit

Father Thomas Higman, who was recently appointed associate director of vocations and seminarians in the diocese, writes about his recent trip to the Pontifical College Josephinum where seminarians of the Diocese of Ogdensburg are studying.

Father Higman made the trip with three young men who are considering the priesthood.

After a weekend of prayer, conversation and fun - which brought back strong memories of his own seminary days - Father Higman reports that "seminarians are still up to par in their zeal and fervor for the Lord and his Church!"

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

Christmas collection

Supports retirement fund

for priests; 47 currently

receive monthly benefits

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

IN HONOR OF FATHER MANFRED



Bishop Terry R. LaValley's annual visit to Trinity Catholic School in Massena featured a special event as he blessed and dedicated the school's new chapel in honor of Father Donald Manfred, in gratitude for the constant love and support he offered as the former pastor of Sacred Heart Church. The chapel is furnished with furniture purchased from St. Michael's Oratory in Parishville and decorated in a way that reflects the ideas of a chapel committee consisting of students and teachers. The dedication Mass was concelebrated by Father Mark Reilly, pastor; and Father Tojo Chacko; parochial. Among those attending were committee members, as well education council member Judy Leary, and diocesan assistant director of education for faith formation and Catholic schools, Pam Ballantine. Pictured, front, from left are Mrs. Leary, Dominic Murtagh, Gwen Austin, Ryland Dodson, Louis LaRose, Paige Francis and Mrs. Ballantine, back, Lisa Witkop, Father Reilly, Liam O'Neill, Bishop LaValley, Andrea LaValley, Diamond Barrett, Kim Stewart, Principal, Kathy Behrens, and Father Chacko.

CHRISTMAS CARD LIST: Addresses for all your favorite priests... pages 8-9

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Blessings of a new kind of Christmas

Preparing for Christmas takes on a whole new meaning when "grand" is part of a name by which you are known.

Gone are the days of non-stop shopping to make sure that three children find an equal number of presents under the tree and that the perfect gifts for "we-don't-need-anything" parents are discovered. Gone too are the preparations for special dinners and treats for a house full of people and plans to attend "our" Christmas Eve Mass.

The traditions which we

thought would last forever have taken on new forms in the homes our children have created for their own children.

Mary Lou
Kilian

Papa and Grammy have had to add an important new tradition to our own holiday season – flexibility.

Last year, we traveled all around New York State to see three little ones open their gifts.

This year, we get to share our baby

Tommy's first Christmas in sunny southern California... definitely a first for us!

I guess we can consider that our new ways of Christmas-ing

can help us embrace the true meaning of the season. After all, spending time with those we love means we're following the lead of Mary and Joseph, traveling towards a room at the inn. Of course, we don't need to worry that we will be turned away!

Adjusting to changes in our family hasn't always been easy. I don't want to count the twinges of jealousy I've felt upon hearing about friends whose grandchildren live close enough for daily visits, but usually I'm smart enough to shake away those feelings immediately.

I can't imagine anyone in the world who has been more

blessed than I have been. So many of my friends are longing for the time when "grand" becomes part of their names, too.

And one particular blessing in my new life - now that I'm old - is the gift of time. The hours I spent shopping and wrapping and keeping up with our kids' December activities are now available to me as the gift of Advent.

Over the next couple of weeks before Christmas, I know that my home will be a place of heavenly peace.

I may miss the crazy, chaotic days of Christmas Past, but I do recognize a blessing when it comes my way.

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

An example for all followers of Jesus

The Knights of Columbus showed up here at Church this morning to put up the larger manger scene on the lawn in front of the Church. It is an annual ritual. The Knights consider this their privilege and duty. I imagine this happens in your parish also.

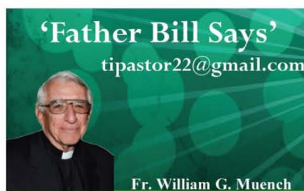
Here in our parish we have a rather nice little building and impressive statues. The big decision each year is whether to place the image of the Baby Jesus in the manger now or wait until Christmas.

From now on, this manger will remind all passers by the meaning of Christmas – the Birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ. The hope is that, in the midst of a busy day, people will notice the manger and a prayer will come to mind.

As they remember the Birth of Jesus, they will pray for their loved ones, especially those in need of prayer.

However, I know you have noticed that in our Advent Masses in Church, our attention has been on the relationship of Jesus and John the Baptist.

I am certain that although it



is not mentioned in the Gospels Jesus and John knew each other and spent time together as they were growing up. They were cousins, after all.

I would love to know something of their conversations during that time. In the Gospels we do read about their public ministry. John the Baptist understood well his call to be the one to point out Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. John was imprisoned but continued to lead his own disciples to discover Jesus.

I have often wondered how John's disciples felt about all of this. It must have been a difficult time for them. They were dedicated to John the Baptist. They loved him. They were absorbed with his preaching and teaching. They thought that he was the coming Messiah. They didn't want to desert him, now

that he was being persecuted by Herod.

Yet, John knew and persisted in his mission. So, he cleverly sends his disciples to Jesus to learn more about Jesus' message and teaching. They were to go to ask Jesus if he was the one who was to come. Jesus' answer was to remind them all that the Old Testament prophets had promised that the time of the Messiah would be like. They knew their scriptures well. They understood when Jesus went on to tell them about himself.

Jesus says: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

John's disciples find and understand something special in Jesus. Jesus then makes it very clear to them how much he cared for John the Baptist; John was important and certainly made a tremendous difference in the beginning of Jesus' presence in this world.

His message to them and to us was too bring awareness of the coming of Jesus to this world of ours.

So, John the Baptist becomes an example and model of all Christians and followers of Jesus. Just as John called and dedicated himself to making Jesus known we are called to bring the presence and message of Jesus to our part of the world.

As disciples of Jesus – as today's evangelizers – may we bring Jesus to all who will listen to us, through prayer and action just as John the Baptist did. It is well that we notice that many throughout the centuries who walked in the path of John the Baptist would be ready to suffer for Jesus just as he did, even to give their lives.

Finally, Jesus gave this tribute to John, as recorded in Matthew's Gospel: "This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you. Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none great than John the Baptist.'"

Retirement plan provides benefits for 47 priests

By Michael J. Tooley
Diocesan Fiscal Officer

The 38 retired priests of the diocese who currently receive pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes in the Christmas collection.

Supported by contributions to parish Christmas collections

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

Parishioners' gifts this year will help support not only priests currently receiving support from the Priests' Retirement Fund but also benefits to be paid to future retirees.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese receives 75% of the Christmas Collection proceeds given to each parish.

While gifts help 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 2016-17 to fully fund the Plan.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese currently pays monthly pensions to 38 retired priests and nine active priests eligible for a partial retirement benefit.

Estimated pension pay-

ments in this fiscal year amount to \$860,000.

Effective July 1, 2016, 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. One hundred percent of the cost of health insurance for retired priests is also funded through the PRF.

Retired priests of the diocese 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 decreased over a one-year period from \$11,869,202 to \$11,401,164 on June 30, 2016.

The diocese's Investment Advisory Committee, diocesan administration, and the investment portfolio's investment managers closely monitor monies invested in support of the Plan.

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@rcdony.org.

Your personal generosity to the Christmas collection in your parish will support all retired priests of the diocese and benefit longer term the diocesan and religious priests serving you today. Your priests, retired and active, will appreciate your support tremendously!

FOR CONFIRMATION AND BEYOND



The Eastern Regional Office of the Department of Faith Formation launched a new program as part of the Diocesan Envisioning Process for Family Catechesis. An invitation was extended to confirmation candidates and their families from the Clinton Deanery to join Bishop LaValley Oct. 30 for Mass, followed by refreshments and keynote address. The bishop spoke on the role of parents as the first teachers of the faith for their children and how they can assist them in the preparation for the celebration of confirmation. He also shared with the candidates how confirmation is not a graduation, but a beginning and a call to continue even more passionately their journey of faith. Over 175 parents and candidates attended this event at St. Augustine's Parish in Peru.

CREATING A CULTURE OF VOCATIONS



The community of St. Stephen in Croghan recently celebrated the final profession of seven members in the Secular Franciscan Order. Father Donald Manfred and Father Leo Wiley, concelebrated the Mass during which the seven promised to follow the Franciscan Rule of Life forever. Each received a bible, a San Damiano cross and Tau. The words of profession included, "I renew by baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of the kingdom. . . in my secular state I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. . ." Pictured in back, from left, are Jeanne Merry, minister; Kathleen Grondin, secretary; Nancy Utsler, Jim Hoch, Liz Peters, Ethel Hoch, Ramona Walseman, Karen Reape and Peter Woolschlager, formation director; front Karen Hoch, Ellen Lyndaker and Yvonne Krischner, fraternity treasurer

Commissioned lay ministers

Groups on east, west sides of the diocese meet for prayer and fellowship



Area priests and religious joined members of the Eastern Region Commissioned Lay Ministers' Association for the Fall Event held at St. Augustine's Church and Parish Center in Peru. Above, they listen to a presentation by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

For Clinton, Essex, Hamilton-Herkimer deaneries

By Patricia Marie
Contributing writer

PERU - On a beautiful, balmy autumn evening, Oct. 14, about 84 commissioned lay ministers from the Clinton, Essex, Hamilton-Herkimer deaneries gathered to attend the annual Fall Event of the Eastern Region Commissioned Lay Ministers' Association which was held at St. Augustine's Church and Parish Center.

Judging from the attendees' feedback and comments, the evening proved to be enjoyable for everyone as the agenda offered an evening filled with spiritual and social camaraderie.

In keeping with the month of October and the Holy Rosary, the evening began with a public recitation of the rosary in St. Augustine's Church. Immediately following the Rosary, Bishop Terry LaValley who was the main celebrant and the evening's keynote speaker, offered

Mass along with area priests and deacons; host pastor Fathers Alan Shnob, Patrick Mundy, John (Mickey) Demo and Eduardo Pesigan. Deacons John Lucero and Deacon Jack Lukasiewicz also assisted at Mass.

After Mass, the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Monica's # 2598 hosted a dinner at the parish center.

Bishop LaValley delivered the keynote address, noting his support for commissioned lay ministry and offering a few suggestions for the participants to consider. He spoke of the fact that we need to get back to "rootedness" in our parishes - which seems to have all but disappeared in our present day society.

"We need to bond to one another again - especially in our spiritual lives," he said. "With so many changes in today's society, many of us may have forgotten that important sense of being connected (or rooted) to each

other in our parishes.

As God has made us social beings, that innate need to belong to others must be nurtured and we should be cognizant of that need, the bishop said.

He suggested other ideas to help Catholics along their life's journey: to be aware of hospitality, exude the joy of the Gospel and to never refuse a person's offer to help, regardless if there is a real need or not.

We can also develop skills of being a good listener, to claim our responsibilities and obligations of our Baptismal promises and to focus on our other Sacramental gifts, he said.

Perhaps one of the bishop's best comments can be summed up in a simple but profound thought: although we have a personal relationship with God through Jesus, our faith should not be private. As our lives and faith are communal, so too should our faith be in communion with God and others.

For Jefferson and Lewis deaneries...

By Deacon Kevin Mastellon
Staff writer

WATERTOWN-- James D. Crowley, chancellor of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, addressed an audience of commissioned lay ministers in Watertown at the fall dinner meeting of the CLM Association of the Jefferson and Lewis Deaneries held at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse.

Bishop Terry R. LaValley named Crowley chancellor in May 2016. He also serves as coordinator of ministry to lay pastoral leaders in the diocese so his first presentation to the commissioned ministers in Watertown was in his dual role.

The chancellor used the opportunity to briefly outline the Living Stones Planning Committee report and plan approved earlier this year by Bishop LaValley.

Crowley's theme for the talk, "Do We Ask Enough of God's Mercy" permitted him to weave the challenges facing the diocese as outlined in the Living Stones plan with a call for prayer and collaboration among all the people of the diocese.

"We will need God's help and mercy in this endeavor," Crowley said, "we will also need cooperation and collaboration among the clergy, religious and lay leadership in order to successfully deal with the challenges we face."

That was a reference to the report's forecast of only 34 priests available within the next decade to serve as pastors of parishes.

The Living Stones report can be downloaded from the Diocesan web site www.rcdony.org. The report according to Crowley outlines the new configuration of parishes in each deanery.



PHOTO BY DEACON KEVIN MASTELLON

James D. Crowley, chancellor of the Diocese of Ogdensburg was the guest speaker at the fall dinner meeting of the Commissioned Lay Ministers of Jefferson and Lewis Deaneries held at the Sisters of St. Joseph motherhouse in Watertown. He discussed the Living Stones Planning Committee's report issued earlier this year.

Commissioned lay ministers will play an important role in parishes as the new groupings are developed according to the chancellor. That will require continuing education for CLM, retreat opportunities and closer collaboration among all the faithful.

Chancellor Crowley is currently a candidate for ordination as a permanent deacon. The ordination for his class of 16 men is scheduled for October 2017.

The evening started with Mass celebrated by Msgr. Paul Whitmore and assisted by Deacon Lawrence Ambeau.

Karen Donahue is the current chair of the CLM Association of the Jefferson and Lewis Deaneries.

A VOICE OF FAITH

Back to school... for a visit!

By Father Thomas J. Higman
Associate Director of Vocations
and Seminarians

Four and half years ago, I proudly posted on social media and made the headlines of the *North Country Catholic* with a picture of my seminary alma mater in the rearview mirror of my Jeep Compass.

Four and a half year later, as associate director of vocations and seminarians – with a seminary filling the windshield - I arrived in a Dodge minivan in the parking lot of the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, with three discerning young men.

The trip offered time for a visit with our seminarians as well as the opportunity for further discernment opportunities for these young men who are considering making this their way of life.

As a I got out of the car, the brisk wind and the sheer sight of what might be described as a modern day Hogwarts, caught the lump in my throat and the still familiar pit of my stomach as I made my way to our seminarians and their community of brothers and spiritual fathers.

The thought of these days for me at 'Holy Mother Overbrook' – Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, filled my mind; a great sense of renewal took over from there.



Father Thomas J. Higman, associate director of vocations and seminarians for the Diocese of Ogdensburg recently met with the men currently in formation at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio. Pictured, from left are seminarians Douglas Schirmer of Ogdensburg, Leagon Carlin, Plattsburgh; Father Higman, who also serves as parish administrator in Lyon Mountain and Ellenburg; Matthew Conger, Ogdensburg; and Nick Olley, Carthage.

Arriving to the hustle and bustle of a community preparing for their annual Advent Lessons and Carols Service, made the memories even more vivid, as the men prepared to offer their God-given talents and make the house look fit for guests.

After a spirit filled performance and hors d'oeuvres plenteous enough for an evening meal – the Ogdensburg seminarians, discerners, and their new associate director returned for an evening of fraternity and story telling.

For me however, it was Sunday morning that made all the difference. I had

talked-up seminary Sunday mornings with the discerners, and the Josephinum did not disappoint!

Beginning in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, one pontifical cassock trimmed in red after another filled the seats of their make-shift auditorium chapel (or as one priest called it- the 'oratorium!')

The Lord's Day began with

Jesus himself and a holy hour, morning prayer, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, followed immediately with the celebration of holy Mass.

It was evident; this was the real heart of not only their week – but also their entire community life. What a treat for this new parish administrator and associate director of vocations!

Whether it was sharing a meal or the stories of seminary professors, classes, classmates, and the news of the diocese and home parishes, or praying in solidarity with one another – it was quickly evident that even after four and half years and a few hundred miles away – seminarians are still up to par in their zeal and fervor for the Lord and his Church!

We are blessed with five young men who currently make up the ranks of those in seminary formation: Deacon Michael Jablonski (Dolgeville) who is scheduled to be ordained a priest in May; Matthew Conger (I Theology, Ogdensburg), Leagon Carlin (III College, Plattsburgh), Douglas Schirmer (I College, Ogdensburg), and Nick Olley (I College, Carthage).

Be on the lookout for these guys over during the Christmas Season as they'll be home on a well-deserved break.

Keep them also in your prayers – because in between a concert, meetings, and prayer with us – they were taking time to study and read – preparing themselves to one day find the seminary in their rearview mirrors and your parish church in their windshields!

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC HAS GONE GREEN



Here is what one subscriber has to say:



"What a pleasure to be able to read the North Country Catholic online. I am pleased that it has been offered in this manner - as sometimes I don't have time to sit and read a paper - but when I can't sleep at night - I log onto the computer. Very nice gesture - thanks"

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HOLY HERITAGE



PHOTO COURTESY CHATEAUGAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This 1956 photo was taken in front of the high altar in St. Patrick's, Chateaugay. It shows all of the parish altar boys with pastor Father Donald Gallagher and assistant pastor Father Daniel Keefe. The *North Country Catholic* welcomes contributions of historical photos from parishes and schools of the diocese.



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Rest in Peace

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

- Dec. 15** – Rev. Leon Cochard, 1915; Deacon Joseph H. Gilbert II, 2010
Dec. 16 – Rev. J. F. McGowen, O.S.A., 1935; Rev. Frederick Cummings Horton, 1975
Dec. 17 – Rev. John O. Senecal, 1980
Dec. 18 – Msgr. Narcisse Lorrain, 1915; Rev. Laurent Legoff, O.M.I., 1932; Rev. Louis Kopp, M.S.C., 1946; Msgr. Harold J. Skelly, 1980; Rev. George A. Fortaine, 1990
Dec. 20 – Rev. Luke Harney, 1892



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Bishop's Schedule

- Dec. 15** - Retreat Day at Christ the King Retreat House in Syracuse
- Dec. 16** - 12 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral
- Dec. 17** - 4 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral.
- Dec. 18** - 8 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral
2 p.m., Advent Penance Service, Notre Dame Church in Ogdensburg
- Dec. 20** - 2 p.m., Episcopal Council Meeting at the Spratt Conference Room followed by Dinner at the Bishop's Residence
- Dec. 21** - 12p.m. to 1:30 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral followed by a Luncheon with the Seminarians of the Diocese of Ogdensburg at the Bishop's Residence in Ogdensburg

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. 1440. Upcoming sessions:

Dec. 14 - 6 p.m., Father Amyot Parish Center, Norfolk
Dec. 15 - 1 p.m., St. James School, Gouverneur
Dec. 17 - 6 p.m., All Saints Church, Chaumont

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, PO Box 2446, Plattsburgh, NY, 12901; e-mail: terriannyanulavich@yahoo.com Phone: 518-483-3261; or Father James Seymour, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy at 315-393-2920, ext. 1340

Environmental Stewardship

"Open the Doors..."

Recently when little children were asked to name who was in the Christmas Story, no one named the Innkeeper who turned away the Holy Family in their time of need!

Even Joseph and Mary's donkey and the wise men's camels found a place in their Story.

In the Scriptures we hear "Rise, you Ancient doors, let the King of Glory in! Who is this king of glory?" (Ps. 24:9) In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus answers this question. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me... The virtuous will say to him, 'Lord, when did we see a stranger and make you welcome?'... Insofar as you did this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

Who is the 'stranger' knocking at our door today? Daily we witness millions of people who are seeking a safe haven for their families just as Mary and Joseph sought safety in Egypt. Why are there so many refugees today? One major cause of war cited by the CIA is climate change. Changes in the climate often cause droughts, floods, etc. When there is little food, water and employment, violence and war often erupts.

At recent Catholic Immigrant Integration Initiative Conference held in San Diego, Bishop Robert W. McElroy spoke concerning the refugee crisis. "For us as a Catholic community of the United States, it is... unthinkable that we will witness the destruction of our historic national outreach to refugees at a time when the need to offer safe haven to refugees is growing throughout the world." (Cited in *Origins*, Dec. 8, 2016)

Advent calls us to be 'Awake,' and to 'Open the Doors.' Lord, open our eyes to recognize You in the 'stranger' in our community, our Church, our country. Grant us the grace to welcome them, as we would You.

Pope appoints new bishop for diocese in NYS

WASHINGTON (CNS) - Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, and appointed as his successor Bishop John O. Barres of Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Bishop Murphy of Rockville Centre retires; Bishop Barres named successor

Bishop Barres, 56, has headed the Diocese of Allentown since 2009. Bishop Murphy, who has been Rockville Centre's bishop since 2001, is 76. Canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation to the pope when they turn 75.

The changes were announced Dec. 9 in Washington by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop Barres' Mass of installation will be celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Agnes in Rockville Centre Jan. 31. Until that time, Bishop Murphy will serve as apostolic administrator of the diocese.

"It is my deep conviction that he will be a bishop for all of us without exception," Bishop Murphy said of his successor in a statement. "He has shared with me his love of youth and his care for the elderly. He has a keen sense of parish life and has a special expertise in education. He has a deep love for the poor."

Bishop Barres will support Catholic Charities, parish outreach as well as Catholic hospitals, he added.

Born in Larchmont, New York, Sept. 20, 1960, Bishop Barres was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware, Oct. 21, 1989. On May 27, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him bishop of Allentown. He was

installed as that diocese's fourth bishop July 30, 2009.

From NYS Catholic Conference

Richard E. Barnes, executive director of the New York State Catholic Conference issued the following statement on the changes in the Long Island diocese:

"We offer a warm welcome to Bishop Barres to the Diocese of Rockville Centre and to the New York State Catholic Conference. We look forward to working closely with him for many years to come in advancing public policies that serve and protect the most vulnerable of our state's citizens - the poor and marginalized, immigrants, the elderly and infirm, people with disabilities, and children, born and unborn. We know that, like his predecessor, Bishop Barres will be a strong voice for all of these populations and an advocate for our constitutional rights of conscience and religious liberty. We at the Conference assure Bishop Barres of our prayers as we work together to have a positive impact on the lives of all New Yorkers.

"As we greet Bishop Barres, we also take this opportunity to stress our deep gratitude to and affection for Bishop William F. Murphy. Bishop Murphy was installed as Bishop of Rockville Centre less than a week before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and immediately distinguished himself as a shepherd of profound compassion and empathy as he consoled a grieving diocese, which lost so many souls that day. In the years that followed, he has served the diocese and as a member of the Executive Committee of the New York State Catholic Conference with dedication."

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Pope: recognize your sin and let God caress you

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - At Christmas, God reveals his full power, which is the power of relentlessly seeking his lost sheep and, when he finds them, giving them a caress, Pope Francis said.

As Christmas nears

"One who does not know the caresses of the Lord does not know Christian doctrine. One who does not let himself be caressed by the Lord is lost," the pope said Dec. 6 during his early morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae where he lives.

Christmas, he said, is a celebration of the fact that "the Lord comes with his power -- which are his caresses -- to find us, to save us like lost sheep and bring us back to the flock of his church."

Pope Francis said that when he reads the Gospel story of the lost sheep, he always thinks of Judas, "the most perfect lost sheep in the Gospels."

In the Bible, he said, Judas seems always to have had "bitterness in his heart," something critical to say about others and a standoffish attitude.

Judas, who is one of the apostles but betrays the Lord, has a "double life, that double life that many Christians have -- even priests and bishops, it pains me to say," the pope said.

"We must understand the lost sheep," he said, because "we, too, always have some-

thing -- small or not so small -- of the lost sheep."

The lost sheep, he said, know where the shepherd wants to lead them, but they go off in another direction.

God's response is described not only in the Gospel story of the lost sheep, the pope said, but also in the day's first reading from Isaiah 40: "Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm. ... Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care."

Christmas, he said, is a celebration of the coming of the Lord, who "comes like a judge, but a judge who caresses, a judge who is full of tenderness, who does everything to save us."

Pope Francis said Matthew 27:3 gives the idea that maybe there was hope even for Judas who, as it says, "seeing that Jesus had been condemned, deeply regretted what he had done."

The good news of Christmas, the pope said, is that God never stops seeking out the lost sheep. Recognizing his love, people should allow themselves to be consoled and resolve to follow him more closely.

Pope Francis prayed for the grace "to await Christmas sincerely recognizing our wounds and sins, to await the power of God who comes to console us, who comes with power, but the power of tenderness and caresses that are born of his heart, a heart so good that he gave his life for us."

VATICAN NATIVITY SCENE



CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

The Nativity scene is pictured in St. Peter's Square during a Christmas tree lighting ceremony at the Vatican Dec. 9.

Youth ministers urged to walk with young adults

By Valerie Schmalz
Catholic News Service

SAN JOSE, CALIF. (CNS) - Jesus Christ's example of friendship with his apostles is the model for "the start of ministry to young adults in the 21st century," a bishop told 1,000 members of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry gathered in San Jose Dec. 2.

"Knowing he was to go to the cross, knowing that he was going to see his apostles at their ugliest -- as they left the upper room, he turned to them and said, 'I no longer call you my servants, I call you my friends,'" Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut, told the crowded ballroom.

"And that, I believe, is the start of ministry to young adults in the 21st century," he added. "It begins in that love that is accepting, loving, caring and walking with them as friends of one mind and heart, one person at a time."

"For the infant church, Christians did that and brought an empire to its knees. And you and I, my friends, are asked to do the

same," Bishop Caggiano said. Living as a loving community sharing a "fire for Jesus," he said, is the same challenge that "exists in our time."

That is what it will take "to become credible in the eyes of the world," said Bishop Caggiano.

'As Jesus did'

Episcopal adviser for the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry since 2013, the bishop has an extensive history of outreach to youth and young adults said. Last July, he was among a number of bishops who addressed World Youth Day pilgrims in Krakow, Poland.

The federation met Dec. 1-3 at the San Jose Convention Center.

In his remarks, Bishop Caggiano said that "as we reimagine ministry among young adults, we must also rise to the challenge that Pope Francis is giving to you and to me."

"Our Holy Father speaks of becoming a people of mercy and compassion. It seems to me that this is the beginning of this odyssey of renewal," he told the assembly.

Being "intentionally welcoming" will mean "not being afraid to let our young adults ask questions without fear of being shut up" and letting them have ownership -- "skin in the game" -- with opportunities for leadership and service, he said.

"Every community will have a different recipe for renewal," Bishop Caggiano said, but each must be intentional in outreach and he said the ministry to young adults will then "be a leaven for the renewal of the whole church."

But the way will be hard, he said. The early Christians, many martyred, "realized that suffering is the privileged path to let Jesus into their lives," Bishop Caggiano said. "So what's the challenge? The challenge my friends is that ministry in the 21st century is not for the faint of heart. Ministry in our age and time is going to demand that you and I be willing to suffer for love."

"We cannot do it without prayer. We cannot do it without Eucharist. We cannot do it without sitting before the word of God, and we cannot do it without each other," he said, "But we can do it."

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CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Says genocide, indifference will make Mideast Christians extinct

NEW YORK (CNS) -- Christians in the Middle East face extinction because of genocide, wars and international indifference to their plight, according to panelists at a Dec. 5 interfaith forum in New York. A concerted multilateral effort to establish a safe haven for them while rebuilding their devastated homelands is preferable to massive permanent resettlement to other countries, including the United States, they said. Twelve speakers at the Sheen Center for Thought & Culture event explored "The Crisis for Christians in the Middle East," with a particular focus on vulnerable Christian minorities in Syria and Iraq. Christians formed the majority in the Middle East until the Crusades in the 12th-14th centuries, but "the past thousand years haven't been good in many ways," said Jack Tannous, assistant professor of history at Princeton University. Tremendous violence perpetrated against Christians led to widespread conversion, he said, and long periods of stasis have been punctuated by large-scale persecution and followed by immigration. As a result, many Christians were effectively exterminated from the lands where they lived for centuries, said Michael Reynolds, associate professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton University.

Ohio lawmakers send governor two bills restricting abortion

COLUMBUS, Ohio (CNS) -- The Ohio Legislature has sent two abortion bills to Gov. John Kasich for his signature. On Dec. 8, lawmakers passed a measure to ban abortions in the state after 20 weeks, or five months of pregnancy. On Dec. 6, they approved legislation that would ban abortions when a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which is usually at about the sixth week of pregnancy. Current law bans abortions after a fetus has begun its 20th week of gestation, unless a doctor determines that the fetus isn't viable outside the womb. The latest measure, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, or S.B. 127 -- would eliminate the viability test and simply ban abortions past 20 weeks. The current exception for the woman's health would still apply. "The bold pro-life action taken by the Ohio Legislature is reflective of the message the voters sent on Election Day, and that is a rejection of the status quo," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Washington-based Susan B. Anthony List. "Americans reject the status quo of abortion on-demand, especially painful late-term abortions," she said in a Dec. 8 statement. "Instead, voters and lawmakers are recognizing the humanity of the unborn child: its heartbeat around six weeks and the pain the child can feel at 20 weeks."

Baby Jesus reminds us of painful plight of migrants, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Christmas tree and Nativity scene are symbols of God's love and hope, reminding us to contemplate the beauty of creation and welcome the marginalized, Pope Francis said. Baby Jesus, whose parents could find no decent shelter and had to flee persecution, is a reminder of the "painful experience" of so many migrants today, he said Dec. 9, just before the Vatican Christmas tree was to be lit and its Nativity scene was to be unveiled. Nativity scenes all over the world "are an invitation to make room in our life and society for God -- hidden in the gaze of so many people" who are living in need, poverty or suffering, he told people involved in donating the tree and creche for St. Peter's Square. The northern Italian province of Trent donated the 82-foot-tall spruce fir, which was adorned with ceramic ornaments handmade by children receiving medical treatment at several Italian hospitals.

Vatican updates guidelines for educating 'holy, healthy and humble' priests

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - The Catholic Church needs holy, healthy and humble priests and that requires prayers for vocations and the careful selection and training of candidates, said the Congregation for Clergy.

Updating 1985 guidelines for preparing men for the Latin-rite priesthood and ensuring their continuing education, training and support, the Congregation for Clergy Dec. 7 released "The Gift of the Priestly Vocation," a detailed set of guidelines and norms for priestly formation.

The updated document draws heavily on St. John Paul II's 1992 apostolic exhortation on priestly formation, as well as on the teaching of and norms issued by now-retired Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis and by Vatican offices over the past three decades.

It reaffirms an instruction approved by Pope Benedict in 2005, which said, "the church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture.'"

The document insists that through courses in pastoral theology, the example of priests and practical experience, candidates for the priesthood learn that priestly ministry involves - as Pope Francis says - being "shepherds 'with the smell of the sheep,' who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them."

Highlighting lessons learned over the past 30 years from the clerical sexual abuse scandal, the new guidelines state, "The greatest attention must be given

to the theme of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, being vigilant lest those who seek admission to a seminary or to a house of formation, or who are already petitioning to receive holy orders have not been involved in any way with any crime or problematic behavior in this area."

Seminars and courses on the protection of children and vulnerable adults must be part of both seminary education and the continuing education of priests, it says. And bishops must be very cautious about accepting candidates who have been dismissed from other seminaries.

In the end, each bishop is responsible for determining which candidate for priesthood he will ordain, but the guidelines strongly encourage bishops to accept the judgment of seminary rectors and staff who determine a candidate is unsuitable.

Reaffirming the requirement that seminarians study Catholic social teaching, the document says the education must include a study of climate change and other environmental threats.

"Protecting the environment and caring for our common home - the Earth - belong fully to the Christian outlook on man and reality," the document says. Catholic priests must be "promoters of an appropriate care for everything connected to the protection of creation."

Seminarians should be encouraged to use social media to build relationships and for evangelization, the guidelines say, but seminary personnel will need to help the students use the media wisely and in a way that is healthy.

Psychologists, whether or not on the staff of the seminary, can provide valuable help to the seminary rector and diocesan bishop "in the

assessment of personality, expressing an opinion as to the psychological health of the candidate and in therapeutic accompaniment, in order to shed light on any problems that may emerge and to assist in growth in human maturity," the document says.

The Congregation for Clergy recommends that women be on the staff of seminaries or teach at the universities where the candidates study and that seminarians' ability to relate to and work with women be considered in the candidate's evaluation, since the majority of parishioners with whom the future priest will work are women.

The guidelines, which are to be adapted by national bishops' conferences, include an outline of the stages, prayer life and specific subjects to be studied during the six or more years of preparation for priestly ordination.

But the guidelines also acknowledge that many of the skills needed to be a good priest cannot be learned in a classroom. They are the result of prayer, self-discipline and seeking to model one's behavior on that of Christ, the document says.

"The call to be pastors of the people of God requires a formation that makes future priests experts in the art of pastoral discernment, that is to say, able to listen deeply to real situations and capable of good judgment in making choices and decisions," it says.

"To make pastoral discernment effective, the evangelical style of listening must take central place. This frees the pastor from the temptation of abstraction, to self-promotion, to excessive self-assurances and to that aloofness that would make him a 'spiritual accountant' instead of a good Samaritan."

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

God lovingly intervenes in human history

Today's readings on this Fourth (and last) Sunday of Advent describe how God very dramatically and lovingly intervenes in human history when "there is no way out".

In the first reading, God directly invites King Ahaz to ask for a sign that God would protect the southern kingdom of Judah from enemies that threaten to destroy it.

Now, a wise leader would eagerly grasp at the oppor-

tunity. Not Ahaz, who in his pride has already decided on his own political solution!

Isaiah decides to give him God's sign anyway, saying "the virgin shall conceive a child and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel."

Ahaz was not interested in God's help. He foolishly trusted his own wisdom. As a result, the whole nation was defeated and sent into exile in Babylon.

The Gospel tells us of another man faced with a grave dilemma who did listen to God.

Joseph, already bound by a solemn betrothal ceremony to take Mary as his wife, discovers to his dismay that she is with child. He can only suppose that she has been unfaithful to him, and is now subject to very severe laws that could result in her death if he exposes her. Joseph takes the compassionate way out. He will divorce her quietly, exposing himself, not her, to shame.

God intervenes through a

contrast between this just man and crafty Ahaz.

Advent has been all about getting our hearts ready to be a closer part of the drama. Jesus name is "Emmanuel" which means "God is with us". Are we ready to become actors in the drama, rather than just observers?

At Christmas, God is asking of us what He asked of Mary and Joseph - complete trust in his plans.

If we keep on listening to the Christ Child, he will teach us our lines, and shower us with the grace to proclaim them with conviction.



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

DEC. 18

Fourth Sunday of Advent

READINGS

Isaiah 7:10-14

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-24

dream in which an angel tells him the whole story.

The angel tells Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, for her child has God Himself as the Father!

With incredible trust and humility, Joseph obediently agrees to the plan. What a

VATICAN LETTER

How sacred music evangelizes, lifts up hearts

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - 'Tis the season for a huge assortment of holiday concerts and carols to choose from, making Advent and Christmas a unique period for reminding people of the evergreen beauty of sacred music.

And music can be that gentle lure that helps welcome and embrace those who have become distant from the church, said one liturgy and music expert.

Like weddings and baptisms, "Christmas is a great time" to reach out and offer people an experience that encourages them to return to church more regularly, said Paul Inwood, a British composer and former director of liturgy and music for the Diocese of Portsmouth.

"When it comes to Christmas, I'm always very aware of the people who perhaps come just once or twice a year" to church, he told Catholic News Service by phone in early December.

For that reason, he said, the music that parishes program should be "beautiful

and magnificent," but also "hospitable" and "accessible" to everyone.

Music can be that gentle lure that helps welcome and embrace those who have become distant from the church

Because "you can't find anything more religious and more joyful in sacred celebrations than the whole congregation expressing its faith and devotion in song," Inwood said.

Msgr. Vincenzo De Gregorio, who heads the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome, told CNS that accessibility means respectfully matching the complexity of the music to the abilities of the congregation so that everyone can participate and feel elevated by the music.

Inwood said before the Second Vatican Council, liturgical music was performed by choirs and the people in the pews were spectators.

"After Vatican II, the kind of liturgy that we had

changed its nature and went back to the traditions of the earlier church when participation in the liturgy was the norm," he said.

Music was now seen "as a ministry, rather than a performance, and it serves the people and helps them lift up their voices and praise to God," said the composer.

This push for musical reform was already well underway before the Second Vatican Council, Msgr. De Gregorio said, which is why the pontifical institute was founded in 1911 by St. Pius X. The institute was established to respond to the growing belief that "the people must sing," he said.

The institute teaches religious and laypeople from all over the world about liturgical music as well as giving them the practical skills to include and promote new forms of artistic expression appropriate to the present culture and people.

The tendency toward inclusion is a unique characteristic of the Latin-rite Catholic Church, said the monsignor, who is an expert in the pipe organ and Gregorian chant, and has degrees

in sacred theology and modern literature.

Roman Catholicism was heavily influenced by "the ancient Roman mentality," he said, which saw that expanding into new territories and spreading its influence meant including and assimilating all that was good and useful from the local cultures.

This history of inclusion "is the secret of the development of music" and all arts, he said.

The Latin-rite Catholic Church "never chose one style. It never said 'no' to new developments and allowing instruments, which "for around 1,000 years were never used in (Christian) worship because they stunk of paganism."

Instruments first used by pagan Greece and Rome -- like the organ, flute, trumpet and string instruments -- are today considered by many to be uniquely sacred instruments, the priest said.

"In her wisdom," he said, the church embraces appealing local traditions and elevates them, finds a way to fold them into the sacred.

That's why the institute is

so important, he said, because the desire for inclusion was never about "wanting to lower the level" of standards, but to skillfully elevate the music of the people to a higher plane.

"Here then is the reason for our school, to create and form people who can make music of the highest level," he said.

He said he thinks the debate over "folk" versus "traditional" forms of music stems from an "ignorance" about music in general.

Fears that "the church has abandoned its great music" find fertile ground "where there is no widespread musical culture" in schools and parishes, and people lack basic skills in reading or understanding music, he said.

Problems and polemics occurred, he said, where the reform of liturgical song was "introduced without the necessary preparation."

The answer, then, isn't "creating an aristocracy" of experts, but of increasing awareness and preparation for everyone so they can hold onto, develop and appreciate musical traditions.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

AT THE MOVIES

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

Fans of British novelist P.G. Wodehouse have a special place in their hearts for one of his most memorable comic creations, a shy and eccentric newt fancier with the immortal name Augustus Fink-Nottle.

Gussie, as his pal Bertie Wooster always called him, turns out to bear some similarity to the protagonist of "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" (Warner Bros.).

Since the film is primarily a fantasy and not a comedy, however, this resemblance proves a mixed blessing.

Penning by "Harry Potter" scribe J.K. Rowling, and set in 1926 New York, the movie follows the stateside adventures of Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne), an alumnus of Harry's alma mater, the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, who specializes in studying and preserving the creatures of the title.

As he travels the globe, Newt keeps an entire menagerie of the outlandish critters he's collected in an ordinary-looking but magical suitcase.

When this valise accidentally falls into the hands of



CNS PHOTO/WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT

Katherine Waterston, Eddie Redmayne, Alison Sudol and Dan Fogler star in a scene from the movie "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them."

everyday mortal Jacob Kowalski (Dan Fogler), the owner of an outwardly identical grip, it's easy to foresee the fallout.

Jacob cluelessly releases the inhabitants of Newt's portable zoo, thereby creating two interconnected problems for the spellcaster.

First, there's the danger of setting off a panic as fauna

unknown to nature wander the streets of Gotham. The result of such a sensation, moreover, would be to reveal to humans the existence of the whole carefully hidden world of wand-wavers - with persecution and conflict the likely results.

To prevent all this, Newt joins forces with local Ministry of Magic enforcement official Tina Goldstein

(Katherine Waterston).

While barely able to understand the alternate reality he's suddenly stumbled into, Jacob, too, lends a hand. Finally, to round things out - and create parallel love possibilities - Tina's sister, Queenie (Alison Sudol), also joins the chase to retrieve the strays.

As directed by "Harry Potter" veteran David Yates,

"Beasts" is visually impressive. And Folger brings off Jacob's working-stiff persona to droll effect. But, overall, emotional engagement is lacking - perhaps because Redmayne makes withdrawn bashfulness one of his peculiar character's leading qualities. Thus special effects wind up predominating over human interaction.

The predictable mayhem punctuating the story is thoroughly stylized. So parents may be more concerned to find that a vaguely religious atmosphere surrounds one of the villains of the piece, anti-wizardry crusader Mary Lou Barebone (Samantha Morton).

The film contains considerable action violence with minimal gore and a couple of uses of a slang term some may find vulgar.

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.

Sacred music

CONTINUE FROM PAGE 12

Education and formation, he and Inwood said, have to tackle both fronts: the risk that clergy don't understand music and its proper expression, and the risk that musicians don't know enough about liturgy.

Inwood said "there's a lot of goodwill" on both sides to do the right thing, but people need to understand how music is "integral to the rite and not just an optional stuck on top of it, which is how it sometimes comes

across."

"The music needs to fit the ritual like a glove," which requires people understand not just music, but also "what liturgical action is doing so they can tailor the music to what is going on," a skill not unlike what composers do when fitting musical scores to action unfolding on film or the stage.

Being respectful of the ritual and sensitive to the congregation mean sacred music can shine anywhere -- whether it's a parish in a

poor shantytown or in a monumental cathedral, the two men said.

It doesn't depend solely on resources like a pipe organ or a professional choir, Inwood said, it's about "authenticity."

"You can do wonderful things with what you have," even just a cantor and assembly, he said. "The music isn't inferior in any way, it's just different and reflects who the community is at that particular point" and aims to draw them together

in praise.

"It's much better to do (music) you can manage and do it well than try very hard to do things you can't achieve," he added.



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ADIRONDACK

NAVE LESSONS, CAROLS

Lake Placid - The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE) will perform a Festival of Lessons and Carols.

Date: Dec. 18

Time: 4 p.m.

Place: St. Agnes Church

Features: 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. NAVE's Festival of Lessons and Carols follows the traditional model of those performed annually on Christmas Eve (since 1928) at King's College Chapel in Cambridge, England. The customary format is built around nine short Bible readings from the Old and New Testaments 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 to musically illuminate the narrative.

Price: Suggested donation of \$10.

Contact: drew.benware@gmail.com; and on Facebook.

CLINTON

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

Moors Forks - A parish Christmas Festival to be held.

Date: Dec. 18

Time: 6 p.m.

Place: St. Ann's Church

Features: Presentation of the Greens, Lighting of Christmas Tree, Live Nativity, Bonfire, Chili and Hot Dogs Following.

LESSONS, CAROLS BY NAVE

Plattsburgh - The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE) will perform a Festival of Lessons and Carols.

Date: Dec. 17

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: St. Peter's Church

Features: (See information above, Adirondack Deanery)

Price: Suggested donation of \$10.

Contact: drew.benware@gmail.com; and on Facebook.

SPAGHETTI DINNER

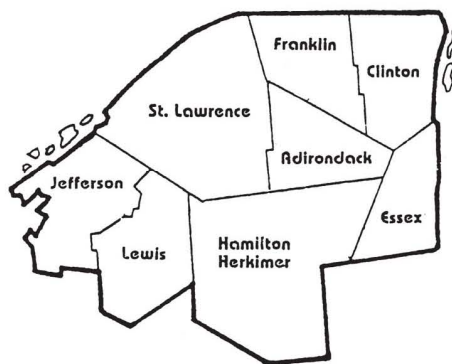
Morrisonville - St. Alexander's Church and the Knights of Columbus 7248 will host a spaghetti dinner fundraiser.

Date: Jan. 14

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

Place: St. Alexander's Jubilee Hall

Cost: Adults, \$8; Children 6-12, \$3; under 5, Free



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.

EMPTY MANGER CAROLING

Plattsburgh - "Empty Manger" Christmas Caroling days are set

Date: Dec. 17

Time: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Place: Planned Parenthood

Contact: Nancy Belzile at 518-593-6024

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.

Contact: call 518-561-5083 or email ohnsadoration@aol.com

FRANKLIN

SATURDAY DEVOTION

St. Regis Falls - First Saturday Devotion and Holy Hour to be held the first Saturday of each month.

Time: after 4:30 p.m. anticipated Mass

Place: St. Ann's Church

HAMILTON-HERKIMER

CHRISTMAS CHEER

Lake Pleasant - St. James Altar Rosary Society is spreading Christmas cheer to elderly and homebound by putting together care packages.

Suggestions: A list of suggested items to donate include: Christmas card with cheery and encouraging message, prayer or devotion book, puzzle, large print crosswords, word search or Sudoku, stress ball, travel pack or box of tissues, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, lotion, personal care items, potpourri, slippers,

throws, shawl, scarf, stationary with pen and stamps, ice gripper for bottom of cane or any items you think an elderly person might enjoy. Also, if you know of someone who would like to have a care package let us know.

Contact: 518-548-6275

CHRISTMAS MASS

Wells/Lake Pleasant - Christmas Mass schedule for St. Ann's and St. James is set

Schedule: Dec. 24, 4 p.m. at St. Ann's Church. Children's pageant followed at 4:20 by Christmas Vigil Mass; Dec. 25, 8 a.m. at St. James Church

Features: Please note there is no Sat. 4 p.m. Mass at St. James and NO 10 a.m. Mass at St. Ann's Church.

DAYS OF DISCERNMENT

Old Forge - Discerning men are invited to consider the call to the priesthood.

Dates: Jan 29; Feb 12; Mar 5; Apr 2 and 23; May 7

Time: 3 p.m.

Place: St. Bartholomew's Rectory
Features: Reflection, Vespers & dinner. Juniors in high school and older.

Contact: Fr. Howard Venette, pastor.st-barts@roadrunner.com/ 315-369-3554;

JEFFERSON

IHC MYSTERY PLAYERS ADVENT

Watertown - IHC Mystery Players to present 'The Birth of Jesus.'

Schedule:

Dec. 18, Holy Family Church, Watertown at 7:15 p.m.

Contact: Mystery players is also cur-

rently looking for spots to perform during Lent 2017. Interested churches please contact Terry at tburgess@spar-tanpride.org

FRANCISCAN MYSTERY PLAYERS

The Franciscan Mystery Players of St. Mary's in Clayton and St. John's, La-Fargeville, will present "The Birth of Jesus - A Franciscan Christmas".

Schedule:

Dec. 18 at 6 p.m. at St. Anthony's, Watertown

Features: dramatic meditation on the birth of Jesus, using special lighting and sound. A free-will offering

Contact: parish office at 315-686-3398

BLOOD DRIVE

Evans Mills - Community Blood Drive to be held.

Date: Dec. 21

Time: 1 p.m. to 6

Place: St. Mary's Church

Features: Appointments encouraged and appreciated. Walk-ins welcome. Consider a Power Red Cell donation if you are O Neg, A Neg, B Neg or O Pos.

Contact: Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit redcross-blood.org and enter Sponsor Keyword IndianRiverCatholics to schedule your appointment to donate.

LEWIS

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Lowville - Eucharistic Adoration to be held.

Date: Dec. 15

Time: 4 p.m. to 5

Place: St. Peter's Church

Features: One hour of Exposition, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Silent Adoration, and Benediction.

INTERNATIONAL NATIVITY EXHIBIT

Houseville - An international exhibit of Christmas Creches-Nativities Will be seen at St. Hedwig's Church.

Schedule: The display may be seen on Dec. 11, 18, and 25 and Jan. 1 and 8 (2017), after the 11 a.m. Mass, or between 1 p.m. and 3 on the above dates with the exception of Christmas Day when the exhibit will close at 1 p.m. The exhibit may also be seen by appointment. Contact 348-6260.

Features: The exhibit is free

OPLATEK 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 Christ, 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.

Contact: 348-6260.

ST. LAWRENCE

DAYS OF DISCERNMENT

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

Dates: Jan 29; Feb 12; Mar 5; Apr 2 and 23; May 7

Time: 3 p.m.

Place: St. Mary's Rectory

Features: Reflection and vespers. No reservation necessary. Open to men who are Juniors in high school and older.

Contact: Your Catholic Campus Minister or Father Stephen Rocker, pastorsmsp@gmail.com, 315-265-9680; or Fr. Doug Lucia, frdoug@twcny.rr.com

DIOCESAN EVENTS

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

The Vocation Office has scheduled a women's discernment retreat day.

Date: Jan. 7

Place: Morrisonville

Contact: Cathy Russell, diocesan Vocation Coordinator: 315-393-2920 or crussell@rcdony.org

NEIGHBORING DIOCESES

SILENT RETREAT

Syracuse - Silent Directed Retreat Weekend to be held.

Date: Jan. 6-8

Place: Christ the King Retreat Center
Cost: \$250, \$25 non refundable fee
Features: The retreat begins with supper at 6 p.m., and concludes at noon on Sunday. Each retreatant will meet individually with an assigned director from the Center staff several times over the weekend. The director will suggest material to guide the retreatant's times in prayer. The fee includes a two-night stay, meals, snacks and individual direction. A Catholic liturgy will be available on Saturday evening. Directors will be Ms. Lana Riley, Rev. Lou Sogliuzzo, SJ, Sr. Mary Ellen Schopfer, CSJ, Mr. Jim Krisher, and Sr. Marise May, OSF.

Contact: register online at spiritualrenewalcenter.com/events or contact the center at (315) 472-6546 or mail@spiritualrenewalcenter.com



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@rcdony.org

Christmas artwork contest

The guidelines for the 2017 Missionary Childhood Association's Christmas Artwork Contes have been announced.

The 24 winning entries will be displayed at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. in 2017.

CHRISTMAS ARTWORK CONTEST GUIDELINES

- The contest is open to young people in grades K-8 All entries must be postmarked and / or received no later than January 31, 2017.

ARTWORK SPECIFICATIONS

- Artwork must be on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of WHITE paper — no construction or lined paper. White card stock is okay.
- The illustration may be depicted HORIZONTALLY or VERTICALLY.

- Students must illustrate one of the subjects listed under the heading "Subjects."

- Acceptable media includes crayons, pastels, colored pencils, markers, tempera or watercolor paints. PLEASE — NO LEAD PENCILS Artwork must be the child's own. Tracings and direct copies of other art cannot be considered. Students selected as finalists will be asked to validate the originality of their artwork.

SUGGESTED SUBJECTS

- The Nativity (a manger scene, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, animals)
- Three Wise Men (presentation of gifts or following the star)
- Shepherds (with sheep, in fields, seeing the angel, or visiting the manger)
- Mother and Child (Mary with her infant son)
- Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem
- Newborn Jesus in manger
- The Angel Gabriel

To enter, please complete this entire form found at the website shown below and attach it (with tape) to the back of each student's entry. Please type or print. Artwork will not be accepted without this form. Do not glue or staple this form to artwork. **

Mail entries to your local Missionary Childhood Association office at PO BOX 369, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 attn: Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Diocesan Director of MCA.

For entry form go to www.missio.org



OBITUARIES

Brownville — Michael R. Shepard, 80; Funeral Services Dec. 8, 2016 at Immaculate Conception Church.

Chateaugay — Thomas J. Blair, 67; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2016 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in Brainardsville Cemetery.

Clayton — Virginia E. "Ginny" (Bazinet) Kay, 64; Funeral Services Dec. 8, 2016 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Clayton — Sterling G. LaLonde, 76; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Colton — Stanley P. Tarbox, 60; Funeral Services Dec. 7, 2016 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

Evans Mills — Vernon F. LaFave, 79; Funeral Services Dec. 6, 2016 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Michael's Cemetery, Antwerp.

Gouverneur — Brian George Green, 35; Funeral Services Dec. 6, 2016 at St. James Church; burial in Hermon Cemetery.

Lake Placid — John MacKenzie Wilkins, 23; Funeral Services Dec. 5, 2016 at St. Agnes Church; burial in St. Agnes Cemetery.

Louisville — Marie Anne (LaForce) St. Hilaire, 97; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2016 at St. Lawrence Church; burial in Parish cemetery.

Pope: Mary shows what good comes from saying 'yes' to God

By Cindy Wooden
 Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)— Although she was just a humble young woman from a small town, Mary's total "yes" to God was "the most important 'yes' of history" and overturned Adam and Eve's prideful "no," which unleashed sin into the world, Pope Francis said.

"With generosity and trust like Mary, may each of us say this personal 'yes' to God today," Pope Francis prayed Dec. 8 as he recited the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter's Square on the feast

Massena — Alice Elizabeth Roy Conant, 103; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Cyril's Cemetery, Alex Bay.

Massena — Bonnie M. (Barrett) Fye, 68; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2016 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Massena Center Cemetery.

Massena — Roger J. Peets, 76; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at Church of the Sacred Heart; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Morrisonville — Roger Russell Everleth, 90; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2016 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Morrisonville — Barbara (Reyell) Lyman, 82; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in St. Alexander's Cemetery.

Norfolk — Norma R. (Cardinal) Sharlow, 91; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2016 at Church of the Visitation; burial in Visitation Cemetery.

Ogdensburg — Robert Edgar Girard, Sr., 81; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at Notre Dame Church; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Ogdensburg — Mary Jane A. (Gagnon) LaLonde, 61; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at Frary Funeral Home

Ogdensburg — Jaden Michael TenEyck-Rice, Infant; Funeral Services Dec. 5, 2016 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

Plattsburgh — Dorothy M. Newell, 94; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2016 at St. Peter's Church; burial in Whispering Maples Memorial Gardens.

Plattsburgh — Barbara V. Riley, 95; Funeral Services Dec. 5, 2016 at St. John's Church; burial in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Potsdam — Nora K. (McKenna) Clarke, 89; Funeral Services at Garner Funeral Home; burial in Bayside Cemetery.

Saranac Lake — Dr. John G. "Jack" Debbie, 80; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery.

Watertown — Raymond R. Anderson, 64; Funeral Services Dec. 6, 2016 at Sacred Heart Church.

Watertown — Joyce M. (Perkins) McDermott, 70; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at Holy Family Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Watertown — Roy F. Remus, 89; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2016 at Holy Family Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

West Chazy — Steven L. Matott, 63; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2016 at St. Joseph's Church.

of the Immaculate Conception. Even when they do not say "no" to God, human beings can be experts in saying, "yes, but ..." to God, the pope said.

"To avoid saying 'no' outright to God, we say, 'Sorry, but I can't,' 'Not today, but maybe tomorrow,' 'Tomorrow I will be better, tomorrow I will pray, I'll do good tomorrow,'" he said. But in responding that way, "we close the door to what is good and evil profits."

Nevertheless, Pope Francis said, God keeps trying to reach out and save us. And through the "yes" of Mary, he became human, "exactly like

us except for one thing, that 'no,' that sin. This is why he chose Mary, the only creature without sin, immaculate."

In the late afternoon, the pope made his traditional visit to a statue of Mary erected in the center of Rome, near the Spanish Steps, to celebrate the official church recognition that Mary was conceived without sin.

Thousands of Romans and tourists crowded around the statue where people had been laying flowers all day. Pope Francis composed a prayer to Mary for the occasion and read it, standing under the statue's watchful eyes.

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

Advent, Christmas and mercy

By Rachel Daly
Contributing writer

The Year of Mercy has been over for a few weeks now, and the Church has begun to take stock of how it went. I for one continue to be amazed by some of the work the Holy Spirit accomplished in this time of grace (shout-out to St. Andre's Parish in Malone, where I had the privilege of being part of the Doors of Mercy Lenten study and seeing lots of people come back to the sacraments and run smack into God's healing love in surprising and incredible ways).

But there's a part of me too that thinks, if we're being honest, that the Year of Mercy has left us with a lot still to accomplish.

I think for some of us, the Year of Mercy was an uncomfortable time. It was a time that pricked our consciences and shined a light on the fact that mercy is something we really need to grow in.

I think a lot of us who consider ourselves "good Catholics" found that when we were called upon to speak more boldly about mercy, it made us squirm a little inside - perhaps because it's easier to speak compellingly about the things we practice well than the things we don't, and, let's face it - mercy is hard.

And the further we get along our faith journey, the harder it can be to admit that we need to go back and revisit square one.

I think I speak for more people than would like to admit it when I say that this Advent finds me secretly visiting Jesus in the night like the Pharisee Nicodemus and saying, "Lord, I've done my best, but the truth is I still have a lot left to learn that only you can teach me."

I think there are a lot of us, many of whom represent the Church in official ways, who are admitting that we are in very real need of seeking some further prayer and transformation in the area of mercy.

May I suggest that the upcoming feast of Christmas is the perfect opportunity to do that?

May I suggest that it is the perfect time to begin again, to quietly make our way to Jesus and say, "The push to appear as experts on your mercy is over. Now that no one's looking, can we



Children of St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga attended Mass on the first Friday of Advent, where the oldest and youngest students were chosen to light the first candle on the Advent wreath. Shannon Jordan (eighth grade) and Raegan Smith-Telford (pre-k) are seen here on Dec. 2 at St. Mary's Church in Ticonderoga.

begin the lifelong process of making deep, intimate knowledge and practice of your mercy a reality?"

In my own life, the deepest insight I ever had into the mercy of God was directly connected with Christmas.

I was serving at a Christmas soup kitchen in Spanish Harlem, and it was my job to walk up and down the line out front, passing out Christmas cookies and inviting people to the sacrament of Confession, which was being offered in a nearby alleyway.

I got into a conversation with a very poor old

man, and he told me that his apartment was being broken into and robbed over and over. "I'm shaking like a pickle," he said to me. (I'm not sure if that's a real expression, but in any event, he definitely looked shaken.)

Later, as I was walking around, I passed by the area where confessions were being heard and I happened to glance down the alleyway. The priest who was hearing confessions was surely one of the most intelligent people I'd ever met. He had been a successful lawyer before becoming a Franciscan and a priest, and now he was working on an advanced degree at the Catholic University of America.

But at that moment, he was there in his patched habit, sitting in a metal folding chair in a dingy alleyway, hearing the confession of the poor, bedraggled old man whom I had spoken to earlier. The extraordinary contrast of it shocked me.

And then it hit me like a thousand bolts of lightning - that's the meaning of Christmas! That's what's so incredible about the mystery of the Incarnation! That one who was great became small for us.

Nothing had ever embodied that for me before like the image of this eminently gifted priest joyfully squandering his time and his talents on the poorest of the poor.

Nothing had ever shouted of God's mercy - of his love squandered so lavishly upon us, his poor ones - than the work of mercy that was taking place in front of my eyes.

Never did Almighty God taking the form of a small child in a manger hold such profound punch to me.

I feel sure that this experience was a special grace and not something I could readily recreate. But it just goes to show God's readiness to extend mercy even to the proud.

Don't forget, in the Prodigal Son parable (which most of us have heard spoken about ad nauseum this year), the father goes out to meet the stubborn elder son too, and we never hear what happens in the end.

For those of us Pharisical types who are still wondering what the ending is to our own story, let's make the most of this Advent and Christmas season to let the humbling enormity of God's mercy begin its work in us once and for all!

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