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Vocation coordinator takes on additional role | PAGE 8

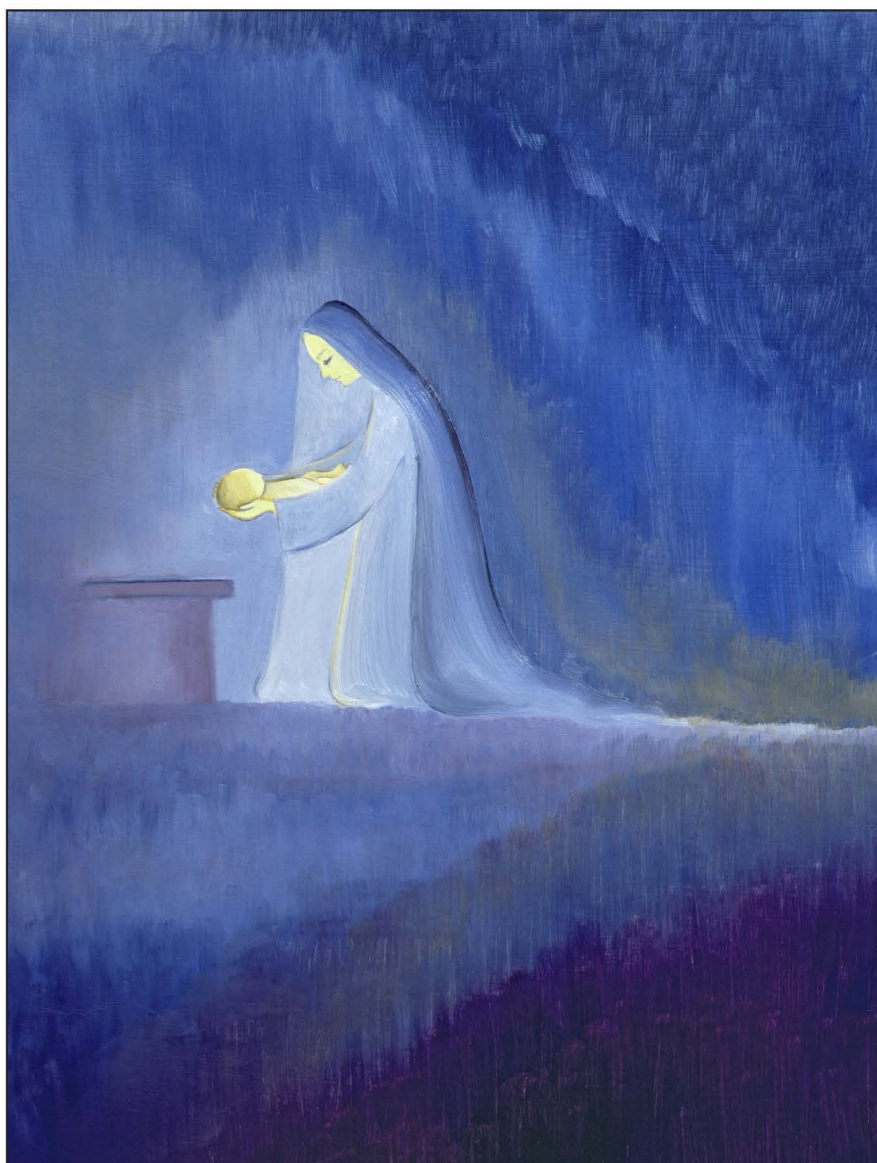
Nativity scenes bring joy to hardened hearts | PAGE 11

The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 72, Number 30

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DEC. 20, 2017

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS



CNS/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Mary and the Christ Child are depicted in a 1997 painting by Elizabeth Wang. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.

God's greatness in little things

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- God shows his greatness through his tenderness toward his children like a loving father, Pope Francis said.

In his homily during morning Mass at Domus Sanctae Marthae Dec. 14, the pope said it is as if God "wants to sing us a lullaby" to soothe those who are wounded.

"He carries us within his very being. He is the God who with this dialogue makes himself little to make us understand, so that we

may trust in him and we can tell him with the courage of Paul."

Pope Francis reflected on the day's first reading from the prophet Isaiah a which proclaims that "the Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works."

This compassion is most evident during the Christmas season, where God "makes himself small and in his smallness, does not stop being great," Pope Francis told the congregation.

SPECIAL VISITOR



Bishop Antoine Chbeir of Latakia, Syria spends a week in the North Country

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

Bishop's message for Christmas

"As we celebrate the birth of our Savior and greet a New Year, let us unwrap the gift of salvation offered by making Mary's words our own: 'Let it be done to me according to thy word.'"

"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 New Year!"



FULL STORY, PAGE 16

Msgr. Poissant

Msgr. Leeward Poissant, one of 48 retired priests to benefit from the 2017 Christmas collection, looks back on his life as a priest

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

Around the Diocese

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CATHOLICBox 326
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USPS 0039-3400BISHOP TERRY
R. LAVALLEY
PresidentREV. JOSEPH A. MORGAN
Vice President
JAMES D. CROWLEY
Secretary-Treasurer
MARY LOU KILIAN
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EDITOR'S NOTE

An early taste of Christmas joy

Christmas came a little early for the Diocese of Ogdensburg as we were blessed by the presence of Bishop Antoine Chbeir of our twin diocese of Latakia, Syria.

This charming, gentle prelate certainly made friends across the diocese as he met Catholic school kids, priests, deacons and many folks of the North Country Church.

As a guest at the Christmas party for diocesan employees, Bishop Chbeir had a chance to reflect a bit on his visit. He told us that he particularly enjoyed meeting the priests and deacons who gathered in Watertown, Ogdens-

burg and Plattsburgh. "When I see the way the priests are serving the people and their parishes and the love the faithful have for their priests, I found it very beautiful," he said.

Mary Lou
Kilian

The bishop also encouraged his new American friends to appreciate the gifts and graces of our lives.

"When I saw that you had power every day, I found it a little bit weird," he said. "And the respect that people have for the law, I found that a little bit weird."

What a lesson for those of us who find any inconvenience or minimal threat to our safety or comfort, just too weird to tolerate.

This week's coverage of Bishop Chbeir's visit is just the beginning of our long term commitment to keep the story of Syrian Christians in front of the eyes of Christians of the North Country.

In coming weeks we will publish background material about Christianity in Syria which Bishop Chbeir supplied to Father Steve Murray, chair of the Solidarity in Faith committee. We will also, of course, keep up with all the diocesan initiatives to reach out to Bishop Chbeir's diocese.

In Plattsburgh, Bishop LaValley said, "this isn't a one-time thing. This is a relationship that continues to blossom, that continues to move forward."

The relationship will continue with monetary donations

that we make to Latakia and, more importantly, it will continue with our prayer for each other.

"Jesus has united us in our love and faith," Bishop Chbeir said. "That's why you are always in our thoughts, in our prayers. We will pray for you, for the bishops, for the priests, for the deacons, for the faithful, for each one of you.

"Every time I come to America (and this is my fourth time) I learn a lot from you and that's what I am so grateful to you. You are always in our thoughts and in our prayers.

"Thank you. God bless you and God bless America," Bishop Chbeir said.

Thank you, Bishop Chbeir. Because of you, God has blessed us already!

FATHER MUENCH SAYS

Remembering an extraordinary day

May the Peace and Joy of Christ be with you at this Christmas and throughout the New Year.

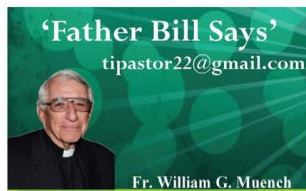
I promise to remember all of you and your families in my Christmas Mass.

I am truly grateful to you all for being a part with me in this column. Each time, I prepare to write a column I think of you all. Thank you!

I must admit that over the last few years my column at Christmas time has been the same: a remembrance of the most exciting day of my life. So, I am certain you have heard this story before, probably often.

As you may remember, I was invited by Susan and Paul to accompany them to the birth of their second child whose name is Will. I continue to remember that day well and all that happened that day.

I got down to Syracuse in time to join them on the way to St. Joseph's Hospital. For various reasons, I was the only one with them that night. I felt very honored. I was able to be



with them during the whole evening. I do remember overhearing one of the nurses commenting to the other nurse – "my goodness they even brought their own priest."

I have been asked often when I tell this story what prayers I said during the birth. I must admit I did not pray at all as I was so completely taken up with all that was happening. My attention was absorbed by the birth and all that this new life meant. One of the nurses was right at my side to explain what was happening and, I suspect, to take care of me if I fainted. I didn't.

Later, when I was allowed to hold this new born, I did take the time to pray – a prayer of gratitude for this child and for

life. I prayed in hope that this child's life would be filled with happiness and that he would find success in life.

I continue today to remember him in my prayers as he goes through his college experience. We now have a close bond – I held him right after his birth.

The memory of that day continues to remind me to pray for many – including Susan and Paul for involving me. Today I have been thinking of many more I should have prayed for back then.

As I observed that birth I do remember noticing that Susan had to work hard. She endured pain – as you, mothers, all realize better than I. Susan endured that pain of giving birth to her child. I could see her husband, Paul, readiness to give support.

As I remember this, today, my thoughts are of my own mother. She also suffered much pain in bringing me into this world. I pray today in gratitude to my mother. Curiously, I am certain that I

caused her many more pain over the years. So, God, I offer a prayer of gratitude today for my mother's strength – her patience – her willingness to suffer for me.

Finally, I remember that day after the infant, Will, was settled and Susan was moved to a hospital room. Paul and I headed home and, along the way, we decided to stop for a cup of coffee, even though it was 2 a.m. We talked and, as I remember, it was a rather impressive conversation. We talked about tomorrow and all the future tomorrows. We talked about hopes and dreams for this child – for all the children in their family. It was a very special moment. I remember it well.

So, all these years later, I still remember and continue to be grateful for that day. It was truly the most exciting day of my life. I know there have been others. However, each Christmas that day still comes to mind. So, thank you again, Susan and Paul, for inviting me on that very special journey.



PHOTO BY MADELEINE KELLER

In his first stop during the Dec. 11-18 visit through the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Bishop Antoine Chbeir of Latakia, Syria, had the chance to meet Father Steven Murray, chair of the Solidarity in Faith Committee which facilitated the trip. Bishop LaValley, Bishop Chbeir and Father Murray are shown at Immaculate Heart Central School in Watertown.



PHOTO BY DAYNA LEADER

Bishop LaValley invited children from St. James School in Gouverneur, St. Mary's School in Canton and Immaculate Heart Central in Watertown to his home in Ogdensburg to meet his guest from Syria.

'Jesus is uniting us in love and in faith'

Bishop Antoine Chbeir shares the story of his Syrian diocese with the church of northern New York

By Deacon Kevin Mastellon
and Mary Lou Kilian

From Watertown to Ogdensburg and Plattsburgh Bishop Antoine Chbeir shared the story of the church in Latakia, Syria, with priests, deacons, children, reporters and groups of the faithful across the North Country.

Bishop Chbeir is the Eparch of The Maronite Catholic Eparchy of Latakia, a diocese of the Eastern Rite of the Catholic Church.

From Dec. 10 to 18, Bishop Chbeir toured the Diocese of Ogdensburg at the invitation of Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

At the Chrism Mass this past April 6, Bishop LaValley announced an initiative to provide spiritual and monetary support to the Syrian Diocese. Bishop LaValley said the twinning of the dioceses was to give the people of the North Country "a deeper appreciation of the remarkable faith of people who have suffered so much giving witness to the same faith as ours."

Civil war struck Syria in 2011. Originally the effort was to oust the Assad family which has run Syria since 1971. The war has become more complicated in motive and more violent since it started.

Bishop Chbeir began his visit in Watertown with a visit to Immaculate Heart Central School, and Mass at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse. The congregation was mostly priests, deacons and religious from the Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence deaneries.

Bishop Chbeir spoke in his homily at the Motherhouse about being Christian even to those who do not share our faith. "Because when you are Christian, you can not only think of yourself, but you'll go out of yourself to meet especially the people who are in difficulties, in need."

In Ogdensburg, Bishop Chbeir met a group of Catholic school children at the Bishop's house and then preached at a Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral.

"Last month we had a meeting in Damascus, the



PHOTO BY TOM SEMERARO

Among the gifts Bishop Chbeir will bring back to Syria is a Seton Catholic baseball cap.

capital of Syria, for the Syrian Catholic bishops," he told the congregants. "We chose Damascus because it is bombed every day and for three days, we were bombed every day.

"I'm saying so because

sometimes we are not aware of the gifts and graces that the Lord has given us...and we may take everything for granted," Bishop Chbeir said. "When I found you have power every day, it's a little bit weird to me. When I find respect for the law and discipline, it is also a little bit weird to me."

"When I see the way the priests are serving the people and their parishes and the love the faithful have for their priests, I found it very beautiful," he said, "and I, myself have been feeling a lot of love and affection wherever I go.

"I would like to thank Your Excellency for everything you are doing for us, for the twinning, for the help you are giving to us, even before knowing each other, he said. "You made me remember when I was first ordained a bishop. I knew about being a bishop of a diocese but a bishop is not just for his diocese but he's bishop of the church and has to serve the whole church all over the world.

"Because you are Christian,

you are helping another diocese that is on the other end of the planet," Bishop Chbeir said. "Jesus is uniting us in love and in faith. That's why you are always in our thoughts, our prayers

In Plattsburgh, the two bishops concelebrated Mass at Seton Catholic Central School.

Bishop LaValley told the students, teachers and community members, "this isn't a one-time thing. This is a relationship that continues to blossom, that continues to move forward."

The relationship between the two dioceses began as a response to Pope Francis' call to help families and Christian communities remain in their native lands.

But that's something Bishop Chbeir said many Syrian families cannot do.

"In Syria, we have very bad and tough times. Our people suffer a lot," he said. "We have a lot of dead people, injured, handicapped, orphans and widows.

"We pray for peace in Syria and all over the world," he said.

Msgr. Leeward Poissant looks back on 54 years of priesthood

Scholar, rector, pastor... priest

By Shawn Ryan
Staff writer

PLATTSBURGH - A lot of life has passed before the eyes of Msgr. Leeward Poissant, now retired; from his seminary study in Rome during Vatican II, to his time as president/rector at Wadhams Hall, and through his 27 years as a pastor and 54 years as a priest.

Msgr. Poissant's formative years in Rome, during the most important time in the modern Church, certainly colored how he carried out his ministries.

He fondly recalls the "simple pastoral nature" of Saint John XXIII, then Pope during Vatican II, likening his nature to that of current Pope Francis.

For his first Mass, Msgr. Poissant chose to celebrate in a small chapel in one of Rome's famed catacombs.

"It was a reminder to me that a priest must be prepared to lay down his life, whether suddenly or a day at a time."

Now five years' retired, Msgr. Poissant's days may be less hectic, but are certainly no less spiritual.

He relishes setting his own pace each day, and is catching up on tasks some 40 years in the making like finally reading "The Birth of the Messiah" which has been waiting for him to read since it was published. He considers his apartment a "haven" from the constant demands and challenges of the parish life he knew for so many years.

Though retired, Msgr. Poissant is far from done with his ministry, vowing to step in to help younger priests whenever they might be in need.

"When I retired I resolved to respond to whatever requests I received. I realize that sooner or later, as the years continue to roll by, I



This week - on Dec. 18 - Msgr. Leeward Poissant celebrates both his birthday and his 54th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. His ordination photo and current photo flank a picture of Msgr. Poissant taken in St. John the Baptist Church in Keeseville where he served as pastor from 2002 until his retirement in 2014.

may need to make some prudent decisions about how distance and winter affect my abilities. For the present, however, I ask God to help me to do as much as I can for as long as I can."

Msgr. Poissant shares reflections about his priesthood here:

After 54 years of priesthood, what have been your greatest joys and challenges?

My greatest joy was to be ordained on my birthday, which was a remarkable coincidence and a wonderful gift which keeps on giving. Every year I am reminded of this blessing at the same time as I add another year to my life.

Close behind on the joy list are becoming a pastor for the first time 23 years and six months after my ordination and all my opportunities to work with children. Their simple faith and joy are infectious, and they make me want to recapture the joy of my youth, as far as humanly possible.

As for challenges, I am reminded of the old saying, "I have been down a lot of roads, and not all of them were paved." Some of my more challenging roads were

1. becoming the Bishop's personal assistant (I never liked the term "secretary") after only 10 months in a parish,

2. trying to adapt to graduate study in philosophy while having little or no background in the subject compared to the other graduate students,

3. trying to complete my thesis and prepare for a defense while already a fully active faculty member at Wadhams Hall, plus becoming Dean of Students my second year and Vice President my third year,

4. facing the challenges and problems of being president/rector for five years, and

5. trying to be rector of the cathedral, with all of this assignment's unique dimensions, while still teaching one philosophy course each semester.

Did your years of training priests at Wadhams Hall make a difference in how you ministered as a pastor?

I think it did. Certainly, I was affected by the deep spirituality and spirit of community. I also learned a lot about the importance of

collaboration, communication, and compromise, and these all served me well as a pastor. You could say that I came from a good learning environment.

What was it like in Rome when you were in the seminary and then ordained during the years of the Second Vatican Council? How did that experience affect your priesthood?

It was an exciting time to be in Rome. We eagerly awaited the English translation of each council document and speculated on what it would mean for our ministry.

We were also deeply impressed by the simple pastoral nature of Pope (now Saint) John XXIII, who affected us much the way Pope Francis touches people's hearts today.

Finally, Rome is always a powerful reminder of the history of the church and the time of the martyrs. I chose to celebrate my first Mass in a small chapel in one of the catacombs.

It was a reminder to me that a priest must be prepared to lay down his life, whether suddenly or a day at a time.

What has your life as a retired priest been like? Any hobbies of special ministries?

You can discover my expectations in the e-mail address that I chose: glenhaven5075@gmail.com. The numbers stand for 50 years ordained and 75 years of age when I retired. Glen is the name of the street I live on, and it also has a peaceful connotation. Haven indicates my hope that my retirement apartment and experience would be a haven from the constant demands and challenges of parish life.

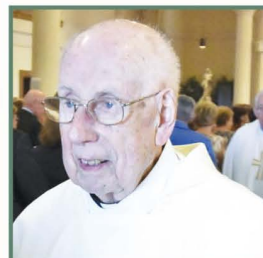
So far it has worked out pretty much that way, with minor adjustments from time to time. Most days I can set my own pace, and now I have time for many things that I once put off until some indefinite future date. For example this Advent I am reading "The Birth of the Messiah" by Raymond Brown, which has been on my shelf untouched since it was published 40 years ago.

As for hobbies, my tastes have changed somewhat. There was a time when I was very interested in bridge, chess, and puzzles of any kind. Now my interests are less intellectual and less competitive. I enjoy outdoor exercise (walking, jogging, and golf when possible), watching my favorite sports on TV, recreational reading and listening to classical music.

Ministries are usually the result of requests from other priests and include weekend Masses, Holy Day Masses, days of recollection, parish missions, and other special events. I think most priests would view the sacramental dimension of their ministry as the most satisfying and enjoyable, and I am blessed to be able to do that without the many other obligations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Christmas Blessings



Among the 48 retired priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg who will benefit from the 2017 Christmas collection are Msgr. Robert J. McCarthy, left; Father Richard S. Sturtz and Father Leo A. Wiley, above with Bishop LaValley; Msgr Paul E. Whitmore, top right; and Father Daniel T. Keefe, bottom right.

Your personal generosity to the Christmas collection in your parish will support all retired priests of the diocese and benefit the diocesan and religious priests serving you today.

Your priests - retired and active - will appreciate your support!


MERRY CHRISTMAS

Msgr. Poissant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

With the wisdom garnered from your wide variety of priestly experience, what advice would you have for younger priests and all Catholics who call the North Country home?

Without making any claim to great wisdom, I would simply advise the younger priests to take time...time to pray each day, lest their ministry become hollow with no spiritual interior...and time to relax for at least a short time each day with something they really enjoy, lest they burn out from all work and no play.

I would advise the Catholics of the North Country to broaden their horizons from a narrow view of their own preferences (Mass time, Mass location, etc) to a more complete grasp of what everyone is going through. Their pastors can help them achieve this by being models of the collaboration, communication, and compromise so essential for the planning process.

What gives you the greatest hope for the future of the Catholic Church? What is your greatest concern?

It is almost impossible for me to identify any one concern as greatest, when there are so many of them and they even vary greatly by geographical location all over the world. However, I am convinced that there is and always will be hope in every situation because of the ongoing powerful presence of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing is impossible with God!

Any favorite stories you would like to share?

I have always liked to use stories in my teaching and preaching. I have a collection of hundreds of them. However, only about five are from my own personal experience, and I would like to

share one those with you.

During the time that I was President/ Rector of Wadhams Hall I was on vacation in Toronto one summer, but it was not very relaxing. I was constantly worried about problems that I would have to face when I returned, even during my last meal before I left.

I was too wound up to enjoy a nice restaurant, so I was in a large two story McDonald's. I took my meal, if you could call it that, to the farthest corner of the second floor, where I could be alone with my anxiety.

As I was eating I saw a shabbily dressed man come up the stairs and start to put a narrow slip of paper on each table. I didn't acknowledge him or even look at him as he left one for me. When he was gone I looked at the small piece of paper which had these words on it: "Be not afraid. I am always with you."

I thought without really "getting it" that he could hardly go wrong with that, because everyone is afraid of something. But the surprise came when I got up to leave and looked at the messages abandoned on other tables. They were all different! Mine was the only one with that wonderful message of reassurance.

It was like I received exactly what I needed to see, and my trip home was a lot more peaceful than I had anticipated.

To this day, whenever I hear the song "Be Not Afraid" I remember that wonderful manifestation of God's presence and providence in my life.

Any final thoughts?

I remember how many times retired priests helped me when I needed them during my 27 years as a pastor. I can no longer repay them, except with my prayers, but I can "pay it forward" by helping those who now need me.

When I retired I resolve to

respond to whatever requests I received. I realize that sooner or later, as the years continue to roll by, I may need to make some prudent decisions about how distance and winter affect my abilities.

For the present, however, I ask God to help me to do as much as I can for as long as I can.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Diocesan Central Offices

will be closed in observance of Christmas beginning Friday, Dec. 22 and will re-open for business on Tuesday, Dec. 26 at 8:15 a.m.

Rest in Peace

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Baptiste Lemercier, 1863; 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 W. McFadden, 1978; Deacon Robert J. LeClair, 2009

Bishop's Schedule

Dec. 20 – 12 p.m., Luncheon with the Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocation Society at Church of the Visitation in Norfolk.

Dec. 22 – 10:50 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg

Dec. 23 – 4 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 24 – 6 p.m., Christmas Vigil Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 25 – 12 a.m., Christmas Midnight Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral
9 a.m., Christmas Day Mass at Notre Dame Church in Ogdensburg

Dec. 27 – 12 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 28 – 12:00 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

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

Dec. 30 – 8 a.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Jan. 2 – 6 p.m., Jefferson Deanery Clergy Dinner at Pete's Trattoria Restaurant in Watertown

NO PAPER NEXT WEEK

The next issue of the North Country Catholic Will be dated Jan. 3.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terriane Yanulavich, Adult & Youth Counseling Services of Northern New York, 618 Lake Rd, Chateaugay, NY 12920; terrianeyanulavich@yahoo.com
Phone: Day: 518-651-2267, Night: 518-569-0612; or Fr. Christopher Carara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy at 315-393-2920, ext. 1340

Environmental Stewardship

Joy in the midst of darkness

In the midst of the shortest days of the year we welcome the winter solstice that marks the gradual return of the light and warmth of the sun.

During the Advent days we welcome the light and warmth of God's love in our hearts. It is the light of the sun and the Son that brings us joy amid the pain and brokenness of all Creation.

Evidence of the light of joy amidst darkness of suffering is described by a Mercy Sister of the Americas' in her blog:

"Many people know of the drama that the people of Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico have lived due to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma (and Maria). We who live in Peru also had a flooding disaster when, due to climate change, we had rains from the end of January until June 2017. It rained every day from 4 p.m. until 6 a.m. – not a soft rain, but downpours.

Although it is very hard to see people lose their farms, their only source of income, due to the change of the river's course, it was outweighed by the solidarity of so many people. We saw a glimpse of what the Beatitudes mean: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God" Matt. 5:3.

Some of the darkness stems from the fact that we aren't taking care of our Earth. The effects will eventually touch everybody, but first the most vulnerable are the poor. How can we believe that the darkness will not overcome the light? We must follow the example of the poor – live more simply and stand in solidarity with our neighbors in need."

Prayer: Lord of light, fill our hearts with the joy of your abiding love. In the darkness of our world, give us courage to search for truth. Help us to welcome and empower those displaced by environmental crisis. Give us the passion to create a more just society. We thank you for the gift of life and the call to protect all that you have created. Amen.

RESPECT LIFE

My Christmas Moment

By **Kathleen M. Gallagher**

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

Unexpectedly, this year my Christmas Moment came in a church. Oddly enough, I don't believe I've ever experienced one there before.

It was a glorious day in September, and I was helping to lead a conference and retreat for the state's Catholic prison chaplains in beautiful Canandaigua, in upstate New York. The chapel in the retreat center overlooked the lake on a day when the weather was postcard perfect, sunny and 75 degrees.

I admit that I was not

looking forward to Mass on this particular day. A Ukrainian Catholic liturgy was planned, something I knew little about. What I did know was that everything in this Eastern Rite Mass is sung – EVERYTHING – and it therefore takes longer than the Roman Catholic Mass with which I am familiar. Ugh. On a day like this?? Really?

Perhaps it was its novelty, combined with a large dose of incense, but I found the Ukrainian liturgy to be filled with profound meaning and reverence.

Singing the words kind of unlocked them for me, in a way that empowered me to understand them.

Each time the celebrant

chanted "Be attentive!" it was as if God was speaking directly to me, and snapped me back from my tendency to either daydream or worry about what was next on the schedule. I had no choice but to partake.

There is much repetition in the Eastern Rite; many prayers and petitions are repeated three times. By the third time in each set, I heard the words.

The liturgy is flooded with prayers for peace, which seemed so timely and so needed in our violence-ridden world.

And there are lots of reminders that only God can offer true peace, in our hearts and in our cities, and only He is life-giving.

Many of the litanies from the Mass still echo in my head months later, and I find myself praying them as I go about washing the dishes or driving the car:

- Be merciful to me, a sinner.
- Heal my soul and my body.
- Enlighten my eyes and my heart.
- That I may no longer live for myself.

It was during the Prayers after Communion that I experienced the "Moment"... that instant when the essence of Christmas – Jesus Himself -- penetrated my being and swelled my heart with sudden understanding and gratitude. I was completely centered

on Christ, on seeing His face in the people around me, on viewing His beauty on full display outside the windows, on listening to Him in the stillness of my heart. I felt connected to Christ not only spiritually, but physically, emotionally, and intellectually as well. (When was the last time that ever happened to me at Sunday Mass? Honest answer: never.)

While we wait expectantly for the birth of the Baby Jesus, let us clear away the distractions of our daily lives so that we might make room for Him.

We can find Him, experience Him, and connect with Him in both likely and unlikely places.

Joy
Hope
Peace
Love

Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year

from your friends at Fidelis Care.

FIDELIS CARE®



From the Mission Lands to Main Street.
Merry Christmas and Peace on Earth!

This year, please remember the Missions
with prayer and sacrifice.



Pontifical Mission Societies, Inc.

Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director
& Molly McKee Ryan, Bookkeeper



Catherine Russell takes on new responsibilities

Bishop Terry R. LaValley has appointed Catherine Russell as the Assistant Director of Faith Formation for the Western Regional Office and Coordinator of the Formation for Ministry Program.

Her appointment becomes effective Jan. 1.

Ms Russell will continue her work as Diocesan Vocation Coordinator

An educator for 40 years, Ms. Russell earned a bache-



Catherine
Russell

lor's degree from Regents College and a Master of Education in Counseling and Human Development from St. Lawrence University.

She has also received permanent New York State certification as School Counselor and English teacher

She taught in diocesan Catholic schools for nine years, was a public school teacher for three years and also worked as an English teacher for Jefferson

Community College in Watertown. Ms. Russell worked as a school counselor at Crown Point Central School for 20 years and then served as principal in Seton Catholic Middle High School for six years before becoming Diocesan Vocation Coordinator in 2016.

She now lives in Massena where she is a parishioner of Sacred Heart Church.

In the Faith Formation and Formation for Ministry positions, she succeeds Deacon Patrick Donahue who has been named director of Catholic Charities.



*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



*Holidays can be challenging for families
but they are opportunities for abundant grace.
May God richly bless your family in this new year!
Behold...I make all things new!*

- The Office of Family Life

**Wishing You Great Joy This
Christmas Season and Always!**

*"You will have joy and gladness,
and many will rejoice at his birth." Luke 1:14*

Trinity Catholic School 188 Main St. Massena

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT AT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



Children at St. Mary's School in Canton tell the story of the birth of Jesus in their annual Christmas pageant Dec. 13.



Giving back at Holy Family School in Malone: Middle School students made cookies to sell to benefit Catholic Charities Senior Citizen food baskets.



Immaculate Heart Central School in Watertown welcomed the Fort Drum 10th Mountain Division Band 'Avalanche' to the school Dec. 5. Mrs. Piatt, Major General Piatt's wife, was in attendance; Mrs. Svedberg-Miller, English as a second language teacher at IHC, organized the concert.



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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Christmas Blessings

St. Alphonsus - Holy Name of Jesus Parish

Holiday Mass Schedule:

Dec. 24th - 4 p.m.
Children's Mass at
St. Alphonsus

Dec. 24th - 7 p.m.
at Holy Name Church

Dec. 25th - 9 a.m.
at St. Alphonsus Church

Author shares stories from his meals with St. John Paul II

Table talk with George Weigel

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

ROME (CNS) -- For some 25 years as pope, St. John Paul II would invite people to his table each day -- sharing breakfast, lunch, dinner and conversation with a wide variety of cardinals, bishops, theologians, writers and friends.

George Weigel, the author and scholar, was one of those guests on dozens of occasions and it was over a meal that he asked Pope John Paul the questions that form the core of "Witness to Hope: The

Biography of Pope John Paul II," published in 1999. The meals and conversations continued, providing information for the sequel, "The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II -- The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy," published in 2010.

His last dinner with St. John Paul was Dec. 15, 2004.

Now, Weigel is sharing the mood, anecdotes and reflections on the table talk in the more personal "Lessons in Hope: My Unexpected Life with St. John Paul II."

"What people really wanted was not more heavily footnoted, annotated scholarly

biography," Weigel said. "What people wanted were stories, stories that would make him come alive again."

Interviewed in Rome Dec.

12, Weigel said he decided "to tell the story of our conversations," which took place over a dozen years. But for that to make sense, he said, he also had to write about events and experiences in his life that prepared him to understand the history, philosophy and theology discussed around the table.

Of course, he said, the conversations also included both lighter moments and personal ones, such as when Pope John Paul asked how

Weigel's mother was doing after his father died.

Sharing a meal and a table was important to Pope John Paul, Weigel said, because he "understood that a pope who relies only on the official channels of information -- nuncios, Curia, bishops' conferences -- is not going to get all the information he needs because that information is being filtered bureaucratically."

"The table rather than the desk was his favorite point of encounter," the author said.

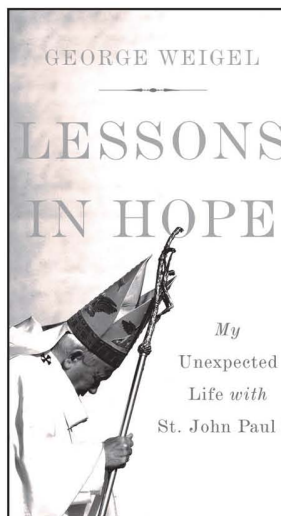
The conversations gave the pope different points of view on the situation of the church, on issues of theology and on political and social realities around the world, Weigel said.

Then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, once told Weigel that "major documents and audience themes would be hashed out over lunches in the papal apartments."

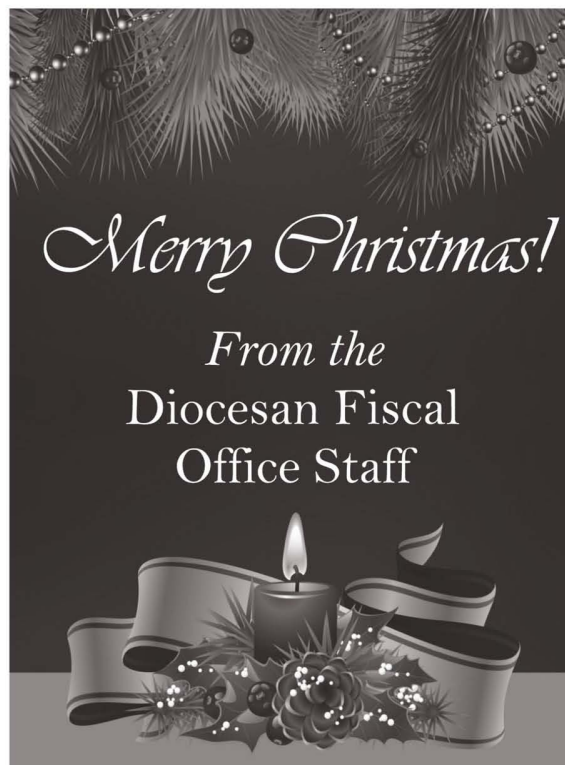
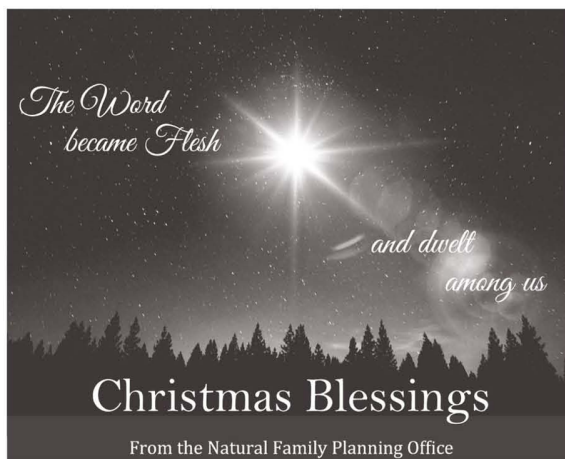
But, he said, at the same time, friendships were very important to him and he made sure to nourish them at the dinner table.

Pope John Paul would ask his guests their opinions about books, films, world leaders and political situations. "He was the most insatiably curious man I have ever met," Weigel said. "He always wanted to know what was happening."

The pope's curiosity, he said, was less a "tic" than a sign that "he really did believe in the providential guidance of history," which meant he needed to stay informed "in order to find the providential footprints."



CNS PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE WEIGEL
In his book "Lessons in Hope: My Unexpected Life with St. John Paul II," George Weigel recounts the story of and anecdotes from his mealtime conversations with St. John Paul II. It was over meals that Weigel asked the pope the questions for "Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John II," published in 1999.



NCC Christmas schedule

The North Country Catholic will not be published during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. The next issue will be dated Jan. 3, 2017

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Sunday has lost its sense as day of rest, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Just like a plant needs sun and nourishment to survive, every Christian needs the light of Sunday and the sustenance of the Eucharist to truly live, Pope Francis said. "How can we carry out the Gospel without drawing the energy needed to do it, one Sunday after another, from the limitless source of the Eucharist," he said Dec. 13 during his weekly general audience. "We don't go to Mass to give something to God, but to receive from him that which we truly need," the pope said. Sunday Mass is the time and place Christians receive the grace and strength to remain faithful to his word, follow his commandment to love others and be credible witnesses in the world. The pope continued his series of audience talks on the Mass in the Vatican's Paul VI hall, which was decorated with a large Christmas tree and a life-sized Nativity scene. A number of people in the audience hall handed the pope -- who turns 81 Dec. 17 -- Christmas cards, notes and a chocolate cake.

Number who view Christmas as religious dwindling

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The percentage of Americans who see Christmas as a religious holiday continues to slide across nearly all demographic lines. In a telephone survey of 1,503 U.S. adults conducted Nov. 28-Dec. 4 for the Pew Research Center, 55 percent said they mark Christmas as a religious holiday. The figure in 2013, when Pew last asked this question, was 59 percent. "Nine in 10 U.S. adults say they celebrate the holiday, which is nearly identical to the share who said this in 2013," said the survey, whose results were released Dec. 12. "About eight in 10 will gather with family and friends. And half say they plan to attend church on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day," it said. Those numbers, Pew added, are roughly the same as those of 2013. "Most respondents in the new poll say they think religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less in American society today than in the past. But relatively few Americans both perceive this trend and are bothered by it," the Pew survey said.

God does not lead us into temptation, Satan does, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Italian and English translations of the "Our Father" can give believers the wrong impression that God can and does lead people into temptation, Pope Francis said. The Italian bishops' television channel, TV2000, has been broadcasting a series of conversations between the pope and a Catholic prison chaplain looking at the Lord's Prayer line by line. The episode broadcast Dec. 6 focused on the line, "Lead us not into temptation." Father Marco Pozza told the pope that friends have asked him, "Can God really lead us into temptation?" "This is not a good translation," the pope said. The standard versions of the prayer are translated from the Latin, which was translated from the New Testament in Greek. While he said nothing about ordering a new translation, Pope Francis noted how the French bishops had decided that beginning Dec. 3, the first Sunday of Advent, French Catholics would change the line to the equivalent of "do not let us enter into temptation."

VATICAN LETTER

A weary world rejoices: Nativity scenes bring joy to hardened hearts

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square is not getting rave reviews: The backdrop does not look like a stable and the characters in need -- hungry, naked, dead, imprisoned -- don't exactly evoke a silent night when all was cozy, calm and bright.

Franciscan Father John Puodziunas said he didn't like it at first.

In addition to Mary and Joseph -- baby Jesus will appear only on Christmas -- the scene includes figures of people who illustrate the ongoing need for the corporal works of mercy, including feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, burying the dead, caring for the sick and visiting those in prison.

As Father Puodziunas, a friar from Philadelphia who is now general treasurer of the Order of Friars Minor, stood in St. Peter's Square, he said he realized "this really captures what I believe the Nativity set is about. It's about 'Where am I today? Where is the world today? Where is the church today?'"

The Vatican display, he said, "brings the manger scene into our present world reality to remind us that this is a God who continues to step into our world. It isn't just something that happened 2,000 years ago."

According to legend, it was St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of Father Puodziunas' order, who invented the Nativity scene in 1223 by bringing straw, an ox and an ass to the side of a hill where Christmas Mass was about to be celebrated.

Father Puodziunas conceded Nativity scenes may have been around before St. Francis brought one to life in Greccio, Italy, but the Franciscan is certain the friars were responsible for spreading the tradition and bringing it into people's homes.

"Why did St. Francis do the crib scene on the side of the mountain? Because the people were not able to receive the child into their lives," he said. Back then, like today, the obstacles may have been "busyness or anger or war or the past or concerns."

But by bringing the people of Greccio to the manger, he said, St. Francis hoped they would be able to experience again the power and awe of God taking human flesh,

becoming one of them and then offering his life for them.

"The whole idea of the creche speaks to so many feelings and emotions we have," Father Puodziunas said. "The child, manger, animals, night, outdoors, emptiness" - they all communicate feelings that endure through time and can be recreated anywhere.

St. Francis, he said, was focused on "the creche and the cross. The wood of the manger becomes the wood of the cross. This Christ that steps into a messy world - whether at the time of Christ, the time of St. Francis or our own time - is the same Christ that takes us to the cross and is the source of our salvation."

While there probably was a catechetical element to St. Francis' creche, Father Puodziunas believes it was more spiritual and experiential than education. "It was about making the story of Christ come alive in their lives.... This child steps into the world we have today, into our own lives, not as a child, but as a savior."

The scene also is a reminder of humanity's poverty, not in the sense of things that people do not have, but in the sense that there is a void in everyone that only God can fill, he said. "Love, peace, mercy, freedom, joy -- these are the real poverties of the world" and the gifts that the Christ child brings.

St. Francis believed that "we're not all that bad," but that God steps into the world to offer more, he said.

"As pretty as our manger sets are," he said, "the reality is that that first manger wasn't a pretty sight and that the world that this child steps into isn't always pretty. And yet, this child chooses to step into this world."

The inclusion of animals in a Nativity scene not only helps illustrate Jesus' birth in a stable, he said. "Clearly, the Incarnation touches all of creation" and "all things are created for the purpose of praising God."

But, he said, "we are not a 'Hallmark Christmas' people," life gets messy, but in the Gospel Jesus talks about the truth being revealed to the smallest children.

As they "grow up," Father Puodziunas said, many people build walls and other obstacles to experiencing God's love for them and to seeing how God is stepping into their lives.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Advent comes to a close

This Fourth Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas eve this year. What a dramatic way to fulfillment of all our waiting for the coming of our Messiah and Redeemer.

On Sunday morning, we will celebrate the end of Advent, and just a few hours later on the same day, we hear the Angels singing "Glory to God in the highest!" God has arrived as a tiny, Child, helpless and shivering;

We are delighted and charmed at the way He chose to come without signs of frightening power.

Simple shepherds from

the fields are the first to hear the news.



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

The Gospel for the Fourth Sunday tells us that another Angel, Gabriel, was sent as God's messenger to ask permission of a pure, holy maid to be His mother!

It is Mary's "yes" that makes Christmas possible - the coming into humble flesh of the Lord of heaven and earth.

What is a mystery? It's a truly factual and real work of God that is beyond all human understanding. Nevertheless, It radically effects our lives and our future.

Both readings from Samuel and St. Paul tell us

DEC. 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

READINGS

2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-11, 16

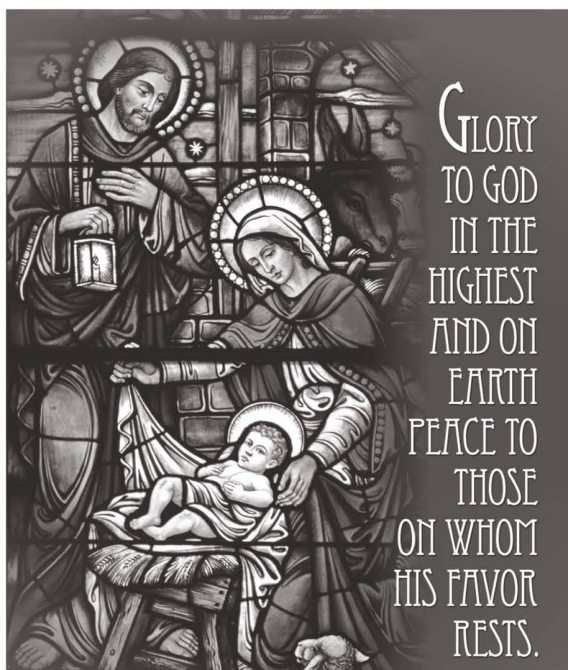
Rom 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

that the obedience of both Jesus and His mother to the will of the Father are models for us to follow.

We are urged to enter fully into the drama, of God's plans for peace on earth, engaging in the building of His kingdom of peace and love. Advent has come to a close. The Savior has arrived.

What happens now? Our sharing with Jesus in the building up of the Kingdom.



St. Anthony's of Inlet & Raquette Lake
and St. Bartholomew's, Old Forge

LUKE 2:14

One Christmas night

By Dr. Elmer Ahear
Contributing writer

After the 6:45am Mass at Notre Dame Church by Father James Shurtleff, while everybody went home I stayed behind and sat alone for an hour or two to pray my rosary and meditate before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

After an hour in prayer the door on the left side of the Church opened. I saw an elderly woman about 50 years old dressed in black

pants and red shirt, walking perhaps with arthritis. I expected her to kneel and pray in one of the pews.

But instead she continued to walk towards me. I was near the confessional box, some 200 meters from the door. Slowly she sat down heavy beside me: too close for comfort. I could feel her warmth: uncomfortable I knelt down on the kneeler. Stealthily, I glanced at her from the corner of my left eye but saw nobody.

It was out of the question that she stood up and

walked away. Objectively, she just disappeared. I stood up and looked around: The Church was empty and she could not run that fast, considering that she seemed to have an arthritis.

I was shocked and I sat down to reflect on this event. And suddenly I remembered that one Christmas night in 2004 before she passed away in 2005, my only daughter, Rossana came to our Christmas party wearing black pants and a red shirt.

She was so beautiful that night that I kissed her on the forehead and said, "Sweetheart, you are so beautiful." And I became emotional, not knowing that was our last Christmas together.

It left me with no doubt that it was Rossana who appeared to me disguised as an elderly woman. I prayed a Rosary for her that she might rest in peace at the other side.

REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

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

(With ecclesiastical approval)

Mass
Rosary
Fasting
Day Offering
Eucharistic Adoration
Offering of Sufferings
Divine Mercy Chaplet
Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him

January
JESUS
Holy Name
Of Jesus

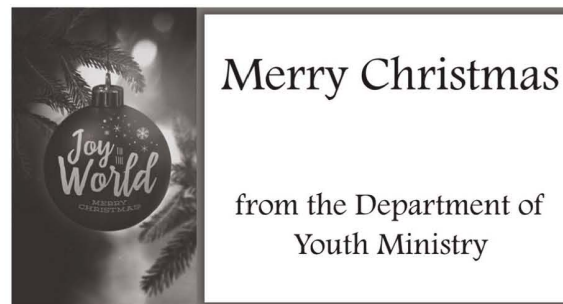
JANUARY

DIocese OF
OGDENSBURG, NY

2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY	1 REV. PATRICK A. RATIGAN	2 REV. WILLIAM G. REAMER	3 REV. MARK R. REILLY	4 MSGR. PETER R. RIANI	5 REV. DONALD A. ROBINSON
6 REV. STEPHEN ROCKER	7 OUR PASTOR	8 REV. MIKOLAJ L. SCIBIOR	9 REV. JOSEPH N. SESTITO	10 REV. JAMES W. SEYMOUR VF	11 REV. SCOTT R. SEYMOUR	12 REV. ALAN D. SHNOB
13 REV. F. JAMES SHURTLEFF	14 POPE FRANCIS	15 BENEDICT XVI POPE EMERITUS	16 MSGR. HARRY K. SNOW	17 REV. BRYAN D. STITT	18 REV. RICHARD S. STURTZ	19 REV. JONAS R. TANDAYU MSC
20 REV. TODD E. THIBAUT	21 RETIRED PRIESTS	22 REV. JUSTIN THOMAS HGN	23 REV. HOWARD J. VENETTE	24 REV. RAYMOND J. WERTMAN	25 MSGR. PAUL E. WHITMORE	26 REV. LEO A. WILEY
27 REV. JOHN K. YONKOVIG VF	28 DECEASED PRIESTS	29 REV. PHILIP T. ALLEN	30 REV. ANDREW J. AMYOT	31 For more copies contact: Diocese of Ogdensburg PO Box 369 Ogdensburg, NY 13669		

For more information visit us online at: www.mprppapostolate.com
A donation to help support THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS will be appreciated.
The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests is graciously underwritten by: Diocese of Ogdensburg
Vocations Society www.myvocation.net



Merry Christmas

from the Department of
Youth Ministry

AT THE MOVIES

STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

Despite the high price of a movie ticket these days, patrons are unlikely to come away from a showing of the engrossing sci-fi epic "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" (Disney) feeling shortchanged.

Vast in scale and operatic in intensity, this 152-minute visit to that galaxy far, far away is both satisfying and, for the most part, family-friendly.

With the mayhem inevitable in a movie about a war kept gore-free and only minor blemishes on the dialogue, parents may be more concerned about the non-scriptural notions centering on the famous Force that are here collectively referred to as the "Jedi religion." Teens able to take this fictional faith, a sort of dime-store Taoism, as just one more element in a fantasy world will benefit from lessons about the value of hope and the true nature of heroism.

The "Star Wars" saga has often been characterized as the Iliad of contemporary culture. So perhaps it's fitting that the opening of writer-director Rian Johnson's eighth episode of the narrative initiated by George Lucas in 1977 finds Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) imitating Homer's Achilles by holding aloof from the great struggle in which he once took an active part.

Rather than sulking in his tent, as Achilles did, Luke is leading a solitary life of self-

imposed exile among the small stone huts of a distant planet. (These scenes were shot on the Irish island of Skellig Michael, site of a medieval monastery.)

His isolation is interrupted by the arrival of Rey (Daisy Ridley) who has come as a messenger from Luke's twin sister, Leia (the late Carrie Fisher).

As the leading general of the embattled Resistance - the latter-day version of the Rebel Alliance for which Luke once fought -- Leia urgently needs her brother's famed skills as a warrior if the struggle against the fascistic First Order (successor to the evil Galactic Empire), and its malignant leader, Snoke (Andy Serkis), is to continue.

Luke refuses to join the conflict. But he does agree to train Rey in the ways of the Force. Rey will need the power of this mysterious spiritual energy, the source of Luke's own prowess, when she eventually confronts Leia's son, Ben Solo, aka Kylo Ren (Adam Driver).

Originally a good person, Ben has gone over to the side of darkness, and now serves as Snoke's chief lieutenant. Even so, he still has some elements of good remaining in him, and his ongoing moral struggle has

the potential to sway the outcome of the intergalactic battle.

Though it gets off to a slow start, once it hits its stride "The Last Jedi" sweeps viewers along with stirring action and audience-pleasing plot twists.

While not as taut as last year's "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," this sprawling installment of the great franchise makes, in the end, for a more memorable experience.

The script's portrayal of the Force as capable of endowing those who cultivate it either with goodness or iniquity may strike moviegoers of faith as establishing a false equivalence of power between these two poles of morality. Some may even see in this an implicit denial of the rule of divine providence and God's ultimate supremacy over sin.

Yet, in keeping with a Christian worldview, characters do make their ethical choices more or less freely. And the idea that a change in basic identity should be reflected by a change of name echoes a recurring trope in Scripture - and in the church's sacramental practice.

Audience members young or old are unlikely to spend much time meditating on



CNS PHOTO/DISNEY

Mark Hamill stars in a scene from the movie "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."

these aspects of the picture, however. Instead, they'll be content to ride this cinematic whirlwind while it lasts.

The film contains frequent but bloodless combat violence, a scene of torture, and a few crass terms.

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

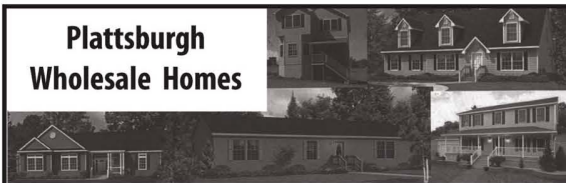


*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All Things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him
was life,
and this life was the light of the
human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
And the Word became flesh and made
his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only son,
full of grace and truth.
~John 1:1-5*



From the Staff of the Tribunal Office
Fr. Douglas Lucia, JCL
Fr. Garry Giroux, JCL
Elaine Seymour

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ADIRONDACK

FRIENDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Tupper Lake - Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is recruiting new volunteers and has scheduled a Friendship Volunteer Training Program.

Date: Jan. 11 and 18

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Features: Volunteers from Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake help elder neighbors stay connected to their communities and helping to make their lives a little easier and happier.

Contact: Program is free of charge, but pre-registration is required. To request registration information, contact Jenn Grisi at Mercy Care, 518-523-5583 or by e-mail at jgrisi@adkmercy.org.

CLINTON

MARCH FOR LIFE

Plattsburgh - Annual Plattsburgh March for Life to be held.

Date: Jan. 14

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Place: St. John XXIII Newman Center, to St. John the Baptist Church.

Features: Presentation at 1p.m. Reception follows in parish center.

BUS TO MARCH FOR LIFE IN DC

Plattsburgh - A bus will be traveling to Washington, D.C., for the annual national March for Life.

Schedule: Meet at St. Peter's Church, Plattsburgh Jan. 18 at 7:15 p.m., Jan. 19, March for Life and Leave Washington at 4:45 p.m.

Cost: \$30

Contact: Deacon Randy Smith at 518-566-6229. Please leave a message with your name and phone number

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Treadwell Mills - The Knights of Columbus will hold an all you can eat Pancake Breakfast.

Date: Jan. 7, Feb. 4, March 4, April 22

Time: 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Place: St. Joseph's Church Parish Hall

Cost: Adults, \$7; Children 6-12, \$3; under 5, Free

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

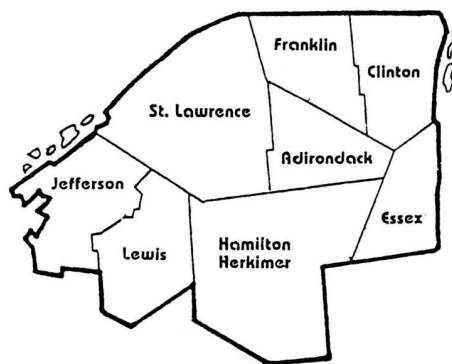
Plattsburgh - Eucharistic Adoration is held throughout the year every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

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

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

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Plattsburgh - The Sacred Heart Fraternity Secular Franciscan Order meets the



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.

second Sunday of the each month.

Time: 2 p.m.

Place: St. John's Holy Family Chapel.

FRANKLIN

HEARTS ON FIRE

Malone - Hearts on Fire to be held the first Friday of the month.

Schedule: 7 p.m., Praise & Worship

Holy Hour; 8 p.m., Bonfire, snacks

Place: Notre Dame Church

FIRST SATURDAY DEVOTION

St. Regis Falls - First Saturday Devotion and Holy Hour to be held

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

Place: St. Ann's Church

JEFFERSON

SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER

Evans Mills - Spaghetti and meatball dinner to be held to benefit the Indian River Knights of Columbus.

Date: Jan. 6

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

Place: St. Mary's Parish Center

LIFERIGHT MEETING

Watertown - Liferight meets the first Wednesday of the month.

Time: 1 p.m.

Place: 870 Arsenal Street.

Features: pro-life videos, books and educational materials for borrowing.

CURSILLO MEETINGS

Carthage - The Jefferson/Lewis Cursillo holds its monthly meeting on the third Tuesday of every month.

Time: 6 p.m. to 8

Place: Community Room of St. James

Features: All Cursillistas are encouraged to attend. We also welcome those interested in deepening a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Contact: Anne Seegebarth
ams2962@gmail.com, 315-783-4596

HOLY HOUR FOR VOCATIONS

Watertown - Holy Hour for vocations

Date: Monday-Friday

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 10:30

Place: Holy Family Church

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER GROUP

Watertown - Our Mother of the Eucharist Prayer Group to meet the 2nd Thursday of every month.

Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8

Place: Msgr. Sechi Hall, St. Anthony's

SECULAR FRANCISCANS

Watertown - The St. Joseph Cupertino fraternity of the Secular Franciscans will have their monthly meeting.

Date: Aug. 27

Time: 1:30 p.m.

Place: Holy Family Parish

WEEKLY ADORATION

Sackets Harbor - St. Andrew's has scheduled exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on every Friday.

Time: 5 p.m. to 6

HOLY HOUR FOR VOCATIONS

Watertown - Holy Hour for Vocations to be held every Tuesday.

Time: 3 p.m. to 6

Place: St. Anthony's Church

LEWIS

INTERNATIONAL CRECHES

Houseville - An exhibit of International Creches-Nativities is set

Dates: Dec. 21, Jan. 7

Time: The display may be viewed before or after the 11a.m. Masses or between 1 p.m. to 3 or by appointment during the week.

Place: St. Hedwig's Church,

Features: This exhibit is free and open to the public.

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. 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 this Holy Night.

Contact: 315-348-6260.

ST. LAWRENCE

FIRST FRIDAY ADORATION

Massena - Friday Devotions are set featuring Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Holy Hour for Vocations.

Date: First Friday of every month

Time: 6:30 p.m. to 7:30

Place: St. Mary's Church.

ST. RAPHAEL'S FOOD PANTRY

Heuvelton - St. Raphael's Food Pantry will be open every Friday.

Time: 9 a.m. to 11

Place: Parish Center

SPIRITUAL BOOK CLUB

Massena - The Massena Catholic Community Book Club meets once a month

Date: Third Thursday of each month

Time: 7 p.m.

Place: Sacred Heart Rectory

Features: Copies of book are often available on Kindle through our parish's Formed.org subscription

Contact: www.massencatholics.com or: smarion@massencatholics.com

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

Massena - St. Mary's & St. Joseph's hold Benediction, Adoration on Fridays

Time: 9 a.m. to 10

Place: St. Mary's Family Room

DIOCESAN EVENTS

DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Syracuse - The NYS Vocation Directors announce the annual priesthood discernment retreat.

Date: Jan. 2 to 4

Place: Christ the King Retreat House

Features: Gather with other young men from across NY State who are considering the call to the priesthood. Participate in special Masses celebrated by bishops from NY dioceses.

Contact: Vocations Office at crussell@rcdony.org, pastors or Fr. Doug Lucia at dglucia@rcdony.org

SURVIVING DIVORCE

Canton - The Diocesan Family Life Office has announced a new ministry for divorced Catholics

Date: 12 week program begins Jan. 25

Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:30

Place: St. Mary's Church

Cost: \$25, includes program materials "Surviving Divorce Personal Guide"

Features: Surviving Divorce features twelve video presentations that cover topics such as shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage.

Contact: Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920 or go to

<http://www.rcdony.org/family-life/surviving-divorcesupport-group.html>.

FISHERS CLUB

Fishers Club is about men gathering to consider a vocation to the priesthood.

Date: Groups will reconvene in early 2018, check parish bulletins, the NCC or one of the priests listed below.

Contact: *Midlanders* (Potsdam/Canton) Fr. Doug Lucia
dglucia@rcdony.org/315-348-4466 and *Lakesiders* (Plattsburgh) Fr. Howard Venette
pastor.stbarts@roadrunner.com/315-369-3554

DOVS MEMBERS SOUGHT

D.O.V.S. (Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocation Society) is a group of people who pray for and work to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our diocese is seeking new members. DOVS meets most months, plan events to thank priests and religious and annually take a pilgrimage.

Contact: Call Connie at 315-265-2762 or Cathy Russell, diocesan vocation coordinator at the diocesan Vocations Office at 315-393-2920



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 joy in our world

There is light coming out of the darkness in the developing lands because of missionaries. Yes, missionaries like you, let the light of Christ shine in the lives of people in the missions as they receive your generous donations.

By virtue of our baptism, we are called to be missionaries.

On behalf of missionaries and the people they serve who benefit from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Missionary Childhood Association and the Missionary Projects of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, I thank you for your generosity and the gifts that bring Christ's light into the darkness of the suffering and the poor in mission lands.

Yet, there is so much yet to do. There is still unthinkable suffering. We continue to reach out for your help and we pray for the strength and courage to do God's work. Tomorrow is another day.

Another crisis can occur at any time. For now, we celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Pontifical Mission Societies accomplished so much good work and so many good deeds in the Mission Lands this year. Thanks to prayer and sacrifice, Christmas may be a bit merrier and brighter for so many who do not live surrounded by the safety net our land.

The Missions continue to deal with so much strife each day, but there are pockets of prosperity thanks to the generosity of our Diocese. Human Rights violations, disease, and treatment of the elderly are just a few of the issues that the Pontifical Mission Societies are currently battling to make a difference in places like India, Nigeria, Cameroon and Pakistan.

Ingenuity, restructuring, and technology are getting things done faster, more efficiently and delivered to where the help is more dire.

God Bless the people working hard both here and abroad to make these essential improvements in our world all of Christ's people.

Merry Christmas to you all. The Mission office wishes you all a very blessed day and best wishes to a happy new year. Again, thank you for your generous support. God Bless.

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

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OBITUARIES

AuSable Forks – Gary J. Nelson, 72, Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 10, 2017, at Holy Name Church

Cadyville – June S. Venne, 87, Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 16, 2017, at St. James Church

Canton – Debra Lee Ormsbee, 53, Funeral services Dec. 15, 2017, at Lawrence Funeral Home; burial in Hillcrest Cemetery, Heuvelton

Malone – Marguerite M. Gobin, 70, graveside service Dec. 15, 2017, at Notre Dame Cemetery

Massena – Victor L. LaShomb, 93, Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 16, 2017, at Sacred Heart Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Brasher Falls

Massena – Anneliese (Bopp) Reed, 92, Memorial Mass Dec. 31, 2017, at St. Mary's Church

Morristown – Robert L. Moore, 87, Memorial Mass Dec. 12, 2017, at St. John the Evangelist Church.

Morrisonville – Leigh S. Chilton, 72, Mass of Christian Burial, Dec. 15 at St. Alexander's Church, burial in St. James Cemetery

Norfolk – Shirley (Bigness) Lashway, 82, Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 12, 2017, at Church of the Visitation; burial in parish cemetery.

Ogdensburg – George E. Dillingham, 83, Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2017, at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in Ogdensburg Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Irene (Boulerice) Racette, 84, Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 12, 2017, at St. John's Church, burial in St. Mary's of the Lake Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Janet (LaBounty) Rivers, 90, Mass of Christian Burial, Dec. 15, 2017 at St. Peter's Church; burial in Whispering Maples Memorial Gardens

Plattsburgh – Duwane Seymour, 76, funeral services at R.W. Walker Funeral Home; burial in St. the Baptist Cemetery, Keeseville.

Visit our website
www.northcountrycatholic.org

- Read Bishop LaValley's columns
- Search archived papers
- View diocesan events and much more

Find us on Facebook!

Adirondack Center For PEACE
 P.O. Box 2748
 Plattsburgh, New York 12901
 Phone: (518) 561-5083

These Masses for Life are co-sponsored by
Adirondack Center For PEACE
 and
Knights of Columbus Council #255

2018	St. Peter's Church			St. John's Church		
	Day	Date	Time	Day	Date	Time
JAN	Sat.	1/6/2018	8:15 a.m.	Mon.	1/8/2018	9:00 a.m.
FEB	Sat.	2/3/2018	8:15 a.m.	Fri.	2/9/2018	9:00 a.m.
MAR	Sat.	3/3/2018	8:15 a.m.	Thurs.	3/8/2018	9:00 a.m.
APR	Sat.	4/14/2018	8:15 a.m.	Sun.	4/8/2018	7:30 a.m.
MAY	Sat.	5/5/2018	8:15 a.m.	Tues.	5/8/2018	9:00 a.m.
JUN	Sat.	6/2/2018	8:15 a.m.	Fri.	6/8/2018	9:00 a.m.
JUL	Sat.	7/7/2018	8:15 a.m.	Sun.	7/8/2018	7:30 a.m.
AUG	Sat.	8/4/2018	8:15 a.m.	Thurs.	8/9/2018	9:00 a.m.
SEPT	Sat.	9/1/2018	8:15 a.m.	Sat.	9/8/2018	4:30 p.m.
OCT	Sat.	10/6/2018	8:15 a.m.	Mon.	10/8/2018	9:00 a.m.
NOV	Sat.	11/3/2018	8:15 a.m.	Thurs.	11/8/2018	9:00 a.m.
DEC	Sat.	12/1/2018	8:15 a.m.	Sat.	12/8/2018	4:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Victory:
 One per month, date and time TBA

Please join us in prayer for a greater reverence for all human life!

PEPSI COLA OGDENSBURG BOTTLERS

Support And Pray For Vocations

For a New or Used Car
Mort Backus & Sons
 On Canton-Ogdensburg Rd.
315-393-5899

 CHEVROLET

FOLLOW ME

Gift of love... promise of peace

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I have asked the youth of our Diocese to provide me with a cover design for this year's Christmas card. I received many fine pieces of art, many of which were captioned with verses from Scripture.

Bishop LaValley's Christmas message

One citation that surfaced on a few cards is from St. Luke's Infancy Narrative: "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'" (Luke 2:10)

What an appropriate message for each of us to reflect upon this Christmas. We should give careful attention to this angelic proclamation that offers such hope and heavenly happiness to all people. Fear, bad news and division seem to be having their way in our world today. In the midst of such darkness, we remember that there is no reason to be afraid because God brings Good News of great joy for all of God's people through His Son, born of Mary.

"Do not be afraid." I need not provide a list of



serious concerns that today cause so many to fear what tomorrow may bring. No matter the heartache, this is a season of hope and joy.

Jesus is the One who rescues humanity from sin and delivers us from the condition of alienation from God. With His birth, the Christ Child brings an unfathomable gift that we must unwrap to enjoy.

He brings salvation to all humanity. But in

order to enjoy the salvation won for us, our personal encounter with Jesus must be tended to through a lifelong journey of love and service.

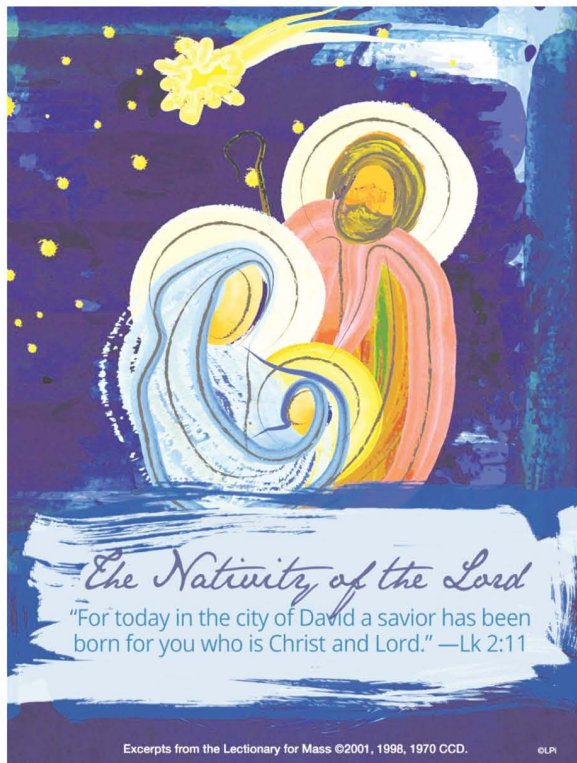
Just a few weeks ago, I consecrated the Diocese of Ogdensburg to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. We know that Mary submitted humbly and totally to God's will, even without fully understanding it.

By saying "yes" to God's mysterious will, she enabled salvation to enter the world through the birth of her Son. We must tug at her sleeve, she who desires so much to lead us, all of us, to Jesus. We want to follow Jesus. Christ-led and Christ-fed, we can be hope-filled and not weighed down by the menace of evil.

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior and greet a New Year, let us unwrap the gift of salvation offered by making Mary's words our own: "Let it be done to me according to thy word."

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 New Year!

**Faithfully yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg**



A Blessed Christmas and Blessed New Year

St. Mary's of the Fort Church
Fort Covington

St. Joseph's Church
Bombay

St. Francis of Assisi Church
Constable

Our Lady of Fatima Church
Westville

St. Patrick's Church
Chateaugay

St. George's Church
Burke

*And the Word became flesh
and dwelt among us.*



Merry Christmas from the Respect Life Office
(Image used with permission from The Saints Project)