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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 74, Number 30

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DEC. 25, 2019

Follow Me: A look at the Holy Family

Neatly nestled in the middle of the Christmas Season is the beautiful Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As I mentioned previously, in response to a question I asked him, the Holy Father considers the current condition of the family as the most urgent challenge that he faces in his Petrine Ministry. In light of Pope Francis' response, I thought it timely to review a challenge for every family that has been shared previously.

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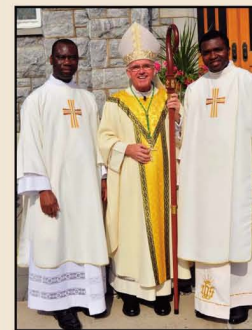
FULL STORY, PAGE 3

GIFTS FOR THE BABIES



The fifth and sixth graders from St. Mary's School in Canton led the entire student body collecting baby items for a Baby Shower for Jesus during Advent. The students delivered many of the baby items to the Ogdensburg office of Catholic Charities. They ended their visit with a Christmas Carol serenade.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



Two seminarians, Severinus Torwø and Jude Nnadibuagha were ordained as deacons on Oct. 26. Deacon Torwø and Deacon Nnadibuagha are two of 13 men currently discerning, studying and preparing for ordination to the priesthood in the diocese. This week, in the last edition of 2019, the North Country Catholic looks back on the highlights of the year.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

Pope, U.N. chief record Christmas wish for peace

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis and the secretary-general of the United Nations said that, like millions of people around the world, during the Christmas season their thoughts turn to yearnings for peace and for the well-being of those in need.

After a 40-minute private meeting in the papal library Dec. 20, Pope Francis and Antonio Guterres, the U.N. chief, recorded an eight-minute video, which

was released a few hours later.

Pope Francis began by saying that in the days before Christmas, "our gazes are turned toward heaven to entrust to God the people and situations dearest to our hearts."

Giving thanks "for all the good there is in the world," the pope especially singled out the people who dedicate their lives to helping others and refuse to give up working

for a more humane and just world.

"We cannot, we must not look away when faced with injustices, inequalities, the scandal of hunger in the world, poverty, children who die because they do not have the necessary water, food or health care," Pope Francis said.

"We cannot turn away when there is any kind of abuse of children," he said. "We must fight this

plague together."

"We cannot close our eyes to our many brothers and sisters who, because of conflict and violence, misery or climate change, leave their homelands and often encounter a sad destiny," he said.

"We cannot remain indifferent when human dignity is trampled and exploited or to attacks on human life, both of the unborn and of any person in need of care," the pope

continued.

And, he said, "we cannot, we must not look the other way when believers of different faiths are persecuted in several parts of the world."

When religion is used "to incite hatred, violence, oppression, extremism and blind fanaticism" or to force people to stand on the sidelines of their community life or even to migrate, he said, it "cries out to God for vengeance."

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Publish 45 issues per year: Weekly except skipping every other week beginning July through Aug. and skipping one week in Dec. by the Diocese of Ogdensburg. 622 Washington Street, Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.

Editorial Office:

622 Washington Street,
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Entered at the

Post Office:

Ogdensburg, NY
13669 and
additional mailing offices as
Periodical Postage.

Subscription:

For one year:
In-Diocese Rate: \$27
Outside of Diocese Rate: \$30

Matters for publication

should be addressed to
PO Box 326
Ogdensburg, NY 13669
and should be received by
Thursday prior to
publication.
Paper is printed each
Monday;
dateline is Wednesday.
Member, Catholic Press
Association.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to
North Country Catholic,
PO Box 326
Ogdensburg, NY
13669-0326

EDITOR'S NOTE

More guts than brains

Sometimes, I have more guts than brains.

I've jumped out of a perfectly good airplane. I've been whitewater rafting a couple times. I once volunteered to allow a local police agency to taser me for a newspaper story. Historically, I've enjoyed playing paintball and karate sparring, even though I know I'll get hit while I'm participating in these activities. I don't mind public speaking.

I was reflecting on the "more guts than brains" part of my personality as I pre-

pared for Christmas and read Bishop Terry R. LaValley and Msgr. Paul Whitmore's reflections on the Holy Family in this week's edition.

Darcy L.
Fargo

When it comes to putting my body at risk for fun, for physical activity or for adventure, I jump in with little hesitation. But, as I thought about Mary and Joseph turning their wills and their lives over to God, I'm not so sure I have that kind of fortitude.

I'm shamefully and painfully attached to my will,

my desires for my life.

When I perceive someone as having wronged me, I know it's God's will that I love them and forgive them, but my will wants me to stew about it and dislike the offender, maybe even run them down to others.

When I'm making a major decision, I may feel God calling me in a particular direction, but my experience tells me God's direction is usually the more difficult, riskier path. My will tends to prefer the path of least resistance, the path that involves the least risk and the most comfort.

I often let my brains and

my pride overrule my guts and my desire to surrender my will to God.

So how do I move from a place of fear and my will to a place of surrendering to God's will?

So far, my plan is to start with small things. This week, I've felt called to add someone I don't particularly like to my prayer list. Earnestly praying for the good of someone who, as I say, "really grates my cheese" goes against my natural inclinations, but maybe it's a step toward being the person God is calling to be.

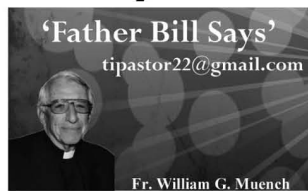
And that takes more guts than brains.

Know that you are a loved person

Today, I would like to begin by offering my gratitude to you all who join me each week in this column. I like to think of you as family. I wish you all a happy and peace-filled Christmas. I want you to know that I think of you each week as I begin writing here. I promise to remember you and your family in a special way in my Christmas Masses.

When I think of Christmas each year, the first thing I think of is gratitude. Each year, Christmas is a time to renew our faith in the incarnation of our Lord and Savior. Jesus came to become one of us. We believe that God sent Jesus to our world to show us the way and to bring us God's message – a message we renew in our hearts, over and over again, a message that transforms us and makes us into a new person, more alive in the Lord. That message: God loves us all, each and every one of us.

So, I begin today by being so grateful to God, who has blessed me with my vocation



Fr. William G. Muench

and with innumerable opportunities as a priest to bring Jesus' message to so many, reminding them over and over again that God loves them. I thank God for the many people and the many families that have been part of my ministry as a pastor. I was taught so much by dedicated and faith filled parishioners that message that Jesus brought to our world: that God loves me. I became a different person, a transformed priest, a loved person.

And so, my message to you today is to be happy as you celebrate another Christmas. The Lord wants to reaffirm you that you are special in the sight of God. You are a loved person.

It is important that we realize what the message is that we are a loved people. Jesus

came to make it clear to us that God loves us unconditionally – God loves us. There are so many stories in the Gospels that make it clear that God does not place so many demands. So, it is not a question of how loving we are. God loves us. Jesus came to do all that he did for us because God loves us. We are a loved people. God is so loving that we are not expected to earn God's love. There are so many stories of Jesus reaching out to someone and welcoming them into a close and loving relationship with him without demands.

We are a loved people, and so we come to the Lord in prayer, celebrating Eucharist to discover how we are to live like a loved person. Each time we come to our God, each time we enter into prayer with our God, each time we come to the presence of our God in a sacred place like our parish church, it becomes a moment of transformation. We change. We become a new person because we realize how blessed

we are and that we are loved, that our God loves us and that we must live like a loved person.

I know from my own experience that it is obvious those who know they are loved. I believe I can identify someone who lives like a loved person simply by looking a person in the eyes. I know those with a loved heart that makes them a loving and caring person. I also know those who have a cold, hard heart, who don't realize how much God loves them. I want to quote that old song that I learned a long time ago: "Hard hearted Hannah, the vamp of Savannah."

In the writing of the prophet Ezekiel 36:26, when we fully experience the love of God, we are promised: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

As you celebrate again the Birth of Jesus, may you become that loving disciples of Jesus because you realize that God loves you.

FOLLOW ME

Feast reminds us to 'make the first move'

Neatly nestled in the middle of the Christmas Season is the beautiful Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As I mentioned previously, in response to a question I asked him, the Holy Father considers the current condition of the family as the most urgent challenge that he faces in his Petrine Ministry. In light of Pope Francis' response, I thought it timely to review a challenge for every family that has been shared previously.

Every Christmas Season we are reminded that God was born into the very ordinariness of a stable among common folk. For most of us, there are no

people who seem so ordinary as the members of our families. It is often said that "Familiarity breeds contempt." The family setting can easily become the location where we take one another for granted.

Family life is full of opportunities to show God's goodness in doing little things for those around us. As we set out on this New Year, we might develop the simple (but very difficult) habit of "making the first move." Making the first move means not waiting for others to do the right thing but taking

the initiative ourselves. In a family quarrel, for instance, the odds are that both parties share some of the blame. I shouldn't wait for the other person to apologize first, even if I think that person is more responsible than me for the conflict. Instead, I need to make the first move.

Or when I notice that a sibling, a child, a parent or other family member is having a bad day, or a bad week, I shouldn't wait for them to come to me for support. I need to make the first move. If I know

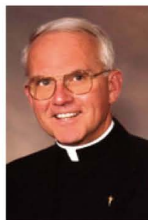
that something I do bothers someone else in the house, I shouldn't wait for them to complain before I stop doing it. I should make the first move. Sometimes it's those little things that can become big rifts and fracture a family.

This New Year, let us be especially attentive to one of the greatest stumbling blocks to spiritual growth in our families: our inability to forgive. The family is a great training ground of mutual forgiveness. Without forgiving oneself and without forgiving one another love does not remain, it simply cannot last. Every first move of forgiveness repairs the

cracks of the home and patches its walls.

We celebrate Jesus making the first move by coming into the world on Christmas morning. The Christian Family album begins and ends with Jesus Christ. In our relationships with other family members, like the Head of our Christian family, we need to take the initiative in healing hurts.

The Feast of the Holy Family provides you and me with the graced opportunity to humbly and courageously make the first move. Jesus did, so should we! Our families will thank us for it. Have a very Happy and Blessed New Year!



Bishop Terry R. LaValley



Father Scott R. Seymour led a group of 47, pictured here with their bus, on a Christmas tour of New York City.

Parishioners tour Big Apple

Father Scott R. Seymour of St. Alexander's Church in Morrisonville arranged and guided a Christmas trip to New York City for 47 parishioners from St. Joseph's of Dannemora, Assumption of Mary of Redford, St. James of Cadyville and St. Alexander's.

The three-day trip included a private guided tour of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Broadway show "Come From Away" and the Radio City Music Hall "Christmas Spectacular" featuring the Rockettes. Spending time strolling in Bryant Park, shopping at Century Department

21, touring One World Trade Center and the 9/11 Memorial Pools rounded out a busy itinerary. The group's tour guide also led a walking tour of Rockefeller Center, Grand Central Station and a tour of Manhattan on the Premier Coach bus.

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)

January

JANUARY

Holy Name Of Jesus

DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG, NY 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY	1 REV. JOSEPH A. MORGAN VG	2 REV. WILLIAM G. MUENCH	3 MSGR. JOHN R. MURPHY VF
5 REV. STEVEN M. MURRAY	6 REV. MACIEJ NAPIERALSKI	7 REV. DUC NGUYEN	8 OUR PASTOR	9 REV. KEVIN J. O'BRIEN	10 REV. PATRICK J. O'REILLY	11 REV. JEROME PASTORES
12 REV. TERRENCE R. PATTERSON	13 REV. EDUARDO C. PESIGAN III	14 MSGR. LEEWARD J. POISSANT	15 POPE FRANCIS	16 BENEDICT XVI POPE EMERITUS	17 REV. HERMAN PONGANTUNG MSC	18 REV. SONY G. PULICKAL VF
19 REV. PATRICK A. RATIGAN	20 REV. WILLIAM G. REAMER	21 REV. MARK R. REILLY	22 RETIRED PRIESTS	23 REV. DONALD A. ROBINSON	24 REV. STEPHEN ROCKER	25 REV. JOSEPH N. SESTITO
26 REV. JAMES W. SEYMOUR VF	27 REV. SCOTT R. SEYMOUR	28 REV. ALAN D. SHNOB	29 DECEASED PRIESTS	30 REV. F. JAMES SHURTLEFF	31 MSGR. HARRY K. SNOW	

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A donation to help support THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS will be appreciated. The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests is graciously underwritten by:

A look back on 2019

Editor's note: This is the final edition of the North Country Catholic for 2018. Here's a look back at some of the highlights of the year, divided by theme.

RESPECT LIFE: Two busloads of youth and a van of college students from the Diocese of Ogdensburg participated in the March for Life in Washington, D.C. Several youth participants were interviewed by Fox News during the event, sharing their pro-life message with the national media organization. Teen Day for Life, featuring Kate Maloney from Students for Life, was held May 18 at St. Bernard's in Saranac Lake. The movie "Unplanned," the story of Abby Johnson's transformation from Planned Parenthood clinic director to pro-life advocate, was screened in both Watertown and Plattsburgh. The 2019 Respect Life Collection funded grants to 20 organizations who promote life. The grants totaled \$59,268. The 40 Days for Life Campaign in Plattsburgh ran from Sept. 25 to Nov. 3.

YOUTH: Youth from around the diocese were urged to "Rise Up" at the annual youth rally on April 16. Speaker Kevin Dowd encouraged the youth to say "yes" when Jesus asks them, "will you finish my work?" Camp Guggenheim summer sessions kicked off June 30. In the course of the season, 270 campers hiked, swam and praised at the diocesan camp. The Saranac Lake area received a wave of youth volunteers as Catholic Heart Work Camp returned to the diocese from June 23-29. As part of the camp, 250 youth volunteered at more than 85 worksites,



JESSE SOVIE/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Sixty-four lay ministers were commissioned by Bishop Terry R. LaValley on June 30.

mostly churches and private homes, to complete service projects.

REST IN PEACE: The diocese mourned the passing of Msgr. Peter R. Riani, 89, who died May 16. A Mass of Christian Burial was held May 20 at St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid. Msgr. Riani was remembered as living a life that reflected his love of the Lord, and for the peace and happiness that gave him. "Several years before he died, he chose some words that would be an inscription on his tombstone," Msgr. Leeward J. Poissant said. "The words were 'smile, Jesus is risen.' Whenever anyone asked him why he chose that inscription, he would explain that we have joy in our lives because Jesus is risen from the dead and still with us. And it gives us hope of our own resurrection when our time comes, and that resurrection in us has already begun with the power of the Holy Spirit working in

us. If that isn't enough to make us smile, I don't know what is."

PRIESTS: Eight priests of the diocese were honored at the Jubilee Mass in Lake Placid on May 22. Father Christopher C. Carrara celebrated 25 years since ordination; Father Vincente F. Jazmines and Father Stephen R. Rocker celebrated 40 years; and Father Philip T. Alien. Msgr. Lawrence M. Deno, Father Vincent T. Freeh, Father William G. Muench and Father Joseph N. Sestito celebrated 60 years.

DEACONS: Deacon Kevin Mastellon was appointed director of Permanent Deacons. The deacons and their wives gathered in Lake Placid for their annual assembly on May 23. Fourteen men were accepted by Bishop Terry R. LaValley as candidates to the diaconate in an Oct. 4 ceremony.

A BISHOP NAMED: Pope Francis appointed Father Douglas J. Lucia, then vocations director and judi-

cial vicar for the Diocese of Ogdensburg and pastor of St. Mary's Church in Waddington and St. John the Baptist Church in Madrid, the eleventh bishop of Syracuse. He was ordained and installed on Aug. 8 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: Mrs. Shannon Margrey from Augustinian Academy in Carthage was named Outstanding Catholic School Teacher for the diocese. Magrey, who attended Augustinian Academy in her youth, has taught at the school since 2001. On June 26, Staff and families were notified that Holy Family School in Malone would not be re-opening for the 2019-20 school year due to declining enrollment and financial challenges. Daniel Charlebois was named principal of Immaculate Heart Central. Immaculate Heart Central was accredited for seven more years by the presti-

gious Middle States Association.

LAY LEADERS: Bishop Terry R. LaValley commissioned 64 lay ministers from 23 parishes at a ceremony in St. Mary's Cathedral on June 30. The lay ministers are now serving their parishes and communities in a variety of ministerial roles. On April 27, Bishop Terry R. LaValley presented the Bishop Edgar P. Wadhams Award for Distinguished Service to Irving Papineau and Elaine Cook during the celebration of Confirmation on April 27, 2019 at St. Regis Mission at Akwesasne.

DIOCESAN EVENTS: Priests, deacons and faithful from around the diocese attended the Chrism Mass "If the Chrism Mass is about anything, it's about grace," Bishop Terry R. LaValley said at the Mass. "We need to restore the power to God so as to minister passionately in the life of His Church. We must place our trust back in God, not ourselves. The Church is not a rowboat driven forward by the strength and skill of the arms of those who are in her. No, the Church is like a sailboat driven by the wind which blows it along from above. No one knows, where it comes from or where it goes - but the wind is caught by the sail of prayer." A women's retreat was held May 5 at the Father Amyot Parish Center in Norfolk featuring guest speaker Edwina Gately. Dr. Maura Fehlner was the keynote speaker at "Loving Authentically," an event held to strengthen relationships and families. Dozens of altar servers from around the diocese gathered at St. Mary's Cathedral on Aug. 16 for the annual Altar

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



DEACON KEVIN MASTELLON/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Deacon aspirants were accepted for candidacy by Bishop Terry R. LaValley on Oct. 4. Candidates include, from left, James Carlin, Mark Webster, Robert Utendorfsky, Randy Besio, Roderic Roca, Bishop LaValley, Daniel LeRoy, Kenneth Lushia, Brent Davison, Kenneth Racette, Gerald Bouchard, Lee Trudeau, Michael Lieber, Jr., Noel Voos and Peter Wooschlager

A look back

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Server Picnic. The Blue Mass, honoring law enforcement and corrections officers from around the diocese, was held Sept. 29. The Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocations Society (DOVS) and diocesan residents traveled to Ottawa for their annual pilgrimage on Oct. 2. The diocese marked Extraordinary Missionary Month in October with a panel discussion with two missionary sisters and a series of articles online and in the North Country Catholic.

AD LIMINA: Bishop Terry R. LaValley and bishops from around the state traveled to Rome for an ad limina Apostolarum visit. During the visit, the bishops met with various Vatican offices, celebrated Masses at the tombs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, St. Mary Maggiore and St. John Lateran, and had personal visits with the Holy Father.

HEALING & RECONCILIATION: The Child Victims Act (CVA) opened, giving victims of sexual abuse a new right to sue for compensation. This legislation extended the statute of limitations on criminal cases involving certain sex offences against children under the age of eighteen; extended the time within which civil actions based on such criminal conduct may be brought until the child is 50 years old; and opened a one-year window reviving civil actions for which the statute of limitations has already run. This "Window" of legal opportunity began on August 14th and runs through August 13, 2020. The opening week of the "window," sixteen individuals filed lawsuits against the diocese.

VOCATIONS: Thirteen men are studying or participating in pastoral years as they discern their vocations to the priesthood. Two men, Severinus Torwoe and Jude Nnadibuagha were ordained as deacons on Oct. 26.

FINANCE: The 2019 Bishop's Fund, "Alive in Christ" kicked off in September, raising funds to support vital ministries, seminarians, the diaconate, Formation for Ministry, Camp Guggenheim, the Good Samaritan fund and other programs.

Bishop's Public Schedule

Dec. 25 – Midnight – Midnight Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral
9 a.m. – Christmas Mass at Notre Dame Church in Ogdensburg
Dec. 26 – 10:50 a.m. – Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg
Dec. 29 – 10 a.m. – Mass at St. Joseph's Church in Bombay
3 p.m. – Evening Prayer and Christmas Dinner with Our Seminarians and their parents at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg
Dec. 31 – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral
Jan. 2 – 5:30 p.m. – Annual Jefferson and Lewis Deanery Clergy Dinner at Pete's Trattoria Restaurant in Watertown
Jan. 3 – 7 p.m. – Deacon Candidate Class at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terri-
anne Yanulavich, Adult & Youth Counseling Services of Northern New York, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY, 12955
terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com
Phone: Day: 518-651-2267, Night: 518-569-0612; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy at 315-393-2920

Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters from readers of the North Country Catholic.

- Due to space limitations, we ask that the number of words be limited to 300.
- We cannot accept letters which support ideas which are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Send letters to North Country Catholic, PO Box 326, Ogdensburg, NY, 13669 or e-mail to news@northcountrycatholic.org



Rest in Peace

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

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; Rev. Sam D'Angelo, O.S.A., 1961; Deacon Victor Demers, 2003
Dec. 31 – Rev. Joseph Butler, 1894; Rev. Benedict Granottier, 1930; Msgr. Clarence A. Kitts, 1949
Jan. 1 – Rev. Earl Leo Taylor, 1974
Jan. 2 – Rev. Henry William McFadden, 1978; Deacon Robert J. LeClair, 2009
Jan. 3 – Rev. A. J. M. Viau, 1966; Rev. Hilary Neal, O.P., 1986
Jan. 4 – Rev. James Edwin O'Haire, 1877; Rev. Michael Walsh, M.S.C., 1977; Rev. Charles E. Chase, 2011
Jan. 5 – Rev. Louis Lebrert, O.M.I., 1903; Msgr. Dennis E. Lynch, 1979; Rev. Raoul J. Poirier, M.Afr., 1997
Jan. 6 – Rev. James Dennis Phalon, 1974; Deacon George W. Carroll, 1994; Rev. Benoit Dostie, M.S.C., 2007; Msgr. Robert J. McCarthy, 2018
Jan. 7 – Rev. Leonidas Geoffrion, 1954

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg has scheduled sessions for Protecting God's Children for Adults. Pre-registration online is required. Participants may preregister at www.virtus.org.
Upcoming sessions:
Jan. 30 – 6 p.m., Wakefield Recital Hall at SUNY Potsdam

Environmental Stewardship

The heavens declare your glory (Ps. 19:1)

We learn of God's glory not only through His creation on earth but also in the heavens as well.

As we think about it, the stars have a very significant part in the Christmas story. They bring light to a darkened world in the midst of winter in the northern hemisphere.

On a clear, cold winter night when we look up to the sky, it seems that the stars are even brighter at this time of year. It is when the sun's rays are most distance from our part of the planet that we celebrate the presence of the Son of God, our true light for all eternity.

Is that perhaps why lights play such an incredibly important part in our Christmas decorations both inside and outdoors?

Ancient peoples longed for the warmth and comfort of the sun in the midst of the darkest time of year, and they celebrated the winter solstice with great joy and hope. We, too, long for the warmth and love of the sun in the midst of winter.

We long even more so for the warmth and love of the Son of God. He is the light who has come into the world to release it from darkness of sin and heal it from blindness of selfishness.

In the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus says "You are the light of the world . . . your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven."

Each of us is being called to bring that light of God's love to reality by the way we are live each day.

What a challenge this is to be the reflection of the light of Christ into the world so in need of healing love!

As a faithful follower of Christ, what acts can I do that will bring healing to our "common home" that will ensure a healthy, peace-filled future for our young children?

THANK YOU FOR SHARING IN THE CARING

*The Religious of the Diocese Wish to Thank All
of the Generous People Who Contributed to the
2019 Retirement Fund Collection.
You Will Be Remembered in Our Prayers.*

*Franciscan Friars of the Atonement
(SA)*

Brother Alan LeMay

*The Missionaries of the
Sacred Heart (MSC)*

Rev. Pierre Aubin
Rev. David DeLuca
Rev. Vincent Freeh
Rev. Herman Pongantunh
Rev. Jonas Tandayu

Sisters of St. Joseph (SSJ)

Sister Judy Adams
Sister Mary William Argy
Sister M. Judith Baumert
Sister M. Maurice Black
Sister Mary Paul Blank
Sister Mary Ellen Brett
Sister Shirley Anne Brown
Sister Norma Bryant
Sister Jean Marie Chiovitti
Sister Annunciata Collins
Sister Bernadette Marie Collins
Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin
Sister Mary Anne Croitz
Sister Jane Frances Cutting
Sister Sharon Anne Dalton
Sister Kathleen Mary DeBoalt
Sister Mary Louise Fiedler
Sister M. Bethany Fitzgerald
Sister M. Monica Flaherty
Sister Mary Catherine Laboure
Goodbout
Sister Ronald Marie Hax
Sister Noel Chabanel Hentz
Sister Cecilia Marie Hermann
Sister Mary Helen Hermann
Sister Anne Hogan
Sister Suanne Johnson

Sister James Marie Kelly
Sister Mary Rita Kempney
Sister Carol Louise Kraeger
Sister Mary Eamon Lyng
Sister Gabriel Marie Meyer
Sister Cathleen Moore
Sister Gregory Munger
Sister Mary Patrick Murphy
Sister M. Teresa Magdalen
Nichols
Sister Juliana Raymond
Sister M. Kateri Rose
Sister Maureen Sweeney
Sister Constance Marie Sylver
Sister Mary Christine Taylor
Sister Diane Marie Ulsamer
Sister Jennifer Votraw

*Daughters of Charity of the Sacred
Heart of Jesus (FCSCJ)*

Sister Mary Ann Gour

Dominican Sisters of Hope (OP)

Sister Deborah Blow
Sister Stephanie Frenette
Sister Barbara Langlois
Sister Elizabeth Menard

*Mid-Atlantic Community of the
Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the
Americas (RSM)*

Sister Catherine Cummings
Sister Mary Audrey Hallahan
Sister Brian Marie Latour
Sister Carolyn Madden
Sister Mary Camillus O'Keefe
Sister Carolyn Parker
Sister Janet Peters
Sister Mary Denise Wilke

Servants of Mary (OSM)

Sister Doris Durant

*Sisters of Charity of the Blessed
Virgin Mary (BVM)*

Sister Cindy Sullivan

Sisters of Charity of St. Louis (SCSL)

Sister Bernadette Ducharme
Sister Claire Michel Fortier
Sister Louella Pelletier

Sisters of the Precious Blood (APB)

Sister Martha Emery
Sister Marilyn McGillan
Sister Linh Therese Nguyen
Sister Mary Catherine Pham
Sister Rose Rossi
Sister Elizabeth Washburn

Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod

Sister Deepali Karbhari Banker
Sister Maria Flavia D'Costa
Sister Maria Angelica Rebello
Sister Jaquiline Mary Sellappan
Sister Sahayarani Selvaraj
Sister Rosy Soosairaj
Sister Jessintha Xavier



THANK YOU FOR SHARING IN THE CARING

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CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Supreme Court to hear cases of fired Catholic school teachers

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The Supreme Court will take a deeper dive into laws governing church and state next year when it examines two Catholic school teacher firings. The court agreed Dec. 18 to take up the combined cases of two California Catholic schools that were sued by teachers they had fired who claimed they had been victims of job discrimination. The schools, both in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, argued in lower courts that they were exempt from discrimination laws by "ministerial exception." This exception is based on a 2012 Supreme Court decision that said church and religious school employers are exempt from anti-discrimination laws for employees who are ministers of the faith. In these two cases, federal district courts ruled in favor of the schools, citing ministerial exception. But two separate panels of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit reversed these decisions, saying the limited extent of the employee's religious duties were insufficient to qualify for a ministerial exception that was more often applied to those with roles of religious leadership.

Northern Ireland bishops seek waiting period in abortion law

MANCHESTER, England (CNS) – The Catholic bishops of Northern Ireland have asked the U.K. government to include a mandatory waiting period for women who request abortions under a new law. They also demanded that abortion services, such as access to abortion-inducing pills, are kept out of Catholic schools, and that all medical personnel and pharmacists have the legal right of conscientious objection to involvement in abortion procedures. They set out their case in a response to a government consultation on the legal framework for abortion ahead of the law coming into force in March. The five bishops said the law was "unjust" because it "directly and intentionally leads to the killing of an unborn child." "It is our view that urgent consideration be given to the inclusion of appropriate counseling services and a significant time period be provided for careful reflection on the serious nature of a decision to abort the unborn child," they said in a Dec. 17 summary of the response, posted on the website of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

New report shows decreased use of death penalty in U.S.

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Use of the death penalty in the United States continues to decrease, according to a report released Dec. 17 by the Death Penalty Information Center. The report said this year's 22 executions and 33 new death sentences were down from the previous year's 25 executions. This year also marks the fifth consecutive year when there were fewer than 30 executions and 50 death sentences. The report also noted that death sentences have declined by more than 85% and executions by more than 75% from their peaks in the 1990s. "It is encouraging to see the continual decline in the use of the death penalty in the United States," said Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, which works to end the death penalty and promote restorative justice. This past June, the U.S. bishops voted to revise the death penalty section of the U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults, reflecting an earlier change made by Pope Francis and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2018. The Catechism of the Catholic Church now states that the "death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

High Court to hear cases of fired religion teachers

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The Supreme Court will take a deeper dive into laws governing church and state next year when it examines two Catholic school teacher firings.

The court agreed Dec. 18 to take up the combined cases of two California Catholic schools that were sued by teachers they had fired who claimed they had been victims of job discrimination.

The schools, both in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, argued in lower courts that they were exempt from discrimination laws by "ministerial exception." This exception is based on a 2012 Supreme Court decision that said church and religious school employers are exempt from anti-discrimination laws for employees who are ministers of the faith.

In these two cases, federal district courts ruled in favor of the schools, citing ministerial exception. But two separate panels of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit reversed these decisions, saying the limited extent of the employee's religious duties were insufficient to qualify for a ministerial exception that was more often applied to those with roles of religious leadership.

Becket, a nonprofit religious liberty law firm, is representing the schools in the cases: St. James School v. Biel and Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru.

In a Dec. 18 statement, the firm said: "Most courts have ruled that ministerial employees are those employees who perform important religious functions, like instructing young children in the pre-

cepts of the Catholic faith," adding that the 9th Circuit in these cases "rejected this widely accepted rule."

"Parents trust Catholic schools to assist them in one of their most important duties: forming the faith of their children," said Montserrat Alvarado, vice president and executive director at Becket. "If courts can second-guess a Catholic school's judgment about who should teach religious beliefs to fifth graders, then neither Catholics nor any other religious group can be confident in their ability to convey the faith to the next generation."

The cases involve St. James School in Torrance and Our Lady of Guadalupe School in Hermosa Beach.

At St. James School, former fifth grade teacher, Kristen Biel said she was fired after informing school administrators that she had breast cancer and would have to take time off for surgery and chemotherapy. She sued under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Biel died this summer, but her husband is seeking damages. Becket said that in 2015, the school chose not to renew Biel's one-year contract based on classroom performance.

Our Lady of Guadalupe School did not renew the contract in 2013 for Agnes Morrissey-Berru, who had taught both fifth and sixth grades since 1999, saying she had a problem keeping order in her classroom and meeting expectations under a new reading program. Morrissey-Berru sued, alleging age bias under the Age Discrimina-

tion in Employment Act of 1967.

Briefs filed by both schools point out that the "scope of the ministerial exception is a vital and recurring question of nationwide importance for thousands of religious organizations and individuals."

The 2012 decision these schools are essentially standing on is *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* where a teacher at a Lutheran school in Michigan said she was fired for pursuing an employment discrimination claim based on a disability.

In its ruling, the court said the ministerial exception to anti-discrimination laws meant that religious organizations couldn't be sued for firing an employee classified as a minister.

In the two Catholic school cases coming before the court likely in March or April, the court will have to determine whether the school employees served a ministerial function in their teaching positions.

The National Catholic Educational Association, in a friend-of-the-court brief in support of St. James School filed in February 2019, disagreed with the 9th Circuit's decision that the teacher was not a minister. The brief stressed instead that Biel, as the school's only fifth grade teacher, "bore particular responsibility for effectuating – and embodying – the integral formation that is distinct to Catholic schools."

CLINTON

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Treadwell Mills – The Knights of Columbus will hold a pancake breakfast.

Date: Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 1 & April 5

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

Place: St. Joseph's Parish Hall

Cost: Adults, \$8; Children 6-12, \$4; 5 and under, Free

MARCH FOR LIFE

Washington D.C. – Plattsburgh bus to Washington D.C. for March for Life.

Schedule: Bus to leave St. Peter's at 7:45 p.m. on Jan. 23 and it will return to Plattsburgh on Jan. 34

Cost: \$30

Contact: Deacon Randy Smith 518-566-6229.

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 & Fellowship

Place: Notre Dame Church

DEVOTION AND HOLY HOUR

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

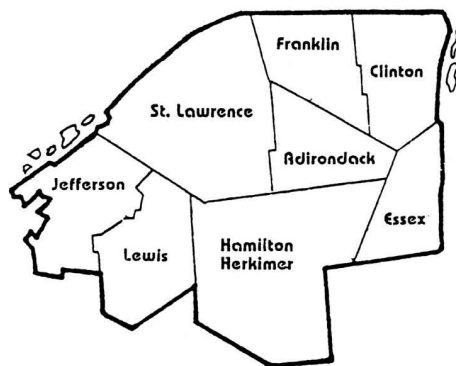
Date: First Saturday of each month.

Time: immediately following the 4:30 anticipated Mass.

Place: St. Ann's Church

Features: Prayer after Mass, Night Prayer, Prayer for All Souls and the Holy Souls, Novena in Honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Reparation Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, private meditation on the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament reposed in the Tabernacle, prayers for the Holy Father and his intentions, and refreshments are provided in the Church Hall.

Contact: 518-856-9656



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.

JEFFERSON

ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS

Watertown – The St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity of the Secular Franciscans will be having adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for vocations into the priesthood and religious life.

Date: Dec. 28

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

Place: St. Patrick's Church

Features: We extend our welcome for all to join us and share some moments in prayer.

SPAGHETTI DINNER

Evans Mills – The Indian River Knights of Columbus to have a Spaghetti & Meatball dinner.

Date: Jan. 11

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

Place: St. Mary's Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$7; Senior Citizens, \$6; Children 12 and under, \$5; 5 and under, Free

SPAGHETTI DINNER

Adams – The Knights of Columbus will have a spaghetti dinner.

Date: Jan. 18

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 7

Place: St. Cecilia's Church

Cost: Adults, \$7; Seniors, \$6; Children, \$4; Children 5 and under, Free

Contact: For more information call Joe Hulbert at 315-465-6543

SURVIVING DIVORCE

Watertown – Surviving Divorce program to be held.

Date: 12 Sessions for 6 weeks start-

ing Jan. 21 on Tuesdays and Thursdays

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

Place: St. Anthony's Church

Features: Separated and divorced adults – come find support and healing.

Contact: For more information, contact Steve Tartaglia at startaglia@rcdony.org or (315) 393-2920.

SPAGHETTI DINNER

Watertown – St. Anthony's church to have a Spaghetti Dinner.

Date: Jan. 30

Time: Take-outs begin at 4 p.m., dinner 4:30 p.m. to 6:30

Cost: Adults, \$8; Half portions for children or adults, \$4.50; children 3 and under, Free; Sauce, \$5 quart (bring a pot); extra meatballs are .75 cents each.

LEWIS

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 or 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 symbol of love, unity and forgiveness.

Contact: 315-348-6260.

INTERNATIONAL NATIVITY

Houseville – All are welcome to an International Exhibit of Christmas Creches-Nativities.

Date: Dec. 22, 29 and Jan. 5

Time: Before or after the celebration of the 11 a.m. Mass, or between 1 p.m. to 3 or by appointment

Place: St. Hedwig's Church

Features: The exhibit is free and open to the public. Help keep Christ in Christmas. Bring family and friends and experience the universality of the Birth of the Christ-Child as experienced through the eyes of many different cultures.

ST. LAWRENCE

PUBLIC SKATING

Canton – The Canton Knights of Columbus will be sponsoring its annual FREE Public skating.

Date: Dec. 25, Christmas Day

Time: 3 p.m. to 5

Place: Canton Pavilion

DIOCESAN EVENTS

DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Syracuse – The Vocations directors of Upstate NY will hold a discernment retreat.

Date: Jan. 5 – 7

Time: Sunday Evening to Tuesday Morning.

Place: Christ the King Retreat House, 500 Brookford Rd, Syracuse

Features: Have you felt the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as a Catholic priest? Gather with other young men from across the state who are considering the call to the priesthood. Hear talks on the priesthood. Meet seminarians and hear their stories. Enjoy Eucharistic Adoration, as well as time for silent prayer. Have an opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Be inspired to live generously.

Contact: Father Christopher Carrara at ccarrara@rcdony.org, 315-393-2920 or speak with your pastor.

YOUTH BUSES FOR LIFE

Washington, DC – Registration is now open for the Youth Buses for life.

Date: Jan. 26, 2020

Cost: \$200

Features: Buses depart the North Country and the cost will include transportation, three hotel stays, three breakfasts, two dinners, two lunches, t-shirt, slingbag and an awesome experience! Western bus departs from IHC in Watertown. Northern bus departs from Massena with stops in Canton and

Gouverneur. March for Life in our nation's capital and participate in the Life is Very Good Rally and Mass and the National ProLife Summit!

Contact: Registration and more information at www.rcdony.org/prolife

YOUTH LENTEN RETREAT

Lenten retreats to be held for young people in grades 7 to 12

Schedule: Feb. 29 at St. Patrick's, Watertown; March 7 at St. Mary's, Champlain

Time: Noon to 4 p.m.

Features: There is no fee to attend. Each retreat will focus on three tools to aid us in centering ourselves on Jesus Christ and strengthening our relationship with our loving God. Each afternoon retreat will be fun, heart and mind opening and spiritually rejuvenating.

Contact: To register go to www.rcdony.org/youthlenten/lenten-retreat.html or contact Virginia Demers, at vdemers@rcdony.org - 315-393-2920 ext. 1401

LEAD EVENT

Lake Placid – Diocesan LEAD event to be held.

Date: March 9-10

Place: Crowne Plaza

Cost: One LEAD member is free. Additional members cost \$50. If you have a team of 3 the cost is \$120. Non-LEAD parishes cost \$75 per person.

Features: The theme is "The Catechumen's Journey: The Initiation process." Creating Holy Moments for New Disciples. Participants are responsible for hotel accommodations and expense. Mention the event when registering with the hotel.

Contact: Jessica Hargrave by email: jhargrave@rcdony.org or by phone: (315)393-2920

DAY OF REFLECTION

Lead event to be held in the Eastern and Western region of the diocese.

Date: March 21

Time: 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Place: Eastern Region, St. John XXIII Newman Center, Plattsburgh. Speaker will be Deacon Mark Bennett. Western Region, Wadhams Hall, Ogdensburg. Speaker will be Deacon Jim Crowley.

Cost: One LEAD member is free. Additional Lead member and non-members fee is \$20

Contact: Jessica Hargrave at jhargrave@rcdony.org or call 315-393-2920

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Advent event focused on prayer, slowing down

By Eileen Greenwood
Contributing writer

LOWVILLE—The message at the “Day of Reflection” held Dec. 7 in Lowville was clear: The hectic pace of our lives is a challenge we must face daily during this season that calls us to slow down. During Advent, a time of peaceful anticipation for the coming of the Christ Child, we are called to recognize the joy in the gift that is coming soon.

Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, a Sister of St. Joseph, led a group of 19 in the “Day of Reflection,” themed “Nurturing Hospitality of the Heart.”

Sister Bethany noted that it is appropriate that the season of Advent occurs in winter. Winter is a season that also encourages us to take a break and to draw inward.

Sister Bethany also spoke of the importance

of the Advent and winter seasons as times for us to grow in our spiritual lives and to experience the peace of Christ.

“During Advent God is calling me to be closer to Him,” she said. “Winter draws me inward and asks us to be quiet. Advent is also the darkest time of the year. It is at this time that Christ comes into the world.”

The event began with prayer and a reflection by Sister Bethany. Those in attendance gathered and listened to her explain how the season invites us to slow our lives and to focus on connecting with God.

“God is waiting for us to clear some space so we can encounter Him,” she said. “How do I open my heart and welcome God’s presence in?”

Different ways to pray were shared, including the Examen as developed

by St. Ignatius.

“St. Ignatius reminds us to articulate our needs to God,” shared Sister Bethany. “God’s ways are not always our ways. The invitation is there to sit at his feet.”

Lectio divina was another kind of prayer discussed. Lectio focuses on reading a passage from Scripture, then reading it again, and meditating on one word or phrase that speaks to you. Participants in the Retreat took some time to practice this method with a passage Sister Bethany shared about Mary’s visit to Elizabeth.

After quiet personal reflection our group re-assembled and discussed what each person took from the passage.

“The calm and peace of the season is there if we slow down enough to grasp it,” Sister Bethany said. “Mary was blessed

because she believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

This passage also reflected on the importance of feeling God’s presence in our lives, Sister Bethany noted.

“When we feel God’s presence, we can then know His will,” she said. “Our encounter with Jesus helps us to live with joy.”

Sister Bethany explained that when we focus on Jesus and let the Holy Spirit in, the way is somehow clearer. We are then more present with our relationships with others we encounter.

Sister Bethany also spoke of the importance of sharing the joy of knowing Christ with others. She highly recommended reading the “Joy of the Gospel,” by Pope Francis.

Sister Bethany also spoke of the importance

of inviting someone into your home for a meal. Sharing the scripture example of Zacchaeus, who shared a meal with Jesus that was a life-changing encounter.

“When you are invited into someone’s home for a meal, you are also invited into their heart,” she said, noting Zacchaeus was changed forever after “Jesus saw his heart and desire for something more. Jesus invited him in and changed his life.”

The Apostles shared meals with Jesus as well of course, and the most famous one, the Last Supper, was certainly life changing for them and for Christians everywhere.

The host for the “Day of Reflection” was Deb Mullin, catechetical leader of St. Peter’s in Lowville. Mullin also provided a luncheon that was enjoyed by all who gathered.

AT THE CURSILLO WEEKEND



MARIKA DONDELS/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

(Above) Nine women made their Cursillo Weekend at Wadhams Hall the weekend of Dec. 15. The nine were joined by existing Cursillo participants at the closing of the weekend. (Right) Father Alan D. Shnob and Father John L. “Jack” Downs display their Cursillo socks, given to them during the women’s weekend.



SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Feast teaches lessons for family life

The Christmas story continues in today's Feast of the Most Holy Family – Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Once a child is born, a married man and woman are now a “father” and a “mother.” At least, this is the ideal. It was this way for Mary and Joseph once Jesus was born. And yet, very soon, this family became refugees, fleeing for their lives.

How their lives resemble the modern scene in Iraq, Syria and South America as thousands of refugee families struggle to stay unified. Families are on the run with a few possessions, often on foot, moving out of their native lands to seek refuge wherever they will be tolerated. It may never be possible

for these people to return to their homelands.

Add to this, the thousands of broken families, broken by divorce, military deployment or abandonment by one or other parent, and we may well wonder what is “normal” for the word “family.”

Just four days ago we celebrated the birth of a tiny Baby, surrounded by the ethereal angel choir, greeted with awe and adoration. Today, we commemorate a family in deep stress. Because their two-year old is seen as a threat to a jealous king, Joseph and Mary are running for their lives from Herod the Great. Their flight into Egypt, as told us in today's Gospel, is a reminder that many cen-



Monsignor Paul E. Whitmore

December 29

Feast of the Holy Family

READINGS

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Colossians 3:12-17

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

turies before their journey, Moses, also a child of danger, had led the Jewish people from slavery to freedom in what we call the Exodus. Now Jesus, the new and greater Moses, will free his people from their slavery to sin in a new Exodus, and secure eternal life to all who will follow Him, in the Promised Land of heaven.

Tradition says that after three years in exile, another angel informs Joseph that Herod the Great is dead. The Holy Family returns to their homeland, not to Bethlehem, since the new King Archelaus who reigns in

his father's place is also a cruel and barbaric ruler. Joseph brings Mary and Jesus to His native town of Nazareth in Galilee. There, they lived a simple ordinary life, Joseph as a carpenter, and Mary as a housewife and mother. Jesus grew in holiness and in knowledge of God's will in the same ordinary ways that good families do in our day.

What extraordinary wisdom we find in both the first and second readings this Sunday for family life! Sirach, a second-century B.C. writer, gives us the fruit of constant reading of Scriptures. First, he reminds us that parents' authority is given them by God Himself. When children obey their parents, they will have their sins forgiven, their prayers heard, and will themselves be blessed with children. Sirach counsels

us to be good to our parents in their old age, even when their minds fail!

St. Paul, in Colossians, gives families, both our own individual families, and the wider family of the Church, a sure-fire formula for success. We are to act with “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.” Who would ever want to escape— whether Dad, Mom, or teenager – from such a happy home?

Families are still the basic unity of any society. How we must mourn families torn apart by addiction of different kinds that leave thousands and thousands of children homeless.

May the Holy Family through our families reach out in whatever way we can to bring healing and hope.

AT THE MOVIES

STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER

NEW YORK (CNS) – A long time ago, in a world that now seems far, far away – to wit, Earth in spring 1977 – George Lucas wowed audiences with the original “Star Wars” film.

More than four decades later, the ninth, and officially final, installment in the main body of the blockbuster franchise, “Star Wars: The Rise of

Skywalker” (Disney), premieres.

Although it feels less substantive than the previous chapter, released in 2017, director and co-writer (with Chris Terrio) J.J. Abrams' sci-fi epic certainly has spectacle to spare as well as some touching moments. Given that the battles that play out in this portion of the saga are spiritual as well as physical, moreover, viewers of faith will have much to ponder.

With the evil First Order rebranding themselves the Final Order as they prepare to launch a vast space fleet capable of crushing all opposition, General Leia (the late Car-

rie Fisher), commander of the Resistance, dispatches her ablest follower, Rey (Daisy Ridley), to locate the enemy's secret base.

Rey is aided by ex-stormtrooper-turned-Resistance-fighter Finn (John Boyega) and by hotshot pilot Poe (Oscar Isaac). But Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), now the Order's supreme leader, is convinced that he can draw Rey over to the Dark Side to which he, once the good Ben Solo, long ago surrendered himself.

The status of Lucas' trademark Force remains ambivalent from a Christian perspective.

But lessons about making moral choices, the

need to reject temptation and the power of forgiveness and redemption are clear.

So, too, is the message that ancestry does not determine moral destiny – just ask Luke Skywalker.

A couple of not-very-bloody wounds aside, the violence is kept non-graphic and the dialogue is mostly on the up-and-up, though the presence of some Jedi jingoism is one of the script's minor flaws.

This being a 2019 Hollywood movie, however, someone felt the need to include, in a moment of general celebration, a gal-gal smooch possibly suggesting a lesbian rela-

tionship between two of the extras.

Blink and you'll miss that moment, though. So parents not wanting to be seen as latter-day Darth Vaders in the eyes of their teens may give way without much worry.

The film contains much stylized combat violence with minimal gore, a same-sex kiss, a couple of mild oaths and at least one crass term. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III – adults.

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





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

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSI, Director

622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669

(315) 393-2920; fax 1-866-314-7296

mbrett@rcdony.org

Reflection and prayer for the Missions

Christmas season is a wonderful opportunity to engage young people in their call to missionary discipleship, seeking their prayers, actions and monetary sacrifices for their brothers and sisters around the world. These resources are designed to love beyond the classroom, engaging families who, by virtue of their baptism, share in the triple mission of Christ: priest, prophet, and king.

There is love and peace in the developing countries because of missionaries. Yes, missionaries like yourselves let the love of Christ shine in the lives of people in the missions as they receive your generous donations. On behalf of missionaries and the people they serve who benefit from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, I thank you for your support. Your support touches the seeking hearts of the suffering poor in the mission lands. At this Christmas time, I offer you this prayer....

A Prayer for Missions

God of Truth and Love
Father Son and Holy Spirit

Hear our prayer for those who do not know You.
We ask that they may come to a saving knowledge of
the truth
and that Your Name may be praised among all peoples
of the world.

Sustain, inspire and enlighten Your servants
who bring them the Gospel.

Bring fresh vigor to wavering faith;
sustain our faith when it is still fragile.

Continually renew missionary zeal in ourselves and in
the Church;

raise up new missionaries who will follow You to the
ends of the world.

Make us witnesses to Your goodness;
full of love, strength and faith –

for Your glory and the salvation of the entire world.

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

OBITUARIES

Brasher Falls – Mary A. Ezyk, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2019 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Clayton – Korleen S. (Fox) Marshall, 81; Funeral Services May 2020 at Cummings Funeral Service, Inc.; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Coopersville – Richard E. Laurin, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 21, 2019 at St. Joseph's Oratory.

Croghan – Margaret A. (Dekin) Kohler, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 14, 2019 at St. James Church; burial in St. Vincent DePaul Cemetery, Belfort.

Keeseville – Vivian I. (Bailey) Barber, 89; Mass of Christian Burial in Spring at St. John's Church; burial in St. John's Cemetery.

Massena – Harry J. Kerr, 49; Funeral Services Dec. 18, 2019 at Donaldson Funeral Home; burial in West Stockholm Cemetery.

Massena – Darrel P. Paquin, 72; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 17, 2019 at Church of the Sacred Heart.

Mooers Forks – Bertha A. (Lafontaine) Begore, 99; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2019 at St. Ann's Church; burial in Whispering Maples Mausoleum, Ellenburg Depot.

Ogdensburg – Marilyn R. LaFlair, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2019 at Notre Dame Church; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

Peru – Karen Elaine (Santor) Donoghue, 59; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2019 at St. Augustine's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Peru – Janet K. (LaPine) Downs, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2019 at St. Augustine's Church; burial in Norton Cemetery, Keene.

Peru – John F. Longware, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 21, 2019 at St. Augustine's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Peru – Raymond Edward Ormsby, 84; Funeral Services Dec. 16, 2019 at the Hamilton Funeral Home; burial in Peasleeville Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Joan M. (Amell) Duchin, 76; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2019 at St. John XXIII Newman Center.

Plattsburgh – Jean Stone Tolosky, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2019 at St. John's Church; burial in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Tupper Lake – Gloria G. Amoriell, 79; Funeral Services Dec. 19, 2019 at Frary-Stuart Funeral Home.

Watertown – Barbara (Zawisza) Frederick, 79; Funeral Services Dec. 18, 2019 at the D.L. Calarco Funeral Home; burial in Sanford Corners Cemetery.

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SCENES OF THE SEASON



Members of the Catholic Community of Burke & Chateaugay Youth Group went around the Village of Chateaugay Dec. 17 singing Christmas carols on a hay wagon. The event is an annual tradition for the youth group.



As part of its Advent celebration, Father Phillip T. Allen of St. Joseph's in Olmstedville blessed the church's recently completed outdoor nativity display. Father Allen was assisted in the blessing by Erin Savarie. The barn was designed, built and assembled by Tom Grace. Elizabeth LeMay finished it by staining it and donating the hay. Clare and David McNally donated the materials for the construction of the barn and the nativity pieces in it. A small plaque was affixed to the display in memory of life-long parishioners Shirley and Patrick McNally. Shirley passed away in 2014, and Patrick passed away on November 13, 2019. Following the blessing, the parishioners enjoyed a pot-luck luncheon in the parish house organized by Betty LeMay and Diane McNally.



St. Nicholas, also known as Father Kris C. Lauzon, visited the students of Seton Catholic on his Dec. 6 feast day. He talked to the students, read them a story, and gave them candy canes and Advent buttons to wear. Pictured with St. Nicholas are Nicholas Santoro and Vivienne Blatchley.

Correct address for Father McGuinness

In the annual listing of priest addresses for Christmas cards, Father J. Roger McGuinness' address was incorrectly listed.

Father McGuinness can be reached at:
Rev. J. Roger McGuinness
 736 Durand Road
 Plattsburgh, NY 12901

The *North Country Catholic* regrets this error.