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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 74, Number 25

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

OCTOBER 28, 2020

Live the Gospel of Life

As Catholics in the United States, we mark October as Respect Life Month. It is a time to focus on God's precious gift of human life and our responsibility to care for, protect, and defend the lives of our brothers and sisters.

This year's theme, "Live the Gospel of Life," was inspired by the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life*. Pope John Paul's defense of the right to life for children in their mothers' wombs, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the marginalized is more relevant today than ever before.

SEE PAGES 3, 4 & 8

PAYING A VISIT



Bishop Terry R. LaValley visited St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga on Oct. 19. Bishop LaValley visited classrooms and celebrated Mass with the school's students and staff. Bishop LaValley is pictured with Father Christopher J. Looby, pastor in Ticonderoga, and Sister Sharon Anne Dalton, principal at St. Mary's School.

SHARING OUR STORIES



Sharing Our Stories; Sharing Our Faith returns this week with Megan Stark of Malone, who shares how God 'cracked open all the doors' to bring her back to a love of Jesus after a period away from her faith. To suggest an individual to be featured in this series, highlighting how Catholics of the Diocese of Ogdensburg are living out their faith, please call the North Country Catholic at 315-393-2920 or email dfargo@rcdony.org.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

Pope: True prayer leads to care for others

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Being indifferent to or hating others is to deny the existence of God's presence in one's neighbor, Pope Francis said.

"This is practical atheism," the pope said Oct. 21 during his weekly general audience.

"To not recognize the human person as an image of God is a sacrilege, an abomination, the worst offense that can be directed toward the temple and the altar," he said.

Arriving in the Paul VI audience hall, the pope observed social-distancing

measures by taking his seat immediately rather than greeting members of the crowd up close.

He also apologized and explained that mingling with them would increase "the danger of infection for you."

"I am sorry for this, but it's for your safety," he said. "But please know that I am close to you in my heart. I hope you understand why I do this."

Before his main talk, the pope said he noticed a mother cuddling and breastfeeding her crying

baby at the start of the audience.

Seeing this, he said, "I thought, 'That's what God does with us, like that mother, who with such tenderness tried to rock the baby, to feed the baby. It is a beautiful image.'"

"Never silence a child who cries in church. Never. Because it is a voice that recalls God's tenderness," he said.

Continuing his series of talks on prayer, the pope talked about "the wicked" person often mentioned in the Book of Psalms and de-

scribed them as someone who "lives as if God does not exist."

The Book of Psalms, he said, presents prayer as a "fundamental reality of life" that serves as a "boundary," which prevents "us from venturing into life in a predatory and voracious manner."

However, he said, there are "the wicked" ones, like those who go to Mass "only to be seen" or to show off, or those who pray out of habit and with no depth, thus rendering "a false prayer" to God.

"The worst service someone can give God, and others as well, is to pray tiredly, in a habitual way, to pray like a parrot: blah, blah, blah. No. We must pray with our hearts," the pope said.

"Prayer is not a sedative to alleviate life's anxieties; or, in any case, this type of prayer is certainly not Christian," he added. "Rather, prayer makes the person responsible for others as can be seen 'clearly in the 'Our Father' that Jesus taught his disciples."

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EDITOR'S NOTE

These can be difficult teachings

"They just announced that this woman will be executed on Dec. 8. I know her."

That quote was part of a post in a Catholic women's group on social media. The post included a link to a news article about a woman, Lisa Montgomery, who was convicted of a particularly heinous crime. Montgomery killed a pregnant woman, cut the woman's baby from her womb and tried pass the baby off as her own.

Just reading about the crime made me sad and angry.

There's part of me that

feels like the woman committed an unthinkable and horrible crime, and she deserves the death penalty.

There's part of me that wants vengeance.

That part of me was challenged by the post in my women's group.

"Please pray for Lisa's victim and her family, and for Lisa's family, too," the post said. "And if you can find it in your heart, please pray for Lisa."

I prayed for Lisa.

That part of me that wants vengeance isn't a very good Catholic/Christian.

As Catholics, we're called

to forgive others. We're called to love our enemies. We're also called to protect life from conception to natural death.

I feel like it's an understatement to say those can be very difficult teachings.

It seems fitting that I ran across this social media post this week as I prepared to assemble this, our Respect Life edition of the North Country Catholic.

The death penalty is not a natural death. Murder is not a natural death. Assisted suicide is not a natural death. Abortion is not a natural death.

Sometimes, our human tendencies and our sinfulness make us want

vengeance. Sometimes, those same tendencies and sinfulness make us want to take what seems like the easy way when we're facing pain, hardships or difficult decisions.

We're called to try to overcome those human tendencies and sinfulness. We're called to "live the Gospel of life," recognizing that every man, woman and child – born or unborn – is made in the image and likeness and of God and has innate dignity and value, even if we don't recognize it in specific moments.

We're called to protect and defend God in others.

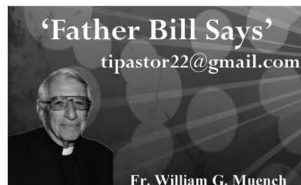
And we're called to pray for Lisa.

Darcy L.
Fargo

Reflecting on the God of surprises

I would like to take some time today to talk with you about God, the God of surprises. I have been thinking about this often this week. It all began when I came upon a video on YouTube, a talk presented by Brother David Steindl-Rast. I truly find all of this talks on spirituality very rewarding. Brother David is a Benedictine monk who is now 90 years of age. I truly find his talks are becoming more impressive as he is getting older. I hope that happens for me. Brother David's talk was about the God of Surprises.

This past week, I was talking with some young people. They were around college age. The subject of our conversation touched on personal spirituality and life. So, I mentioned to them some ideas I picked up from Brother David's talk. The God of surprises made some sense to them. For people of faith, there are many times in a day when we come upon unique opportunities to accomplish something good



and holy to do. I suggested that the Lord brings into our lives the surprises that we least expect at these times of opportunity. God always put us in the right place at the right time. And I further believe that God gives us the right words to use. I truly believe this.

I believe in God's influence in my life as a priest often. Truly, almost every day I have discovered that the Lord leads and guides me with love and peace and with his surprises. I am constantly surprised when something or someone leads me to do something unplanned – something that truly makes a difference in someone else's life.

Often, my preparation for a homily for a Mass will be changed or redone. The Lord

seems to find a way to reach out to me with something better and more meaningful. So, you see I always give my God credit for the words that turn up in my homilies. I pray before and after a homily in gratitude for the Lord's gift of the right words. I guarantee you that I am so surprised at the message the Lord guides me to present.

I believe and hope that you recognize such experiences in your day – those times when God has touched your life, those challenges and opportunities that truly come from the Lord, those gifts that make you a better person. I am certain that all too often they are surprises.

Let me tell you of one such experience: I remember all too well times when anger has taken over my life, and the Lord has truly stepped in and sent me someone or led me to do something to discover a better, more loving attitude. I know it was from the Lord, because it all comes to me as a complete surprise.

Finally, I want to suggest

here that many of the teachings of Jesus are surprising – surprises to many in Jesus' time and even now to us. Let me suggest a one such: Jesus uses his stories to make clear the love of God. For example, the story of the Lost Sheep. You remember story, I am certain. Jesus tells a story about the Good Shepherd, which may seem to be a bit surprising. The Good Shepherd leaves many sheep to go in search for the one lost sheep. Here, Jesus teaches us the value of the individual. The point Jesus is making is this: every person is important and precious to God. All the more so if that person is lost. God will love that person more, not less.

Jesus came to save us all by his death and resurrection. However, this God of surprises makes it very clear that it is important the he comes for each of us, that he is more than willing to take the time to search even for just one lost sheep, and he will not leave a lost sheep unnoticed.

OCTOBER IS RESPECT LIFE MONTH: LIVE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

Crisis services continue during pandemic

By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing Writer

PLATTSBURGH – Women and children need our help more than ever during this pandemic. Local pregnancy centers share their continuing outreach efforts amidst the COVID-19 crisis, as well as their need for our support.

Plattsburgh Birthright

"The pandemic shut down brought Birthright an unexpected way to reach more women than ever with hope and support," reflected Sally Fisher, director of Birthright in Plattsburgh.

Fisher noted that Birthright was blessed to provide for mothers in a special way.

"In March, Birthright received a huge donation of maternity coats from Furi Designs of Montreal," she said. "Pastor Martin allowed us to store the five pallets of boxes at West Chazy Wesleyan Church until August, when we began to ferry the coats to our office for sorting. (Diocesan Respect Life Directors) John and Colleen Miner were the first to take 100 coats for the Gabriel Projects of the diocese. Dan and Janet Waldron took coats to Catholic Charities in Malone. Volunteers drove to Albany to deliver the remaining coats to 14 sister Birthright chapters and to the Hour Children Program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility."

Fisher said she sees God's hand in the opportunity to share the coats.

"The timing of the pandemic actually gave us the time and space we needed for a project of this magnitude," commented Fisher, "[It was] proof that God is way ahead of us, preparing the way for what he would have us do. We couldn't have done any of it without



Joan Liberty, Birthright volunteer, shows the layettes she helps prepare.

our faithful and enthusiastic volunteers. Special thanks to Ken Lushia, Erich Pflanz, Lisa Mockus, Steve and Allison Collier and Paul Fisher. An unexpected blessing from the Respect Life Grant allowed us to cover the gas for the volunteers driving to Albany."

In addition to providing essential items to women and children, Birthright continues to minister in various other ways bolstered by social media outreach.

"Mary Skillan's Facebook post brought over 60 women to our door, a chance to tell them of the other services we offer," she said. "A few signed up for a layette, a young couple wants to take the parenting classes, and a woman in a domestic shelter found in Birthright a safe place to visit with caring volunteers. 'I'll definitely be back!' she said."

More than ever, with the pandemic, Birthright is in need of donations.

"We give out about six layettes a month and are in need of layette items, which we usually get through baby shower donations, but these groups haven't been able to meet,"

Fisher said. "People can call Joan Liberty on Wednesdays to find out what she needs at 518-563-4300."

Birthright is open Tuesday and Wednesday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Thursday 2 to 6 p.m. Check out their Facebook page at Birthright of Plattsburgh and visit their website at: birthright.org/plattsburgh

Plattsburgh Pregnancy Center

"Plattsburgh Pregnancy Center is not functioning as usual, shared Kitty St. Denis, PPC office manager, "In the past, we were open for clients to come to PPC at any time during our office hours (Mon - Fri, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Often they came with former clients, friends or family members. Clients also came as walk-ins after seeing our outdoor sign or seeing our website. Now, because of COVID-19 social distancing, we allow only one person to enter at a time and by appointment. However, we always make ourselves available to help."

Despite the challenges, St. Denis emphasized that they remain available to help.

"We check and return phone calls, email, and website contacts every

Walking with Moms in Need

Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, our parishes need to be "islands of mercy in the midst of a sea of indifference." Everyone in the parish community should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need.

The 25th anniversary year of *Evangelium vitae* gives us a wonderful opportunity to assess, expand, and communicate resources to pregnant moms and families in need. We are inviting parishes, through the support of their bishop and pastor, to join a nationwide effort from March 25, 2020 to March 25, 2021 entitled: "Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service."

For this Year of Service, educational, pastoral, and action-oriented resources have been developed for parish use, such as:

- Tools for documenting an inventory of local resources for pregnant mothers in need.
- Ideas for improving parish responses.
- Prayers for building a culture of life and a civilization of love.
- Reflections on the teachings of *Evangelium vitae*, *Evangelii gaudium*, and *Laudato si'*.

For more information or to access resources, visit walkingwithmoms.com

day," she said. "We have given needed information in that way. We also have brochures on our office door with information about the risks of abortion and contraceptives as well as COVID-19 requirements at PPC and our phone number to make an appointment."

Additionally, St. Denis explained one of PPC's new services.

"During this period, we had a couple sign-up for our Natural Family Planning Computer Assist Program," she said. "This is a new program for us that includes a Lady Comp, which is a handheld fertility computer with attached thermometer. After 30 years of NFP manufacturer's research, Lady Comp has a 99.3% reliability rating. Married couples interested in Natural Family Planning should contact us at 518-324-2010 for more information about this program. As with all of our services at PPC, this program including its fertility computer is free."

PPC continues to offer other service as well, St. Denis noted.

"We have trained pregnancy counselors, give pregnancy tests, administer ultrasounds, and provide referrals for: doctors, WIC, Behavioral Health Services, and adoption agencies," she said. "We also assist with insurance enrollments and give needed financial assistance to women in crisis pregnancies."

St. Denis concluded with an urgent reminder about a task that all of us can fulfill.

"During these trying times, we are spending much time and effort in prayer and sacrifice for the unborn, their families, and our nation," she said. "This is what is really needed! We also ask for your prayers as we serve in this ministry."

Plattsburgh Pregnancy Center is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization and is an affiliate of Heartbeat International. Learn more at PlattsburghPregnancyCenter.Org

OCTOBER IS RESPECT LIFE MONTH: LIVE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

Top reasons to oppose assisted suicide

Courtesy of USCCB

The deadly and dangerous practice of assisted suicide is now legal in five states (Oregon, Washington, Vermont, California, and Colorado) and the District of Columbia, our nation's capital. With new momentum and lots of money, assisted suicide proponents are pursuing an aggressive nationwide campaign to advance their agenda through legislation, ballot measures, litigation, and public advertising, targeting states they see as most susceptible to their message.

Some polls indicate that the public is receptive to the general concept of assisted suicide. But the same polls show that when the public learns about the dangers of assisted suicide, especially for those who are poor, elderly, disabled, or without access to good medical care, their views shift against the practice. The following dangers are among the top reasons to oppose assisted suicide.

A DEADLY MIX WITH OUR PROFIT-DRIVEN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

- Some patients in Oregon and California have received word that their health insurance will pay for assisted suicide but will not pay for treatment that may sustain their lives.

PUTS VULNERABLE PERSONS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND COERCION

- Once lethal drugs have been prescribed, assisted

suicide laws have no requirements for assessing the patient's consent, competency, or voluntariness. Who would know if the drugs are freely taken since there is no supervision or tracking of the drugs once they leave the pharmacy and no witnesses are required at the time of death? Despite a reporting system designed to conceal rather than detect abuses, reports of undue influence have nonetheless surfaced in Oregon.

- Elder abuse is considered a major health problem in the United States, with federal estimates that one in ten elder persons are abused. Placing lethal drugs into the hands of abusers generates an additional major risk to elder persons.

- Assisted suicide laws often allow one of the two witnesses to the request for lethal drugs to be an heir to the patient's estate. Therefore, an heir or friends of the heir can encourage or pressure the patient to request lethal drugs and then be a witness to the request.

DANGEROUSLY BROAD DEFINITION OF TERMINAL ILLNESS

- Assisted suicide laws typically appear to limit eligibility to terminally ill patients who are expected to die within six months but don't distinguish between persons who will die within six months with treatment and those who will die within six months without treatment. This

means that patients with treatable diseases (like diabetes or chronic respiratory or cardiac disease) and patients with disabilities requiring ventilator support are all eligible for lethal drugs because they would die within six months without the treatment they would normally receive.

PAIN NOT THE PRIMARY ISSUE

- Untreated pain is not among the top reasons for taking lethal drugs. Per official annual state reports, in 2016, 90% of Oregon patients seeking lethal drugs said they were doing so because they were "less able to engage in activities making life enjoyable" and were "losing autonomy," and 49% cited being a "burden" on family, friends or caregivers. And in Washington, 52% cited being a "burden" as a reason, while only 35% cited a concern about pain.

NO PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION OR TREATMENT REQUIRED

- Despite medical literature showing that nearly 95% of those who commit suicide had a diagnosable psychiatric illness (usually treatable depression) in the months preceding suicide, the prescribing doctor and the doctor he or she selects to give a second opinion are both free to decide whether to refer suicidal patients for any psychological counseling. Per Oregon's official annual report, from 2013-2016 less than 4% of patients who died under its assisted suicide law had been referred for counseling to check for "impaired judgment."

- If counseling is provided to patients seeking assisted suicide, its goal isn't to treat the underlying disorder or depres-

ion; it's to determine whether the disorder or depression is "causing impaired judgment [emphasis added]." The doctors or counselor can decide that, since depression is "a completely normal response" to terminal illness, the depressed patient's judgment is not impaired.

THREATENS IMPROVEMENT OF PALLIATIVE CARE

- There is compelling evidence that legalizing assisted suicide undermines efforts to maintain and improve good care for patients nearing the end of life, including patients who never wanted assisted suicide.

FOSTERS DISCRIMINATION

- Assisted suicide creates two classes of people: those whose suicides we spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to prevent and those whose suicides we assist and treat as a positive good. We remove weapons and drugs that can cause harm to one group, while handing deadly drugs to the other, setting up yet another kind of life-threatening discrimination.

There are many more reasons why legalizing assisted suicide is a bad and dangerous idea. For further information, visit www.usccb.org/to-liveeachday.

STANDING FOR LIFE



Father Martin E. Cline, pastor of St. Bernard's in Saranac Lake, holds a pro-life sign as part of Saranac Lake's Lifechain event on Oct. 4.



**Attention
Snowbirds**
going south for the winter!

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

'He cracked open all the doors'

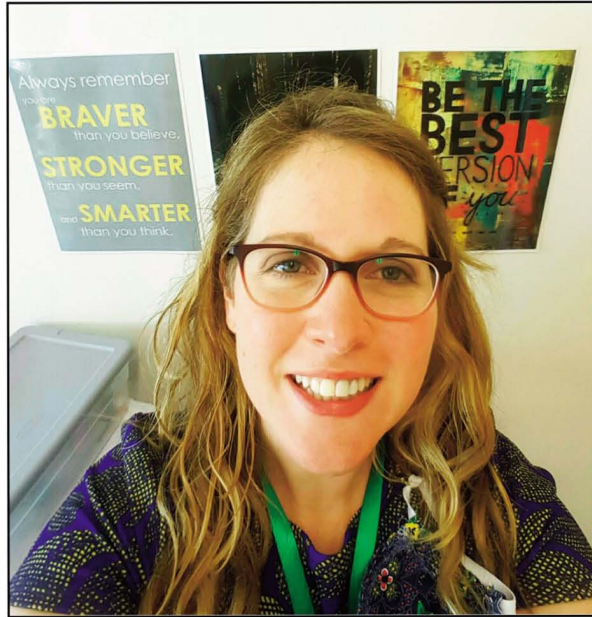
By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Staff Writer

MALONE – “Faith is important to me because my entire life rests in it,” says Megan Stark. “It’s why I am here, and where I am going. At one time it was not so important, but now I could not go a day without turning to the practices of my faith. At one point in my life, though, I forgot where I was going and what I was created for. Then what I learned in childhood became real for me once again: I am created by God to know, love, and serve him. Most of all, I began to know how much God loves me!”

This realization grew out of a decade-long struggle for Stark. Now a parishioner at St. André Bessette Parish, she was born and raised Catholic, with Mass every Sunday, the Rosary, and religious education. Later there were youth groups, retreats, community service. Then she went off to college.

“I went to Mass a few times in the beginning,” she recalls. “But then I took Jesus out of my heart because I had places to go, things to do, people to see. Then I stopped talking with God and lost my prayer life and my relationship with him. I completely lost my footing.”

“Even after taking Jesus out of my heart,” the young woman relates, “I did attend Mass sporadically when I was at home, because that was obligatory in our family. All through my twenties, I sat there, not participating. I was not ready to change those choices which kept me from God. Finding myself in a place of worship, I could not move towards God, because I felt out of



In her hometown of Fort Covington, Megan Stark works as a speech therapist for K-12 students at Salmon River Central School. Stark’s students currently range from 5 to 17 years of age.

place and not worthy to receive his love because of all the bad choices I was making. I always sat in the back because I knew I didn’t deserve to be there.”

“I was in a box,” Stark recalls, “because sin and earthly things held me, and I couldn’t make the jump towards God. At that point I was not ready or willing to change. I doubted that I could ever get that relationship back and thought that I could never talk to God again.”

Yet God’s grace was very much at work: by age 26, Stark was “going to Church consistently, though not living in a way that I could receive Jesus. But I wanted to be there. I was in a relationship and we were talking about marriage. That made me think a lot about children, and how I would want to raise them the way I had been raised. So, I went to Church more.”

Then it happened: “The

Holy Spirit told me it was time to leave that relationship. He was a good man, and ready to marry me, but it was time to go. To this day leaving was the hardest thing I have ever done. Sometimes God asks you to give up good things for even better things. But when it is not meant for you, you do have to set it down.”

So, two months shy of her 29th birthday, Stark was back at home with her parents.

“My heart was shattered, and all my plans were dashed,” she remembers. “In that moment, I was broken, angry, hurt and sure my life was going nowhere. I didn’t know if my heart would recover, but God mended it and put it back together better than before. Really my life was all coming together because God wanted to be at the heart of my life! I received the sacrament of reconciliation, which



brought mercy and forgiveness. Then, just as I was returning to the sacraments, all these people started walking into my life and all the light happened.”

For Stark, the sacraments are very much sources of life.

“Confession became, and remains, important to fix what is wrong in my heart and life, and because sin causes imbalances. Letting God forgive me, and learning to forgive myself, opens me to receive his grace and mercy. That allows me to experience his love in the Eucharist and in the quiet of his presence.”

Stark discovered this unexpected gift when she went on a silent retreat at age 30: “I thrived on being quiet all weekend! I returned home, shut off the TV and the background music, and re-discovered that sitting in the Lord’s presence is, after the sacraments, the greatest gift. He is there, as in the sacraments, loving and delighting in me. The more I sit silent in his presence, the more I hear

his voice, even at home. In the silence he can finally get through and inspire my thoughts.”

Among the things God communicated to her in the silence was that she would meet “people who would be the gateway to Me.”

Soon after, the young woman started meeting people who were invested in God. Her new friends introduced her to others of their friends – including the saints. St. Teresa of Avila was an instant hit.

“She was so feisty! I just love that because I needed to know that feisty people could be saints,” Stark said. “And St. Therese reminds me to be God’s child and let him take care of me, to set aside my agenda and let him do what he wills to do. And St. Bernadette – what a brave and beautiful young woman. Also, St. Augustine really spoke to me because of all his struggles and his fighting with God. The great thing is that God calls everyone to sainthood!”

When one of Stark’s new

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Environmental Stewardship

Do we recognize the signs of the times?

Recently, in the daily Scripture reading from Luke's Gospel (Luke 12:54-56), we hear Jesus observe that people know the signs in the natural world regarding the weather, but he chastises them for not being able to recognize the signs of the times of their own lives and how to act in light of their faith.

In our time, we may not even be in touch with the signs of the natural world except through our weather forecasters. When we are out of touch with our connectedness with the natural world that is literally the very ground of all our relationships, we may be less in touch with our intricate spiritual connectedness with our neighbors and with God.

In the business and stress of everyday concerns, it may become more difficult, yet even more crucial, that we take time just to be with the Lord.

One powerful place to be with the Lord is in the natural world around us.

When we take time to do this we often find a sense of peacefulness in simply being. It gives "our world" a whole new perspective when we discover that we are only a part of something so much bigger.

Yet as tiny as we are in the whole of the universe, God reveals to us that He has set his heart on us and chosen us (Deut. 7:7). When we spend quiet time simply being with the Lord, our focus and preoccupation with our own plans may shift more to an openness to what God's plans for us may be. (Jeremiah 29:11) "I know the plans I have for you... plans for peace not disaster reserving a future full of hope for you."

In the midst of these times of global, national and domestic unrest, let us take time to observe the changing seasons and ponder its meaning about our own lives, and remember Jesus' words to us: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me."

In other words, God's got us covered no matter what happens!

Bishop's Public Schedule

Oct. 28 – 10:30 a.m. – Diocesan Finance Council Meeting at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

Oct. 31 – 10 a.m. – Memorial Mass for Father James Spenard, OSA, former pastor, at St. James Minor Church in Carthage

4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Nov. 1 – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Nov. 3 – 11 a.m. – Catholic Charities Corporation Meeting at Bishop's Residence

Nov. 4 – 1 p.m. – Annual Catholic Charities Board of Trustees Meeting at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

Rest in Peace

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

Oct. 28 – Deacon Richard Gaebel, 2008; Msgr. George M. Phillips, 2011

Oct. 29 – Rev. James R. Scanlon, 1880; Rev. Peter F. Cody, 1888; Rev. John Canning, 1998; Deacon Robert V. Ruddy, 2013

Oct. 30 – Rev. Michael F. Burns, 1921; Rev. Thomas E. Owen, 1945; Rev. Peter N. Butler, 1973

Oct. 31 – Rev. James Rooney, 1863; Rev. Lucien Jean, M.S.C., 1964; Rev. Ivan G. Boyea, 1996

Nov. 2 – Rev. Thomas Walsh, 1888; Rev. John Henry Lyons, 1931; Msgr. James J. Ruddy, 1987

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, 31 Sixth Street, Malone, NY 12953; terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com
Phone: Day: 518-651-2267, Night: 518-569-0612; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Personnel at 315-393-2920

'Cracked open all the doors'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

friends invited her to join a group pilgrimage to France in 2015, she was elated but could not commit to it because of substantial student debt. When a federal loan-forgiveness program for teachers in low-income districts cancelled \$17,000 of her debt, Stark got the last ticket on that

joy! God made this trip happen so he could see me leap for joy!"

This joy impels Stark to share her faith with others, and to witness to all that God has done in her life. Acknowledging that it is not always easy to do this, she has discovered a non-threatening conversational approach.

"When someone shares a problem or sadness with me, I offer to pray for them," she said. "Sometimes people get offended, but often not. I am always glad to tell my God-related story, how he drew me back into his life and love, how he cracked open all the doors."

More formal opportunities to share her faith and her story have included confirmation classes and giving witness talks to teenagers, as she did during the five years she

served on the staff of Catholic Heart Work Camp.

"I appreciated the young people's energy and enthusiasm, and their burning questions about God," she said. "They asked questions about my life and sharing with them helped change me!"

"I think that people just don't understand how much God loves us," concludes Stark. "You think you can fill your empty spaces with the things of this world, but that never fulfills. Most people are doing all the things the world offers, but something essential is still missing: God himself. Your heart craves God and has to open for him so he can fill it. I know this because I have experienced it, and I know that it is all him. I am just along for the ride."

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg uses the training, Protecting God's Children for Adults. There are no live trainings scheduled. If you need to complete VIRTUS training, contact Jean Grizzuto, jgrizzuto@rcdony.org or 315-393-2920 x 1413, who will coordinate online training.

Letters to the Editor

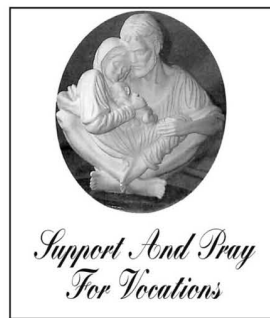
We welcome letters from readers of the North Country Catholic.

- 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

- Join the conversation!



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CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Time to obtain indulgences for souls in purgatory extended

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Plenary or full indulgences traditionally obtained during the first week of November for the souls of the faithful in purgatory can now be gained throughout the entire month of November, the Vatican said. Also, those who are ill or homebound and would not be able to physically visit a church or cemetery in the prescribed timeframe still will be able to receive a plenary indulgence when meeting certain conditions, the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience, said in a notice released Oct. 23. The tribunal also asked that priests be particularly generous throughout November in offering the sacrament of reconciliation and in administering Communion to those who are infirm. The new provisions were made after a number of bishops asked for guidance as to how the faithful could perform the works required for receiving a plenary indulgence given the ongoing pandemic and restrictions in many parts of the world limiting the number of people who can gather in one place, Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, told Vatican News Oct. 23.

HHS ensures hospital patients have access to spiritual care

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Religious Liberty praised the Department of Health and Human Services for resolving discrimination complaints over two hospitals' refusal to let patients have access to the sacraments of baptism and the anointing of the sick during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, gave us the sacraments to convey God's grace and healing," Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami said in an Oct. 21 statement. "As Pope Francis has noted, the sacraments are 'Jesus Christ's presence in us.' Without them, we are distanced from God, the source of our being and meaning. It is of paramount importance that our government, public health authorities and health care providers strive to respect the liberty of the faithful to receive the sacraments," he said. The Office for Civil Rights at HHS announced Oct. 20 the resolution of complaints involving MedStar's Southern Maryland Hospital Center, which is part of the MedStar Health System, and one involving Mary Washington Healthcare in Virginia. "COVID-19 requires us to limit or modify our physical interactions to some degree, in order to reduce risks to physical health," Archbishop Wenski said.

Poll: Majority of Catholics hold concern about climate change

CLEVELAND (CNS) – A large majority of Catholic voters believe climate change is a serious or somewhat serious concern and that governments at all levels as well as corporations and individuals must take stronger action to address it, according to results of a new poll released Oct. 22. Conducted Oct. 13 by Climate Nexus, Yale University Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, the online poll showed that 78% of nonwhite Catholics and 74% of white Catholics who participated consider climate change a serious or somewhat serious problem. At the same time, 82% of nonwhite Catholics and 77% of white Catholics said they are very worried or somewhat worried about climate change. The responses of Catholics are higher than the poll average, which found 73% of respondents overall, including those with no religious affiliation, held the same views. The same percentage of voters overall said they worry about climate change. The poll interviewed 1,884 registered voters.

Questions continue around film's use of pope's quote on civil unions

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – While there is no doubt that Pope Francis said civil laws should protect the rights of gay couples, some mystery shrouds the context in which he said it and the way it is used in a new film.

The film, "Francesco," which was released Oct. 21, presents the pope saying: "Homosexual people have a right to be in a family. They are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it. What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered."

When the documentary by Evgeny Afineevsky debuted at the Rome Film Festival and some news outlets focused on the 20-second clip referring to civil unions, a Vatican official dismissed it as old news, pointing out that the comments were from a 2019 interview with Valentina Alazraki of the Mexican television Televisa.

But the reference to civil unions does not appear in the one-hour, 17-minute interview broadcast by Televisa and available on YouTube, nor does it appear in the Vatican's Spanish or Italian transcripts of the pope's conversation with Alazraki.

And, in fact, the whole 20-second clip in "Francesco" appears to be a reedit, placing phrases the pope did say in the interview together in an order not found in the original.

In statements to the Associated Press, The Washington Post and The New York Times, Televisa confirmed that the pope's

comment about civil unions was part of the interview he gave to Alazraki, which was filmed by the Vatican television center. When Televisa was given the footage, the station said, the civil unions passage had been removed.

Televisa spokesman Ruben Acosta Montoya told The Washington Post in an email, "Someone at the Vatican gave us the part that we did broadcast, and later they gave the rest of the material to someone else," specifically, Afineevsky.

The Vatican press office did not respond to requests for clarification.

Pope Francis has made similar references in the past to the need to provide legal protections for the rights of nonmarried people living together in a stable way – rights, for example, involving inheritance, health care decisions and visitation when one is ill.

And reporters are not the only ones he has discussed it with; Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco issued a statement Oct. 21 saying the pope talked about such protections with the bishops of California when they made their "ad limina" visits in January.

In an article on the conversation Jan. 27, Catholic News Service wrote, "The pastoral care of LGBT Catholics was another topic Pope Francis spoke about," Archbishop Cordileone said. "He spoke about the pastoral care that we have to give' and the need to understand the suffering many of them have endured, including

being shunned by their families."

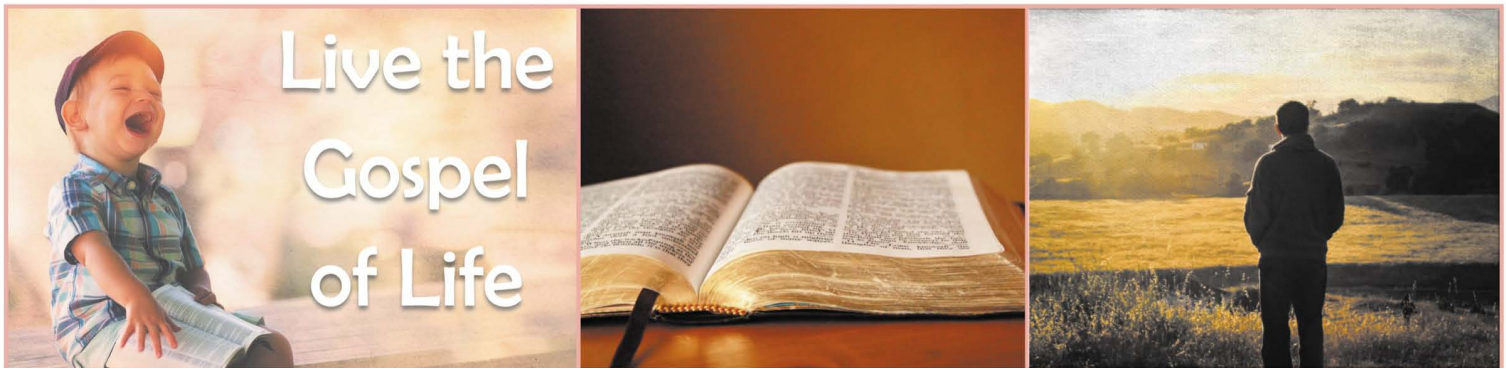
"He made important distinctions between the (sexual) orientation and the question of marriage,' for example saying it was important to ensure gay couples have access to public benefits, but insisting gay couples cannot marry, the archbishop said. 'Marriage is unique; marriage, by its nature, is complementarity between man and woman. And he spoke about the danger of the gender ideology and how it denies difference,' the diversity with which God created human beings male and female."

Pope Francis also is on the record supporting some form of civil union legal protections during his tenure as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and in interviews published in 2014 and 2017.

In every case, he has insisted that a civil union law that equated gay relationships and marriage would be unacceptable since marriage is only between a man and a woman.

Archbishop Victor Fernandez of La Plata, Argentina, who is known to be close to Pope Francis, wrote on his Facebook page Oct. 21 that when, as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis advocated for some form of civil union law, the majority of bishops disagreed fearing that many people would equate such a law with marriage.

Pope Francis never equated the two, he said. "For him, the expression 'marriage' has a precise meaning and applies only to a stable union between a man and a woman open to transmitting life."



Live the Gospel of Life

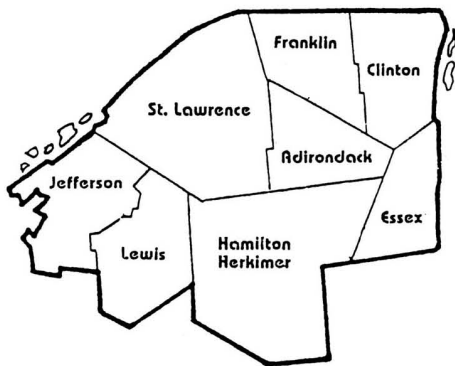
May God grant us the wisdom and courage to lovingly protect His gift of human life at every stage, in sickness and in health.

This page has been graciously supported by the following parishes, organizations & individuals:

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We invite you to visit the
DIOCESAN RESPECT LIFE OFFICE
website at: www.rcdony.org/pro-life

More information can be found at respectlife.org and usccb.org/prolife



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, 315-394-0670;
 e-mail news@northcountrycatholic.org.

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

CLINTON

HARVEST DINNER

Morrisonville – St. Alexander's Church to have take-out Turkey Harvest Dinner.

Date: Nov. 8

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Place: St. Alexander's with curbside pickup.

Cost: \$12 for all Meals

Contact: If you would like your meal delivered within 10 miles please call 518-561-5039

FRANKLIN

CABBAGE ROLLS

Brushton – St. Mary's will be selling homemade cabbage rolls.

Date: Nov. 3

Time: 6 a.m. until gone

Place: St. Mary's Parish Center, Take-out only

Cost: \$4.50

Contact: May be pre-ordered Nov. 1 to Nov. 3 by calling 518-529-6580

JEFFERSON

SAUCE AND MEATBALL SALE

Watertown – St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society will be having a drive-thru sauce and meatball sale.

Date: Oct. 29

Time: 4 p.m. until gone

Place: St. Anthony's parking lot

Cost: Quart of Sauce, \$5; Quart of Meatballs, \$5 Cash Only

ELECTION NIGHT HAM DINNER

Alexandria Bay – The Annual Election Night Ham dinner to be held, take-out

only.

Date: Nov. 3

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

Place: St. Cyril's Church

Cost: Adults, \$10; Children, \$5

Contact: Reservation please call 315-482-5227 or 315-955-5504. For Deliveries call 315-482-5227

ST. LAWRENCE

HARVEST DINNER

Gouverneur – Curb-side pick-up Harvest dinner to be held.

Date: Nov. 5

Time: 4:30 p.m. until gone

Place: St. James School

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

DIOCESAN EVENTS

VIRTUAL PRIEST DISCERNMENT SESSIONS

Zoom in to Priest Discernment. High School Junior men & older are invited to join Father Howard Venette & guests for virtual discernment sessions.

Dates: Nov. 1, 15 & 29 and Dec. 13

Time: 3 p.m.

Contact: Father Venette at hvenette@gmail.com for meeting access.

VIRTUAL FAMILY LIFE CONFERENCE

Watch the "Iron Sharpens Iron" project from the virtual Family Life Conference at <https://www.rcdony.org/vflc>

Description: see the videos from the Virtual Family Life Conference or to submit a video of your family doing something fun.

USCCB SURVEY FOR THOSE ENGAGED IN MINISTRY

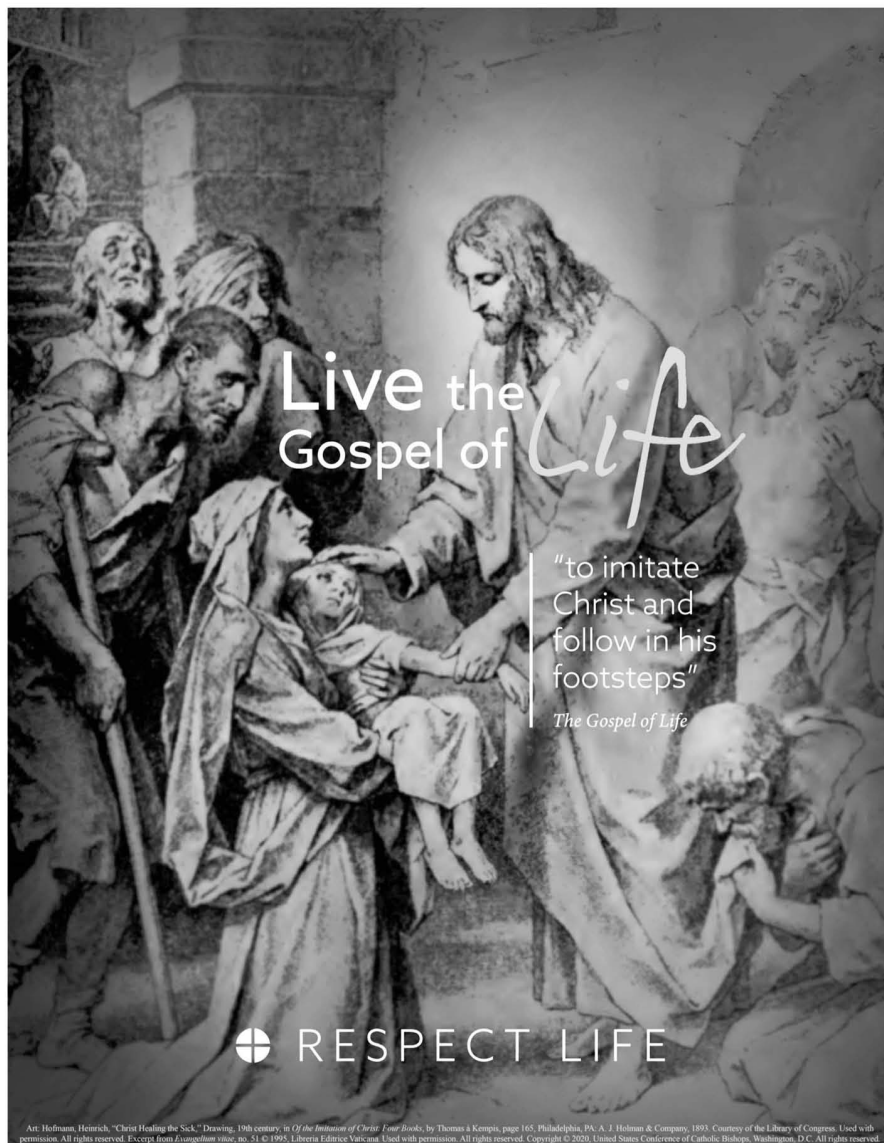
The USCCB would like to learn more about the realities facing lay ecclesial ministers across the country. To achieve that, the USCCB has created a survey that any and all lay leaders are invited to fill out: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/M6FH8BH>

The purpose of this survey is to get a

snapshot of the current landscape of lay ecclesial ministry in the Church in the U.S today; to hear how the pandemic has affected them; to understand the impact of the bishops' document on lay ecclesial ministry, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*; and to ask how the USCCB can support

and advocate for lay ecclesial ministers throughout the United States, most especially at this uncertain time.

The deadline for filling out the survey is December 15, 2020. Thank you in advance for passing this survey to any lay person engaged in ministry in the Church.



Art: Hofmann, Heinrich, "Christ Healing the Sick," Drawing, 19th century, in *Of the Imitation of Christ: Four Books*, by Thomas Kempis, page 165, Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman & Company, 1893. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Excerpt from *L'Espresso* issue, no. 51 © 1995, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Copyright © 2020, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

THE RESPECT LIFE OFFICE
DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG
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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

All Saints Day, our future feast day

Today, All Saints' Day, is – hopefully – our future feast day. It's all about the Communion of Saints, a doctrine of the Church which we profess every Sunday in the Nicene Creed. It unites us all as one, whether in the Church militant (that's us), the Church suffering (those in purgatory), or the Church triumphant (those in heaven).



Monsignor Paul E. Whitmore

In the first reading today, St. John has a vision of a vast throng before the throne of God. Their number cannot be counted. This will come at the end of time at the last judgment, when all the saints will be assembled, dressed in white robes and proclaiming eternal praise of God. This now celebrates the joy and happiness of all the saints. Now is the time

for us to make sure that we're numbered among them!

The second reading proclaims that we are all children of God, and we have been given the faith and God's rules for growing daily in God's love and obedience. This will ensure our final state, when we will be "even closer to God than we can imagine."

In today's Gospel, we have the wonderful scene of Jesus on a mountain (the position for speaking with authority). He gives eight beatitudes, each prefaced with the phrase "Blessed are those who..." Jesus proclaims that those who observe these will be truly happy. We are all us called to model our lives on Christ's own life. In other words, we

are called to live the Gospel. And here, Jesus presents the way to do it. We know that they turn the world's values upside down. We cannot pursue pleasure, power, or pride if we would follow Jesus. His way is the way of love of God and love of neighbor.

What a great feast this is! It's a feast that inspires and encourages us to pursue this path of wisdom and holiness with confidence. One of the great philosophers said, "The only sadness in life is not to be a saint." Well, this Sunday, here we go!

November 1

Feast of All Saints

READINGS
Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12a

Thank you!



And blessings


Father Kevin, Father Eduardo, Father Jojo,



Msr. Aubin & Father Cote


From your family of faith

At Plattsburgh Catholic Parishes





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



NOVEMBER
2020
Holy Souls

DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG, NY		NOVEMBER 2020					
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
1 BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY	2 REV. JOHN R. YONKOVIG V.F.	3 REV. PHILIP T. ALLEN	4 REV. ANDREW J. AMYOT	5 REV. MEDENEL ANGRAND	6 REV. DANIEL ASUE	7 MSGR. JOSEPH G. AUBIN	
8 OUR PASTOR	9 REV. PIERRE AUBIN, MSC.	10 MSGR. ROBERT H. AUCCOIN	11 REV. DEEPAK BARU, HGN	12 REV. SCOTT A. BELINA	13 REV. PETER M. BERG	14 REV. CORNELLE BOYVE, MSC.	
15 POPE FRANCIS	16 BENEDICT XVI POPE EMERITUS	17 REV. THOMAS G. CANAAN	18 REV. CHRISTOPHER C. CARRARA	19 REV. GERALD A. CERANK	20 REV. JOJO CHACKO, HGN	21 REV. DANIEL L. CHAPIN	
22 RETIRED PRIESTS	23 REV. MARTIN E. CLINE	24 REV. DOUGLAS G. COMSTOCK	25 REV. NORMAND C. COTE	26 REV. THEODORE A. CROSBY	27 REV. PEDRO EDGARDO DE LA ROSA	28 REV. DANIEL A. DECKER	
29 DECEASED PRIESTS	30 REV. ROBERT L. DECKER						

For more copies contact:
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Ogdensburg, NY 13669

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.mvocation.net

OBITUARIES

Belleville – Robert James LaLone, 82; Funeral Services Oct. 24, 2020 at Carpenter-Stoodley Funeral Home; burial in St. Cecilia's Cemetery, Adams.

Carthage – George M. Kamide, 88; Private Services to be held; burial in St. James Cemetery.

Clayton – Almyra May (Dwyer) Farnsworth, 95; Graveside Services Oct. 29, 2020 at Old St. Mary's Cemetery.

Colton – Mary (Collins) Fayette, 86; Mass of Christian Burial to be held in the spring at St. Patrick's Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

Constable – Ida Mae (Robinson) Fleury, 91; Services to be held in the summer of 2021.

Croghan – Robert D. "Dodge" Purcell, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 21, 2020 at St. Stephen's Church; burial in Gospel Hall Cemetery, Belfort.

Lake Placid – Dorothy (Sears) Modliszewski, 95; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 24, 2020 at St. Agnes Church; burial in Woodgate Cemetery.

Lake Placid – Kathlyn McCarthy Sullivan; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 24, 2020 at St. Agnes Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery, Potsdam.

Louisville – Gloria V. Hollander, 85; Funeral Services to be held at a later date.

Malone – Gerald "Gerry" Brisebois, 92; Private Services to be held.

Ogdensburg – Mary Ellen (Chase) Sansoucy, 69; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 23, 2020 at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Elizabeth Bissonette, 62; Mass of Christian Burial to be held at a later date at Our Lady of Victory Church.

Saranac Lake – Margaret M. LaPoint, 97; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 24, 2020 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery

Saranac Lake – Patrick W. O'Dell, 64; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 22, 2020 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in Holy Name Cemetery, AuSable Forks.

St. Regis Falls – Deborah J. (Southard) Prevost, 67; Funeral Services Oct. 23, 2020 at the Anderson Funeral Home; burial in St. Ann's Cemetery.

Watertown – Walter L. Grey, Jr., 73; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 19, 2020 at Holy Family Church; burial in Brookside Cemetery.

Watertown – Antonette M. (DeFrank) Navarra, 96; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 23, 2020 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

CALLED TO SERVE

Reflecting on the stole

Clergy and some lay ministers wear vestments during liturgies. Altar servers wear an alb and cincture or cassock and surplice. Deacons wear an alb, cincture, stole and dalmatic (the latter is optional).

The celebrant priest wears an amice (optional), alb, cincture, stole and chasuble.

Your initial reaction might be, "Thanks. So what?"

The stole is the vestment I want to write about today. The Vatican's Office of Liturgical Celebrations writes, *"The stole is the distinctive element of the raiment of the ordained minister and it is always worn in the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals. It is a strip of material that is embroidered, according to the norm, whose color varies with respect to the liturgical season or feast day."*

All the ordained – bishop, priest, and deacon

– wear a stole. A man is first vested with a stole at his ordination as a deacon. A bishop or other priest, once ordained to that order, wears the stole around his neck with the ends hanging down in front, while the deacon places it over his left shoulder and ties it cross-wise at his right side, similar to a sash. That is one of the ways you can distinguish between a priest and a deacon.



Deacon Kevin Mastellon

Which reminds me of the time I was in West Virginia for an RCIA workshop. The priest who was celebrating Mass was also one of the presenters. After the first day, I mentioned to him that I am a deacon.

The next morning, I was to assist Monsignor at Mass. Since I had not come prepared with vestments, I made do with what was on hand. There was no deacon stole.

For several minutes be-

fore Mass, Monsignor was sitting on the floor pinning a priest's stole at my hip to replicate a deacon stole. We were both laughing. It was a real Kodak moment but fortunately there was no camera in sight. The incident is memorable to me for the humor of the moment, the incongruity of the scene and because that priest went the extra mile to make sure I assisted him vested in the symbol of my order.

The sash-like stole I wear as a deacon clearly marks me, and my brothers, as deacons. The stole worn around his neck marks that minister a priest. We both remember the same prayer as we don our stole, "Lord, restore the stole of immortality, which I lost through the collusion of our first parents, and, unworthy as I am to approach Thy sacred mysteries, may I yet gain eternal joy."

Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown. He is the Director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

Thank you from the Mission Office

For many decades, the Church has recognized the work of its missions and petitioned on their behalf on World Mission Sunday. The Mission Office once again thanks God for His mercy on all missionaries and the people they serve around the world. From the earliest days of the Church, those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God and our Redeemer have gone to the ends of the earth to spread the Good News. St. Paul reassured these believers, telling them, "We give thanks to God always for all of you,



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

remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ.... For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessaloni-

ans 1:2-3, 5). Just as the Holy Spirit guided the efforts of Paul and the other faithful disciples who set out to reveal the love and sacrifice of Christ, the Spirit does the same two thousand years later. Jesus came to claim us for Himself with life everlasting.

And He has not yet finished His work of evangelization.

Thank you for putting your faith and action together by responding generously to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith on World Mission Sunday. Your generosity will serve children at risk and reach the many priests, religious and lay ministers and leaders around the world who offer practical, emotional and spiritual care to communities, children and families in desperate need.

I believe you will be

blessed abundantly for responding to the plea of Pope Francis, "Embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important."

Thank you for your generous gifts on this World Mission Sunday. God Bless you and your families!

Please remember "The Society for the Propagation of the Faith" when writing or changing your Will.

<http://www.rcdony.org/m-ission-office>

'Split' Catholic voters try to find dialogue

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Both are Catholic, but their views couldn't have been more different.

One woman said she was voting for a particular candidate because of her beliefs against abortion. The other said she was voting for his opponent because the incumbent had harmed life for many in a variety of ways and it went against her religious beliefs.

The views expressed by the two women showed the divide among Catholics about whom to vote for when the nation casts ballots in the Nov. 3 presidential election.

"We see, basically, Catholics are split like Solomon's baby between the two parties," said Emma Green, a reporter for The Atlantic magazine and one of several panelists participating in an Oct. 20 dialogue on "Faithful Citizenship: Moral and Political Choices for Catholics in the 2020 Election."

The livestreamed panel, sponsored by the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University in Washington, was seeking to foster dialogue and understanding days before the culmination of one of the country's most rancorous elections anyone alive remembers.

"It's interesting how all of this could exist in one Catholic Church under a roof of people who share a faith, certain principles and teachings," said Green, who

writes about religion.

But it also showed how politics has seeped into the life of the church, as it has into so many other institutions, and how people have become shaped more by a political identity than a religious one, Green said.

"Catholics are more Republican and Democrats than they are Catholics," she added.

With name-calling, bullying and denunciations on social media, including by some religious officials, the initiative was aimed at letting Catholics with different points of view have their say in a conversation unusual for its absence of rancor.

"We think that no one should be written out of our Catholic family for how they form and follow their conscience about how to cast their ballot," said Kim Daniels, the initiative's associate director and panel moderator.

The dialogue drew much from the document that inspired the panel's name: "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which aims to educate U.S. church members about political responsibility.

John Carr, the initiative's executive director and a former USCCB staffer who participated in drafting the U.S. bishops' first document on Catholics and voting in the 1970s, said the most "countercultural" aspect of "Faithful Citizen-

ship" is its central message: that politics is good and Catholics should take part, and that "if we focus on people, nothing else matters."

Carr said it outlines what the church should be: "political but not partisan, principled but not ideological, civil but not silent, engaged but not used."

Against that backdrop, the program offered Karina De Avila and Mary FioRito, both of Illinois, an opportunity to present their reasons for backing, respectively, former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee, and the Republican incumbent, President Donald Trump.

"As a Catholic, I have accepted the invitation of the bishops of the United States and educated myself about what's at stake," said panelist De Avila. "It's naive and almost irresponsible to think that there's only one issue that defines an election."

She said she considered the common good and also was affected by her experience working with immigrant communities, whose members have found themselves living in fear and adversely affected by the Trump administration's policies. She said she couldn't reconcile the contradictions of the Trump administration and how they went against her religious views.

"In conscience, I cannot vote for a man who is the opposite of everything that

is humane and Christian," she said. "He has failed the Catholic world by promoting racism implicitly and explicitly. In my opinion, it's horrendous. He has lied by using the pro-life (stance), arguing he's against abortion, yet the administration restored the federal death penalty ... and now he wants to take away basic health care for millions of people including the most young and poor.

"He has failed the American nation and has failed the Catholic world," she continued, "by lying, distorting reality, disregarding the advice of scientists and advisers and making a mockery of the presidency of the United States."

Neither Biden nor his party is perfect "yet the decision is clear for me," she said.

FioRito said she was voting for Trump, concerned with what a possible Biden administration would mean for issues such as the legal protections for the unborn and for religious communities such as the Little Sisters of the Poor and their fight against providing birth control for employees, which violates their religious beliefs, and the Hyde Amendment, which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortion except to save the life of the woman or in case of rape or incest.

Of not voting for Biden and running mate Kamala Harris, FioRito said, "They are not neutral on abortion." Biden, a Catholic, and Harris both support legalized abortion.

And there was something about Trump, she said, that correctly tapped into a part of the population of the United States that "felt very much marginalized and had been called stupid and deplorable."

"I think he tapped into some real anger and hurt from American citizens," she said, "who had just been going out there, blue-collar people, out there trying to do their best, and didn't particularly want government to be involved in their lives."

And that hurt and resentment was "not coming from vengeful hatred" but from a place of "woundedness," she said, and many responded and still support Trump because of it.

If something characterizes this election, said Green, it's voting for a candidate out of fear of what his opponent or his party might do.

Among conservatives, there's a general fear that if Democrats win back political power, not just in the executive branch, but in the legislative branch, conservative Christian religious views will be pushed out of the public square. But certain religious communities and people of color, including Latinos and Muslims, fear what they'll deal with next given "Trump's discriminatory language" and policies aimed at them, Green said.

"Depending on where you're sitting, there's a lot of fear that one or the other side (political party), is going to push one side out of the public square and there's no space for pluralistic coexistence in public life," Green said.



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