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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 75, Number 22

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

OCTOBER 7, 2020

Updates to coronavirus protocols

On Friday, Oct. 2, Bishop Terry R. LaValley announced that after prayerful consideration and extensive review of current data, he is revising some of the protocols regulating how we worship.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

Help us bring back 'Sharing Our Stories'

The NCC has exhausted the list of nominated individuals to be featured in the Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Faith series. To suggest an individual to be featured in this series, which features how lay Catholics are living out their faith, please call the North Country Catholic at 315-393-2920 or email dfargo@rcdony.org.

ST. JOSEPH FOR THEIR HOMES



Seton Catholic second grade students colored pictures of St. Joseph to display in their homes. This was one activity corresponding with the consecration of the diocese to St. Joseph. Shown with their pictures are (front row) Danica Trombley, Brody Colburn, Aaron Oomen, Piper Kagan-Leary, (second row) Liana Hanna, Nathan Hankins, Caroline Mast and Cora Akey.

SISTERS CELEBRATE JUBILEES

This week, the *North Country Catholic* is honoring religious sisters who are celebrating jubilees — milestone anniversaries of their time in religious life.

This year, Sister Carolyn Madden, a Sister of Mercy, celebrates 75 years; Sister Mary William Argy, a Sister of St. Joseph, celebrates 70 years; Sister Anne Hogan and Sister Judith Baumert, both Sisters of St. Joseph, and Sister Catherine Mary Cummings, a Sister of Mercy, celebrate 65 years; and Sister Norma Bryant and Sister Mary Bethany Fitzgerald, both Sisters of St. Joseph, along with Sister Janet Peters, a Sister of Mercy, celebrate 60 years.

This edition of the *NCC* features biographies of the sisters.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

Pope releases apostolic letter on Sacred Scripture

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In an apostolic letter dedicated to Sacred Scripture, Pope Francis said that even today, Christians can learn new things from the countless translations of the Bible that exist.

The variety of translations of the Bible in the world today "teaches us that the values and positive forms of every culture represent an enrichment for the whole church," the pope said in his apostolic letter, "Scripturae Sacrae

affectus" ("Devotion to Sacred Scripture").

"The different ways by which the word of God is proclaimed, understood and experienced in each new translation enrich Scripture itself since, according to the well-known expression of Gregory the Great, Scripture grows with the reader, taking on new accents and new resonance throughout the centuries," he wrote in the letter released by the Vatican Sept. 30.

Earlier in the day, before concluding his weekly general audience, the pope told pilgrims he had signed the document to coincide with the 16th centenary of St. Jerome's death.

"May the example of this great doctor and father of the church, who placed the Bible at the center of his life, awaken in us a renewed love for the Sacred Scripture and the desire to live in a personal dialogue with the word of God," he

said.

The letter itself said that marking the 16th centenary of St. Jerome's death is "a summons to love what Jerome loved, to rediscover his writings and to let ourselves be touched by his robust spirituality, which can be described in essence as a restless and impassioned desire for a greater knowledge of the God who chose to reveal himself."

Catholics today, he said, must heed "the advice that

Jerome unceasingly gave to his contemporaries: 'Read the divine Scriptures constantly; never let the sacred volume fall from your hand.'"

In his apostolic letter, the pope delved into the history of St. Jerome's life and his love of Scripture. His "monumental work" of translating the Old Testament from Hebrew, as well as his commentary on the Psalms and St. Paul's letters, are an example for Catholics today, he said.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

I thought I'd never tell this story

I was convinced I'd never tell this story, because I think it makes me sound like I might be a bit crazy. I'm going to take the risk, and tell it anyway.

While I've said countless times that I believe I'm exactly where God wants me to be, I wasn't always so sure. When I was first offered the job, I didn't accept it immediately. I told diocesan administration I needed a few days to think about it, talk to my husband about it and pray about it.

It was a big decision. It involved adding almost 100 miles to my daily commute. It involved working in ministry, something I had never done before. It involved leav-

ing behind a stable job with a major local employer for something unknown. And there were other factors to consider. I wasn't sure if it

**Darcy L.
Fargo**

was the right decision for me and my family. I talked to a few trusted friends about the decision. Though they were all separate conversations, and these friends didn't know each other, each friend told me some version of, "take it to Jesus."

I took their advice literally, and I went to adoration to pray about the it. At that point, I was frustrated with the uncertainty. I knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, and with a tone that exuded irritation, I silently said to Jesus, "Ok! I'm

here! What do you want from me?"

As clear as any conversation I've had across the dining room table, I heard, "now go."

It's the only time I've ever clearly heard the Lord speaking to me. It was a gift. I felt like I'd better honor that gift by saying "yes." I haven't regretted it for a moment.

That "yes" changed my life in more ways than I could possibly recount in such a limited space, but I can at least say it's helped me grow personally, professionally and spiritually.

I'm not saying this job hasn't included hardships and challenges. It certainly has. I'm not joking when I say, "I'm running out of colleagues who haven't seen me cry." But the good outweighs the bad,

and the joy outweighs the struggles.

So, why am I telling this story now?

The religious sisters who are celebrating jubilees gave a huge "yes" to our Lord. They said "yes" with their lives and ministries. As I read their biographies, I learned about the education, growth and joy that resulted from each of those sisters saying "yes."

I'm sure these sisters encountered hardships and sorrows. We all do. But based on what I read of their biographies, I get the impression that they don't regret saying "yes," and they feel blessed to live in the service of our Lord and ministering to His flock.

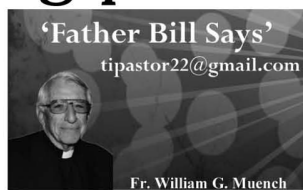
A "yes" to Jesus really does change everything. Even if it seems crazy.

Learning patience, learning love

Today, the first thing I thought of was to write a quick about the colors of the season of fall. This would be perfect for this time, wouldn't you say? You and I live here in the North Country, so we know all about fall colors, don't we? When I think of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, I think of the Adirondacks, the Champlain Valley, the area near the St. Lawrence River and such at this season of the year, I think of fall colors.

With fall colors, I think of standing on the lawn in front of the Adirondack Medical Center in Saranac Lake looking out over Lake Colby. Such a gorgeous sight! All the fall colors – the beauty of God's creation.

This year the fall colors may help as we go through the pandemic. Today, however, I wanted to share with you a further need – a challenge that will make a difference in our lives despite these terrible times, a challenge that will make a differ-



ence. Any ideas?

My idea: I think it may be about patience – a lot of patience. I know that patience is rather difficult for many of you, but I think that patience will be the most important help and solution for our hopes and dreams. There are too many tensions these days, tensions that are rather distressful. We need patience. We are bombarded with questions: Am I healthy? Do I have symptoms? Are those other people affected? Did I remember my mask? Am I too close to those others?

Today, I am urging patience. I believe we can properly get through each day when we humbly live with patience and without fear. Each and every day, our Lord,

Jesus, gives us the opportunities and challenges – our way of living with faith as followers of Jesus when we accept life with patience.

These opportunities are not meant to be just another tension, another pain to add to all the others. Rather, we realize that the Lord gives us these challenges in love, so that we will become a more loving people. I believe this demands a strong patience and a new approach to life. That patience will bring – and should bring – true happiness. We will discover that, despite the COVID, how wonderful our life is. We are a special people. We are loved.

Discovering this helps us to become patient people. I believe we discover true patience when we realize that we are a loved people. We are a loved people, so we must live as loved people. Patiently, we must realize that our efforts will bring love to others. In this way, we help them to see how wonderful

their lives truly are. We must never forget that we are a loved people. We must help others to realize they are a loved people.

God love us. We know that. God created us in his image. God created this world for you and for me. Jesus came to transform our world by teaching us how greatly God loves us. Jesus came to transform us, so that we realize that every opportunity, used well, will make this world of ours a better place. We will bring happiness and peace to others.

Do you remember the last time someone said, "I love you" and really meant it? Changes the day doesn't it. It makes us a different person, and I believe will make each of us a more patient, loving person.

I must share with you a new, nice expression. I just came upon it. When we live with patience and realize how much God loves us, we will be "deliriously happy."

FOLLOW ME

Living the Gospel of Life

October, **Respect Life Month**, is an opportune time to assess how well we are living the Gospel of Life and giving witness to our faith, countering the many ways in which the dignity of human life is under attack today. The most egregious offense is the continuing tragedy of the aborting of innocent human life in the womb. The Church will never cease to decry the tragic story of the millions of aborted babies. The unconscionable “harvesting” and marketing of the body parts of aborted babies (“post abortion material”), reveals the extent of evil in abortions. Planned Parenthood and all those who turn a deaf ear to the silent scream of the unborn and are complicit in the abortion industry must be included in our prayers and challenged with the Gospel of Life.

A related example of the total disregard for the dignity of human life is so-called “mercy” killing or euthanasia (assisted suicide). Clearly, the culture of death is also fed through the prejudice and discrimination of racism. It is also evidenced in those hardened hearts that fail to respond to the pitiful plight of the forsaken refugee and migrant. The profiteers of pornography and human trafficking contribute to a lucrative industry that exploits and victimizes hundreds of thousands of individuals. Tragically, we know, too, that leaders of the Church have contributed to the culture of death. We ask forgiveness

from and seek healing for those who have suffered sexual abuse.

Even as the mentality of the culture of death deadens society’s sensitivity to the dignity of every human life, we believe and celebrate that Christ is our hope in every season of life. As Pope Francis insists, our defense of human life and dignity must always be “clear, firm, and compassionate and extend to every person at every stage of development” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 101). We don’t presume to determine who is worthy of dignity and respect and who is not.

As the Church observes **Respect Life Month**, we reflect on our role in building up the Gospel of Life. Many of our parishes sponsor efforts to feed and clothe those in need, especially evident during this pandemic. Elizabeth Ministry and the Gabriel Project respond to pregnant and new moms in need. Project Rachel offers alternatives to abortion. Efforts such as these reflect our attentiveness to those who don’t have the family or community of loving support that we might take for granted, be it financial, emotional or educational. On Mother’s Day, we invited our parishes to participate in

Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service, a nation-wide effort to increase the Church’s outreach and support to pregnant women facing difficult or unexpected pregnancies.

As you know, Election Day draws near. Right now, forces beyond our control have determined the candidates. Loyalty to Jesus should never play second fiddle to a political party or other considerations. We have a moral obligation to learn about the candidates and their support of the culture of life. Clearly, all human rights are important, however, none is more important than the direct attack on innocent human life. The way we treat the most vulnerable among us reflects the civility our society.


At our last national meeting, the U.S. Bishops reaffirmed that “The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed.” We do not dismiss, ignore, or minimize other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty. However, the Church will never tire of protecting the most fundamental of all human rights – the very right to live.



Bishop
Terry R.
LaValley

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October is Respect Life Month

We are inviting you to consider
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to appear in our October 28th issue of the

The Diocese of Ogdensburg

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

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COVID-19 update: Revisions to protocols

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are all keenly aware of the havoc and high anxiety caused by the COVID-19 emergency. We have seen suffering and isolation on a scale that we never imagined. We have all been adversely affected by the virus and by the measures implemented to limit its spread. I am writing to you to review and to give you an update on our efforts to continue our sacred mission during the pandemic.

In March, it was necessary to dispense the obligation of Sunday Mass and to discontinue public worship. Our pastors and parish staff members found, and continue to provide, creative ways to maintain contact with parishioners and to make Mass available on television or the Internet. While these efforts to touch the lives of the faithful are of great value, they are not the same as attending Sunday Mass. No broadcast is comparable to personal participation or can replace it. If we are not careful, these broadcasts risk distancing us from a personal and intimate encounter with God who has made Himself present to us in a real, not virtual, way.

It was with great joy and relief that I was able to authorize the resumption of public worship in late May. Working with local public health officials and med-

Every Catholic Christian is obliged to keep the Lord's Day holy and to attend Sunday Mass. That being said, the Church has always recognized circumstances in which the faithful may be excused from Mass attendance even without a dispensation from the Bishop.

— Bishop Terry R. LaValley

ical professionals, we were able to safely allow in-person celebration of Mass, while implementing protocols to limit the spread of the virus and keep everyone safe. I thank all of you for your continuing cooperation in following those protocols.

Like you, I have been monitoring the data and guidance that is available, hoping for a relaxation of restrictions that will allow for increased access to the sacraments for all the faithful. Thus far, the data suggests that a widespread relaxation of protocols and a full return to normalcy are not yet possible. The most recent guidance from the Thomistic Institute and the Department of Health indicates that we must continue the safe physical distancing practices that limit the number of persons who may attend Mass, as well as hand sanitizing, disinfecting after liturgies, and the wearing of facial protection. I therefore encourage all our clergy, consecrated religious, and parishioners to continue to follow diligently the protocols set forth in my May 23, 2020 decree for Partial Opening of Churches and Public Worship coupled with the revisions I list below. Our efforts to mitigate the virus and protect ourselves are prudent. The possibility of a national and local resurgence requires that we remain vigilant.

Nonetheless, there is also much reason for hope! Data indicate that the mor-

tality rate of the virus is much lower than was once feared, and that the most severe effects of the virus have been experienced by a low percentage of those who were infected. Accordingly, I have been prayerfully considering ways to provide greater access to the sacraments and other spiritual, educational, pastoral, and liturgical celebrations in our parishes, while still safeguarding that portion of the population which is most vulnerable. I am particularly aware of the need for greater participation in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The partial re-opening permitted by the civic authorities has already allowed many people to return to the dignity of work and resume, to some extent, their social and communal obligations. Eucharistic celebrations are essential for our happiness, health, and, most importantly, for our sanctification. Our faith tells us that the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day with the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life (CCC, #2179).

Every Catholic Christian is obliged to keep the Lord's Day holy and to attend Sunday Mass. That being said, the Church has always recognized circumstances in which the faithful may be excused from Mass attendance even without a dispensation from the Bishop. Clear examples here would be those who currently suffer from an underlying health condition; those who are at

increased risk for severe illness (i.e. the elderly); and those responsible for their care. If you are uneasy about returning to Mass for reasons of public health, I encourage you to make your decision after much prayer and study. If safe distancing in your parish is problematic, perhaps attending Mass at a different time than you usually do or attending Mass at a nearby parish might work better.

Those who do not attend Mass for the reasons stated above should continue to mark the Lord's Day by substituting another pious exercise in its place. This might include watching Mass on television or on the Internet, praying the rosary, Eucharistic adoration, private prayer at church, praying novena prayers or other devotional prayers, or reading Scripture. A person may also consider attending daily Mass, where the number of attendees is less than on Sunday.

As a diocese, we will continue to adhere diligently to physical distancing, hygiene practices, wearing facial protection, and sanitizing our worship sites. I ask for your continued vigilance, patience and cooperation. The following revisions are offered to our current protocols for the celebration of Mass:

1. For those whose conditions during this crisis dictate absence from Mass, the pious exercises offered earlier (or similar ones) should be practiced.

2. Government limitations on the size of Mass congregations (currently 50% of church building occupancy while accounting for physical distancing) and for public gatherings for other activities (currently 50 persons) will continue to be observed.

3. Protocols for hand sanitizing, cleaning churches, and wearing facial protection will continue to be observed.

4. Parishes that do not do so already should consider preparing single-use worship aids with music, readings and prayers to facilitate participation at Mass.

5. I encourage all parishes to move to the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass, rather than at the end.

6. I encourage all parishes to the restoration of simple entrance and recessional processions, if they are not currently employed.

7. Ushers may use long handled baskets to take up the offertory collection, while still observing guidelines for facial protection and physical distancing, as much as possible.

8. All other protocols remain in effect.

We will continue to monitor the data and guideline updates provided by the government. We will make changes to our protocols as we are able. I am so grateful to all our parishioners who are assisting their parishes in their efforts to provide a safe worship space.

Please know of my prayers for you and your families. Let us continue to pray for the powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph for an end to this virus and for the health and safety of one another.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Terry R. LaValley

**Most Reverend
Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg**

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CHEVROLET

Eight religious sisters celebrate jubilees

This week, the *North Country Catholic* is honoring religious sisters who are celebrating jubilees – milestone anniversaries of their time in religious life.

This year, Sister Carolyn Madden, a Sister of Mercy, celebrates 75 years; Sister Mary William Argy, a Sister of St. Joseph, celebrates 70 years; Sister Anne Hogan and Sister Judith Baumert, both Sisters of St. Joseph, and Sister Catherine Mary Cummings, a Sister of Mercy, celebrate 65 years; and Sister Norma Bryant and Sister Mary Bethany Fitzgerald, both Sisters of St. Joseph, along with Sister Janet Peters, a Sister of Mercy, celebrate 60 years.

The following are brief biographies of each of the celebrating sisters.

The *North Country Catholic* congratulates them for these milestones and thanks them for their “yes” in response to God’s call.

Sister Carolyn Madden, RSM 75th Jubilee

Sister Carolyn Madden, a Sister of Mercy, was born in Saranac lake, the daughter of Frances and Lillian (Colburn) Madden. She has one surviving sister, Eileen, and deceased sisters, Helen and Betty, and a brother, Thomas.

She attended elementary school at St. Bernard’s School in Saranac lake with the Sisters of Mercy and attended Saranac Lake High School.

She entered the Sisters of Mercy on August 6, 1945 in Tarrytown.

After her novitiate formation, Sister Carolyn received her bachelor’s degree at Fordham University and master’s degree at State University, Plattsburgh, with further education in Public Relations, Drug Education, and



Sister Carolyn Madden, RSM

Administration and Supervision in Education.

Sister Carolyn taught in the following schools in the Diocese of Ogdensburg: St. John’s Academy, Plattsburgh; St. Patrick’s, Rouses Point, St. Bernard’s in Saranac lake; and St. Agnes, lake Placid. In the Archdiocese of New York, she taught at Cmdr. J.J. Shea in Spanish Harlem, St. Margaret Mary in the Bronx, St. Cecilia’s, Spanish Harlem, and at Transfiguration School in Tarrytown.

She also served as principal in Cmdr. Shea in Harlem, as well as at St. John’s, Plattsburgh, Transfiguration in Tarrytown, and at St. Agnes School in lake Placid.

In 1977, Sister Carolyn became the director of Arts in Education in the North Country at the CMDA, Lake Placid, and later at North Country Community College in Saranac lake.

Presently, Sister Carolyn volunteers at Elderwood at Uhlein, Lake Placid, and High Peaks Hospice in Saranac Lake, finding all very rewarding.

She also enjoys gardening, cross-country, skiing, music and being outdoors, especially in the Adirondacks.

“The years have gone by very quickly, and I am



Sister Mary William Argy, SSJ

most grateful for the many graces I have received, which include my vocation, the support of my family, my community, the Sisters of Mercy, and all of the people to whom I have had the privilege of ministering,” Sister Carolyn said. “I pray that the lord will continue to allow me to serve Him and His people for many more years. I rejoice, celebrate and give thanks to God for this Jubilee year.”

Sister Mary William Argy, SSJ 70th Jubilee

Sister Mary William was born in 1929, the daughter of William and Mary Brady Argy. She was the youngest of five children, Richard, Msgr. William Argy, Mary Agnes Hogan, and Sister Margaret, OSU.

In her early life, her family lived in Brownville, NY, later moving to Lyons Falls and then to Harrisville, where she graduated from High School in 1947.

She completed two years of undergraduate studies at Nazareth College, Rochester.

Sister Mary William entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 8, 1949, and received the habit on April 16, 1950, making final profession on August 28, 1955, with Bishop Walter Kellenberg



Sister Anne Hogan, SSJ

officiating.

Sister Mary William received a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Villanova University, and a masters’ degree in Elementary Education from the State University of New York in Potsdam. She also received permanent State Certification in Elementary Education Administration and Supervision from SUNY Plattsburgh. Sister Mary William completed post graduate studies and workshops for professional, theological and spiritual updating at Notre Dame, St. Lawrence University, one on-year at Galilee Institute for Spirituality in Arnprior, Canada.

Sister taught at the elementary level at Sacred Heart and Holy Family Schools in Watertown; St. Mary’s in Massena; St. James in Gouverneur, where she served as teaching principal and superior; Holy Name School in AuSable Forks; and Sacred Heart School in Watertown where she was supervising principal. She was administrative assistant to the diocesan superintendent of Education for five years.

Sister was a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph General Council, Mater Dei College Board of Trustees,

assistant director of Junior Professed Sisters. The last 23 years of service in the diocese, Sister Mary William served as pastoral assistant at St. Peter’s Parish in Lowville, and at St. Patrick’s in Watertown.

In 2008, Sister Mary William retired to the Motherhouse in Watertown, where she is helping to prepare lay men and women candidates for the Sisters of St. Joseph Associates’ Program. She has been assistant to the house superior, catalogues library books on the computer, drives sisters to appointments, keeps up her hobby of sewing and various kinds of needle work.

Sister Mary William finds it a wonderful blessing to have more time for prayer and spiritual reading.

Sister Anne Hogan, SSJ 65th Jubilee

Sister Anne Hogan was born on August 30, 1933 in Chateaugay, the daughter of Robert Hogan and Anna Tacy Hogan.

She is a graduate of St. Joseph’s Academy, Malone.

Early on, Sister Anne attended the College of St. Rose in Albany for courses in Social Service from 1952-54. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 8, 1954. Sister received the habit on April 17, 1955 and made Final Profession on August 28, 1960. She received her bachelor’s degree from the New York State University of Potsdam, and a master’s degree in Social Work from Boston College. She also did post-graduate work in Social Services at the University of Duna, India, Chulalong-Kam, Thailand and the University of Wisconsin. Sister Anne received her certifi-

Sisters celebrate jubilees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

cate of Theology, from Providence College in Rhode Island and took music courses from Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam.

Sister Anne taught in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, including St. Joseph's, Dannemora, St. James, Gouverneur, and St. Mary's, Fort Covington. She taught the Science of Social Work at Mater Dei College, Ogdensburg, as well as courses at the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation. Sister also taught Social Justice courses for the diocesan Formation for Ministry Program.

Sister Anne was involved in parish ministry at St. Joseph's Parish in Massena and did social work as a pastoral administrator in the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska, for seven years. More recently, she worked in the three parishes of the Catholic Community of Cape Vincent, Rosiere and Chaumont. She became actively involved in the interfaith community of Chaumont.

Sister Anne retired to the Motherhouse in 2015.

Sister Anne made the statement that when she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph, she entered for a grand adventure. That she did, as she traveled worldwide with faith, joy and energy doing social work in India with Mother Teresa's sisters.

She loves music and plays the piano well, entertaining the sisters and the residents at Samaritan Keep Home. She organized the Parkinson's Support Group and loved to visit them after her retirement. She was named Woman of the year by the Chamber of Commerce of



Sister Judith Baumert, SSI

Chaumont.

Her favorite hobbies are music, travel and care of cats.

Sister Judith Baumert, SSI 65th Jubilee

Sister Judith Baumert (Sandra) was born in Gouverneur to Francis Xavier and Mary Gertrude Baumert. Her best friends growing up were her two sisters, Sally and Shirley. She and her family moved to Antwerp when she was in grade school, and she graduated from Antwerp High School (Indian River Central) School in June 1954 and entered the novitiate of Sisters of St. Joseph that September.

In college, Sister Judith majored in Education. Later, she went on to receive a master's degree in Religious Studies and did further studies at Fordham University and Boston College.

Sister Judith has served as a teacher and in administrative ministries at St. Joseph's School in Dannemora, Mater Dei College in Ogdensburg, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Schools in Massena, Bishop Smith School in Malone, St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga, and Holy Family and St. Patrick's Schools in Watertown, and as pastoral associate



**Sister Catherine
Mary Cummings RSM**

at St. Paul's Parish in Black River.

Later, Sister Judith was director of the Formation for Ministry Program in the Diocese of Ogdensburg for seven years. She also served on the diocesan Council of Consecrated Life.

Sister Judith has ministered with Urban Mission and the Samaritan Summit Village in Watertown, as well as assisting at the Sisters of St. Joseph's Motherhouse.

She said her greatest pleasure, and sometimes my greatest stress, is being a lifelong YANKEE fan.

"I thank God for my many beautiful experiences, in ministry to the young people in our schools as well as in the Formation for Ministry Program," she said. "I thank God, too, for the many times of prayer, joy, laughter, and sorrow with my family, friends, and community."

Sister Catherine Mary Cummings, RSM 65 Year Jubilee

Sister Catherine Marie Cummings was born in Plattsburgh and was baptized at St. Joseph's Church in Dannemora. Her family moved to Og-

densburg when she was one year old.

"My faith was nourished at home by my parents, Myron and Kay Cummings; my brothers, Bob and Tom; and my sister, Gert," she said. "It was further developed at St. Mary's Cathedral Parish and by the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, who were my teachers for twelve years at Bishop Conroy Memorial School and St. Mary's Academy. Thank you to all the wonderful priests and sisters of our parish."

Sister Catherine Mary said she fondly remembers her First Holy Communion in the old Cathedral that later burned, her confirmation in the temporary cathedral in St. Mary's Academy gym and her high school graduation at the "new" St. Mary's Cathedral on Hamilton Street.

In September 1955, her parents took her to Tarrytown to enter the Sisters of Mercy Novitiate.

"I think vocation is one of God's great mysteries," she said. "I felt called to give my life completely to God, but it wasn't until I met the Sisters of Mercy at Mercy Hospital, Watertown, that I knew the direction that call would take. I am grateful to God and to all whose patience and support enabled me to take those first steps to the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy."

After the novitiate, Sister Catherine Mary studied nursing at Mercy College in Detroit, Michigan. Her ministry as a nurse took her to Mercy hospitals in Watertown and Port Jervis, and in nursing education to colleges in NYCI Syracuse and Hartford, Connecticut. Along the way, she re-

ceived a master's degree in Nursing and a doctorate in Nursing Education. She was also in community leadership for five years.

"Thousands of thanks to my Mercy Community, who afforded me so many opportunities and supported me during all those years," she said.

In 2006, Sister Catherine Mary came full circle, called back to the Diocese of Ogdensburg with the start of a new ministry – Mercy Care for the Adirondacks. She has served there for the past 14 years, first as director of the Friendship Volunteer Program and the Faith Community Nurse Program and now as Mission Director. As part of Mercy Care, she has had the privilege of training and supporting volunteers and parish nurses who serve the elder members of the community. She said she has learned so much from them and from all at Mercy Care about caring, compassion and generosity. As the Sisters of Mercy Constitution states, "By collaborating with others in works of mercy, we continually learn from them how to be more merciful".

"Through all these years, my family, my friends and my Mercy sisters have loved and supported me, and for all of them I am so grateful," she said. "In all these years, I have been held close to the heart of Jesus whose love and forgiveness is limitless and who constantly reminds me that He has called me by name and I am His. So, full of love and gratitude at this 65th year as a Sister of Mercy, I embrace a future full of hope."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Sisters celebrate jubilees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Sister Norma Bryant, SSJ 60th Jubilee

Sister Norma Bryant received the habit of the Sisters of St. Joseph at Mater Dei College in Ogdensburg, on June 24, 1960 with Bishop James J. Navagh officiating.

The daughter of the late Robert J. and Geraldine S. Stickney Bryant, Sister Norma has two younger sisters. She was raised in Winthrop and taught by the Sisters of Mercy at St. Joseph's Academy in Brasher Falls.

"In second grade, one day we couldn't go outside during the noon hour because of inclement weather," Sister Norma said. "A number of my friends and I stood around Sisters desk, and she asked us, what we wanted to be when we grew up. Without hesitation, I said, 'I want to be a sister.'"

By the time she reached eighth grade, St. Joseph's Academy High School had closed, but the grade school was open for another year. St. Patrick's Parish Grade School opened the following year. Holy Family School in Massena hadn't yet been built, so it was necessary for her to attend St. Lawrence Central in Brasher Falls for high school. She graduated in June 1959.

"Needless to say, changing to a public school was a big adjustment for me," she said. "However, at the public school, I was blessed with learning to play the violin, taking a music theory course, as well as being in a small orchestra."

She entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Ogdensburg in Watertown in the fall of 1959. Sister Norma was received into



Sister Norma Bryant, SSJ



Sister Mary Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ



Sister Janet Peters, RSM

the community on June 24, 1960 and made her final vows at Mater Dei College in Ogdensburg on June 24, 1965. She began college courses with the Sisters of St. Joseph at the Watertown Motherhouse. The following year, she attended Mater Dei College. Sister Norma later received a bachelor's degree in Education from SUNY Potsdam and a master's degree from SUNY Plattsburgh.

Sister Norma was also allowed to do some graduate study at St. Lawrence University in Canton, Fordham University and Notre Dame University.

"I am grateful to our community for such a good education," she said.

Sister Norma's teaching assignments were in the Ogdensburg Diocese, including Norwood, Lake Placid and Dannemora, and later at Holy Family School in Watertown. In 1969, she was assigned to Mater Dei College in Ogdensburg as dean of Students and director of Avila Hall Dormitory. She was at the college for 16 years.

After serving at Mater Dei, Sister Norma returned to the Motherhouse in Watertown. At various points, she was involved with new candidates in formation, community administra-

tive duties, as well as Christian Formation at St. Patrick's Parish in Watertown. She was later a pastoral associate at St. Cecilia's Parish in Adams for a period of nine years.

Currently, Sister Norma is the community archivist at the Motherhouse and co-director of associate candidates, and she assists as a volunteer with the Religious Education Program for students with special needs. Sister Norma also teaches violin lessons, and she has served on the diocesan Council for Consecrated Religious for a few years.

For a period of 20 years, Sister Norma enjoyed belonging to the Jefferson County Community Orchestra at Jefferson Community College. She and some of her students are also associated with the Trillium Music Center in Watertown.

"Seeing young students throughout the week, is one of my greatest joys, at the present time," she said.

Sister Mary Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ 60th Jubilee

"I know the plans I have for you ..." – Jeremiah 29:11

"It seems that those plans that God has for me began when I was born in

a loving Catholic family with two older brothers in the small village of Cape Vincent along the St. Lawrence River," said Sister Mary Bethany Fitzgerald, a Sister of St. Joseph. "Along with the blessings of family, the joys of riding horseback, swimming in the lake or river, working with family in the hay fields and our garden filled me with a deep sense of the delights of God's love outpoured in all of Creation. When the Sisters of St. Joseph came to teach catechism classes in the summer, I witnessed a sense of joy in them, too, as they shared God's Word with us. I began to think even then that maybe God was calling me to be one of them who brought the joy of God to others."

In high school at Immaculate Heart Academy she began to attend Mass daily and prayed to Mary that she would know God's plan and have the courage to follow it. After graduation, she decided to give religious life a try.

"If it wasn't God's will for me, I could move on knowing God had something else in mind for me," Sister Mary Bethany said. "Well, right from the very beginning of my years of formation with Sisters of St. Joseph, I felt it fit me

'like an old shoe.' Sixty years ago, I said my 'yes' to God as a Sister of St. Joseph."

As God's plan continued to unfold, it led Sister Mary Bethany to Mater Dei College and SUNY Potsdam for a degree in education and later to a master's degree in Formative Spirituality at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

"I feel blessed to have had the privilege to share His love as a teacher from elementary to high school in places that stretched around the diocese from Watertown, Gouverneur, Massena, Lake Placid, Ticonderoga, Plattsburgh," she said. "Later God's plan brought me to Mater Dei College as Religious Studies educator and campus minister. When MDC closed, my journey with the Lord took me to SUNY Canton and St. Lawrence University as Newman campus minister. In the past few years the call of God seemed to shift from nurturing the faith of young college students to offering these opportunities to adults through retreats, educational workshops/courses, spiritual direction, etc."

In addition, Sister Mary Bethany has served in ministry within the Sisters of St. Joseph as vocation and religious formation director, assistant director of Lay Associates and Sisters of St. Joseph Social Justice coordinator.

Sister Janet Peters, RSM 60th Jubilee

Sister Janet Peters, a Sister of Mercy, is the second oldest child of two very loving and caring parents, Maurice and Ina Constance Peters. She was born in Cape Vincent and raised on a farm near, Rosiere and Chaumont.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Environmental Stewardship

A healing balm for worries

In Matthew's Gospel (6:25 – 27), Jesus states "...I am telling you not to worry.... Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your life span?"

While this is great advice from Jesus for dealing with the emotions that arise when listening to the news, acting on it can be a challenge. The array of apocalyptic stories in the media can trigger serious feelings of depression, fear and hopelessness. Learning to trust in God's promises of His care, peace and salvation can go a long way in overcoming the unsettling emotions that arise from watching daily newscasts.

Since the dawn of recorded history, people have turned to nature for the solitude it offers and the positive influence it has on a person's soul. This is why all the great spiritual leaders, like Moses, Elijah and Jesus periodically retreated into the wilderness, as it allowed them to better communicate with their Heavenly Father and acquire His divine council, wisdom and inner peace. Nature is a place for us to become engulfed in quiet, pausing and opening our hearts to God. It is possible to feel the warmth of His embrace, and experience His joy and serenity.

When relaxing it is recommended to take in several deep breaths and expel them to the surroundings. When immersed in nature, the fresh incoming air is thought of as being pure and clean. The simple act of breathing allows us to connect physically with a major portion of the life forms close to us. In silence and in meditative thought we can also connect with God, who sustains all life on the planet which helps greatly nourish our spiritual being.

Nature can offer us an experience of the Divine that can fill one with a sense of awe and wonder. In such places, the cares of the world can be temporarily lost and replaced by a feeling of peace and joy. When we return to the concerns of the present, we may experience renewed energy and strength to respond to challenges that face us with the Lord at our side.

By Tom Kalinowski, Faith and Ecology Group, St. Bernard's, Saranac Lake

Bishop's Public Schedule

Oct. 7 – New York State Catholic Conference Virtual Board Meeting

Oct. 8 – New York State Catholic Conference Virtual Board Meeting

Oct. 9 – Noon – Mass at Notre Dame Church in Ogdensburg

Oct. 10 – 4 p.m. – Dedication and Blessing of the new Altar and Baptistry at St. Ann's Church in Mooers Forks

Oct. 11 – 10 a.m. – Confirmation at Holy Angels Church in Altona with St. Ann's Church in Mooers Forks

Oct. 12 – 7 p.m. – Confirmation at St. James Minor Church in Carthage with St. Mary's Church in Copenhagen

Oct. 13 – 11 a.m. – The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ogdensburg meeting at Bishop's Residence followed by lunch

Oct. 14 – 9:45 a.m. – Episcopal Council Meeting at Bishop's Residence

7 p.m. – Confirmation at The Roman Catholic Community of Keeseville (at St. John the Baptist) in Keeseville with The Catholic Community of Holy Name and St. Matthew in AuSable Forks

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 500.

- 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@northcountycatholic.org

- Join the conversation!

Sisters celebrate jubilees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Living in a very rural area with three brothers and two sisters provided her many opportunities to learn responsibility and the importance of sharing and caring for others.

After graduating from Lyme Central School in Chaumont, she pursued her lifelong dream of becoming a nurse by enrolling in Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Water-

town. After graduating and working in the hospital for a year, she attended D'Youville College in Buffalo to obtain a bachelor of science degree in Nursing (BSN). While pursuing her BSN degree, she was introduced to courses in the liberal arts and the humanities, and found theology and philosophy courses very interesting, sowing the seeds for her future vocation in religious life.

At age 25, she felt the call to serve others, and in 1960 she entered the Sisters of Mercy of Dobbs Ferry. After the novitiate she attended St. Louis University in Missouri and obtained a Master's Degree in Nursing Education. Sister Janet returned to Watertown and began a pediatric nursing course in the School of Nursing. When the school closed three years later, she was one of the first instructors in the new associate degree Nursing Program at Jefferson Community College in Watertown. After 14 years there, nine of them as chair of the Nursing Program, Sister Janet was elected to the Sisters of Mercy Leadership Team and lived in the Bronx for five years, serving as education facilitator and director of the new members of the religious community.

With her parent's health failing, Sister Janet returned to Watertown Mercy Center for health Services

as vice president of Mission Services and coordinator of Staff Development. After the death of her parents and when the sisters ceased to sponsor the health center, Sister Janet went to St. Louis and became a chaplain intern at a medical center and long-term care facility.

She once again returned to the North Country in 1996 to become the vice president for Mission services and manager of Pastoral Care at Uihlein Mercy Center in Lake Placid and Mercy Health Care Center in Tupper Lake.

After a personal sabbatical in 2001-02, and upon the urging of Chandler Ralph, with whom she had worked in Watertown, Sister Janet began the Pastoral Care Program at Adirondack Medical Center and completed the requirements for board certification with the National Council of Catholic Chaplains.

After seven years of being director of Pastoral Care, she moved back to her roots to reconnect with family and friends in Sackets Harbor. She volunteered for prayer groups, scripture studies, and teaching others how to visit the sick.

Sister Janet retired from active ministry in 2014 and moved to Centennial Apartments in Watertown, where she currently resides.

Rest in Peace

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

Oct. 7 – Rev. Jean N. Laverlocher, O.M.I., 1884

Oct. 8 – Rev. Edward Letourneau, 1898

Oct. 9 – Rev. William Joseph Normandeau, 1892; Rev. Francis Xavier Chagnon, 1911; Most Rev. Leo R. Smith, 1963

Oct. 10 – Rev. Robert Duford, 1949; Rev. J. A. Sirois, O.M.I., 1950

Oct. 11 – Rev. William Burns, 1837

Oct. 12 – Rev. Francis Xavier Pelletier, 1881; Rev. P. Joseph Mullins, O.S.A., 1960

Oct. 13 – Rev. Francis X. Campbell, O.S.A., 1984

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, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terri-
annyanulavich@citizenadvocates.net Phone: 518-651-2267
days; 518-569-0612 evenings; or
Father Christopher Carrara, the
Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; ccarrara@rcdony.org Phone: 315-393-
2920 ext. 1340. If you have a
complaint of suspected sexual
abuse or related misconduct by the
bishops, contact the **Catholic
Bishop Abuse Reporting Service**
at 800-276-1562 or
www.ReportBishopAbuse.org.

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St. Joseph can help us to be watchful

Editor's note: In May, Bishop Terry R. LaValley consecrated the Diocese of Ogdensburg to St. Joseph. To celebrate that consecration, the NCC will be featuring occasional columns highlighting St. Joseph.

By Sister Brian Marie Latour, RSM



St. Joseph's Corner

"And Joseph was silent..." We all know that St. Joseph cannot be quoted at all, since he didn't utter a word. Did you ever wonder what he might have said??? In the litany of St. Joseph, he is entitled, "Watchful defender of Jesus." How could he keep quiet and do that job?

So, most of our information about Joseph is what we think he might have done, what we think he might have said. But there are some truths on which our suppositions rest.

To be watchful means to be mindful, to always have the needs, wants and de-

sires of the other on one's mind. We can imagine how perceptive he had to be in the situation in which he found himself. First of all, he had to decide. Was he going to get himself into this relationship with Mary?

In agreeing, he had to watch over a wife who had received a special message from God, he had to be immune to the stares and snide remarks that may have been uttered when she announced her pregnancy. He quietly took Mary into his home, and

together they began their life as a Jewish couple. That meant that God was present in their home, in their prayers, in the celebrations of the Jewish feasts with others, in knowing that they as a couple were under the watchful eye of God.

Joseph was God-fearing and law abiding in embarking with Mary on the trip to Bethlehem for the census. How hard was that trip and what experiences did they have together? Then THE baby was born, and Joseph's watchful eyes

had to become more focused. He had a wife and baby to tend. They moved, fled, moved again. All the while, he had to provide for them. As Jesus grew, Joseph was his teacher and male model. Many words were uttered by Joseph – words of comfort, words of instruction in carpentry skills, words of warning against common dangers like fire and sharp objects, words of love and encouragement. We wish we had heard if he had a deep voice, or a tenor voice...maybe he just whispered.

To defend another means to stand up for them. How did he do that and yet help Jesus to grow up to assume mature responsibilities? Jesus, remember, was a "man like us in all but sin."

Joseph didn't have any courses on husbandry or fatherhood. He had the example of the Jewish men

in his own family, other men with whom he worked, men who were officials in the Temple, poor men, outcasts, friends and acquaintances.

In thinking about Joseph, we can ask him to help us to be watchful, to really look at others when they speak to us. We ask him to help us to listen with both ears and with our heart. We ask that Joseph would give us the words to say so that we can address injustices and defend others, seek solutions for poor people looking for food and jobs or advice. We ask Joseph for the right words to say when we are seeking solutions to problems with others. We ask Joseph's help to keep our own mouths shut when that is the only solution.

St. Joseph, Watchful Defender of Jesus, pray for us and keep us on our toes!

Conference of Bishops hosts 'Rosary for America'

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will host a virtual rosary event on October 7, the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary. Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the USCCB has called for this moment of prayer with the intention of uniting Catholics across the country at this time when there is much unrest and uncertainty.

Archbishop Gomez has invited several bishops, representing the various geographical regions of the United States, to pray a part of the rosary and it will premiere on the USCCB's YouTube channel (youtube.com/usccb) and Facebook page (facebook.com/usccb) on

Wednesday, October 7 at 3 p.m. (ET).

The faithful are encouraged to join in this prayerful moment of unity for

our country, to seek healing and to ask Our Lady, on her feast, to pray for us and help lead us to Jesus.

USCCB offered the following suggestions for participants:

Prior to the rosary: invite at least one person to join you – share on your personal social media platforms using #RosaryForAmerica or pick up your phone to extend an invitation via call, text or email (graphics in English and Spanish are below).

Leading up to the rosary: take a photo of our rosary and share it on social media. Be sure to use #RosaryForAmerica and let us know where you are praying from – how beautiful will it be when we flood the digital

highways with images of rosaries on Our Lady's feast day!

During the rosary: turn off social media and enter into prayer – we'll be praying the Glorious Mysteries! As Pope Pius XII said, "We put great confidence in the Holy Rosary for the healing of evils which afflict our times."

After the rosary: turn back to social media, and using the #RosaryForAmerica hashtag, leave a prayer intention for country and invite others to pray for that intention. Then be intentional about your use of technology and be present to those around you! One act of love flowed from the grace of prayer can change our world!

ADIRONDACK

PERSONAL STRATEGIES DURING TRYING TIMES

Lake Placid – Molly Kasriels, Ph.D. in counseling psychology, will delve into strategies to help us persevere during these perplexing times.

Date: Oct. 13

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Place: St. Agnes Church

Features: Covid-19 seems to be the “icing on the cake” when one reflects on the many social challenges of our day. How does one deal with the numerous and difficult stresses of life? All are invited to come listen and learn. All Covid-19 social regulations will be in place. Mass follows at 5:30 p.m.

CLINTON

SPAGHETTI TAKE-OUT

Peru – St. Augustine's Knights of Columbus Council 7273 will host a take-out spaghetti dinner.

Date: Oct. 10

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Place: St. Augustine's Parish Center

Cost: \$8 per person

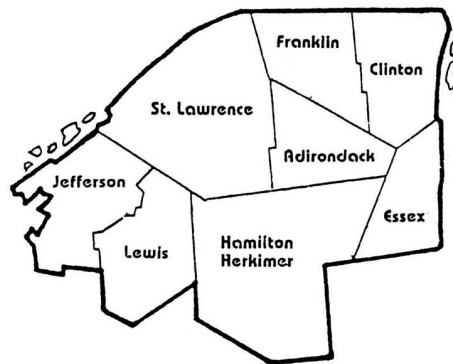
Features: Regular and gluten-free options will be served. Funds raised will be used to assist St. Augustine's Parish and the local community.

VIRTUAL SETON GALA

Plattsburgh – Seton Catholic invites everyone to join us for our Virtual Mardi Gras Gala.

Date: Oct. 24

Features: The idea is a Dinner for Eight style evening where you can dine in the safety of your home and support Seton at the same time. Corporate sponsorship is \$600, Individual tickets are \$50 each and \$25 for Seton Staff. Silent and Live Auctions will be available online. Party baskets will be delivered to participants. Help us make this unique Gala a huge success!



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.

Contact: Susan FitzPatrick Pellerin
at spellerin@setonknights.org for more information.

FRANKLIN

HARVEST HAM DINNER

Constable – Harvest Ham take-out dinner to be held.

Date: Oct. 18

Time: Noon to 4 p.m.

Place: St. Francis of Assisi

Cost: \$12 per dinner

Contact: Reservations encouraged, please call 518-483-0486 or 518-358-0208

JEFFERSON

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

LEWIS

ROSARY PROCESSION & HIGH MASS

Port Henry – St. Patrick's Church will host an outdoor Candlelight Rosary Procession followed by a Missa Cantata in the Extraordinary Form for the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Date: Oct. 7

Time: 6 p.m.

Features: Latin/English worship aid will be provided. Masks, physical distancing and COVID-19 protocols will pertain.

ST. LAWRENCE

ROSARY RALLY

Ogdensburg – Rosary Rally to be held.

Date: Oct. 10

Time: Noon

Place: Notre Dame Church

Features: This corresponds with a world-wide Rosary sponsored by America Needs Fatima. We invite everyone to join with millions of prayer warriors and recite the rosary as a shield and a weapon against evil.

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 60-minute virtual discernment sessions.

Dates: Oct. 18, Nov. 1, 15 & 29 and Dec. 13

Time: 3 p.m.

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

CLM FALL GATHERING

Watertown – Special Mass and program for all Commissioned Lay Ministers in Jefferson and Lewis counties.

Date: Oct. 14

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Holy Family Church

Features: Deacon James Crowley will speak on the topic of Catholic

Leadership in a COVID-19 World.

DIOCESAN LEAD FOR CATECHESIS

Diocesan Lead: RCIA as model for Catechesis on how to fundamentally use the Catechuminate Model for effective catechesis.

Date: Oct. 17

Time: 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Place: Zoom event

Speakers: Anita Soltero, Assistant Director of Faith Formation for the Eastern Region & Pam Ballantine, Former Assistant Director of Faith Formation for the Eastern Region

Features: There is no cost to attend, and the event is open to anyone.

Contact: To register contact Department of Faith Formation Secretary, Jessica Hargrave by phone (315)393-2920 or by email jhargrave@rcdony.org by Oct. 9

FAMILY LIFE CONFERENCE

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

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

READY TO GO!



St. Augustine, Peru, begins its first COVID-era Religious Education session. Here, Abigail stands with her mother, Erin, as nurse, Theresa, does a health check.

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As the election nears, my voice won't be silent

Editor's note: The following guest column appeared in the Sept. 24 edition of The Evangelist, the official publication of the Diocese of Albany. It is re-printed here with permission from that publication.

By Father Thomas Morrette

Every time elections draw near, I let out a pastoral shutter. As a pastor, it's my duty to encourage my congregation to vote and to encourage them to choose candidates who best advance the vision and moral teachings of the Church. (This includes strong advocacy for the poor and forgotten.) I'm aware that our government is watching us during this pre-election time, ready to pounce on us if we endorse one political party or candidate over another. The threat of rescinding our tax-exempt

status ever looms over us. Moreover, the Church too advises good pastoral judgment at this time. Pastors are never permitted to publicly endorse one political party or candidate over another. Preaching and teaching should advance the cause of faith, morality and social justice and it should leave to personal conscience and choice the candidate an individual Catholic votes for.

Some Catholics maintain that "the Church should stay out of politics." This sounds nice and simple and, if chosen, takes the heat off. But it's an extreme interpretation of the principle of the separation of Church and State and it's naïve. This position relegates the Church to silence and impotency and promotes the abandonment of the Church's mission to announce the Good News and to trans-

form our ego-driven world.

As I understand my charge as a pastor in election time, I accept the reality that I cannot, and will not, endorse any party or candidate for any elected office. However, that doesn't mean I have to keep my voice silent. I feel strongly that I, and every clergy person, needs to point out the areas of concern that the Church sees as critical in our time. We should encourage our congregations to make judgments about candidates based on the eternal truths advanced by Christ and his Church. I will point out the complexity that Catholics have to face when making their choices since neither Republicans nor Democrats are committed to furthering all the principles we hold. And, I have to remind parishioners that, as Catholics, there are some

fundamental truths that can never be compromised. These include humanitarian assistance to immigrants, commitment to racial equality, more equitable distribution of wealth, increased health-care access, religious freedom and, above all, the legal protection of the unborn.

I expect that I'll get some flack for speaking out during this election time. Some of the pushback may be directed at me personally and that may be justified: sometimes preachers don't present things clearly or completely. However, I've learned that some of this flack also comes from some who don't want to be reminded of the principles being preached. They don't want to see trouble brewing from the pulpit. It disturbs their peace. They don't want to think about re-evaluating their posi-

tions. Some others may have compromised their own political views long before and are committed to "more practical" or "more progressive" ideas. When this happens, I'm going to disturb some by my voice. I really don't like doing that. But I have to.

It's also helpful for me to keep in mind that a great many of our Lord's teachings were counter-cultural back then and remain so. Some of his teachings strongly confront secular values which are taken "as gospel" in this world. So, some hostility should be expected as we enter the fray of this election time. This is nothing new. We've been facing that kind of pushback, in one form or another, since the Incarnation.

Father Thomas Morrette is pastor at St. Mary's Church in Glens Falls.



Mason and Logan Arthur, new altar servers, were guided at the Sept. 20 Mass by their grandfather, Royal Kraeger, who has been an altar server since 1960. The servers are pictured with Father Lawrence E. Marullo.

Young altar servers begin training in Constableville

CONSTABLEVILLE – It's been a long time coming, but it was worth the wait.

St. Mary's in Constableville has been served by adults for several years, which was very welcome. Now the parish is fortunate to have five young people learning the necessary procedures to assist Father Lawrence E. Marullo and Deacon James Chaufy at the Sunday morning Mass (and weekly

services, if possible).

To be an altar server, one must have received First Holy Communion.

In training at this time, are Mason and Logan Arthur, Faith Lieber, Aubrey Morczyk and Alicia Morczyk.

While the function of altar server is commonly

associated with children, it can be and is carried out by people of any age or dignity. The group young altar servers have been learning the routine and have been guided by the adult servers. Father Marullo also has held formalized Altar Server sessions.



Fr. Kevin McEwan, Msgr. Dennis Duprey & Fr. Eduardo Pesigan

Thank you for your virtual Masses during these trying times, especially during Holy week and going forward. It is deeply appreciated.

May God Bless you abundantly.



From all of your virtual followers.



Health care is key voter concern amid pandemic

WASHINGTON (CNS) – This election year, in the midst of a global pandemic and with the Affordable Care Act about to be challenged for the third time before a Supreme Court that is in flux, it's no surprise health care is a bigger issue than it has been in previous presidential elections.

The economy still gets top billing, followed by the coronavirus outbreak, which has killed more than 200,000 people in the United States and affects both health and economy.

Criminal justice, race relations and health care round out the list of top voter concerns, according to a September Kaiser Family Foundation poll. Democratic voters, according to the poll, place a higher emphasis on health as a voting issue than Republicans.

But Democrats also have shifted their health care emphasis from the early part of 2020, when it was a top concern, to this fall when it slipped behind concern for closed businesses and issues of racial justice. When voters were asked what parts of health care most concerned them, they listed costs of health insurance coverage and prescription drugs as top worries followed by the coronavirus outbreak and Medicare concerns.

The presidential candidates have widely differing health care platforms based on their hopes to either dismantle the ACA, as President Donald Trump has spoken of since the previous presidential election, or to keep it in place and expand it, which former Vice President Joe Biden advocates.

During the presidential debate Sept. 29, Biden and Trump sparred over health care with Biden criticizing Trump for his failure to re-

peal and replace the law and Trump saying: "I want to give them better health care at a much lower price, because Obamacare is no good."

The presidential candidates also had divergent views on the availability of a COVID-19 vaccine, with Trump questioning if the production had been slowed for political reasons and Biden saying he agreed with scientists on the turnaround speed.

Republican health care plans have been criticized for not offering safeguards to protect people with pre-existing conditions. On Sept. 24, the president signed an executive order protecting these conditions, but health experts say these conditions are already protected under the ACA.

Trump has backed proposals to eliminate Medicaid expansion and put a cap on all federal funding for Medicaid, while Biden supports increased federal funding to states for Medicaid during the current economic crisis.

The ACA, which became law in 2010 and was fully implemented in 2015, has been before the nation's high court twice before, in 2012 and 2015, and survived, but this time its fate is more uncertain particularly since the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the possible confirmation of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to fill her seat.

On Nov. 10, the court will hear oral arguments – in a case brought by 18 Republican state attorneys general and supported by the Trump administration – challenging the nation's health legislation.

Its opponents are focused on the court's 2012 decision that upheld the law's individual coverage

requirement under Congress' taxing power and the 2017 tax law that zeroed out that tax penalty. Without that tax in place the state leaders claim the ACA's coverage requirement is unconstitutional.

As a judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, Barrett did not hear any cases dealing with the ACA. But in 2017, she wrote a paper in the Notre Dame Law School journal that was critical of Chief Justice John Roberts' majority opinion in the 2012 ruling saying he "pushed the Affordable Care Act beyond its plausible meaning to save the statute."

This article has raised red flags for those concerned that Barrett could vote to dismantle the law – if she is confirmed to the court in time to hear the case – but some legal scholars have said her writing doesn't necessarily reveal how she would vote on a case that centers on a different legal question.

The ACA, which provides health coverage for 20 million people in the United States, has slipped in public support in recent months. The Kaiser Family Foundation poll said 49% of U.S. adults viewed the law favorably in September compared to 55% in February. And 42% disapproved of it in September.

The Catholic Church has had a complicated relationship with the law. Catholic hospitals have long emphasized the poor and vulnerable must have access to health care, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a 2010 letter to Congress when the law was enacted, stressed that health care is "a basic human right" and "universal coverage should be truly universal."

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CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Trump administration drops refugee cap to historic low

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The steep slope, appearing almost as a vertical line, is a stunning mark by the Trump administration on what was once a refugee program recognized around the world as a model to welcome the tyrannized and persecuted masses. Late Sept. 30, the administration announced it would bring the refugee cap – the maximum number of displaced people the country decides to resettle in a federal fiscal year – to a historic low: 15,000. The average during presidencies of both Republicans and Democrats had been around 95,000. But the announcement on the new cap doesn't mean the bad news for refugees, or organizations that help them, ended there. "It's not official, the president still has to sign it," so no refugees can enter the country until that happens, said Ashley Feasley, director of policy for Migration and Refugee Services at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "I have no idea when he'll sign it." Feasley said there's a "pause" until Oct. 26, which means nothing will happen until then.

Russia's Church warns against proposed curbs on clergy

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) – Catholic Church officials in Russia criticized planned religious law changes that will require all clergy who studied abroad to retrain in a Russian college. "Like other confessions, we find it absurd to talk of recertifying priests who are already in service and of having to send our archbishop back to seminary for a course in Russian history and spirituality," said Father Kirill Gorbunov, vicar general of the Moscow Archdiocese. "Of course, Catholic priests coming here from Poland, Italy or Spain need some kind of acculturation, and we don't always have the opportunity to provide this. But this shouldn't be regulated by the state," Father Gorbunov told Catholic News Service Oct. 1. Church officials' concerns stem from draft amendments to Russia's 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, which would bar "clergy who receive religious education abroad" from ministering unless they obtain "recertification within a Russian religious organization" and "receive additional professional education."

Pope brings seven people closer to sainthood

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis advanced the sainthood causes of four Spanish martyrs, an Italian laywoman and two Spanish nuns who founded religious orders. The Vatican published the decrees Sept. 30, saying the pope authorized their promulgation Sept. 29. Normally the pope signs the decrees during a meeting with the prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. However, its prefect, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, was forced to resign during a meeting with the pope Sept. 24 due to allegedly embezzling Vatican funds – an accusation the cardinal denies. The pope recognized the martyrdom of Father Francisco Castor Sojo Lopez and three other members of the Diocesan Worker Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who were killed "in hatred of the faith" between 1936 and 1938, during Spain's civil war. The decree clears the way for their beatification. Among the other decrees, the pope recognized the miracle needed for the beatification of Gaetana Tolomeo, who was born in Catanzaro, Italy, in 1936 and died in 1997.

Pandemic bill excludes Catholic school students

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The chairman of the U.S. bishops' education committee said Oct. 1 "it is unconscionable" the HEROES Act stimulus bill proposed in the House is excluding Catholic school students and their families.

The bill includes \$225 billion for education, including \$182 billion for K-12 schools, but "provides no equitable services for students in nonpublic schools and maintains language that prohibits any funds from being used to provide financial assistance to nonpublic school children," said a news release about the measure from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"This has the effect of excluding virtually any aid to students, families and teachers in nonpublic schools," the release stated.

In his statement, Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, California, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, noted the COVID-19 pandemic "has affected all Americans, including those whose children are enrolled in Catholic and nonpublic schools."

"It is unconscionable that this latest aid proposal would exclude these American children and the schools they attend from emergency aid that would ease the financial burdens they have borne as a result of the pandemic," he said.

Democratic lawmakers have introduced a revised HEROES Act measure ahead of negotiations with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. HEROES Act stands for Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act. The proposed package is \$1.2 trillion less than the

Democrats' original \$3.4 trillion bill that the House passed in May.

Senate Republicans balked at the earlier legislation, calling it too expansive and mostly aimed at bailing out state and city governments. Democrats in the Senate blocked a slimmed down \$300 billion Republican relief measure in early September.

Bishop Barber said Oct. 1 the "economic devastation" in this country wrought by the pandemic "has already led to the closure of at least 150 Catholic schools, many in low-income areas that serve children of color."

"Congress and the White House must come together to support emergency aid that prioritizes the health and safety of all students, including nonpublic school children and the nearly 2 million students enrolled in Catholic schools," he said.

The bishop said the USCCB "supports robust education aid for all students and has asked the Congress to include the bipartisan School Choice Now proposal in any COVID aid package."

"School Choice Now would provide emergency tuition scholarships to hard-hit families. The USCCB has also advocated for equitable services for Catholic and other nonpublic schools," he said. "Nonpublic schools have had access to equitable services since 1965 and have been included in all recent federal emergency aid bills until now."

For weeks, U.S. Catholic bishops and other Catholic leaders have been pressing congressional negotiators to include financial support for families to

continue to send their children to Catholic and nonpublic schools in any coronavirus relief bill.

The pandemic-induced recession has "made it impossible for many struggling families to continue paying tuition," five cardinals, an archbishop and Bishop Barber, as education chairman, said in an Aug. 5 letter to the Republican and Democratic leadership in the House and Senate.

The letter implored lawmakers to provide "robust" assistance "to ensure that the education needs of all children are met, including children in Catholic and other nonpublic schools."

Signing the letter with Bishop Barber were Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB president; Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York; Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago; Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston; Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston; and Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey.

In an Aug. 6 letter to Rep. Karen Bass, D-California, chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Bishop Barber and the chairmen of two other USCCB committees made the same appeal for families who have their children enrolled in Catholic and other nonpublic schools in low-income communities.

They said that because the pandemic has "disproportionately affected" predominantly Black communities and the Catholic schools that serve them, Congress must provide immediate financial help to families who have chosen these schools for their children's education.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

What can we learn from these banquets?

In this Sunday's Scripture, we hear about two great banquets. Isaiah, the 8th century prophet, has a vision of a lavish banquet on a high mountain which God will give at the end of time for every nation on earth. He speaks of "...juicy, rich food, and pure, choice wines." No one will be excluded.



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

We are meant to presume that these nations have learned their lesson the hard way. God has removed the veil of

hatred and division from their eyes. They see one another as brothers and sisters, so they have finally abandoned war as a means of solving differences. All people are now united in peaceful submission to the one Lord of the Universe.

In return, God has given prosperity to the earth. Obviously, the nations of the earth have a long way to go before they could merit such a banquet!

In the Gospel, Jesus

October 9

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

READINGS

Isaiah 25:6-10a

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22:1-14

tells his listeners that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who gave a great wedding banquet for his son.

At first, the list of guests in quite limited (a pointed reference to the Pharisees and followers of the Law). When these "elite" guests refused the invitation and even abused and killed the messengers, the king

sent out his soldiers to destroy those murderers and burn their city. He then sends his soldiers out to invite to the banquet the entire countryside, both bad and good.

In the course of the banquet, the king throws out a boorish individual who didn't take the trouble to wear a "wedding garment" (which, in that society, would have been provided any guest who needed one).

In the parable, the king is God, his son is Jesus, and guests who were first invited are the chosen people. They rejected the Old Testament prophets

and even killed them. Now, they are soon to kill the Son and His messengers, the Apostles. Who is the man without a wedding garment? Any one of us who has heard the Good News of the Kingdom, but does not change one's life and live by the teaching of Jesus.

What great reward God has prepared for His people! Whether a nation or an individual, we are all invited to that glorious banquet. Will we accept? Have we woven ourselves an acceptable wedding garment? According to today's Scriptures, it's all up to us!

CALLED TO SERVE

The diaconate, marriage and celibacy

The men who will be ordained deacons next fall are inching their way to that wonderful day. Traditionally, ordinations to the diaconate in our diocese come near the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4. Francesco was a deacon. Along with Saint Stephen and Saint Lawrence, Francis is one of the better known deacons in Church history.

The class of deacons I joined for ordination celebrated our anniversary October 4. That seems like ages ago; it was, 17 years to be exact. Every priest,

deacon, brother or sister has a unique vocation story to tell. Mine is not extraordinary. I can say, looking back, that I now see the hand of God in every step that led to ordination.

The first major step was putting Kathy and me on the same path. Like many of you, we were from neighboring communities but really did not become acquainted until high school. Almost 50 years ago, we married. That was an important step for us personally, but it also became an important step in

my clerical vocation. I could not be ordained without Kathy's support and approval. That's in the rules. A vocation to deacon would not have made any sense if we had not developed a strong, loving marriage.

Some permanent deacons are single when they are ordained. The majority of men ordained as permanent deacons are married, and most of us have children. All men ordained to the clerical state in the Latin Church make a promise of celibacy. That's the piece you may not have known. For the single man, it is a vow to remain celibate. The married man promises to remain celibate if his wife should die before him.

Celibacy does not contradict marriage. It is not

the opposite of marriage. The website Catholic Answers says of celibacy, "it is precisely the holiness of marriage that makes celibacy precious; for only what is good and holy in itself can be given up for God as a sacrifice. Just as fasting presupposes the goodness of food, celibacy presupposes the goodness of marriage. To despise celibacy, therefore, is to undermine marriage itself – as the early Fathers pointed out."

The topic has popped up for me of late in a few different places. Kathy and I watched a streamed lecture recently that discussed the relationship between marriage and holy orders. The presenter, Deacon Bill Ditetwig, reminded us that the two servant vocations are inti-

mately entwined. As we approach our "golden anniversary," I decided to check the wedding dates of my brother deacons in the diocese. About 30% of our 87 deacons are married 50 years or more.

Deacons are ordained to serve God and the people of God in Word, Service and Liturgy. Perhaps witness is in there too. Whether married or single, the deacon knows his life is held up as an example for others. Sometimes, that is a greater challenge to all clerics and consecrated than any other factor in discernment. Keep those things in mind as you consider the call or are inspired to mention the diaconate to a worthy candidate.

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

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The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director

622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669

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

mbrett@rcdony.org

Honoring sisters celebrating jubilees

Once again, it is time to honor those religious celebrating jubilees. What a wonderful and blessed occasion! The Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Ogdensburg & Missionary Projects of the Diocese of Ogdensburg congratulate our Jubilarians!

Sister Janet Peters, RSM 60th
Sister Mary Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ 60th
Sister Norma Bryant, SSJ 60th
Sister Catherine Mary Cummings, RSM 65th
Sister Judith Baumert, SSJ 65th
Sister Anne Hogan, SSJ 65th
Sister Mary William Argy, SSJ 70th
Sister Carolyn Madden, RSM 75th

The Mission Office offers this prayer during the month of World Mission Sunday.

This year's theme is "Here I am Lord, Send Me." Such meaningful words for such grace filled sisters who have devoted their lives to the Mission of the Church.

Prayer the Prayer for Mission Month

Heavenly Father, when your only begotten Son Jesus Christ rose from the dead,

He commissioned his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations:

And you remind us that through our Baptism we are made sharers in the mission of the Church.

Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to be courageous and zealous

In bearing witness to the Gospel, so that the mission entrusted to the Church,

Which is still very far from completion, may find new and efficacious expressions that bring life and light to the world.

Help us make it possible for all peoples to experience the saving love and mercy of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Please remember the Pontifical Mission Societies when preparing your will.

www.rcdony.org/mission-office.

OBITUARIES

Carthage – Shawn M. (Beitler) Croft, 74; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 1, 2020 at St. James Church; burial in St. Ann's Cemetery, Phoenixville, PA.

Carthage – Harold L. Lofink, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 3, 2020 at St. James Church.

Carthage – Susan Ann (Siedlecki) Staab, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Sept. 30, 2020 at St. James Church; burial in St. James Cemetery.

Chateaugay – June H. (Martin) Janisewski, 85; Graveside Services Oct. 2, 2020 at Eastside Cemetery.

Dexter – Diane Roseboom Slate, 86; Funeral Services Oct. 8, 2020 at Johnson Funeral Home; burial in Dexter Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Edwin Joseph Hamblet, 83; Funeral Services to be held at a later date; burial in Evergreen Cemetery, Portland, Maine.

Potsdam – Veronica A. (Baxter) Bissett, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 2, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Redford – Patricia J. O'Hearn, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 1, 2020 at

Church of the Assumption.

Saranac Lake – Eleanor Gauthier, 91; Graveside Services to be held at St. Bernard's Cemetery.

Ticonderoga – Eugene R. "Gene" Lobdell, 75; Mass of Christian Burial Sept. 28, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

West Chazy – Wayne E. Deno, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Oct. 1, 2020 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Woman shares regret over her abortion year round

QUEENSBURY, N.Y. (CNS) – Monday through Friday, Marcia Brown stands outside Planned Parenthood on Bay Road in Queensbury.

For upward of six hours a day, Brown holds a sign with a very powerful message – a piece of her life story she struggled with for years – that reads: "I regret my abortion."

"I've been (standing there) for quite a few years," Brown said. The Hudson Falls native said that since she began holding the sign, dozens of young women and girls have stopped to talk to her about her story.

A few months ago, Brown was approached by a young woman outside Planned Parenthood to talk about her unplanned pregnancy. A few weeks ago, she came back to visit Brown again. She took out her phone and showed Brown photos of her baby girl, Ann Marie, who was born in May.

"She said, 'I saw your sign and it changed my mind,'" Brown explained through tears. The girl said "she's alive today" because of Brown's message.

"I'm so happy for her,"

Brown told *The Evangelist*, Albany's diocesan newspaper. "She doesn't have to regret those feelings. You don't know it until you've done it."

Just like Brown, hundreds of Catholics around the Diocese of Albany are standing outside their local Planned Parenthood locations as part of the 40 Days for Life campaign, a national, community-based movement to end abortion in dioceses and communities around the country.

The campaign – which started Sept. 23 and runs through Nov. 1 – has been a place for women and men to come together in support of ending abortion.

Despite COVID-19, Catholics are sure that with proper safety measures – such as masks and social distancing – the 40 Days for Life campaigns can be held as scheduled.

"I never thought this wasn't going to happen," said John O'Brien, leader of the Queensbury campaign. "There's common sense in the North Country, and we're outdoors in fresh air so that won't be an issue."

Throughout the cam-

aign's 40 days, volunteers are called to pray and fast, participate in public vigils outside Planned Parenthoods and reach out to the community to bring awareness to the fight against abortion.

"This year's campaign will run the same way we have in the past," said Craig Paczkowski, leader for the 40 Days campaign in Hudson. "Prayer participants are encouraged to sign up for vigil hours online if possible. This allows others who have more flexibility to come during times that are less covered."

Paczkowski also is "encouraging prayer participants to wear a mask while praying and/or maintain at least 6 feet of social distance for the safety of others."

Some participants in Hudson have mixed feelings on being out during the pandemic: "Many are feeling very good about coming out in person, especially with masks, but some are still hesitant. Being outdoors helps a lot, but prayer works from anywhere too!" Paczkowski said.

Diocese of Rockville Center files under Chapter 11

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N.Y. (CNS) – Facing over 200 lawsuits alleging sex abuse filed since New York state lifted the statute of limitations on such cases, the Diocese of Rockville Centre Oct. 1 filed "a voluntary petition for reorganization" under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

The petition was filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York.

"We believe that this process offers the only way to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for everyone involved, including abuse survivors whose compensation settlements will be resolved by the courts," said Bishop John O. Barres said in a statement.

"This decision was not made lightly," he said, "but, with the passage of the Child Victims Act, the failure of the diocese's insurers to honor their contractual obligations and the number of suits filed to date, it has become clear the diocese would not be able to continue its

spiritual, charitable and educational missions while shouldering the increasingly heavy burden of litigation expenses associated with these cases."

Last year, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the Child Victims Act to lift the statute of limitations on filing childhood sex abuse cases that previously had been "time-barred or expired." The new law gave survivors a year to file, but Cuomo has twice extended the deadline because of difficulties posed by the ongoing pandemic, he said. On May 8, he extended the deadline to Jan. 14, 2021, and on Aug. 3, he extended it further to Aug. 14, 2021.

Regarding the bankruptcy filing, "we know that this will be difficult news for people across the diocese to hear, especially for the many people of Long Island, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, who depend on the church in so many ways," Bishop Barres said in a 10-minute video posted on

the diocese's website, www.drvc.org.

The financial burden of litigation expenses "has been severe" and has "only been compounded" by the financial toll of COVID-19 on the diocese, he said.

The bankruptcy will allow the diocese to still carry out its "spiritual, charitable and educational missions," Bishop Barres said, while at the same time "make sure all clergy sex abuse survivors are afforded just and equitable compensation" and "offer survivors some measure of healing from these horrific abuses."

The news release, and Bishop Barres in his video message, said the diocese "believes its current and future liquidity will be sufficient to fund operations and ministries during the restructuring process and beyond."

"Vendors will be paid for all goods and services delivered after the filing, and transactions that occur in the ordinary course of business will continue as before. Employees will be paid their normal wages, and their benefit programs will continue uninterrupted," the release said.

The diocese said its parishes and Catholic schools are separate legal entities and therefore are not included in the filing. "Operations of the

parishes and schools are expected to continue as normal," it said.

Some parishes are named in Child Victims Act lawsuits along with the diocese, and Bishop Barres said the diocese "intends to petition the Bankruptcy Court to stay any separate civil actions against these parishes and bring these cases under the umbrella of the settlement process in the diocese's Chapter 11 case."

"We carefully and prayerfully considered other alternatives, but Chapter 11 was the only way to provide fair settlements to survivors while continuing to be of service to the 1.4 million Catholics in the geographical boundaries of the Diocese of Rockville Centre," Bishop Barres said in his message.

The diocese began implementing cost reductions and streamlining its operations in October 2019, a move expected to save the diocese about \$3.5 million annually.

"Like many other institutions, the diocese has suffered a strain on its finances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 40% of its annual revenue comes from offertory collections, which have dropped precipitously (along with attendance at Sunday Mass," the news release said.

This past August, the diocese cut its budget and reduced staff by 10% at the pastoral center in Rockville Centre, cuts it said will save about \$5 million annually.

"We will work diligently with all survivors, creditors and ministries to maintain open communication while we work toward our goal of completing a settlement and finalizing a restructuring plan that includes a comprehensive and final resolution for suffering survivors," the diocese said.

The diocese created the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2003 to oversee implementation and compliance with the U.S. bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Essential Norms" first approved in June 2002.

The office also ensures the protection and safety of children by enforcing protocols for reporting and investigating alleged incidents of abuse.

In 2017, the diocese launched its Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program to provide abuse survivors "a confidential avenue for being heard" and provide "some measure of reconciliation and compensation based on an independent review by nationally recognized fund administrators."

The program ended with the Chapter 11 filing, the diocese said, but since it was instituted, it had provided varying amounts of compensation to about 350 survivors totaling more than \$62 million.

"Participation in the IRCP had been completely voluntary," the diocese said.



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