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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 75, Number 29

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

NOV. 25, 2020

## No NCC next week

To allow our staff an opportunity to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no Dec. 2 edition of the *North Country Catholic*.

The next edition will be dated Dec. 9.

The *North Country Catholic* wishes all of you a happy and blessed Thanksgiving.

## Follow Me: A new liturgical year, Advent

Bishop Terry R. LaValley reflects on Thanksgiving, the start of the Advent season and the start of the new Liturgical Year in a time of pandemic in this week's installment of "Follow Me."

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

## CONFIRMED IN THE SPIRIT



Students from St. Mary's Parish in Ticonderoga and St. Joseph's Parish in Olmsteadville celebrated the sacrament of confirmation Nov. 8 with Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

## SHARING OUR STORIES



A quote from an Indiana Jones movie led Joseph Brosk of Carthage, who had been away from the Church, to think more about the faith of his childhood. Read his story in this week's Sharing Our Stories; Sharing Our Faith, a series highlighting how lay Catholics are living their faith here in the North Country. To nominate someone for the series, contact Darcy Fargo, editor, at [dfargo@rcdony.org](mailto:dfargo@rcdony.org) or 315-393-2920.

FULL STORY, PAGE 11

# Pope: Mary shows how to hear God's call

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—There is no better way to pray than like Mary, who opened her heart to God with humility and trust, Pope Francis said.

"It is putting our life in the Lord's hands, that he be the one who guides us. We can all pray like this, almost without words," the pope said Nov. 18 during his weekly general audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace.

Continuing his series of audience talks about prayer, Pope Francis reflected on Mary as a model of prayer.

Mary did not autonomously orchestrate her life, the pope said. "She waits for God to take the reins of her path and guide her where he wants."

By being docile and willing to be God's instrument, she prepares the way for "the great events in which God takes part in

the world," he said.

"There is no better way to pray than to place oneself like Mary in an attitude of openness with a heart open to God, 'Lord, what you want, when you want and how you want,'" he said.

Those whose lives are inspired by such a prayerful attitude, he said, "do not get upset when their days are filled with problems," but face reality knowing that if they offer themselves with humble

love, "we become instruments of God's grace."

When the angel Gabriel told Mary of God's plan for her, the pope said, Mary "knew how to reject fear, even while sensing that her 'yes' would bring her tremendously difficult trials. If in prayer we understand that each day given by God is a call, our hearts will then widen, and we will accept everything."

People also should pray that the Lord would be

present every step of the way, "that he does not leave us alone, that he does not leave us to temptation, that he does not abandon us during terrible moments," he said.

Mary not only accompanied Jesus's entire life in prayer, right up to his death and resurrection, she also accompanied the first steps of the church, praying with "the men and women whom her son had called to form his community," Pope Francis said.

NORTH  
COUNTRY  
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

## We can still be thankful

"I'm ready for 2020 to be over. It's been the worst year ever!"

My son, Jake, age 13, uttered that sentiment recently.

While it's definitely an understandable opinion (and one I've espoused at various moments over the course of the year), I pointed out to him that 2020 could've been far worse.

"We're healthy. Our basic needs are met. The people we love are healthy, and their needs are met. It stinks, but the worst thing that's happened to us is that we've had to stay home a lot. That's not

so bad."

Though we've been dealing with the pandemic, attempting school and work from home, a shortage of toilet paper, being confined almost exclusively to our homes at various points and related uncertainties, we're still trying to get into the spirit of the Thanksgiving holiday, even if it doesn't look like any Thanksgiving in my memory.

Due to the pandemic concerns, my family has called off its annual holiday gathering (we normally have around 40 people). The small Fargo

**Darcy L.  
Fargo**

family will likely spend our holiday at home, just the three of us. While we're sad to lose that opportunity to be around our loud, crazy and wonderful family, we're still trying to cultivate an "attitude of gratitude." We're still thankful.

We're thankful to be spending more time together as a family than we have in years, possibly ever. We're thankful we're spending that time together in our safe and warm, but humble home, which is located in a neighborhood we love and relatively close to the family we love (also just far enough away from them). We're thankful to have food in the refrigerator, freezer and cupboards. We're

thankful that we're healthy.

Personally, I'm also thankful to have a career I love and for every interaction I get to have with the readers of this newspaper and the people of this diocese. I'm thankful to have a circle of friends who support me and keep pushing me to grow my relationship with the Lord. I'm thankful for every day God gives me on this earth, and I'm thankful God continuously works to draw me into Him and His ways.

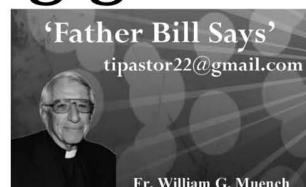
This Thanksgiving, I'm trying very hard to be thankful. There are hardships, but there are always blessings, too. As we celebrate this holiday, I pray you can be thankful, too.

## Celebrating gratitude in our families

This morning as I walked over to church, I noticed several cars coming into the parking lot bringing children to school. These cars were driven by fathers – actually many fathers – who escorted their children to the front door of the school. One caught my attention. A little child got out of the family car and immediately began running at full steam, and a father rushed out of the same car chasing, catching up with that kid.

This became sort of an image for me. I saw a unique image of a father, of the importance of a father – catch and protect. In these days of pandemic, I truly think of this father each time I celebrate Mass, Mass that is livestreamed to the homes in this parish. I like to think of the fathers that are watching. I like to think about the fathers sitting with their children and praying with them.

I believe that they are truly acting as fathers at that moment. They become the leader of prayer in their



homes just as the priest praying at the altar at church. As the priests say the words of Jesus, the fathers at home pray with their children also saying the very same words of the Lord.

I further believe in this time of pandemic that the home, each home, becomes an important place, a sacred place. This is a place where a family joins together as family. And a father joins with his family in a real and true union at that moment – especially when praying at Mass, even that livestreamed Mass – becoming a leader of prayer.

I have been thinking of this today as our Church and our country prepares for another Thanksgiving. Like many others, I think, and I am certain many fathers also think,

that this year's Thanksgiving should be more meaningful. This year, I am going to put together a better, a more meaningful "grace before the meal." This year the family should experience a Thanksgiving that is real. The family may have watched the Thanksgiving Day Mass livestreamed from the parish church. So many fathers should decide that they should make the whole day meaningful.

Thanksgiving Day is about gratitude, of course. For me that means I look back to Brother David Steinhilber. He gives me through his books and talks the real message of gratitude, a message that always makes true sense to me. I remember well and quote often his words about gratitude: "Want to be happy, be grateful." "Live gratefully – every moment is a gift." Each and every moment is an opportunity, a unique opportunity, and for this we should all be grateful.

I believe God brings to each of us unique opportuni-

ties every day. I have written this often, but I believe very firmly in this message of the Lord. I am constantly grateful to my God for the gift of these opportunities. My prayer each morning is that I will recognize these opportunities that I am certain come from the Lord each day. Not only do I pray I recognize these opportunities, I pray that I will live these opportunities. I believe that these opportunities will be my road to sainthood. I pray that each of you will find the opportunities that the Lord offers to you.

Today, my Thanksgiving Prayer is for each family, and in a special way for each father, as they all join in gratitude for the blessings of being joined together. As I pray for each family, I also pray that soon the families of each parish – the families of our Catholic Church – will be united as Church so that our Church can work together as a strong and powerful force to make our world a better place.

FOLLOW ME:

# Preparing to begin a new Liturgical Year

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving Day 2020 and approach the beginning of a new Liturgical Year on November 30th, the First Sunday of Advent, I want to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a Happy Thanksgiving and a very blessed New Church Year.



**Bishop Terry R. LaValley**

Last year at about this time, my brother bishops from New York and I had just returned from the ad limina visit to the Holy Father. What a difference a year makes! Since that time, COVID-19 has reared its ugly head and continues to wreak havoc in our lives. Tens of thousands of individuals, of all ages, have died. So many are suffering today from the virus. Our sisters and brothers have lost jobs or are worried about holding on to them. Businesses have closed permanently. We struggle with feelings of heightened anxiety and uncertainty as the number of persons contracting the virus increases in our North Country communities.

School administrators, faculty and staff continue to extend themselves in truly remarkable fashion to provide safe learning environments for our children and youth. Parental understanding and support have been invaluable. Pastors and pastoral staffs are creatively offering Christian Formation in our parishes while ensuring that all safe distancing, facial protection, sanitizing and cleaning

protocols are followed. Health care professionals and hospital staff place themselves in harm's way to be instruments of healing and comfort. Our local government leaders work hard to assist our communities in combatting the pandemic. Parishes are providing food and meals to families and individuals in need.

You know that the sacramental life of our parishes has been severely disrupted. Celebrations of baptisms, First Communion, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and ordinations have all been significantly impacted by the pandemic. The public celebration of weekday and Sunday Masses stopped for a time, and their resumption has been contingent upon the implementation of protocol procedures that have been meticulously followed in our parishes. Such protocols such as facial protection may make us feel uncomfortable in church, but we persevere for the good of our neighbor.

Given the changing protocols, we continue to experience cancellations and postponements. However, the mission of this local Church continues. Virtual meetings and the livestreaming of Masses remain a link that many parishioners find helpful. I want to express my deep gratitude for your continuing support and patience as we follow established protocols. Your faithfulness is a

source of great inspiration and sign of hope.

Certainly, the recent announcements of possible vaccines that are effective against the coronavirus is welcome news. Yet, we are experiencing far more than a public health emergency. Public worship has been compromised. The risk remains that we can become comfortable staying away from Church. We can lose touch with the Eucharistic Christ. This new Liturgical Year brings each of us an opportunity to renew our fidelity to Jesus Christ during these troubling times.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. Do we hunger for the Eucharist? In the weeks ahead we will hear more of our Church's efforts to revive our Eucharistic faith and practice. Such a Eucharist-centered renewal will call our attention to the necessity of public worship and help us realize again that the Eucharist is who we are and what we do as Catholics.

Perhaps, not all the members of our families will gather around our dinner tables this Thanksgiving due to the pandemic. Many among us experience isolation and loneliness during this difficult time, particularly loved ones in nursing homes or those who are hospitalized. Let us pray for one another. We are confident in a brighter tomorrow because, Christed, Christ-fed, and Hope-filled, the Eucharistic Christ is our constant Companion and Source of unending joy and peace. God's blessings to you and your loved ones!

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS



**St. Mary's Thrift Store, located at 7 Main Street in Canton, has reopened! The store offers a wide selection of blouses, slacks, pants, jackets, tops and shoes. All sizes, from infant through adult, are available at low prices. The thrift store is open for shopping Monday and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Social distancing, masks and safe practices are required. Shoppers are asked to enter the front (Main Street) door. Donations are accepted only on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and only at the back door.**

## REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

**THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS**

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

— PRAYER SUGGESTION —

O Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name a priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own dispositions and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul; take over his entire personality and life.

Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always. O Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (...)

Amen.

**DECEMBER**

December  
Divine Infancy

DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG, NY		2020					
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
			1	2	3	4	5
			BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY	REV. DAVID DELUCA, MSC	REV. GARVIN J. DEMARAS	REV. RICHARD D. DEMERS	REV. JOHN M. DEMO
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	MSGR. LAWRENCE M. DENO	REV. RAYMOND DIESBOURG, MSC	OUR PASTOR	REV. JOHN L. DOWNS	MSGR. DENNIS J. DUPREY V.F.	REV. GUY F. EDWARDS	REV. JOSEPH W. ELLIOTT
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
REV. ALFRED H. FISH	REV. FRANCIS J. FLYNN	POPE FRANCIS	BENEDICT XVI POPE EMERITUS	REV. VINCENT FREEH, MSC	REV. J. MICHAEL GAFFEY	REV. ADIRAN GALLAGHER	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
REV. GARY B. GIROUX	REV. JOSEPH W. GIROUX	RETIRED PRIESTS	REV. L. WILLIAM GORDON	REV. DANIEL GOULET	REV. ALEX V. GUIMPOL	REV. ROLLAND A. HART	
27	28	29	30	31			
REV. ALBERT J. HAUSER V.F.	REV. PETER G. HELFRICH	DECEASED PRIESTS	REV. MICHAEL J. JABLONSKI	REV. VICENTE F. JAZMINES			

For more information visit us online at [www.mprprgpostlate.com](http://www.mprprgpostlate.com)

A donation to help support THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS will be appreciated. The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests is graciously underwritten by: Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocations Society [www.myvocation.net](http://www.myvocation.net)

# 'We give you to God because He healed you'

By **Mary Beth Bracy**  
Contributing Writer

**SARANAC LAKE** – “During monsoon season, traveling by boat is risky, but we have no choice. One has to face gigantic waves as high as 10 meters (over 30 feet!),” shared Father Alex V. Guimpol, about traveling to Our Lady of Penafrancia Church, located on the island of Balaton, Lagonoy, in the Philippines. It took three hours to travel to his church, facing the Pacific Ocean.

Father Guimpol was born on November 20, 1973 in Naga City, in the Archdiocese of Caceres. He grew up in Pili, Camarines Sur. From a family of eight children, three boys and five girls, Father Guimpol is the sixth child and youngest boy. At 40 days old, Father Guimpol was hospitalized.

It was “a life and death situation. The doctor advised my parents to pray for miracles. They made a promisa, a covenant to God,” Father Guimpol said.

If he survived the procedure, they would give him to God, “because He healed you.” They connected this to Father Guimpol entering the seminary, “But, in my younger years, I wanted to become a soldier.”

His parents volunteered to have him “act as an Easter Angel during holy week,” he said.

“In the Philippines, the celebration of Easter begins before dawn,” Father Guimpol said. “We rise by 4 a.m. for a ritual procession called ‘Salubong’ or ‘Encuentro.’ It’s a pre-dawn meeting of two processed images, the Risen Christ, and the



Father Alex V. Guimpol

image of a still-mourning Mary, covered in a black dress and veil. The Angel unveils Mary before meeting the statue of the Resurrected Christ.”

Father Guimpol’s parents told him: “You entered the seminary because God called you. And we promised Him that you will act as an Easter Angel.”

His father, Ciriaco Guimpol was born in 1923, in Milaor. He was orphaned and raised by his four older siblings. Due to poverty, they didn’t have formal education, but he was really good with math. During the outbreak of WWII, he and his brothers joined the guerilla movement to resist the Japanese occupation. His two brothers didn’t survive. Every First Friday, his father left early in the morning to go to Hinulid to pray, attend Mass and venerate the sacred statue of Christ laid to rest.

“On Sunday, we would go to Church as a family,” added Father Guimpol.

Lydia Velasco, Father Guimpol’s mother, came

from a very religious family, with 11 children. She was born in 1941, the second among 11. One of the eldest, she went to school until sixth grade. After, she stopped so that her other siblings could finish their studies.

“She helped my grandparents earn their livelihood by selling cooked food and vegetables,” Father Guimpol said.

“Through hard work and sacrifices my parents provided us with a good education by sending us to Catholic schools,” remembered Father Guimpol.

His parents said: “Education is a treasure that you cannot take away from us, the only treasure that we can give you.” Father Guimpol attended Pili Central School, followed by St. Catherine Labouré.

“My siblings and I were so active in the Church,” he said. “We joined Chiro Youth Movement. This organization is involved in faith formation and catechesis; choir and altar service.”

From fourth grade until



Father Alex V. Guimpol spearheaded the effort to raise funds needed to build Our Lady of Penafrancia Church.

the end of high school, he was an altar server.

During his fourth year of high school, religious congregations held vocation campaigns. Boys were exempted from classes to attend. The seminary invited them to orientation. Father Guimpol’s friends asked him to join them in entering. His father discouraged him, since they didn’t have relatives on his side, and he wanted him to continue his name.

In 1990, a month after his entrance, Father Guimpol’s father visited him and accepted his decision. His family and siblings were supportive. He is “the good boy” and, among his six best friends who entered, the first ordained. He attended Holy Rosary seminary, and became a priest on March 15, 2000, the Jubilee year.

Father Guimpol was assigned to St. Andrew Parish at Sagnay, a coastal town. Then, in 2002, he was sent to St. Anthony of Padua in Iriga City. In 2004, he was appointed

administrator of Our Lady of Penafrancia Mission Station of Sacred Heart Parish, Garchitorena. In fact, Father Guimpol proposed that the parish be named after Our Lady of Penafrancia. It was providential because on that island the people had a great devotion to her. He was the pioneer priest; it is the first and only island parish in their archdiocese. In 2005, it was made a separate parish.

“It is one of the poorest parishes in the Archdiocese and most of the people are farmers and fishermen,” Father Guimpol said. “Most of the residents are not Catholics.”

Many young people didn’t finish school; they went to big towns and worked as servants or construction workers to help provide for their families. The people were rich in faith, and they had a lot of conversions to the Catholic faith. With the help of the Archdiocesan mission office and seminarians, they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

# Funeral Mass planned for Sister Ellen Mary Looby

A private funeral service will be held for Sister Ellen Mary Looby, a Carmelite of the Monastery of the Incarnation in Beacon.

Sister Ellen Mary of Jesus peacefully passed away on Wednesday, November 11, 2020 at Vassar Brothers Medical Center in Poughkeepsie.

Sister Ellen Mary was born in Ogdensburg, on December 25, 1940, the daughter of Clarence J. and Helen (Fairfield) Looby. Following graduation from St. Mary's Academy in Ogdensburg, she



Sister Ellen Mary Looby, OCD

entered the Carmelite Monastery in Saranac Lake

on January 6, 1959 and made her profession of vows on October 15, 1960. In 1998, she moved with her Carmelite community to the mid-Hudson Valley to become part of the new community of Carmelite Nuns at Beacon.

Sister Ellen Mary had an artist's eye for color and beauty. Throughout her Carmelite life she used her creative gifts in needlework, calligraphy and creative design, generously contributing time and talent to the various community mailings by which the

sisters share the life of Carmel with family and friends.

Sister was an avid reader undaunted by large volumes; she enjoyed poetry, composing haikus, playing the melodica, and planning liturgies. She took delight in the variety of birds that fed at her window. Sister Ellen Mary kept informed about current events, praying steadfastly for the needs of the Church and our country. Her kind, gentle presence is deeply missed.

Sister Ellen Mary is sur-

vived by three brothers: Thomas (Joan) Looby, Father John J. Looby of the Ogdensburg Diocese, Philip (Barbara) Looby, two sisters: Margaret (Wayne) Randall, Sister Mary Elizabeth, GNSH, and many nieces and nephews.

Father Christopher J. Looby, nephew of Sister Ellen Mary, will preside. Burial will follow in St. Joachim Cemetery, Beacon.

To send a personal condolence please visit [www.riverviewbyhalvey.com](http://www.riverviewbyhalvey.com).

## 'We give you to God'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

conducted youth and adult catechesis.

During the first months, Father Guimpol celebrated Mass in a house. Then, they were able to use wood and palm leaves to build a temporary church, which was rebuilt due to typhoons. In 2007, Archbishop Legaspi told him that 2010 would mark 300 years of diocesan devotion to Our Lady of Penafrancia; he said that the best gift the parish could give to Our Lady was a church building "where people could gather to pray and worship."

Father Guimpol applied for grants and, within two

years, raised \$200,000. Half of the funds were donated by a family devoted to Our Lady of Penafrancia. In 2010, they gave "the best gift" of a church building to Our Lady.

During stormy season, people seek refuge in the church. He also constructed the rectory and parish hall, and procured funds from the government for the water system for the island. In 2012, Father Guimpol was transferred to St. John of the Cross Parish, Agadangan, Baa.

On August 15, 2017, the Archbishop sent him to St. Bernard's in Saranac Lake. He thinks it is "providen-

tial" because he is surrounded by the Adirondack Mountains. Father Guimpol said he "fell in love with the people, mountains, and lakes. The people are very warm and welcoming."

He relishes the different seasons and does a lot of hiking, kayaking, and canoeing. He has climbed several of the 46 mountains, including Mount Marcy.

"It's a heaven on earth experience," Father Guimpol said.

At St. Bernard's, Father

Guimpol's first pastor was Father Patrick Ratigan, who he considered a father figure.

"I really thank him for his guidance and for introducing me to the parish life and ministry," Father Guimpol said. "He's very well organized and systematic in the parish administration. I enjoyed his company plus his dog, Iggy."

Father Guimpol said he "really loves the company of his current pastor, Father Martin Cline, with Msgr. CJ McAvoy and Fa-

ther Joseph Giroux."

"We take turns cooking, helping in different work and liturgical activities," Father Guimpol said. "I'm very thankful for Bishop Terry LaValley and to the clergy of the Diocese of Ogdensburg for their fraternal acceptance and guidance to us missionary priests."

Father Guimpol said he continues his time in the North Country trying to share "The joy of the priesthood, doing things for God, giving yourself for the love and service of the Church."

### AROUND THE DIOCESE

#### WINTER QUICHE SALE

LYON MOUNTAIN – St. Bernard's Knights of Columbus to host a Winter Quiche Sale to benefit Healing Grace Perinatal Hospice, Inc.

**Date:** Dec. 5; pre-order by Dec. 4

**Times:** Noon to 4 p.m.

**Cost:** \$10 per quiche

**Location:** Lyon Mountain Legion

**Features:** Options are broccoli and cheese, ham and cheese or broccoli, ham and cheese. Delivery available within a 20-mile radius.

**Contact:** Order by calling 913-201-0875 or 518-593-2052.

#### VIRTUAL PRIEST DISCERNMENT

Zoom in to Priest Discernment. High

School Junior men & older are invited to join Father Howard Venette & guests for 60-minute discernment sessions.

**Dates:** Nov. 29 and Dec. 13

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Contact:** Father Venette at [hvenette@gmail.com](mailto:hvenette@gmail.com) for access.

#### VOCATIONS EVENT

Follow me: A time to pray and discern vocation.

**Date:** Dec. 13

**Schedule:** 2 p.m. there will be a Holy Hour for vocations in each deanery and livestreamed at [rcdony.org/livemass](http://rcdony.org/livemass) with Bishop Terry

R. LaValley. At 6:30 p.m. there will be a Zoom question and answer session with Bishop LaValley, Sister Mary Gregory Munger, SSJ, and sminarians.

**Contact:** If you have any questions, call the Vocations Office at (315)393-2920.

#### VIRTUAL FAMILY LIFE CONFERENCE

Watch the "Iron Sharpens Iron" project from the virtual Family Life Conference at [rcdony.org/vflc](http://rcdony.org/vflc)

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

## DID YOU ATTEND A CURSILLO WEEKEND FROM 1967-1977?

Fr. Jack Downs is working on writing a brief history about Cursillo from 1967-1977. If you attended a Cursillo weekend during this time please contact Fr. Jack at 315-384-4143 or by sending him a letter at 8828 State Route 56, Massena, NY 13662.

If you were a priest who served as a spiritual director between 1978-1990 please contact Fr. Jack as well.



## Share Christmas greetings with priests of our diocese

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**Rev. Shane M. Lynch**  
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## Share Christmas greetings with priests of our diocese

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**Rev. Lawrence E. Marullo**  
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**Rev. Kevin D. McEwan**  
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Rome, NY, 13440

**Rev. Gilbert B. Menard**  
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**MERRY CHRISTMAS**



## Environmental Stewardship

## Could there be a connection?

In the coming days, we are invited to celebrate a national day of Thanksgiving and to begin the Advent season.

While the focus of these two celebrations seems very different, could there be something that connects them together?

One possible connection comes from the Mohawk traditional decision-making process. It begins with their Thanksgiving Prayer that names various elements of the sky, Mother Earth and all her children for which they are grateful. To each one everyone responds: "Now our minds are one."

This Prayer can last as long as the leader chooses, maybe as long as an hour or more.

In a spirit of gratitude and sense of the interconnectedness of all life, do they make decisions in light of the effects on the seventh generation of children.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, Brother David Steindl-Rast, Benedictine monk and author of *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, offers us a thought about gratefulness: "Everything is a gift. The degree to which we are awake to this truth is a measure of our gratefulness, and gratefulness is the measure of our aliveness."

He seems to imply that our gratefulness is dependent upon our ability to be attentive and awake to what is around and within us.

This brings us to the Scripture for the First Sunday of Advent. Christ reminds us of our need to be watchful and awake.

Our gratitude is dependent upon how awake we are to recognize the presence of God's gifts in our midst and to make wise decisions that will benefit not only now but the seventh generation to come.

What is one way that my decorating and gift giving this Christmas can reflect my gratefulness for all God's gifts and my desire to consider the effects these decisions will have on the next generation? Reflect – Decide – Do it!

It is my hope that you, the readers, are finding our explanations of the North Country Cursillo movement both interesting and informative! I am writing again, this time specifically as the Precursillo Coordinator, and in effort to help ease apprehensions should you or someone you know be interested in joining our group of joyful friends of Jesus, women and men of God! It's important to know that this is a JOURNEY. A journey that starts with you reading this series, continues with your interest and application, and further continues with the time leading up to the

## Rest in Peace

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

**Nov. 25** – Rev. M. C. Dubreuil, O.M.I., 1912

**Nov. 27** – Rev. Joseph Cole, 1929; Rev. Maurice O'Neil, 1999

**Nov. 28** – Rev. Edward Gabriel Brice, 1929; Rev. Real Labrie, O.M.I., 1978

**Nov. 29** – Rev. John F. Meaney, O.S.A., 1942; Msgr. Michael Kelly, 1957; Rev. Peter A. Ward, 1984

**Dec. 1** – Rev. Charles Goulet, 1913; Rev. George J. Bouchard, 1967

**Dec. 2** – Rev. Charles Desrosiers, 1944; Rev. Joseph A. R. Cote, 1969; Rev. Joseph Fortier, M.S.C., 1970

**Dec. 3** – Rev. Michael O'Neill, 1899; Msgr. Walter Funcke, 1958

**Dec. 4** – Msgr. James Mackey, 1883; Rev. Alexis D. Medeville, O.M.I., 1884; Rev. Albert Chevalier, O.M.I., 1948; Msgr. Joseph Patrick Heslin, 1962; Rev. Charles A. Flaherty, 1974

**Dec. 5** – Rev. Michael Hallahan, 1891; Most Rev. Edgar P. Wadhams, D.D., 1891

**Dec. 6** – Rev. Edward F. O'Brien, 1936

**Dec. 8** – Rev. Patrick J. McGuinness, 1931; Msgr. Cornelius J. Crowley, 1946; Rev. John Leo Hammill, 1949; Rev. John Harvey, 1961

## GET TO KNOW CURSILLO

## Before the retreat weekend



famed "short course" or Cursillo Weekend. We'll be talking plenty about the weekend and the final and longest leg of the journey, in the articles to come.

The Precursillo, however, starts at this very moment! The date of the weekend retreat really does not matter at this point, as it's now that we look to make a friend in Christ, one that will see the applicant through the initial period of discernment. The applicant may be you or someone you know, that like me had been sitting at Mass faithfully every weekend, but looked around at the congregation and won-

## Bishop's Public Schedule

**Nov. 25** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Nov. 26** – 9 a.m. – Thanksgiving Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Nov. 28** – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Nov. 29** – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Nov. 30** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Dec. 1** – 4:30 p.m. – St. Lawrence Deanery Clergy Penance Service followed by dinner at St. Mary's Cathedral

## 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.

## Learn more or get involved

To learn more about participating in a Cursillo weekend and the Cursillo movement, visit [rcdony.org/cursillo](http://rcdony.org/cursillo), call Michael Neaton at 315-261-4150 or email [nccsec2019@gmail.com](mailto:nccsec2019@gmail.com).

dered, "what am I missing?" or, "how is it that all these others seem to find a special joy in the Church, but I'm here because I feel obligated to be?" Precursillo is the preparation time. It starts with the completion of a simple application and connecting with a new friend who will assist in the process. Ideally the applicant will be exposed to portions of the Fourth Day (life after the Weekend) by participating with cursillistas in small group and/or ultreya meetings. This takes time. Although it is tempting to base a decision to start the process by determining if the applicant is available on the date of the retreat, that is not the preferred way. The applicant may not be ready to attend the next weekend retreat, but there will be more down

## 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-anneyanulavich@yahoo.com](mailto:terri-anneyanulavich@yahoo.com) Phone: 518-651-2267 days; 518-569-0612 evenings; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; [ccarrara@rcdony.org](mailto: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](http://www.ReportBishopAbuse.org).

the road. Stated another way, this part of the process is to determine the desire for conversion of the applicant. It may not be for everyone but the application process is risk and cost free, so there's no reason to hesitate.

On the Diocese of Ogdensburg website ([rcdony.org](http://rcdony.org)) you will find the Cursillo by clicking on "Offices" on the top banner, then finding Evangelization and on that dropdown. On the black bar under the initial picture, you'll see Cursillo as the second choice to click on! As that seems a bit difficult, the alternative is just type in Cursillo in the search box and it'll come up. After all that effort (I'm sorry about that), browse down to the "How to Apply" section, and you'll find a link within to get to the application. Just a few things for when you go to fill it out. Please do not worry if you don't have a cursillista you know to sponsor you. Complete the application and forward it to me. Secondly, there is no worry about the cost at the application time. Even the deposit is not required until the weekend commitment letters come out. We will be in touch with you about that later in the process. The important thing is simply to express your interest by getting your application to me.

Don't hesitate my friends and start the process now! Fill out an application or at least, contact me (or any other cursillista) with your questions or concerns.

Meanwhile, continue to look for our "Get To Know Cursillo" articles in future additions of the North Country Catholic. I'm sure you'll be intrigued by the varied perspectives and experiences of our North Country cursillistas!



# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Young people explore connections of economy, ecology, faith

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — Inspired by St. Francis of Assisi and by Pope Francis, 2,000 young adults met online to discuss making the economy more responsive to human dignity and more respectful of creation. The economists, entrepreneurs and "change-makers," all of whom were under age 35, were not calling for an end to capitalism but for a style of doing business that focused on creating jobs, wealth and human flourishing without excluding anyone and without destroying the environment. The Economy of Francesco project, sponsored in part by the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, hosted a virtual global meeting Nov. 19-21. The young adults were joined by experts in their fields who participated in their online discussions, offered encouragement and gave feedback for ways to improve their projects and research. Paraphrasing a prayer of St. Francis, Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the dicastery, thanked the young adults "for bringing light into our dark world, for bringing love in these times of indifference, for bringing hope to many of us who are in despair, and for bringing faith in a different economy that can serve an inclusive and sustainable world."

## U.S. priest to become rector of Canada's largest Catholic shrine

**MONTREAL (CNS)** — U.S. Holy Cross Father Michael DeLaney will become rector of Montreal's St. Joseph's Oratory, Canada's biggest Catholic shrine, Nov. 22. "I am very grateful and honored for this opportunity to continue the work of St. Brother Andre so that his important mission reflects the values of our Congregation of Holy Cross," said the new rector. Brother Andre firmly believed "that everyone he met, regardless of origin and beliefs, could share our faith by belonging to the universal church." The president of the Oratory's board of directors, Serge Benoit, explained that when the nomination process began several months ago, Father DeLaney quickly became the obvious choice to the selection committee. He said Father DeLaney, who worked in Chile for 10 years, is "a natural leader, a man of faith and a team player." Born in the United States in 1958, Father DeLaney grew up in Skaneateles, New York. He was admitted to the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1981 and was ordained a priest in 1987. For the past five years, he has directed the Holy Cross Mission Center, the organization that coordinates the missionary work of the American Province members of his religious congregation.

## Report: Many Americans rely on their faith in uncertain times

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — An annual survey on public attitudes toward religious faith by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty indicates, not surprisingly, a considerable amount of objection to government-imposed limits on the size of congregations in houses of worship amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "In a number of cases during the pandemic where houses of worship asked to receive equal treatment with businesses ... courts ruled that the place of business could receive higher priority," the report stated. "But," it said, "when asked to compare priorities for reopenings after coronavirus outbreaks, a majority of respondents said that houses of worship should be treated with at least the same priority as reopened businesses," the report states. Becket's Religious Freedom Index Report was released Nov. 17. Because respondents said "that religion is part of an individual's identity, not just a hobby or weekend activity," they also saw that it "requires protection and accommodations," the report stated.

# Virtual bishops' meeting: More efficient, less personal

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — In a year when most meetings have switched to an online format, the fall assembly of the U.S. bishops was no exception.

The Nov. 16-17 virtual meeting involved about 300 bishops on Zoom and many viewers watching the livestreamed public portions.

The two days of discussions went off without a hitch, save for the occasional bishop either on mute or repeating: "Can you hear me?" while Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, gave the thumbs-up sign from the USCCB studio that was the command center for these sessions.

The archbishop, led the meeting along with Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit, USCCB vice president and Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield, outgoing USCCB general secretary. The three sat at a desk behind plexiglass separators, quite different from the dais on the hotel ballroom stage at typical bishops' meetings.

And this year, when bishops discussed topics from the recently issued Vatican report on Theodore McCarrick to ongoing responses at the diocesan level to the coronavirus pandemic and the nation's reckoning with racism, they did not have to walk up to the microphones to speak but instead raised their hands electronically to be called on and then addressed the group directly, each from very similar looking offices.

A few bishops who spoke with Catholic News Service after the meeting were upbeat about the ex-

perience, saying it was an efficient way to meet as a body, but they also missed the camaraderie that is a big part of their annual fall gathering in Baltimore.

For many bishops, this yearly assembly often spans one week because of the meetings before and after the days of executive and public sessions.

One big thing this virtual meeting didn't have that the bishops missed was the coffee breaks.

Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Virginia, said he appreciated the meeting's abbreviated scheduled, but like others, he definitely missed the "in-between times" of meals and coffee breaks that are all part of building relationships and networking.

Similarly, Auxiliary Bishop Robert P. Reed of Boston, who is president of the television network CatholicTV, said he missed the casual conversations in the hall during breaks or even talking in the elevator that gave him the chance as a fairly new bishop, since 2016, to meet other bishops and hear about their ministries.

He also said he missed the opportunities to pray and celebrate Mass together.

During the in-person meetings, a section of a hotel conference room is designated as a chapel with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Bishop Reed said you could go in at any time and see maybe seven or eight bishops there, which he said was a "very powerful experience."

"What was lacking was personal interaction," echoed Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, noting that bish-

ops can be isolated, like everyone else right now. He said it's important to be able to talk together, "not as a closed club," but to offer fraternal and spiritual support.

Bishop Knestout said the dynamics in group meetings sometimes come from spontaneous reactions from those you are sitting with. In many online platforms, the chat groups attempt to offer that same experience, he said, but it's not the same.

One thing that worked for Bishop Reed in this set-up was when each bishop came up full screen with their individual remarks, which he found more personal than the usual format with microphones scattered throughout the room.

"There was a personal touch to it," he said, noting that you could sense the emotion and sincerity of the bishops as they were speaking from their own offices.

What also worked for these bishops was the savings on travel expenses, and they also liked the ability to still get some work done during the two-day block.

"Under the circumstances," Bishop Reed said, "it was a great way to get business done and it was still a collegial experience."

The bishops, like much of the rest of the world, have embraced the Zoom platform as a way to meet in this time of social distancing.

Bishop Knestout said he has used the platform a lot this past year with meetings, conferences and diocesan functions including a eucharistic congress in early November that wrapped up the diocese's bicentennial celebration.

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

## Be alert as we enter season of Advent

The theme of Advent this year is BE ALERT. It reminds me of the saying on a sundial in an old English garden: IT'S LATER THAN YOU THINK! We need to take Advent very seriously this year. Even more than we have in other years. We must so well absorb the lessons of Advent that we can be a witness to many in our families, our neighborhoods and our country that a serious turning to God and his



Monsignor  
Paul E.  
Whitmore

teaching is needed.

In the first reading from Isaiah, the people of Israel who have been so unfaithful in the past, have had a dramatic change of heart. They admit their sinfulness and are now ready to turn to God. "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down" they pray, and they are willing to be molded by God into a people of whom He will approve. This Advent, we need to admit our sinful

November 29

First Sunday of Advent

READINGS

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

unfaithfulness and indifference. We need to let God, the potter, mold us into a people eager to do His will.

In the second reading, St. Paul urges the Corinthians to be patient in their faith and to be firm to the end, whenever that will come.

In the Gospel, Jesus

says to his disciples, "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come."

What does it mean to be ready? Faithfulness to the sacraments of the Church, for one thing. They are sources of strength and perseverance. Then, we need wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit to help us make right decisions. And we need fortitude and courage to act on God's inspirations. We also need the support and encouragement of others in our faith community. We cannot prepare alone.

We must not put off our readiness. We need daily prayer, reading of sacred Scripture, and the discipline of keeping free of sin and the attractions of all that would distract us from being alert of what God expects of us. These are dangerous times with the pandemic and the corrosion of regard for religion with all its respect for life in the womb.

Let's all make this the best Advent we have ever made. Our own salvation and the bolstering of the life of our nation depend on God working through us.

## CALLED TO SERVE

## Nun Danket: Now we give thanks

"Martin Rinckart (1586-1649) was an accomplished musician who studied at the University of Leipzig and then spent most of his career as a musician and archdeacon in the city of Eilenburg during the Thirty Years' War." Rinckart is credited with writing the lyrics, and maybe the music, to one of the most popular hymns in the Christian music catalog, Now Thank We All Our God. See, you started singing it already!

Nun Danket, the musical setting for the hymn,

translates from German as Now Thanks. Indeed, it is a fitting hymn for us to sing at this time of year as we give thanks for all the blessings God has bestowed.

When Rinckart wrote this piece, he was "one of the last surviving ministers in the city. Rinckart had to stretch personal resources to take care of refugees and spend most of his time performing nearly 50 funerals per day at the height of the plague. This experience during the Thirty Years' War had a profound im-

pact on Rinckart's poetry."

Our priests and deacons have not reached the same desperate situation, but the words of the hymn ring true this year, every year as we gather for our Thanksgiving dinners

*Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices;*

*Who wondrous things hath done, In whom this world rejoices. Who, from our mother's arms, Hath led us on our way, With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.*



Deacon  
Kevin Mastellon

Rinckart's inspiration for the lyrics came from the Book of Sirach in the Old Testament:

*And now, bless the God of all who has done wondrous things on earth; Who fosters men's growth from their mother's womb, and fashions them according to his will!*


We gather this Thanksgiving in small, masked groups. Some of us are quarantined, others are hospitalized. For those of us who have been spared, we pray the COVID virus will not visit

us or those we love.

I hope we do not dwell on our fears this Thanksgiving, but rather find it in our hearts to recognize all that has been given to us, all that makes us smile, all that makes us give thanks. According to legend, this memorable hymn was usually sung just before dinner by those gathered to share their meager meal in difficult times. The circumstances are different, but the sentiment is the same.

Happy Thanksgiving, non danket.

Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown. He is the Director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg. [kmastellon@rcdony.org](mailto:kmastellon@rcdony.org)



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

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director  
622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669  
(315) 393-2920; fax 1-866-314-7296  
mbrett@rcdony.org

# Let us pray this Thanksgiving

As we sit down to Thanksgiving with family and friends this week, let us take a moment to remember those who are living in so much despair this year.

The Mission Office is grateful to those who dedicate their lives to spreading the word of the Lord to those less fortunate than us.

Let us pray for the missions and show thanks to all those who do so much for so many so far away.

2020 has been a hard year. For all who are suffering either from the pandemic or other crippling illness, for the poor, those denied dignity, and those who are living without hope, we pray for them this Thanksgiving that God will grant them the peace of knowing that Christ the King will never abandon them nor tire of tending to their needs.

For this great country, where our voices do make a difference, where we have the freedom to live our lives in accordance with our beliefs, where our potential is not limited by our parentage, and where we have the opportunity to raise our families in comfort and abundance, we thank you Lord; Let us pray for peace in our great nation and mutual respect for all.

For the children of the world, may they be protected from hunger, abuse, illiteracy, disease, neglect, and violence, and allowed to enjoy lighthearted and carefree childhoods, gently molded by God's laws and loving discipline.

Let us help these children and remember them at this Christmas season with a gift of prayers and resources to the Pontifical Mission Societies.

For all Christians, may we be humble stewards of the gifts given to us by God, may we better stewards of our planet, and may we set an example of mercy and generosity by becoming involved in efforts to distribute the worlds wealth among all of those in need.

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

## OBITUARIES

**Chateaugay** – Leo Boyea, 79; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 19, 2020 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Croghan** – Henry Francis "Hank" DeLaPorte, 93; Graveside Services Nov. 11 at St. Stephen's Cemetery.

**Harrisville** – Barbara (Tilley) Trombly, 85; Memorial Mass Nov. 28, 2020 at St. Francis Solanus Church; burial in St. Francis Solanus Cemetery.

**Massena** – Anthony "Tony" Joseph LaRosa, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 20, 2020 at Church of the Sacred Heart; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

**Norfolk** – Ruth M. (Blue) Delosh, 83; Funeral Services Nov. 19, 2020 at the Buck Funeral Home; burial in Visitation Cemetery.

**Plattsburgh** – Gracemary Branon Fairbanks, 74; Mass of Christina Burial Nov. 20, 2020 at St. John's Church; burial

in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

**Redford** – Theresa m. Boldman, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 23, 2020 at Church of the Assumption

**Tupper Lake** – Patricia (Duffy) Cook, 75; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 18, 2020 at St. Alphonsus Church; burial in Holy Name Cemetery.

**Watertown** – Connie Jean Newtown Lambert, 76; Private Mass held.

# 'That was when I fell in love with the faith'

By Darcy Fargo  
Editor

**CARTHAGE** – A question from an Indiana Jones movie helped Carthage resident Joseph "Joe" Brosk return to the Catholic faith.

Brosk, now a parishioner at St. James Minor Church, was raised in the faith. In young adulthood, though, he fell away from his faith for a time.

"I was raised in the classic American Catholic family," he said. "I went to Catholic grade school and public high school."

But when he went to college and fell into the secular lifestyle, Brosk stopped regularly practicing his faith for a time.

When he became married and had young children, he began to question his belief system, partly inspired by a quote from the movie, "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade."

"There's a part of the movie when Sean Connery – who is playing Indiana Jones' father – gets shot," Brosk said. "The guy who shoots him delivers a line that ends with, 'it's time to ask yourself what you be-



lieve!"

Brosk began to think about what he believed.

"I believe I love my wife, but I can't prove it," he said. "I believe I love my children, but I can't prove it. That led to the fundamental question: do I believe in God? It's much easier to answer 'no.' If I answered 'yes,' a whole bunch of other questions follow. Like 'then what?'"

Brosk said he started "examining faith through adult eyes and adult experiences," studying and learning more about the

faith and the teachings of the Church. He also completed the Formation for Ministry program and was commissioned as a lay minister by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

"I started looking deeper and deeper into Catholicism," he said. "Particularly through the lens of someone who has a handicap son. I had a lot of questions, including, 'how can a loving God do this to a child?' As I looked deeper and deeper, I learned that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

# 'Fell in love with the faith'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

there really aren't any new issues. These are all questions and issues the Catholic Church has answered and addressed. The Church has seen it all. I realized there was a lot more to our faith than kneeling and genuflecting and making the Sign of the Cross. That was when I fell in love with the faith."

Though he fell in love with his faith, Brosk notes it hasn't been a perfect life since.

"I'll never forget one Easter Sunday," he said. "It was a beautiful morning, a beautiful Easter morning! I thought, 'this is perfect! We'll all walk to church on Easter Sunday. We live close enough.' I have a son who has been diagnosed with pretty much everything a psychologist ever studied in college. I couldn't get him out the door. I tried everything. I became furious with God. Here we are trying to celebrate the biggest, holiest day of the year, and we can't go. I was furious. Then, I figured there must be a God. Otherwise, who am I mad at?"

Brosk said he considered such moments – moments that bring him closer to God – to be miracles.



Joseph 'Joe' Brosk

"There used to be a Protestant preacher, Robert Schuller, who would say 'expect a miracle,'" he said. "He's right. God works in our lives every day. When things are looking really dark, wait for a miracle. It's coming. It may not come the way you want it. It may not come in the shape you want it. It may not come at the time you want it. But it is coming. Time and time again, miracles pop up. You know what a miracle is? Anything that increases your faith, that's a miracle. It might be big and spectacular, or it might be tiny,

but if it increases your faith, it's a miracle. They happen all the time, but you might have to look for them."

That belief in God and belief in his everyday miracles both challenges Brosk and brings him peace.

"It's easy to think we're in charge of our lives and in control," he said. "We get upset when things don't go our way, and we feel like we've lost control. We never really have control. We have the ability and sometimes opportunity to make decisions and choices. Ultimately, though, we don't really control the outcomes. That realization led me to an ability to just let go. It's the greatest thing in the world. I'm still responsible, and I still have to

make choices, but I'm not making them alone. It's still hard. It's extremely hard. Throughout history, there has always been a conflict between our egos and our will. I think it was (G.K.) Chesterson that once said something like, 'we all want to serve God, but we want to do it mostly in an advisory capacity.'"

Brosk now likes to share his faith with others. He's been teaching Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) since 2011.

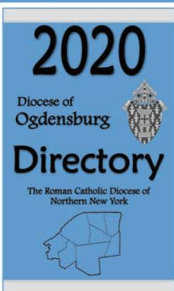
"I love it! It gives me a chance to be on stage," he said, laughing. "I sometimes get the sense that 99.9 percent of what people know about Catholicism was learned from Hollywood movies. It's really difficult to learn about the faith just by going to

Mass. At Mass, the sermons are related to the readings or the Gospels specific to that Sunday. With RCIA, I get the opportunity to help people start looking at things a bit differently. Hunters or hikers would get the analogy of going into the woods. Sometimes, you get to the point where you can't see a thing because of the trees all around you. But if you step to the side enough, sometimes a lane opens up, and you can see through the trees. It's just a slight change of perspective. That's what I believe I do with RCIA. We look at the faith from different angles to help see it clearer, better."

Brosk also says he feels blessed to be growing in his faith and helping others do the same in this particular part of the world.

"I've found that North Country Catholics don't always realize how fortunate they are to live in an area with such a strong Catholic tradition," he said. "Growing up, we moved every two years. In my life, I've lived all over the country and overseas. I've lived in places with pretty anti-Catholic feelings. Sometimes I feel like North Country Catholics have this sense that being Catholic is a normal thing to do. It's not normal. Being truly aware of that, I appreciate it even more. It is special."

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