

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Catechesis continues despite pandemic | PAGE 3

High Court rejects schools' challenge to COVID limits | PAGE 10

The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 75, Number 32

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DEC. 23, 2020

Merry Christmas!



Canton Knights of Columbus installed their annual nativity scene in front of the rectory at St. Mary's Church in Canton.

SHARING OUR STORIES



Nancy and Mark Beddoe, parishioners of St. André Bessette Parish in Malone, say God's providence brought them together and continues to lead them through life. Read about the Beddoes in this week's installment of Sharing Our Stories; Sharing Our Faith, a series highlighting how lay Catholics are living out their faith here in the North Country. To nominate an individual or couple to be featured in this series, contact Darcy Fargo, editor at dfargo@rcdony.org 315-393-2920.

FULL STORY, PAGE 9

No NCC next week

To allow our staff the opportunity to celebrate Christmas, there will be no December 30 edition of the *North Country Catholic*. Our next edition will be dated January 6.

The staff of the *NCC* wishes a blessed and merry Christmas to all our readers and diocesan residents.

Pope Francis: Pray for one, pray for all

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—If Christians forget to remember in prayer people who are suffering, their prayer can become a superficial activity that feeds their ego rather than seeking the good and well-being of others, Pope Francis said.

"Those who pray never turn their backs on the world" but instead, seek to intercede for humanity through prayer, the pope said Dec. 16 during his weekly general audience.

"When believers – moved

by the Holy Spirit – pray for sinners, no selection is made, no judgment or condemnation is uttered," he said. "They pray for everyone, and they pray for themselves. At that moment, they know they are not that different from those for whom they pray."

Continuing his series of talks on prayer, the pope reflected on "the prayer of intercession."

Although many people seek solitude and silence in prayer, he said, they

should do so always keeping "the door of their hearts wide open" to pray for those who can't or won't pray for themselves.

People who pray aware of others are like "God's antennas in the world" and, as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, have "a heart attuned to God's mercy."

"This is beautiful," the pope said, departing from his prepared remarks. "When we pray, we are in tune with God's mercy,

mercy in the face of our sins; he is merciful with us. But he is also merciful with all those who have asked us to pray for them, those who we wish to pray for in tune with God's heart. This is the true prayer, to be in tune with God's mercy, with that merciful heart."

Continuing to cite the catechism, the pope said that those who pray for others participate in Christ's intercession before God for all of humanity.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

An unexpected gift

It's been an unexpected gift.

While my son, Jake, is 13 and can stay home by himself, remote education hasn't been the best experience for him. He needed a bit of additional support and accountability.

For the past several weeks, I've been occasionally working from home to provide that support and accountability. As I've mentioned before, it's not my favorite situation. I feel ill-equipped to help him with math and technology homework. We're trying to work in a shared space without interfering with one another's classes, video

chats, phone calls...

It's not ideal.

Thursday morning, Jake was on a class via video in our dining room while I was working on this newspaper in the living room, the next room over. I found myself distracted listening to him answering questions in a class quiz game. I found myself listening to his classmates and teacher. The interactions were funny and endearing.

In between his classes, Jake and I talked about the game they were playing. Jake took the opportunity to make an easy joke at my expense (something

about me being too old to understand their youthful pop culture references), and we chatted for a few minutes.

As he returned to his desk to start his next class, I sat at my workstation (normally my sewing table) and reflected for a few minutes.

While I love my time in the office and still feel apprehension about my ability to help him, I've discovered this time with Jake is an unexpected gift. I'm enjoying the glimpse into his school life. I'm enjoying the jokes we lob at one another. He seems to be enjoying the glimpse into my work life, too. He regularly asks questions about the tasks I'm completing, the conversations I'm having and the interviews I'm conduct-

ing. It's nice having lunch together.

It seems fitting that I'd come to view this situation – once a source of anxiety and stress for me – as an unexpected gift during this season. It's the time of year when we celebrate the most unexpected gift – that our Lord and Savior became man and entered the world in lowly circumstances.

Speaking of gifts, we at the *North Country Catholic* view you, our readers, as gifts. We thank you for your continued support, Christmas cards, encouraging notes and kind words. Our staff, reporters, photographers and columnists wish you and your loved ones a merry and blessed Christmas.



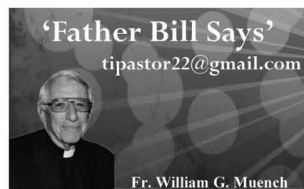
Darcy L. Fargo

Finding cheer in the story of Jesus

Today, I want to wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas, also a Christmas filled with good health. May Christ's love surround you at this Christmas time and always. I continue to be so grateful for so many of you who have sent me Christmas cards. They do bring joy and happiness to me. You make this Christmas time a season of love and peace.

I want to share with you a story, which I think is filled with Christmas spirit. I am reminded today of a young girl that I visited in a hospital in another place a very long time ago. She must have been about 13 years old. I don't remember her name. I do remember that she was very sick. As I remember, she was usually exhausted when I visited. I cannot remember what caused her to be in that condition.

One Sunday afternoon, I decided to visit the hospital. As I passed my friend's hospital room, there were several people in the room. It must have



been her whole family. There was lots of laughter and conversation. I did notice my young friend because she was sitting up smiling and looking bright.

Later I stopped into her room – now empty and quiet. She was calm and again peaceful. I mentioned to here that I had noticed that her room was busy and alive with visitors and that she had seemed rather alert. She told me that she knew how disturbed they were that she was so sick, so she had to do something to cheer them up. I could understand that this was her gift to them.

This morning I attended Mass. We are now in the Masses that form the novena in preparation for Christmas. These are Masses that pre-

pare is well for the celebration of the Feast of Christmas. And truly this was the message that came to me, this was the reason that Jesus came to our world: Jesus came to live with us, to teach us, to die and rise again for us because he wanted to cheer us up.

That really made sense to me. So many of the things that are told us in the Gospels are meant to cheer us up. And during this time of the pandemic, we certainly need some cheering up. The Christmas story is so beautiful – a loving message of the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem, the story of the angels, the story of the Magi coming to Bethlehem. All these stories are so wonderful and truly are meant to cheer us up each year as we celebrate Christmas.

The stories of Jesus' healing someone in need brings so much peace and love to me. Another way to put it is it cheers me up. I think especially of Jesus going with

Jairus to his home to raise up he daughter. And do you remember when Jesus surprisingly came upon the funeral procession of the son of the widow of Nain and brought him back to life? Each time I read that story I am thrilled.

There are so many. I think of Jesus walking on the water and getting into the boat with the apostles and calming the sea. I know that Jesus comes to me often when the sea of my life gets rather rough and filled with high waves. Oh, yes! And there is the number of times that the Lord Jesus feeds the large crowds. I think of those times each time I was planning a parish supper of some sort.

There are so many times during Mass when I hear the proclamation of the Gospel and a story of Jesus truly cheers me up. May the Christmas story again this year bring joy and happiness to you as you again remember each detail, and may it truly cheer you up in this rather curious time.

Catechesis continues despite pandemic

Editor's Note: This is the first article in a multi-article feature about catechesis during the pandemic. Articles highlighting models of catechesis are on the following pages.

By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing Writer

OGDENSBURG—In August, the diocesan Faith Formation Office suggested that pastors and catechetical leaders “survey their catechists to ascertain if they were willing to do in-person instruction, and inquire from parents which approach they would prefer, e.g., in-person, virtual, or hybrid,” explained Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin, SSJ, director of Faith Formation. “Pastors needed to know whether they would have catechists who were available for our Faith Formation program for children and for young people.”

Overcoming challenges

It was important to parishes that they “provide Faith Formation classes for children and young people, including sacramental preparation,” Sister Ellen Rose said.

“Their challenge was how they would deliver it,” she said. “To date, we have heard from nearly all

the parishes. Depending on local circumstances, they are offering either in-person instruction, virtual instruction, home instruction or a hybrid model (virtual and in-person.) If they are offering in-person instruction they have completed a plan which fulfills the New York State Department of Health guidance and submitted an acknowledgment to our office attesting to the fulfillment of safety protocols.”

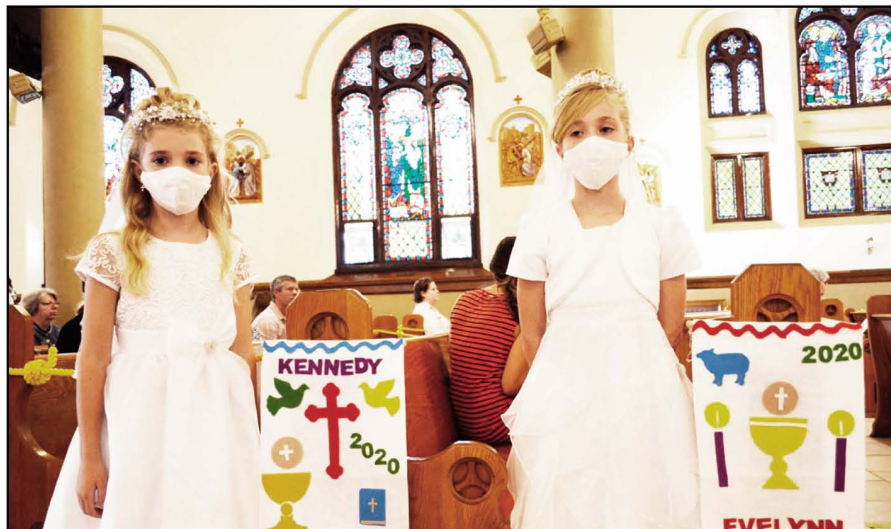
Although COVID-19 has resulted in the interruption of daily life, Sister Ellen Rose said parishes were eager to continue educating others in the faith.

“One of the things that we learned from pastors and catechetical leaders is that they did not want Faith Formation for children and young people to be put on pause,” she said.

Anita Soltero, assistant director of Faith Formation for the Eastern Region of our diocese, expressed that, “the biggest challenge during the initial shutdown was how to continue to offer our Faith Formation programs.”

“For the most part, that did not happen,” she said. “We had class on Sunday, and the following week,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



First Communion was supposed to have been May 3 for youth from St. Peter's in Lowville and St. Hedwig's in Houseville. Youth were finally able to celebrate the sacrament August 30.



*May the blessings of that first Christmas
be yours this season and always.*



From the Staff of the Development Office
Scott Lalone, Valerie Mathews & Lorraine Carney



Joseph,
Protector of Jesus and
Mary, watch over our
Diocesan Family during these
difficult times.
Christmas Blessings!

Diocesan Council of Consecrated Life
Office of the Episcopal Delegate for Religious
Sr. Bernadette Marie, SSJ and Virginia Demers



Catechesis continues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

we were all in quarantine! No one anticipated it would last as long as it did, so we were not prepared to offer on-line learning opportunities at that time. Most students do not bring their books home every week, so we could not continue the lessons. Some parishes were able to do that and communicated via email, but they were the minority. The other challenge was completing the sacraments. Since the shut-down happened in March and continued through the end of the summer, confirmations scheduled for the spring had to be postponed as well as the reception of first Holy Communions which usually take place in May and June. Most of those students have now been able to complete those sacraments, but with social distancing and masks in place! It has been a slightly different experience, but again, through careful planning and with great resolve on behalf of our catechetical leaders, the parents, pastors and

parish staff, we are caught up!"

One positive aspect is that catechists are increasingly utilizing digital media.

"The learning curve that took place over the past few months was tremendous," Soltero said. "We're all running Zoom meetings, and the idea of 'virtual' learning is no longer a foreign concept. The other important thing... is how we relied on the family to provide in-home catechesis during this time. Unfortunately, many of our parents are not comfortable with this. It has been a delicate balance trying to provide guidance for the parents, as well as our youth."

Reactions of parents and youth

The diocese recently conducted Zoom meetings with catechists from its Eastern and Western regions. Sister Ellen Rose said feedback shows that Faith Formation is "going quite well."

"Obviously, the preference for families is that they would like in-person

classes," she said. "In those places where that's happening, it's going along quite smoothly, and in places where it's virtual – other than occasionally having difficulty with internet issues – that's also going along quite well."

Soltero agreed.

"Overall, the response has been better than anticipated," she said. Most catechists "indicated that both parents and students were happy to return to in-person classes for religious education. There are some families that were not comfortable meeting in-person, which is understandable, but the majority did return. Our catechetical leaders and catechists have come up with very creative ways to provide online learning opportunities for families who choose to stay home. It's been amazing to see how everyone has come together to make that happen."

Similarly, Catherine Russell, assistant director of Faith Formation for the Western Region of our diocese, noted "the response

from our catechetical leaders has been enthusiastic and courageous in trying to understand and meet the needs of their families. Parents, we are told, have for the most part been enthusiastic to return to in-person classes. A virtual option for families who feel it is not safe is being provided in most parishes. Students we are told are very happy to come back!"

Engaging families

Sister Ellen Rose noted there are also opportunities within the ongoing situation.

"Catechetical leaders have also recognized ... that they are looking at this as an opportunity, because it's an opportunity to engage families and parents," she said. "They are using that opportunity, particularly for home instruction or for virtual instruction; it requires the presence and the active engagement of the parents."

Parishes, conveyed Sister Ellen Rose, "are trying to move ahead with their sacramental programs, whether it be for First Communion or reconciliation, and likewise confirmation, and they are determining the best way to do this. Some of the parishes have been really quite creative. One of the parishes has certain grades meeting only once a month, but they meet for an extended period of time. They divided the children and young people by grade and that's working out very well. The parents are engaged and are part of the program."

Keeping catechesis available

"I am so proud of our catechetical leaders! They have faced the additional challenges of providing Faith Formation in a safe way," Russell added. "We have also realized this is a

tremendous opportunity to support families in being the first and most important hands-on of the faith. Equipping families, especially in those parishes that cannot provide in-person classes is essential!"

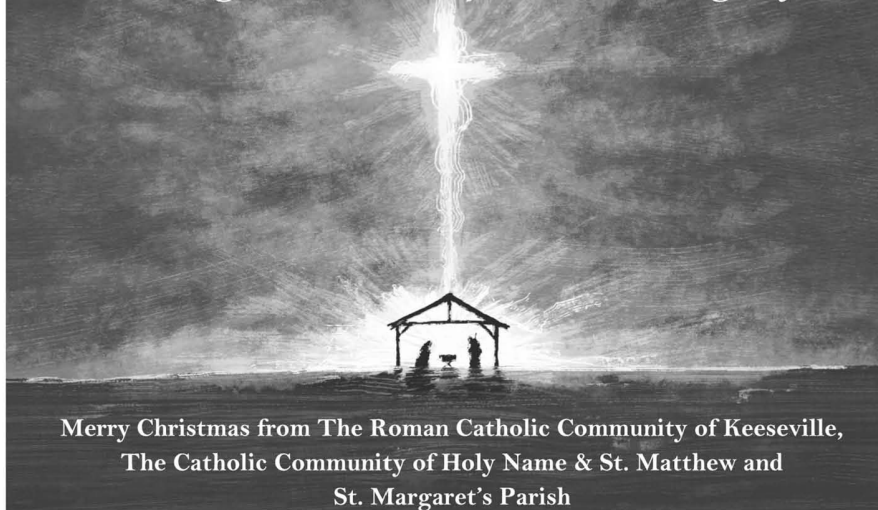
What is Faith Formation?

"As we look at our parishes, we want them to really be vibrant places where faith is nurtured, strengthened, but also places where faith can be shared, where there is a commitment to welcoming new members into the Church," said Sister Ellen Rose. "Then, we have to widen our vision, or widen our perception of what Faith Formation means. Faith Formation, or the handing on of the faith, cannot be limited to programs for children and young people. There need to be programs and processes in place that address adults, parents, and the senior members of our community. There need to be programs and processes in place that invite and welcome those who have expressed an interest in our faith. So, I think that's something that the pandemic is giving us an opportunity to maybe step back and reflect upon: what formation means and what it can look like."

Ready to help

Soltero concluded that "the need for evangelization in our diocese is very high, as it is around the country. As a department, the Faith Formation office will be working to help address this need. I would encourage anyone who feels the need to 'refresh' their catechism knowledge or explore any topic of faith development to contact their pastor, the diocesan or regional Faith Formation offices. We are glad to help!"

*Celebrating Christ's birth to shatter our darkness.
Awaiting His return to fill us with his glory!*



Merry Christmas from The Roman Catholic Community of Keeseville,
The Catholic Community of Holy Name & St. Matthew and
St. Margaret's Parish

Partly online, partly in-person: Hybrid learning

By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing Writer

While some parishes adopted models that are entirely in-person or virtual, others are using hybrid models, which are a combination of both. In the midst of the pandemic, there are advantages and disadvantages to each mode of instruction. Pastors and catechists proffered some highlights of each.

Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin, Episcopal Vicar for Education and the New Evangelization, commented that on-line programs "put more responsibility on the parents to teach the faith and actually helps" them grow spiritually in the process. Though, home education is sometimes "hard to do."

Pastor of St. Mary's Church in Waddington and St. John the Baptist Church in Madrid, Msgr. Aucoin said a few "parents meet about once a month with the formation director." He reflected that they have a small parish, but their on-line program seems to be working really well.

The importance of programming

"In a hybrid model it's important that the parish finds whatever program it wants to use," Msgr. Aucoin explained. "The program is more important, perhaps, than the texts or the actual apps that are going to be used because those are instruments to help the parish achieve its goal of faith formation. At the parish level, I think there are probably more aids out there for education, especially for on-line education, than we ever thought possible. The publishers have done a good job of adapting to the new reality. At our parish we're using *Gospel*

Weeklies because it ties so well with the liturgy."

Instruction during the pandemic

Despite the inconvenience of changing instruction methods due to COVID-19, some pastors and catechists noted benefits as well.

"Something I think that is important is: do we really want it to be back to the way it was?" Msgr. Aucoin said. "Because, often-times in faith formation at a parish level, it is somewhat hit and miss; we don't really know what happens from one week to another, the kids come and go, the parents come and go. So, in some ways the pandemic is helping us by forcing us, actually, to find a better model for delivering faith formation to our children and families."

Deb Mullin, director of Religious Education at the Catholic Community of St. Peter, St. Mary, St. Hedwig in Lowville, explained that since their area recently had an upsurge in COVID-19 cases, they are currently "using the *Gospel Weeklies*, and they can do it right from home; they all have the digital access."

Planning for classes

"As far as in person, we have good numbers," Mullin continued. "We have at least eight in each class. In confirmation we actually have 16. So, they're in person one week and at home the next week because we can only have four classes at a time. Kindergarten is all remote, online, because of spacing. It's going very well. They keep their masks on. Some of the catechists will take them outside, if it's nice out, so they can walk around and take their masks off. They are very good." Children "have their own folder

which goes home with them each week. They are the only ones that touch it, and the *Gospel Weeklies* are in there."

Every student also has their own special bag with supplies.

Keeping in touch with families

Even when the program is entirely virtual, Mullin said that the catechists keep in touch with families. They "email the parents just to help them out with the digital thing 'til they get the hang of it."

The email gives tips to help parents go through the lesson with their children, references where to find resources, the relevant page numbers, etc. They also "send a video [that comes from *Gospel Weeklies*] for that week . . . It goes through the whole lesson with them and teaches them how to do it at home."

Mullin said lessons include a five-question assessment "geared to each week's lesson and they can do it on-line." In addition, there is a "Parent teaching guide." Parents stay in touch with the catechists and vice versa.

Mullin said she really likes the program and thinks that it "will help them [the children] to be comfortable at Mass, to understand it."

A family and community effort

Carol O'Brien Gonthier, director of Faith Formation for the parish communities of Norfolk, Raymondville and Norwood, reflected that "Everyone has their stories, and many will be told for years to come."

"We, as with many others, are a program of various school districts, and communities that come together due to a number of reasons, but all with the same want," Gonthier

said. "We have moms, dads, great-grandparents, and great-aunts working with us to help develop and share our faith to our youngest of parishioners."

Although the program for St. Mary's in Canton is virtual, Father Bryan D. Stitt shared that they're "hoping to be able to do some in-person events during the year; for years we've made Advent wreaths and families fill-up the tables in the gym. We're hoping that we're going to be able to do a modified version of that. Right now we're planning for it and a couple other events during the school year because there is still such a need to interact in-person. We'll see how that all plays out. But, it's so much better in-person than the Zoom meetings and all that."

Father Stitt said the *Spirit of Truth* program they're using from Sophia Institute Press is "a great resource, but we're appreciative of people doing things in-person, whether that's studying in their homes or coming to Church in worship. So to the degree that they can do that, there's nothing better."

Preparing for virtual learning

Although their program is currently in-person, Gonthier discussed protocols they've implemented for on-line learning.

"Various levels of tech-

nology abilities can add to the challenge of getting the Word out, especially when we are not able to gather in person," she said. "We are working to develop the access to the same remote learning that they are using in the six different school districts that are a part of us. With Google Classrooms, they can access any of their assignments and projects right from their homes. We have pick up times for any craft materials the catechists may want to share for them to do while at home. Also, right within their Google Classroom, they can hold a live video meet. While we prefer to meet in-person, this is a means to do our best to gather. When COVID-19 first hit we did our best to send the weekly readings and some activities by email to each of the families. In time we learned to utilize our website to post these lessons as well. Now we hope to also be able to use our Google classrooms to better 'meet' with our children and families in case remote learning is necessary."

They have met once in-person, and once remote so far this school year.

Reaching out to families has also become virtual: "We will hold our three parent meetings for each sacrament online this year due to COVID-19, but really enjoy the interaction in person when we can," conveyed Gonthier.

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Environmental Stewardship

What do you want for Christmas?

This year, the question, "what do you want for Christmas?" – often asked to children before Christmas – received a different answer than expected from some children. Their request wasn't for the latest toys, but that their mommy and daddy didn't get sick with the virus.

With the changing of circumstances often comes a new way of seeing the world. For instance, one parent reflected how being a parent evokes a whole new way of viewing life now and in the future. One desire for his child was a healthy planet that would provide a healthy and safe place for his family. A grandparent taking a walk in the woods with her grandchild found herself wondering what kind of place her grandchild will experience when he grows up? Will it be as beautiful and rich with diversity as what they were enjoying on their walk?

Caryll Houselander in the book, "A Child in Winter by Thomas Hoffman, notes that when one seeks for more, they observe more attentively. "They hear and see and taste life in a new way, in a finer consciousness, because they are searching, because truth and only truth can ease their thirst; and with incomparably more delight, because in this seeking, searching, and finding area one thing; everywhere and in everyone they find what they seek."

During these December days when we yearn for more sunlight, we experience even more deeply our longing for the light of Christ to illuminate our journey with Christ. As we contemplate the manger scene and the Christmas Scriptures, we see how intricately connected our lives as humans are to the natural world from which we are formed and ultimately depend on it for life. Like Caryll notes, as we seek for the light of Christ in our midst, we will be able to see more deeply and clearly how and where we feel drawn to act. What simple actions can bring "light to the world" and help ensure that those not yet born will enjoy a beautiful and healthy world?

What do think of when you hear or read the term morning prayer?

As I stated in a previous Cursillo article, there was a time when I didn't have a close relationship with Jesus, with Him as my friend, my confidant, my mentor ... my Savior. Prayer initiates that relationship with Jesus. I have always said "good morn-

ing" to God throughout my life. I kind of guess a "good morning" is better than nothing. Every night before I set my head down to sleep, I told God I was sorry for all that I did wrong that day and asked for forgiveness, and then said a canned prayer.

I consider myself to be a fairly smart guy. Boy was I ever misleading myself. Smart does not equate to a meaningful relationship with Jesus. How come? Deep inside I believe it was because I was only reciting canned prayers and not talking with Jesus. Cursillo taught me how to talk with Jesus through prayer.

Rest in Peace

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

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

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

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

Dec. 26 – Rev. Aloysius Hyacinth McMahon, 1936; Deacon Andrew Yarchuk, 2019

Dec. 27 – Rev. Hollis David Burns, 1936; Rev. Henry Gilbeau, O.F.M. Conv., 1978; Rev. Wilfred L. DeRoche, 2013

Dec. 28 – Rev. Nicolaus Burtin, O.M.I., 1902; Msgr. John M. Waterhouse, 1995; Rev. Eugene J. Beaudet, 2004; Rev. Howard P. McCasland, 2010

Dec. 29 – Rev. John A. Mullen, 1887

Dec. 30 – Rev. Jean Baptiste Lemerrier, 1863; Rev. Sam D'Angelo, O.S.A., 1961; Deacon Victor Demers, 2003

Dec. 31 – Rev. Joseph Butler, 1894; Rev. Benedict Granottier, 1930; Msgr. Clarence A. Kitts, 1949

Jan. 1 – Rev. Earl Leo Taylor, 1974

Jan. 2 – Rev. Henry William McFadden, 1978; Deacon Robert J. LeClair, 2009

Jan. 3 – Rev. A. J. M. Viau, 1966; Rev. Hilary Neal, O.P., 1986

Jan. 4 – Rev. James Edwin O'Haire, 1877; Rev. Michael Walsh, M.S.C., 1977; Rev. Charles E. Chase, 2011

Jan. 5 – Rev. Louis Lebrett, O.M.I., 1903; Msgr. Dennis E. Lynch, 1979; Rev. Raoul J. Poirier, M. Afr., 1997

GET TO KNOW CURSILLO

Cursillo's morning prayer



Cursillo offers a format for morning prayer that the movement teaches and suggests that its members follow in order to become closer to Jesus. The format is simple to follow: the offering of works for the new day, prayer to the Blessed Mother, the Angelus, preparation for meditation, meditation, and thanksgiving after meditation.

In Cursillos in Christianity – Pilgrims Guide the prayer takes up a total on nine pages. The *Guide* is 3¼" x 4¾" so that really isn't a big nine pages. The morning prayer takes around 20 minutes. I believe you would give a good friend 20 minutes every morning. Why not give that 20 minutes to

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.

For a New or Used Car
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315-393-5899



Learn more or get involved

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

Jesus and center yourself for the day?

My favorite part of morning prayer, other than having my wife to share this experience with, is meditation. I really like the meditation segment because it gives me a specific target to shoot for throughout the day. We have used a myriad of different materials for meditation. We have gone online and found the readings for daily Mass, to the National Catholic Reporter and found Pencil Preaching in the Spirituality section, Father Richard Rohr, and right now we are fully investigating the Beatitudes. Every meditation subject brings a new train of thought, a new avenue to follow in order to get closer to Jesus, an opportunity to begin my day with a positive attitude.

Since I became involved in Cursillo, I have found a new and exciting way to become closer to Jesus through prayer. Morning prayer gives me a path to follow which allows me to nurture my relationship with Jesus, have Him as my friend, my confidant, my mentor ... my Savior.

Try it.... you may feel the same way I do.



'Where two or more are gathered in my name'

By **Mary Beth Bracy**
Contributing writer

Although we live in an increasingly technological society, there is no substitute for person-to-person relationships. During the pandemic, many parents and students still prefer in-person classes. Social media often leaves young adults longing for real life social encounters.

Setting it up

We meet "at Father Andrew Amyot Parish Center in Norfolk for classes from 9:20-10:20 a.m., so all can attend the family Mass at the Church of the Visitation at 10:30 a.m. We are meeting in-person, all but one grade, as there are some medical issues," relayed Carol O'Brien Gonthier, director of Faith Formation at the parish communities of Norfolk, Raymondville and Norwood.

"In the past we have always celebrated children's liturgy, prior to Faith Formation on Sunday mornings," Chris Leahy, catechetical leader at St. Patrick's in Brasher Falls, explained. "Given the constraints now, not all of our students can attend Mass first. To supplement, I provide the parents with the children's liturgy [video] at home every week, so that children are watching it virtually and able to understand it a bit better. Father Garry B. Giroux set it up so that the students were all actively engaged throughout Mass. Since COVID, we haven't had students available to read. We are going to be training a whole new group. The kids are very enthusiastic. I give them a lot of credit for their willingness to step up and be part of it."

By the same token, Marcia Bugbee, director of Faith Formation at St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid, spoke of the desire

for in-person classes.

"We sent out a questionnaire for parents before we started up the program and the response was – overwhelmingly – that they wanted everything back to normal, as much as possible," she said. "So, we did a lot of changing because of the restriction of who can go into the schools; we moved the Religious Education over to the Church."

Second grade first reconciliation and first Holy Communion class "comes to 10 a.m. Mass once a month, and then we have instructional time for an hour and a half," Bugbee said. Grades 3, 4, and 5 also meet monthly "on a Friday evening for three hours, with instructional time and 'up' activities. We serve pizza. Our sixth to tenth graders come on a Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. We'll have Mass for them, instructional time, and do a scavenger hunt outdoors. It's Bible-based, so they look up certain verses and try to find these items in the trails."

The youth "talk, they're not just sitting there going through a book, you have more dialogue with them," Bugbee noted.

St. Agnes Church sends a newsletter home with grades 2 through 5 to help keep families in the loop about instruction and assist them in reinforcing it at home. The newsletter includes a picture of what they did in class, and information about what they learned, including saints. They also send a craft or activity home, detailed Bugbee.

Programs used

"We prefer the lectionary-based approach to help make the weekly readings tangible to all," reflected Gonthier.

Sources that they use are: LTP's Celebrating the Lectionary, supported by

the Diocese's 'Tools for Parish Catechesis'; Discovering the Sacraments, for sacramental classes; and Decision Point for Confirmation, a two-year program, usually beginning in eighth grade. First reconciliation and first Communion utilize Blessed, typically in first and second grade.

"When we are able to return to the Breaking Open of the Word and gather downstairs during Mass, we use The Complete Children's Liturgy," added Gonthier. "We also like to incorporate an underlying theme to tie all of us together. This year we are finishing Prayer."

"The publishers have made it so that, if everything shuts down, we have easy access online," Bugbee commented.

She described their "family friendly programs" for grade levels. Second grade uses Blessed from Dynamic Catholic and grades three through five utilize Finding God from Loyola Press.

"There is a scan code in each lesson, and it brings up a video," she said. "It is great because the family sees the video and they start talking about it."

Sixth and seventh grade use One Faith, One Lord from Sadliers, grades eight and nine utilize Chosen from Ascension Press.

"Father John R. Yonkovig has been so gracious this year to take our tenth graders, and he is going to be using Ascension Press' Jesus, the Way the Truth, and the Life," Bugbee said.

For "older kids, I found a diocese that's using a Bible Trivia and, once a month, they send out Bible questions for families. They look up trivia questions and submit their answers. If they get them correct, they win something like a free pizza," proffered Bugbee. "Also, we like to send

parents a YouTube clip, it could be from BustedHalo, or Father Mike Schmitz, for families to view with their kids."

Response from parents and students

"Our families are excited to be back, students included. We've even added a few more," said Gonthier.

Bugbee added, "Parents are thrilled that the kids are back into religion. I can't tell you enough how parents are appreciative."

"The key to our program is parental support," Leahy said. "The day that we shut down last March was the day that our second graders were scheduled to make their First Reconciliation. The kids have been waiting a long time to receive their sacraments. It is definitely a group effort. We have a group of young families that we are fortunate to have with us. Our pastor, Father Giroux is very warm and welcoming to our families. He works with them, whatever is needed."

Persevering

"One thing that has been very helpful is Cathy Russell and the (diocesan) Faith Formation office having Zoom meetings," Leahy added. "To hear what other people are doing, the issues, problems, and challenges and

how they're overcoming, I just find that reassuring in many ways."

"At any time when numbers were low on a given day, I would remind myself – or any catechist that may be concerned – that we need to remember those who are with us. And 'where two or more are gathered in my name,'" said Gonthier. "We are to work on building a relationship with those who are with us. In time, others will see and want to have that experience for themselves. We are always going to be faced with challenges, but need to persevere with the right intentions and do our best. That's all He is asking us to do."

"I'm really happy to see that Anita Soltero (from the diocesan Faith Formation office) is going above and beyond, trying to connect with the parishes and the ideas that she's bringing forth," added Bugbee. "It's important that families see the bigger picture of our Church besides just what we have within our classes and community, that it's a broader family. So, I'm really excited with the approach that the diocese is starting to take, and with our youth minister, Tom Semeraro. They are really working hard to build this bridge."



'Having a conversation about the Lord'

By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing Writer

When St. Paul said, "Faith comes by hearing" (Rom 10:17), he probably never imagined the hearing happening through a computer. While the preference for catechesis is almost always through in-person interaction, the faithful are grateful to be able to receive virtual instruction. "The word of God is not chained," (2 Tim 2:9) and through quality teaching, curriculum and creativity, faith is still handed on.

St. Mary's Cathedral Parish and Notre Dame, Ogdensburg

"We had an in-person parent meeting before starting to explain the program," said Sister Bernadette Marie Collins, a Sister of St. Joseph and pastoral associate and director of Religious Education for St. Mary's and Notre Dame. "Most parents have been willing to take on the responsibility. The whole situation may be a blessing in disguise since we always maintain that parents are the first and most important teachers of the faith to their children."

"We are using Gospel Weeklies for grades K-1 and 4-9," Sister Bernadette stated. "Grade two is using the program from Formed, Signs of Grace. Grade three students are reviewing reconciliation – they are behind due to COVID-

19 – and then we will move to First Eucharist from Signs of Grace. If they finish, they will move to Gospel Weeklies."

"We initiated what we call Family Faith and Fun on the Run [to disseminate materials]," said Sister Bernadette. "It is a drive through event. Our first event was held in early October. We had stations around our parking lot manned by our catechists and priests: Station 1: Gospel Weeklies and newsletter from me picked up; Station 2: Rosary materials and a rosary kit; Station 3: Blessing of families and animals by our priests (it was Feast of St. Francis); Station 4: Goodie bag and a service project for the year (each family took the name of one of our seminarians to pray for and keep in touch with during the year)."

Sister Bernadette said the event proved to be popular.

"We had more families show up than our registrations indicated and have received even more registrations," she said. "Our teachers are very dedicated and willingly help assemble the materials for each station ahead of time."

The success also involved cross-parish cooperation and additional effort to continue engaging with youth.

"One challenge has been making the home teaching parent friendly. We had

help with this from Christine Ward, catechetical leader in Lisbon, who also uses Gospel Weeklies. She devised a great system to help make it easy for parents and she graciously shares with us," said Sister Bernadette. "Another challenge is for the catechists to keep in touch with the students. We are hoping to do some Zoom meetings with them. In addition, we asked them to do periodic evaluation provided by the program."

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Watertown

Sister Constance Sylver, a Sister of St. Joseph and coordinator of Religious Education at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Watertown is "doing a family catechesis." The parish uses Google Meet for classes every Sunday from 9–10 a.m. She shared that it is "going very well, almost all of my families have chosen to participate this year."

In the beginning, it was challenging to teach all of the age groups at once, from 1st grade to junior high. However, now that they are able to incorporate more activities it is easier to engage each student, Sister Constance said. Recently, a mother conveyed that "her son in junior high enjoys all of the classes." It's "a little hard to gear toward the youngest ones," however, the older students help them with reading stories from Children's Bibles, etc.

Sister Constance "often times leaves them with an activity to do at home" and sends families an email with materials to have ready when they "come to class."

"The 'Tools for Parish Catechesis' document has been a wonderful guideline for being able to do this virtually. It gives a basis, and you add activi-

ties to that," Sister Constance explained. They use one tool from the document each week. Sister Constance also provides links to YouTube videos on the faith and has found various activities online. For instance, to teach that "we walk by faith and not by sight," children were blindfolded and, with guidance, had to find their way to a chair.

St. Mary's, Canton

"We're really very pleased with our program," extolled Father Bryan D. Stitt, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Canton and diocesan director of Worship. "It's all new to us – the books, the program itself. What we love about it is that it's getting parents and kids talking about the faith together. That's the main positive point. The second positive point is that they can choose their own schedule. It doesn't have to be a certain hour on Sunday. And the third benefit is that they're staying in the safety of their own homes."

They are using the "Spirit of Truth" program from Sophia Institute Press, and "it is good stuff," Father Stitt continued. The curriculum is "very clear" while some other programs "are like looking at a strobe light, there is too much information, too much stimuli."

The program has more of a classical bent. Students are "actually soaking it all up" and having "good conversations about faith" with their parents, Father Stitt said. "There is more art," with this program, but less graphics; the pages aren't "a jumble" of information.

"The main thing is to see that they are actually having a conversation about the Lord," said Father Stitt.

Children are provided

with teaching on the basic aspects of the faith. Children's "minds are so supple, they can soak up so much, so quickly" so it is important to teach them the truth, Father Stitt said.

"Some folks just like to be able to drop their kids off," Father Stitt noted. "And it's a challenge for folks who have big families in different age groups because if you have four kids all at different age levels then you're having to facilitate four different Religious Ed classes. Overall, the families really appreciate that this is happening and they know that faith is essential, especially these days."

"We bought a book for every grade level, for every student, and bought access to the app. I think that the majority of our families are finding that the kids do better in having the book in front of them and letting the parents have the teacher view of the app," indicated Father Stitt. "There are things that are fun with the app, when there is beautiful artwork it is more vivid on the computer screen, and you can zoom in and look at it more closely. That's amazing. Everything is available online, but many are using the book and supplementing it with the online."

When families use the app, the parish "office can monitor what things that they've completed. When they use the book, it's mostly honor system and we ask them just to take a picture of every lesson that they do," Father Stitt said.

The St. Mary's Canton program is K-8, including confirmation.

"I'm trying to interact more with confirmation students with a regular Zoom meeting as well," added Father Stitt.



*A blessed
Christmas
to all!*

St. Hubert's Parish,
Star Lake

SHARING OUR STORIES, SHARING OUR FAITH

Blessed by God's providence

By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Staff Writer

DUANE – Nancy and Mark Beddoe speak often and easily of divine providence, of the way God guides us in wisdom and love to draw us closer to himself. They are quick to acknowledge this providence at work in their Catholic upbringings, in the circumstances of their meeting, and in the challenges and blessings of parenthood.

Born and raised on opposite sides of the northern border, the couple – parishioners at St. Andre' Bessette – now divide their time between Ottawa and their camp in Duane, near Malone. Raised in a Catholic family in Massena, Mark graduated from Holy Family High School and LeMoyne College. While working as a reporter and photographer at various area newspapers, he relates, "I had some religious experiences that made me realize I needed to look into the Church more closely. That took me to some monasteries, and even to a semester in minor seminary, until it became clear that this was not the path God wanted for me. Then one day I stopped on the spur of the moment to check on my family's camp on Eagle Pond – and God put Nancy down right in front of me! I should not have been there that day, but we met by divine providence. When we finally stopped searching, God put us together."

Nancy agrees. Like Mark, she was a cradle Catholic; her faith stayed strong as she studied at Loyola College and at Queen's University and began her teaching career with the

Ottawa Catholic School Board. Then in 1984, within a few short months, she lost her only uncle, an aunt, and her beloved dad.

"We had now lost all the men in our family," she recalls. "By November, my doctor told me to take some time off. A friend invited me to visit her place on Eagle Pond; she told me the long walks might help. She was right. I discovered a camp for sale and decided to buy it. And on one of those long walks, Mark was passing by. I used to stand at my apartment window and pray, 'Please send me somebody wonderful.' How perfectly God answered that prayer!"

The couple married at St. Helen's Church, Chasm Falls, on October 11, 1986. Ottawa would be their home for much of each year as Nancy continued teaching and Mark did editorial work in high-tech industry; he would later become a procurement officer with Canadian national defense when the tech bubble burst in 2001.

"Even when things were uncertain, God always provided, job to job," Mark remembers.

But God's greatest gifts to the couple are their two lovely, lively daughters, Alanna and Katrina.

"Our faith was deep when we got married," said Nancy, "but not nearly as deep as it is now. Our girls brought us so much joy. They went all through Catholic school and could hardly wait to be old enough to be altar servers. Matters of Church mattered a great deal to us. We talked about Church the way some people talk about the Yankees."

"Our girls had a lot to do

with deepening our faith because through them we were drawn into circles where people had faith deeper than our own," Mark added.

This faith eventually led their daughters to religious life. Alanna, now Sister Helena Grace, made her first profession in the Little Sisters of the Poor this past October, and is now assigned to the order's center in Kansas City, Missouri.

"She is very pro-life," said Nancy, "and as a registered nurse it is her passion to care and to help. She is very settled and very happy in her new life."

Mark points out that he and Nancy "often thought that Katrina would be drawn to religious life." And she was: in 2018 she entered the order of the Queenship of Mary in Ottawa and is now a novice there after an unusually challenging journey.

Katrina was born with spina bifida.

"We were shaken at first, as it had not shown on ultrasound," Mark said. "Our baby was born and quickly ambulated to Children's Hospital for surgeries to close the lesion and place a shunt to drain spinal fluid. It was only the first of many hospitalizations."

But that did not diminish the couple's joy in their precious daughter. Mark recounts meeting some years later with a couple who were being pressured to abort their unborn because of a spina bifida diagnosis.

"They asked if we would have had Katrina if we had known she had spina bifida," he said. "I replied that if I had known how wonderful she would be, I

would have taken two! That couple had their baby, and Patrick's case proved to be much less severe than predicted. His parents became strong advocates for welcoming these babies."

The Beddoes do not deny the difficulties, but focus on the presence of God, "who has always been there leading us. We have had such a strong experience of his protection, always," says Nancy. Both parents experienced this when Katrina, age 21, was hospitalized for five months in 2010-11.

"There was trouble with the shunt; nothing was working," Mark said. "We had left Katrina in the neurology observation unit, where they bored a hole through her head to adjust the shunt to drain fluid from her brain. At that point, I just cried. Only God held me together."

Nancy confirms how hard that time was.

"It was so difficult to leave Katrina, not knowing how the night would go," she said. "As a teacher and as a mother, you have to be in control. That night I knew, 'I am not in control.' I had to rely on our Blessed Mother in a new way during those long months."

"God drew us closer to himself through our children," Mark added. "Their journeys and experiences have had a huge effect on us and on our faith."

Without fanfare, the Bed-

does live out their faith and share it with others.

"Example matters most," said Mark. "I am so grateful for having had the privilege to influence people in the workplace, for instance. So often an opportunity to listen to others leads to sharing faith."

"It is more important to walk the walk than to talk the talk," Nancy added. "We don't go out preaching, but I love to bring a smile to someone's face, or to make a cashier's day more pleasant. I have reconnected with my recently orphaned godson, Darrel. We talk on the phone for an hour at a time. Next: I need wisdom to know how to bring God back into his life."


Mark and Nancy belong, respectively, to their parish men's and women's groups. Pre-Covid, they generously worked at parish suppers. Happily, the pandemic has not interfered with their commitment to work every Wednesday at the parish food pantry – an opportunity which Nancy calls "a very great gift!"

"It is mind-boggling how rich the Church is," said Mark. "From the sacraments to the saints, from the Chaplet of Divine Mercy to the Rosary, from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the hearts of Mary and Joseph. All these continue to bless our lives, but the Eucharist above all. In his goodness, God draws us toward himself in so many different ways!"

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High court rejects school's challenge to pandemic limits

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court Dec. 17 rejected an appeal from a Kentucky Christian school to be exempt from state orders to stop in-person classes amid rising coronavirus cases.

The justices' decision focused more on timing, saying the pandemic restrictions were expiring in the new year and most of the state's schools were about to close for the winter holidays.

Officials from Danville Christian Academy, near Lexington, and Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron challenged the mid-November order by the state's Democratic governor, Andy Beshear, to stop all in-person classes in the state through the end of the year.

The justices' unsigned opinion said: "The governor's school-closing order effectively expires this week or shortly thereafter, and there is no indication that it will be renewed." They also noted that if the governor issues another order in the new year, the school could return to the court to seek relief from new restrictions.

Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch dissented.

Alito, joined by Gorsuch,

said the court should have responded sooner to address the challenge to this order.

"As things now stand, this action remains on the docket of the district court," the unsigned opinion said. "If the governor does not allow classes to begin after the turn of the year, the applicants can file a new request for a preliminary injunction, and if the lower courts do not provide relief, the applicants may of course return to this court."

The school and the state's attorney general said the state's order violated the Constitution's free exercise clause. A federal District Court said the state could not enforce in-person closings for private religious schools following safety guidelines.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit reversed that decision, saying the appeal was not likely to win because the governor's order was neutral and applied to public and private schools.

Beshear urged the court to leave the order in place noting the state's current "deadly third wave" of the coronavirus. He stressed that the school and attorney general had not pre-

sented "expert testimony, scientific studies, or public health testimony" to support their argument of limited public health risks with in-person schooling.

"Nobody -- not an election official, not a public health expert, and not a court -- should make life-or-death public policy decisions on the basis of such purely anecdotal, unscientific and faulty reasoning about the spread of COVID-19," he said.

First Liberty Institute, the law firm representing the school, said in a Dec. 17 statement that they would return to court immediately if the governor imposes a new school-closing order and stressed that the First Amendment protects religious education just as it protects worship.

St. Michael Academy in Petoskey, Michigan -- described on its website as a classical Catholic high school -- similarly filed suit in December against the state's temporary ban on in-person high school classes. The ban, issued by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, is in effect through Dec. 20 because of the pandemic.

School officials have argued they should be allowed to have in-person learning at their 30-student school. They said the order violates the First Amendment and the risk of COVID-19 spreading at the school is low because of the area's low infection rate and the school's safety protocols.

Richard Thompson, president of Thomas More Law Center, which is representing the school, said in the lawsuit that "harm caused by children being kept away from school is far greater than the chance of that child ever coming down with COVID-19."

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

In a little over a week, COVID-19 takes lives of eight religious

ELM GROVE, Wis. (CNS) — Four women religious died on the same day, adding to the sum of eight nuns who succumbed in a little more than a week in mid-December in Wisconsin after complications from COVID-19 as the virus spread in the facility that cared for them. Group settings that care for the elderly, such as Notre Dame of Elm Grove in suburban Milwaukee where the women lived, have caused alarm during the age of COVID-19. Many communities of men and women religious, particularly those that have members in their 80s and 90s and beyond, have opted for limited contact with the public. But as the cases in Wisconsin show, even with precautions, the virus can seep in, leaving devastation behind. The School Sisters of Notre Dame Central Pacific Province, based in St. Louis, cares for the nuns who live in the facility and though they had largely been able to keep the virus away since the pandemic began in earnest in mid-March, they learned of a positive case within the community around Thanksgiving, according to news reports. The first death reportedly happened Dec. 9, but the deadliest date came Dec. 14 when four nuns died. Many of them had been teachers.

Cardinal's book shares spiritual insights from prison

ROME (CNS) — The first evening Australian Cardinal George Pell was incarcerated, he began writing a record of his thoughts and experiences in the form of a diary. "I am now at the quiet heart of the storm, while family, friends, and wider church have to cope with the tornado," wrote the cardinal, who had been convicted -- against his adamant denials and refutations of the allegations -- on five counts of sexual abuse of a minor in the 1990s. Released Dec. 15 by Ignatius Press, the cardinal's "Prison Journal" is the first of three volumes of these entries and details the run up to the cardinal's first -- and failed -- attempt to appeal his conviction. In the end, 404 days of solitary confinement passed before the former chief of Vatican finance was acquitted in April 2020 by the High Court of Australia in a unanimous 7-0 decision. Throughout the over 300-page book, Cardinal Pell composes prayers, details scenes of daily life in prison and comments on events in the church and the world.

Cardinal: Christmas is sign of God's love for the poor

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Reaching out to and helping the poor "is to imitate God; it is to make oneself small out of love in order to raise up the other," the preacher of the papal household told Pope Francis, officials of the Roman Curia and Vatican employees. The Bible says that there was no room in the inn for Mary and Joseph when Jesus was about to be born, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa noted. "Today as well there is no room in the inn for the poor of the world. But history has shown us what side God is on and what side the church must be on." Offering his third Advent meditation for the pope and his collaborators Dec. 18, Cardinal Cantalamessa quoted Jean Guittou, the French philosopher and lay observer at the Second Vatican Council, who said the bishops there "rediscovered the 'sacrament of poverty,' the presence of Christ under the species of those who suffer. These are strong words, but they are well-founded theologically," the cardinal said. Christ became human, but resembles most especially people who are "poor, humble or suffering. Christ instituted this sign just as he instituted the Eucharist. The one who said, 'This is my body,' said the same words about the poor" when he taught that whatever people do for the least of their brothers and sisters, they do for Christ.



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

- The Office of Family Life

CELEBRATING OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE



COVID did not stop Father Douglas A. Decker and St. Alphonsus Holy Name of Jesus Parish from continuing to celebrate the tradition of honoring the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Father Decker started this tribute the first year he came to Tupper. On December 12, 1531, Juan Diego saw the Mother of God at Tepeyac Mountain, in Mexico City. Her image became embedded on the apron Juan Diego was wearing. When the Spanish arrived in Mexico, it caused many Aztecs to suffer from the Spanish colonial diseases. So, in 1545 the Franciscan priests organized a procession to the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe asking for healing for the Aztecs. After that, the epidemic died out and the credit for the healing was given to the Mother of God. On Dec. 15, at the 11 a.m. Mass at St. Alphonsus Holy Name of Jesus Church in Tupper Lake, Father Decker and the people of the parish did much the same as what was done in 1545. A procession, prayers and a Mass was celebrated with the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, asking Mary to bring a healing of COVID-19 to our community. Anyone who was not able to attend that Mass was and is invited to join the effort by offering up their own prayers for the intercession of our Lady of Guadalupe.

*May the spirit of Christmas
give birth to love which can
transform the world.*



St. Mary's Church, Clayton &
St. John the Evangelist Church, LaFargeville

*"Spread love wherever you go let no one ever
come to you without leaving happier"
~Mother Teresa*

*Thank you for your prayers
and remembering the less
fortunate this holiday season
and always.*



Pontifical Mission Societies, Inc.
Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ Director and
Alexis Michael, Bookkeeper



The Nativity of the Lord
"For today in the city of David a savior has been
born for you who is Christ and Lord." —Lk 2:11

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

**St. Elizabeth's Church, Elizabethtown
St. Philip Neri, Westport
St. Philip of Jesus, Willsboro**

THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

— PRAYER SUGGESTION —

Eternal Father,
we lift up to you these
and all the priests of the world.
Sanctify them.
Heal and guide them.
Mold them into the likeness and
holiness of your Son, Jesus,
the Eternal High Priest.
May their lives be pleasing to
you. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen

(With ecclesiastical approval)

Mass
Rosary
Fasting
Day Offering
Eucharistic Adoration
Offering of Sufferings
Divine Mercy Chaplet

Or whatever the Lord
inspires you to offer Him

January
JESUS
Holy Name
Of Jesus

JANUARY

DIocese OF
OGDENSBURG, NY
2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
For more copies contact: Diocese of Ogdensburg PO Box 369 Ogdensburg, NY 13669						1 BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY
2 REV. DANIEL T. KEEFE	3 REV. PAUL J. KELLY	4 REV. JOHN P. KENNEHAN	5 REV. THOMAS E. KORNMEYER VF	6 REV. STEVE KOVACEVICH	7 REV. DONALD F. KRAMBERG	8 OUR PASTOR
9 REV. ARTHUR J. LABAFF VF	10 REV. ALAN J. LAMICA	11 REV. ROBERT O. LAMITTE	12 REV. KRIS C. LAUZON	13 REV. CLYDE A. LEWIS	14 REV. CHRISTOPHER J. LOOBY	15 POPE FRANCIS
16 BENEDICT XVI POPE EMERITUS	17 REV. JOHN J. LOOBY	18 REV. SHANE M. LYNCH	19 REV. DONALD J. MANFRED	20 REV. LAWRENCE E. MARULLO	21 MSGR. C. JOHN MCAVOY	22 RETIRED PRIESTS
23 REV. KEVIN D. MCLEWAN	24 MSGR. JOHN MURPHY	25 REV. BERNARD D. MENARD	26 REV. GILBERT B. MENARD	27 REV. RAYMOND J. MOREAU	28 REV. JOSEPH A. MORGAN VG	29 DECEASED PRIESTS
30 REV. WILLIAM G. MUENCH						

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Vocations Society www.mrvocations.com

ST. LAWRENCE

MASS FOR DECEASED CHILDREN

Canton – Mass to be held for deceased children.

Date: Dec. 28

Time: Noon

Place: St. Mary's Church

Features: Parents of children who have died often note missing their children more than ever this time of year. As a Church, we must honor the lives of these children and pray for them – from those who were lost before birth, to infants and toddlers who died from

illness, to teens who died tragically in accidents, to those who lived for decades but whose parents are still missing them terribly in these holy days. The Church calendar points very clearly to one day to pray for them: The Feast of the Holy Innocents.

Contact: Sign up for the Mass by calling the parish office or signing up on the parish website. If you would like your child's name included in the Mass and represented with a candle, please contact the office: 315-386-2543, canthoncatholics@gmail.com

DIOCESAN EVENTS

DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Have you felt the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as a Catholic priest? Gather with young men from across New York State who are considering the call to priesthood. Hear talks on priesthood delivered by Syracuse, Ogdensburg, and Buffalo Vocation Directors. This will be a virtual conference over Zoom.

Date: Jan. 2

Time: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Contact: Register by Jan. 1, 2021 by contacting vocations@syrdio.org

LIVING A SACRAMENTAL WAY OF LIFE STARTING AT BAPTISM

A live Zoom event with Director of the Department of Faith Formation, Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin, SSJ to discuss the sacraments, beginning with baptism, touch all the stages and all the important moments of the Christian's life. Christ comes to meet using the "outward signs" of the sacraments, giving birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1113).

Date: Jan. 9

Time: 9:45 a.m. to Noon

Features: Inviting all Catechetical Leaders, RCIA Directors, and Youth Ministers. There is no charge for the event.

Contact: To register go to: <https://www.rcdony.org/ffleadreg>
Zoom link will be sent after registration.

JANUARY RETREAT DAY

Join a virtual retreat with the theme "Walking with St. Joseph as Our Guide."

Date: Jan. 16

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

Features: Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ will host the retreat. "Walking with St. Joseph as our Guide." This retreat will consider the mind and heart of St. Joseph, as reflected in his actions, and how he may be a faithful guide and companion in our own lives.

Contact: To register contact sr-bethssj@gmail.com or 315-212-6592

MASS FOR LIFE

Bishop LaValley will celebrate a Mass for Life. Join in person or virtually to pray for a deeper respect for human life.

Date: Jan. 24, 2021

Time: 11 a.m.

Place: St. Mary's Cathedral or you can view it live at www.rcdony.org/livemass

The Word became Flesh

and dwelt among us

Christmas Blessings

From the Natural Family Planning Office

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



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

Merry Christmas!

From the
Diocesan Fiscal
Office Staff

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

A feast to focus on families

How do we define “family”? Is it just one mom, one dad, and four kids living in the same place for years? This fits fewer and fewer families in our world. Many children are members of broken families, and so-called dysfunctional families. Pictures of refugees escaping from the conflict of war have become familiar images on TV. There are many



**Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore**

families in Asia and Africa, as well as families seeking refuge and safety even to our own country. Families on the run with a few possessions loaded onto a tractor and cart, or on foot,

move out of their native land to seek refuge wherever they will be tolerated.

Most homes are abandoned and will probably be looted and vandalized. It may never be possible for these people to return to their homes.

In today's Feast of the Holy Family, despite the familiar manger scene found on millions of Christmas cards, we find a family in deep stress, running for their lives from Herod the Great. This tyrant, having deceived the Magi who had unwittingly informed the King of the child's presence

December 27

Feast of the Holy Family

READINGS

Sirach 3:2-6,12-14

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:22-40

nearby, was enraged to the point of massacring all newborn babies in his kingdom. And so, they flee to Egypt until Herod is dead. And then they bring the child to the Temple.

The presentation of Jesus in the temple, as narrated in today's Gospel, brings a sword of sorrow to Mary. But they return to their home in Nazareth, where Jesus is known as the son of the carpenter. There, they lived a simple ordi-

nary life, Joseph as a carpenter, and Mary as a housewife and mother. Jesus grew in holiness and in knowledge of God's will in the same ordinary ways that we do.

What extraordinary wisdom we find in both the first and second readings this Sunday for family life! Sirach, a second-century B.C. writer, gives us the fruit of constant reading of Scriptures. First, he reminds us that parents' authority is given them by God Himself. Sirach counsels us to be good to our parents in their old age, even when their minds fail!

St. Paul, in Colossians, gives families, both our own individual families, and the wider family of the

Church, a sure-fire formula for success. We are to act with “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.” Our families are powerful when we educate our children in prayer and work, when they are trained to believe in divine love, and believe that the Lord is always with them to guide them and help them know their purpose in life.

Our Christmas this year was very different from other years. Despite all the chaos, we need to remember the power and witness of holy families. May your family and all our families shine strongly in the darkness around us

CALLED TO SERVE

The joy of the snow day

“Think we will have a white Christmas?” The long-range forecast I looked at recently makes me wonder. There is rain in the forecast from Plattsburgh to Watertown. Even Saranac Lake has rain in the forecast Christmas eve.

Not like last week. The only escape from Gail appeared to be in my neck-of-the-woods where snow is our middle name. “More snow fell in one day in New York City Wednesday than the whole of last winter,” according to one story I read. There were words like “slams,” “powerful,” “major,” and “blasts” in the description of this winter Noreaster.

One radio personality I heard who has a home studio in New Jersey said, tongue-in-cheek, “goodbye” Tuesday. “Listening to the weather forecasters,” he said, “I presume this is the end of the world.”

It was all great theater. As a kid in Queens, we could count on one hand the number of snow days we had in the 12 years of parochial school. Granted, two inches of snow creates havoc in major metropolitan areas, but snow days were not declared until we had a really good, snow fort building, huge snow-pile-from-the-plows dump. And they were great days. Not because we had the day off from school but because we could break out the almost never used wooden sleighs, have great snowball fights, build forts and tunnels and caves, and prove to our always nervous mothers that red cheeks just meant we were having fun, not freezing, as they universally feared.

Sure, we take snow for

granted in this region. We are almost blasé about it. “Six inches! Just a dusting!” But I fear we are taking snow days for granted, too. The pandemic has created a new phenomenon, the virtual classroom. How long do you think it will take the State Department of Education to decide districts do not need to budget for snow days? Districts can



**Deacon
Kevin Mastellon**

just declare “virtual” days instead. The powers that be may not have considered trigger-happy superintendents who might declare a virtual day at the first sign of a flake. How about the teachers who have to regroup when they learn at 6 a.m. that they have a virtual class that day? Can all the teachers initiate class from home? There are

other arguments for snow days that relate to childcare, internet access and a bunch of other things.

The bottom line for me is kids need a surprise day off. Snow days are a rare treat and a special part of school culture in the United States. In the dark, short days of winter, snow days give a boost to students—

and teachers—as they wait for spring. I hope we do have snow for Christmas.

Kathy and I pray that Jesus Christ will bless you with His love at Christmas-time and in the new year.

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

*May the Hope of Christmas
shine brightly on you and
your loved ones.
And, may the wonder, love
and peace of our savior
Jesus Christ,
be with you this season
and all year through.
Merry Christmas
from
St. Peter's Parish, Massena!*





SCENES OF THE SEASON



Two billboards in have been installed with the message, "Keep Christ in Christmas." One is located on Route 3 in Carthage, and the other is on Route 81 in Watertown. This has been a yearly campaign that was started by Joe Shambo and the Knights of Columbus of Carthage. It was funded by a raffle sponsored by the K of C, which raised \$2477.

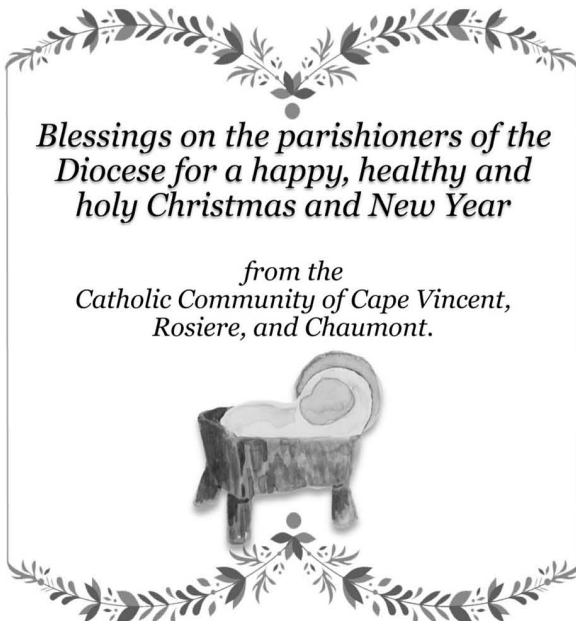


PHOTO BY TINA TAILLON
 Members of the Canton Knights of Columbus carve turkeys for the annual Thanksgiving Day meal delivered to shut-ins. Pictured, left to right, are Grand Knight John Taillon, Father Bryan Stitt, Scott Niles, Peter Mueller and Deputy Grand Knight Corey Swinwood.



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

Wishing you a blessed Christmas

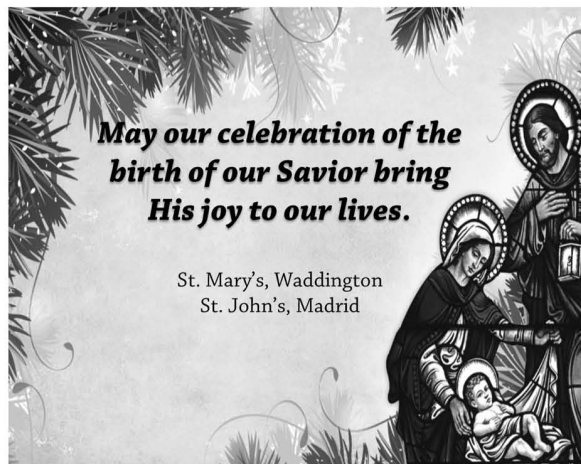
I am filled with gratitude when I reflect upon the words of Pope Francis, "Embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important..." My gratitude causes me to recall the numerous prayers and sacrifices offered by the parishioners of the North Country for the poorest in developing countries who are dear to our hearts.

This year was a challenge for everyone. It was a challenge to work, go to school, grocery shop or see family and friends. It was a challenge to worship our God as we normally do. Yet, through it all, our diocese rose to the occasion and pitched in and helped those near and far.

This Christmas, please take the day to remember and reflect upon all those we lost this year and to be grateful for our health and safety. Let us take the day to pray for peace in our lands. As we welcome the Christ child to the world, let us sing out with joy to the world.

On behalf of the Pontifical Mission Societies, please accept our heartfelt gratitude. In this season of giving, we remember God giving His only son. We are reminded of the significance of your giving as we ponder the greatness of His only son. Your generosity takes on a special significance as you embrace those too many in the world viewed as least important. We wish a blessed Christmas Season to you and your loved ones.

Please remember "The Society for the Propagation of the Faith" when writing or changing your Will. Please donate to our Christmas appeal if you are able at rcdony.org/mission



OBITUARIES

Brasher Falls – Bernard T. Lantry, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 16, 2020 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

Brushton – Donald A. Barney, 91; Graveside services Dec. 19 at St. Mary's Cemetery.

Brushton – Rose (McCray) Dillabough, 49; Graveside Services Dec. 17, 2020 at Sunnyside Cemetery.

Brushton – Ella J. "Janie" (Lucey) La-Page, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Champlain – Melvin Vincent Laramie, 80; Private services to be held in the Spring.

Constableville – Eleanor M. (Snyder) Weiler, 89; Graveside services in the Spring at St. Patrick's Cemetery.

Croghan – Ralph Franklin Thenes, 87; Mass of Christian Burial in Spring at St. Stephen's Church; burial in St. Vincent de Paul Cemetery, Belfort.

Massena – Mary Jane (Perry) Hayden, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 17, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Norfolk – Patricia (McNally) Clarke, 96; Graveside services in the Spring at

Visitation Cemetery.

Norwood – John P. Plonka, 70; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 23, 2020 at St. Andrew's Church; burial in Visitation Cemetery, Norfolk.

Ogdensburg – Maria Stuber Ashley, 93; Memorial Services Dec. 14, 2020 at Notre Dem Church; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

Port Leyden – Mary (Robertson)

Doyle, 94; Private Services to be held.

Schroon Lake – John P. Welch, 70; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2020 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church.

Waddington – Adam R. Miller, 13; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 17, 2020 at St. Mary's Church.

Watertown – Delbert E. Leween, 72; Funeral Services Dec. 19, 2020 at Hart & Bruce Funeral Home; burial

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give birth to love which can
transform the world.*

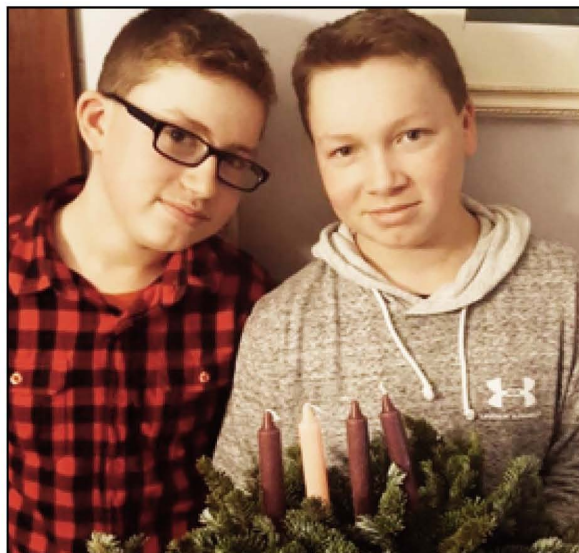


St. Mary's Church, Clayton &
St. John the Evangelist Church, LaFargeville



Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year

From Fr. Bryan Stitt and the Parishioners of St. Mary's Church, Canton, NY



SAME PROJECT, DIFFERENT YEARS

For the past seven years, St. Mary's in Fort Covington has been making fresh Advent wreaths with families participating in Religious Education. Due to the pandemic, the families were unable to gather together for the project, but kits for the wreaths were sent home for family crafting. (Top) Brennan and Ryan Oakes, sons of Darrin and Michelle Oakes, display the wreath they made with this year's home kit. (Bottom) Brennan and Ryan display the wreaths they made the first year of the project, seven years ago.



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May the joy of Christ's birth spread from your family to the world.



Deacons and spouses of the Diocese of Ogdensburg

Jesus IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON



St. Mary's Church, Champlain & St. Patrick's Church, Rouses Point

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