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NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 9, 2020

MAKING BEAUTIFUL MUSIC



JESSICA HARGRAVE/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC
Music Director Christine Bookman sits at the new Viscount organ installed at St. Mary's Cathedral. See the full story on page 3.

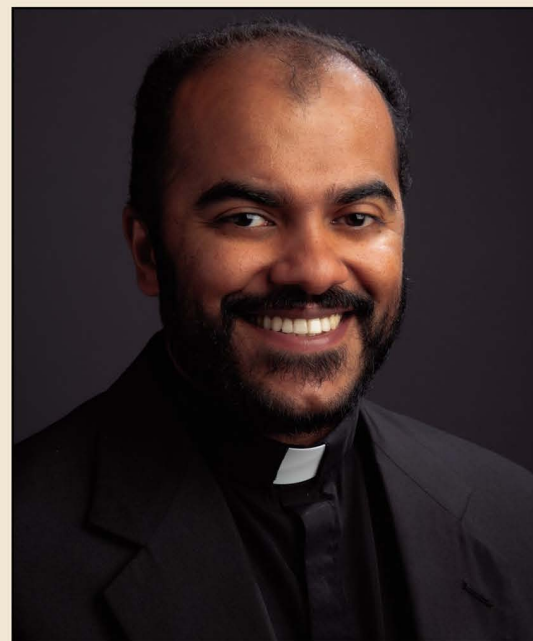
Follow Me: Advent and Christmas

Bishop Terry R. LaValley sends greetings and his reflections this Advent and Christmas season:

The Feast of Christmas is the time when it is the easiest to fight against discouragement and darkness. As we gaze upon the Infant Babe in the manger, God makes Himself so close that our hearts cannot remain fearful, anxious or troubled. As Pope Francis preached on the First Sunday of Advent, "Advent is the season for remembering the closeness of God who came down to dwell in our midst." The Christmas hymns and the customs that surround this Feast are imbued with the profound joy of being saved—such Good News!

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

'GOD HAD A BIGGER PLAN'



Father Justin Thomas, a priest of the Heralds of Good News, shares the story of his vocation and his journey from India to the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

Pope: God loves his children even at their worst

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – While sin may distort and disfigure the image of Christ that every person bears, it does not completely erase it, nor does it remove people from God's abundant mercy, Pope Francis said.

At his weekly general audience Dec. 2, the pope said that even when a sinner remains "in error for a long time," God waits patiently, "hoping that the sinner's heart will eventually open and change."

"God is like a good father and a good mother: They never stop loving their child, no matter what he or she may have done wrong," the pope said during the audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace.

While continuing his series of talks on prayer, Pope Francis also offered prayers for the victims of a terrorist attack Nov. 28 in Nigeria; 43 farmers near

the northeastern city of Maiduguri were brutally murdered.

According to BBC News, no one has claimed responsibility. However, it is believed that either Boko Haram or the Islamic State West Africa terrorist organizations, both active in the area, were responsible.

Remembering the victims, the pope prayed that God would "welcome them in his peace and comfort their families and convert

the hearts of those who commit such horrors, which seriously offend his name."

In his main talk, the pope reflected on blessings, which, he said, are "an essential dimension of prayer."

Noting that there is a "continual repetition of blessings" in the first pages of the Bible, the pope said that both God and humankind give blessings, and that a blessing "pos-

sesses a special power that accompanies the person who receives it throughout his or her entire life and disposes the person's heart to allow God to change it."

Even though sin "altered" the beauty of God's creation and converted the human being into "a degenerate creature capable of spreading evil and death in the world," it did not take away the inherent goodness embedded in each person, he said.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The truth may challenge my ideas

It was two intervals of 30 seconds. During those intervals, my twin sister, Deanna, and I swabbed the inside of our cheeks with small brushes.

We're doing zygotic DNA testing.

For those unfamiliar with that term, the test will determine if we're identical or fraternal twins. When we were born nearly 40 years ago, twin type was largely determined by amniotic sacs. If the twins were in the same amniotic sac, they were classified as identical. If they were in different sacs, they were classified as fraternal.

When we were born, we were classified as fraternal twins.

Now, with advances in science, it is known that some twins born in separate amniotic sacs will still be identical twins. Since we discovered that fact, Deanna and I have always assumed we were part of that group. We've assumed we're identical twins who had separate amniotic sacs.

When Deanna told me she had ordered the DNA test kit, my reaction wasn't what I expected. While I'm excited (the emotion I expected) to know if we're iden-

tical or fraternal twins, part of me is worried/anxious (the emotion I didn't expect). I'm worried/anxious that our birth classification as fraternal twins will be confirmed, and our belief that we're identical will be proven incorrect. If the test comes back and says we're fraternal twins, I know it won't change our relationship, our ability to communicate with just looks, our ability to complete each other's sentences... It'll just change a label and an idea/belief.

But it's difficult to challenge our ideas and beliefs. Sometimes, it's difficult to accept the truth.

As I was reflecting on this surprising emotional reaction

to the DNA test, I was thinking about other truths I've struggled to accept. I'll admit it: there are Church teachings with which I struggle. There are teachings that I sometimes feel are at odds with my natural (sinful) tendencies and inclinations.

Even though I struggle with the teachings, I try to remind myself that the Church – and our Lord – call us and help us to be better than our natural inclinations and tendencies. We're called to accept the truth of the Gospel and the truth of Church teachings. Even when those teachings are hard. Especially when they're hard, in fact.

That's harder than a 30-second cheek swab.



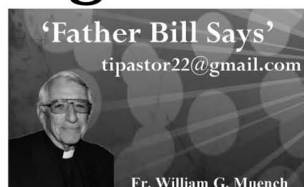
**Darcy L.
Fargo**

‘Through the eyes of a child’

I want you to know that I love sending Christmas cards. I consider it a special time for me, a time to remember, a time to pray for my friends, many of whom I have not contacted since last Christmas. So, the writing of Christmas cards is my pre-Christmas retreat.

Likewise, I enjoy receiving Christmas cards. So many folks, so many of my friends, send out the greatest Christmas cards. I often discover new and great ideas for a homily from the Christmas cards I receive. I must admit that over the years – especially when I was in a parish with a Catholic School – the best Christmas cards that I received were from children. Even when it was just a class assignment, the cards that the children made were always very special.

Saying this, I am reminded of a recent experience of mine, an event in which I remembered how fascinating it is to see the world, to see Christmas through the eyes of a child.



One day, during the first week of Advent this year, I went over to church to celebrate Mass. I had already decided on a homily for that Mass. However, as the deacon read the Gospel at Mass, I changed my mind. This Gospel reading was a prayer of Jesus, a prayer to the Father, to his Father. The reading tells us that Jesus prayed in the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is Jesus' prayer: "I give you praise, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike."

This Scripture reminded me that many times I have discovered something very important from a child. I hope you have had the same experience. So, as I listened

to the deacon proclaiming the Gospel, I remembered such an event in my life. I decided to change my homily and tell the folks about that experience.

My story was about the time that I joined Susan and Paul and their children, Mary, Will and Anna, on a trip to Montreal, Canada. On one of the days, we visited Notre Dame Basilica in the old city. During that visit, I spent most of the time walking and talking with my great niece, Mary. I remember that day so very well. It was like I was seeing this church for the first time through the eyes of Mary, even though I had visited this place many times before.

What was so special? Mary was so wonderfully honest and trusting. She was curious about everything – every image, every statue, every mosaic. I have always enjoyed offering Mass with children's groups. I try to have a few questions for them. However, the dialogue

goes in directions that truly surprise me. There have been times when I have been challenged to keep it alive, and I have discovered that the Lord takes over in a rather spectacular way.

Among the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah certainly gets credit for the many times his writings are used in Christmas cards. He is definitely a masterful poet and certainly childlike. You will recognize many of his verses in our Christmas cards. Here is a bit from Isaiah's chapter 11: "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots shall blossom... Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat. The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair."

FOLLOW ME

Advent and Christmas 2020

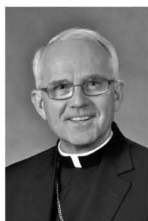
"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing..."—Isaiah 9:1-2

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

"Abundant joy and great rejoicing" -- Isaiah's prayer is most welcome! We have been dwelling in the land of gloom for months. We are restless and ready to hear the Advent message of hope. We yearn to embrace once again the Christmas story of light, peace, and joy.

The Feast of Christmas is the time when it is the easiest to fight against discouragement and darkness. As we gaze upon the Infant Babe in the manger, God makes Himself so close that our hearts cannot remain fearful, anxious or troubled. As Pope Francis preached on the First Sunday of Advent, "Advent is the season for remembering the closeness of God who came down to dwell in our midst." The Christmas hymns and the customs that surround this Feast are imbued with the profound joy of being saved—such Good News! Knowing that we are so loved and saved by God, we shiver with hope and joy before the nativity scene.

The birth of Jesus comes about because of



Bishop
Terry R.
LaValley

the extraordinary faith of His mother Mary. Several months ago, the Diocese of Ogdensburg was consecrated to St. Joseph, her husband. He accepted the fact that Jesus is indeed the promised and long-awaited Savior. We desire the trust and deep faith that Mary and Joseph lived.

In the quiet and calm of sleep, Joseph's life was open to God's regenerative and sustaining love. The decisiveness with which Joseph acts upon his dreams reveals a man who already walks with God. Joseph will believe the angel's words, and this belief will sustain him in the face of challenging demands and arduous conditions.

In the unique demands made upon us in this pandemic, we, too, are determined to be open to God's regenerative and sustaining love. We, like Joseph, want to walk with the One Who bids us, "Follow Me." May the Christ Child bring you and your loved ones the Gift of Love, the Blessing of Hope and the Promise of Peace. A blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend
Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg

New organ fills cathedral with beautiful music

By Jessica Hargrave
Contributing Writer

OGDENSBURG – All that remains of the old pipe organ inside St. Mary's Cathedral are metal pipes crawling up the balcony wall. The original pipes played through countless Masses, ordinations and celebrations since 1952. Over the years, many of those pipes experienced water damage and worked inconsistently, while other parts of the organ needed to be rebuilt, so it was time for an upgrade.

"Certain pipes would sound fine one day, and then some days they would be out of tune, and I couldn't use that pipe anymore. There was just no time to go through all the pipes every time. We were just limited on our options," said organist and St. Mary's Cathedral Music Director Christine Bookman.

Thanks to the generosity of donors who supported *the It's Our Church, It's Our Future* capital campaign, the cathedral was able to work with Viscount Organs in choosing the right organ and for its installation. In the pipe organ's place, there is now a new digital organ so extraordinary, the sound is as if it's part of the building.

Josh Dove, managing director for Viscount North America, an international organ company, said St. Mary's Cathedral is fortunate to have what this digital organ offers, which is called physis technology. This technology uses a computer-generated model of a pipe organ to not only create the sound of pipes, but also how they interact with one another in real-time.

"When the organist is playing, you're sure you



JESSICA HARGRAVE/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

A new Viscount organ has been installed at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

heard the valves open up, which they don't exist. You will be sure you just heard a slight dip in air pressure when they play a big cord which isn't there," said Dove.

The digital organ has a custom set of instruments Viscount created just for St. Mary's Cathedral. With a touch of key, it can play the sounds of oboe, harp, a string ensemble and a horn ensemble. If there's an instrument the organist wants added, all it takes is a phone call to Viscount. The Cathedral hopes one day to tie the original organ into the digital organ, which would make the possibilities endless.

The complete installation took a few weeks, a much shorter timeframe than to rebuild or repair a pipe organ. Such a repair project could leave a church out of commission for months, if not years, depending on the scale of the project. Once the organ was built, a tonal director spent four days in the cathedral choosing the

best sound for the space and speaker placement.

"It isn't just throwing speakers on the wall and stringing cable; our speaker system is custom built for the purposes of every job we do," said Dove. "He then goes through an entire library that holds thousands of organ pipes. The process combines increasing or decreasing air pressure and scaling rank of the pipes."

With the project now complete, Bookman continues to adapt to the organ's technology and sound.

"It's loud up in the balcony, but I don't know what it sounds like in the congregation so I'm still getting use to the combinations and what is too loud or not loud enough."

Regardless of the transition, Bookman feels honored to have the new organ.

"I'm so grateful to be entrusted with such a beautiful instrument and I look forward to exploring its full potential," she said.

Video series celebrates, shares sacred music

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

OGDENSBURG – Building on the success of the *St. Cecilia Sings Initiative*, the Diocese of Ogdensburg is now calling on musicians to share their prayerful performances of Advent and Christmas songs as part of *St. Cecilia Sings – Christmas*.

In November, the diocese celebrated the Feast of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music, by asking musicians to submit videos of their performances of sacred hymns. Musicians were encouraged to record the videos in their parish churches.

A playlist of 25 performance videos “went live” and was available for public viewing starting Nov. 22, the Feast of St. Cecilia. The videos are available on the diocesan YouTube channel or at rcdony.org/stcecilia. Lyrics are provided in the video descriptions to allow viewers to sing along.

Seminarian Leagon Carlin participated in the initiative along with his fellow seminarians at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

“When Father Bryan Stitt sent us the letter (an-

nouncing the initiative), we knew immediately that this was something that we wanted to do,” said Carlin. “Music was the first force in my life that moved me, at a young age, to contemplate God and the beauty of heaven and earth, and I am sure that my brother seminarians have had similar experiences in their journeys of life as well. So, this opportunity to share that same gift with the people that we will one day serve as priests was a chance that we jumped at! For all of us at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, it was a special gift, because due to the pandemic restrictions in the Archdiocese of Baltimore (where the Mount is located) singing was not allowed at any liturgies, and so we had not been able to sing at Mass or any other community prayer all semester. It was so great to sing together again, even just for the time it took to record our contribution.”

The Mount St. Mary seminarians sang “Lord, You Give the Great Commission.”

“It is a hymn that I had heard at a few ordinations and other large diocesan events at the cathedral in Ogdensburg, so I was confident that it was at least

Participate in *St. Cecilia Sings – Christmas*

To participate in *St. Cecilia Sings – Christmas*:

- **Recording:** Video recording are required. Please orient your videos horizontally. HD or higher resolution preferred.

- **Setting:** You are encouraged to do recordings in your parish church to help the viewers appreciate both the visual and musical the beauty of our faith.

- **Licensing:** If your selection is in the public domain, the video can be shared freely. The diocese will provide permissions to use copyright music from major liturgical publishers. Note: If you are interested in using a

hymn found outside of the common hymnals of our churches, please check with us to confirm that we can in fact legally use the hymn.

- **Choirs:** Following diocesan protocols, no in-person choirs are allowed. If multiple musicians are in the video, they need to be of the same household or at least 12’ apart with physical barriers.

- **Lyrics:** Lyrics will be printed in the notes of the video to enable people to sing along with you. Of course, all submissions must have lyrics that are “in conformity with Catholic doctrine; indeed they should be drawn

chiefly from holy scripture and from liturgical sources” (SC 121).

- **Submitting:** Send videos to both ifawcett@rcdony.org and cbookman@smcogd.org with your name, all performers’ names, the parish name and location, and the name(s) of anyone else in the video. You can attach the video to your email or send a link for a shared file in the cloud.

- **Deadline:** December 17th – the beginning of the O Antiphons and the final week of Advent. Please have all submissions in by then. The playlist will go live shortly thereafter.

somewhat familiar for the people in the diocese,” Carlin said. “It seemed to be quite appropriate for seminarians, as it speaks about the Lord’s call to spread the Gospel, serve the Church, and prays for the grace needed for the work of ministry, and these are important aspects of what the seminary process prepares us to give our lives for as priests, if that is God’s will for us!”

Carlin said he enjoyed seeing the prayerful performances submitted from around the diocese when the playlist became available for viewing.

“It was so wonderful to see the great contributions from all over the diocese and beyond,” he said. “My heart was warmed as I watched and listened to all of the talent and care that each participant put in to their videos, and witnessed the love for Christ and His Church, which was evident in each example. Music is a fantastically powerful gift, and there are few things in this world which give a more perfect proof for the existence of God than it does. It brings gladness to both God and humankind, and what could be a more perfect time of the year for our hearts to be glad than this, as we are beginning the Season of Advent, and we wait in glad anticipation for the coming of the Lord in the Manger?”

It was reactions like Carlin’s that led to *St. Cecilia Sings – Christmas*, a similar initiative that asks participants to record videos of performances of Advent or Christmas music.

Father Bryan D. Stitt, director of Worship for the diocese, said the Advent/Christmas version is building on the success of the initial *St. Cecilia Sings Initiative*.

“This came about for three reasons,” Father Stitt said. “One, how good the first one seemed to be. The videos received thousands of hits, and there is so much beautiful, beautiful work. Two, it’s Christmas. Everyone wants to sing more. Three, there were people who wish they had participated in the first round, so it seemed like a good idea to do another.”

The submission deadline for *St. Cecilia Sings – Christmas* is Dec. 17. For complete parameters, see the box included with this article.

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Father Justin Thomas: 'God had a bigger plan'

By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing Writer

OGDENSBURG – “I always loved to be an altar server, ever since I received my First Holy Communion, even though I had to walk four miles roundtrip, and the Mass was at 6 a.m.,” shared Father Justin Thomas. At first he wanted to be a diocesan priest, “but God had other plans,” and Father Thomas joined the *Heralds of the Good News*, a missionary society.

Father Thomas grew up in Pala, Kerala, in India, with his parents and brother. He belonged to the Syro-Malabar Rite, an Eastern Catholic Church of traditional Syrian Catholics or St. Thomas Christians.

It “goes all the way back to St. Thomas who came to my state and preached the good news. The liturgy is completely different than the Latin rite – the vestments, the way priests bless themselves, men and women sit separately,” Father Thomas said. Churches of that rite have a St. Thomas cross.

“We are all part of the universal Church,” Father Thomas said.

They celebrate feasts of the apostles, have a great devotion to Our Blessed Mother, and a St. Jude novena. His home parish patron is St. Joseph. They also have a devotion to St. George, St. Anthony, and some native born saints, including St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who was canonized in 2014. He is the first canonized Indian male saint and a founder of the order of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) order for women.

“All my seminary formation was in India,” Father Thomas noted.

He left home at fourteen, graduated, and continued in the seminary. He was ordained a priest on May 11, 2011. His home parish was about 20 years old, and he was the first parishioner to be ordained.

“When I joined the seminary, there were more than 80 seminarians. After 11 years of formation, I was one among the four to be ordained,” Father Thomas said. “The question I always ask is ‘why me?’ Even though I know it’s God who chooses, sometimes I can’t help asking myself. I know I don’t deserve to be what I am now; all I can do is to be faithful to my given vocation.”

His first priestly appointment was at a seminary in a Northern diocese, where he served as administrator and spiritual director for one year. Following, he was vice-rector and librarian at a diocesan minor seminary, and a vocation director.

“Then came the call to come to this diocese to do my ministry,” Father Thomas said.

When he learned of the opportunity to serve in the North Country, Father Thomas said he was really excited.

His arrival in the North Country in 2014 and was assigned to the Malone parishes with Father Joseph W. Giroux and Father Bryan D. Stitt, which was “great.” Father Thomas is currently parochial vicar at St. Mary’s Cathedral and has been there for six years.

It’s “great to be in the pastoral field you can work with people more and administer sacra-

ments more,” he said, noting he enjoys “being with the faithful, people are beautiful.”

Father Thomas said he “loves making home bound calls, visiting the nursing homes, being with the people to reach out, to bring Christ to them.”

He said he feels it’s important “to be a good neighbor” and “make myself available no matter the time of the day.”

With COVID-19, Father Thomas can’t go to nursing homes and visit “the folks that are so lovely. They love to see a priest walk into their door. It has been a big challenge, but at least I am able to go on some of the homebound Communion calls here in the parish.”

Father Thomas said he’s also enjoyed the community he’s experienced with the priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

“The diocesan fraternity means a lot to me, to be with all the priests,” he said. “Father Philip T. Allen, he’s like a mentor to me.”

Father Thomas lives with Father Joseph A. Morgan, Father James F. Shurtleff, and Father Richard S. Sturtz.

“I learn from them, get a piece of advice from them,” he said. “I love to be part of this diocesan fraternity, it’s amazing – their friendship, their companionship means a lot.”

Father Thomas is also enjoying the outdoor opportunities in the region, having “just finished hiking all of the 46 peaks with Father Allen in less than six months.”

He also likes walking and reading religious books. Sometimes he plays golf with Father

Tojo Chacko “for the sake of company.”

Father Thomas loves “the woods and the quietness, to just go back and see what I am, to discover myself. When you’re out in ministry you’re like ‘I have to do this and that, what’s next.’ I enjoy nature. I do a little snow shoeing. I like driving to venture out and go out of state and explore things.”

His prior travels have also included Europe.

“I asked God for the grace to go to Lourdes and see my Blessed Mother,” Father Thomas said. “When I was in front of the Grotto, I can’t explain how great it was. And to take place in the Rosary rally. It is amazing, they say the Rosary in different languages.”

In October 2017, Father Thomas walked the 500 mile El Camino, in less than a month. Father Thomas began the pilgrimage with Father Howard Vennette. He said the journey was a “big challenge in a foreign country and not knowing the language. You have to depend on God.”

Father Thomas recalls that when he “came to Santiago, Spain and was there in front of the majestic Cathedral of St. James I saw a lot of people from all over the world. Some people had to turn back because of injuries. It shows how much God loves me. I was without even a minor bruise or injury, it was a Divine revelation for me of how much God protected me and guided me in a strange country. It was a big moment.”

He finished the El Camino early and, since it happened to be the 100th anniversary of Fatima, he went to Portugal.

“I never asked God for this grace and there I was,” he said.

He went to the saints’ tombs, thanked the Blessed Mother, and prayed for the diocese and his family.

Father Thomas was blessed to visit several other places. He went to Padua, since his mother had a great devotion to St. Anthony, visited his tomb, and lit a candle for her.

The highlight of Father Thomas’ journey was that, on his birthday, November 15, he attended Pope Francis’ audience at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

“My goodness, I’ve never seen a Pope alive in front of me,” Father Thomas said. “He was riding around and came right in front of me and stopped.”

Father Thomas said he could have reached out and touched the Pope’s hand.

“He looked at me and gave his blessing,” he said.

The entire journey was a blessing, Father Thomas said.

“I was asking for so little and God was lavishing one blessing on top of the other,” he said. “God had something bigger, He just unveiled it day by day. It was God making the plans, God was leading me. That one month revealed a lot about how God cares for all of us. It was enough for me to place my trust in God. Every time I doubt myself, I just have to look back. I can’t thank God enough. The rest of life is not enough to thank God for all that He gives to me. God will always be merciful and he will give you things that cannot be outdone in generosity.”

Environmental Stewardship

An Advent lesson from the Holy Family

When we ponder the life of the Holy Family, we discover a valuable message about life itself. Think about it. . . God could have placed them in a wealthy setting like the palace of King David, but He didn't.

Joseph came from the royal lineage and house of David but without the wealth. Instead, God chose to place them in a small village of Nazareth with a population of a few hundred people at that time. As a carpenter, Joseph was a day laborer that put him on the low social scales of that day.

Their lifestyle would have been very simple yet rich beyond comprehension.

In an Advent series titled "Simple Advent, Abundant Life," we find the same paradox — less is more. The series begins by inviting us to remember God's abundance from the Garden of Eden to the gift of Jesus' life to the world.

This abundant life, then, is not dependent on material goods that one's preparation for Christmas often focuses on. Rather it centers on loving relationships and justice. As suggested by author Duane Elgin, "Simplicity of living, if deliberately chosen, implies a compassionate approach to life.

It means we are choosing to live our daily lives with some degree of conscious appreciation of the condition of the rest of the world."

In the midst of COVID-19, we began our Advent season with a new perspective on what is most essential in our lives.

We have the opportunity to shift from what is the normal busyness of holiday preparations to new ways of being and connecting that are lighter on the earth and promote the life and dignity of all creation.

How are you being called to simplify and live abundantly during this Advent season?

To learn more, sign up for **Advent Simplicity Challenge** with the Ignatian Solidarity Network for daily reflections.

By **George Trejos**
North Country Cursillo

I recall as a young man arguing with my parish priest that practicing religion comes easier for women. Naturally, the priest disagreed. Being newly ordained, I assumed that he was not yet tuned

Rest in Peace

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

Dec. 9 — Rev. George Marion, O.M.I., 1927; Rev. Edwin Hanlon McCarthy, 1950; Rev. Arthur LaVigne, 1956

Dec. 10 — Rev. James Hogan, 1882

Dec. 11 — George Montreuil, 1914; Rev. Edward Tetrault, 1952; Msgr. George Henry Brisson, P.A., 1969

Dec. 12 — Rev. Victor Dugas, 1843; Msgr. Albert J. Farrell, 1967; Rev. Julian P. O'Brien, 1988; Deacon Floyd J. Barton, 1999

Dec. 14 — Rev. P.M. O'Shea, O.S.A., 1942, Rev. Paul Beyette, 2016

Dec. 15 — Rev. Leon Pierre Cochard, 1915; Deacon Joseph H. Gilbert II, 2010

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

GET TO KNOW CURSILLO

Come on down!



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 ncsec2019@gmail.com.

into the world's reality. I don't feel that way now but still think it is not easy for men to acknowledge a deep faith. Sure, men recognize the importance of God and having a "moral compass" for themselves and their families. But saying it out loud might not seem like a manly thing. It is easier for men to say, "I go to church to accompany the wife" or "to set a good example for the kids" than to acknowledge "it's important" or "I need it." Men talk at length about sports and their team, cars, their lawns and careers! Religion, not so much.

This false modesty has no basis in the history of

faith. Biblical faith started as a long journey between God and an aged and childless man named Abraham. That covenant relationship resulted in the patriarchs, Moses, the chosen people, the kingship of Saul, David and Solomon and others — all flawed men who journeyed onward in faith and hope. Patiently, God maintained His love and further promised to send His holy people a Messiah to truly free them from the bondage of sin. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus, in turn, called ordinary men to follow Him and learn from Him. He entrusted His Church to men, continuing the message of God's love and concern for us. Naturally, they had doubts and fears about their worthiness, but with God's strength and their faith, they achieved great things and the Church grew and spread to all the corners of the earth.

The mystery of mankind's encounter with God is that He searches us out first to fill the dark recesses and emptiness of our lives and then invites us to journey with Him and participate in His grand scheme to unite us all together in His love. There is no reason to be fearful or shy about responding to His invitation.

In Luke's Gospel, we encounter Zacchaeus who was curious about Jesus. He was afraid to approach

Him openly, so he climbed a tree to see Jesus from afar. Jesus yelled up to him: "Come on down, Zacchaeus!" I'm having dinner at your house tonight. That encounter made Zacchaeus a changed man, and he was no longer fearful to acknowledge the Lord. Nor should we, men!

You are probably wondering what all this is leading up to? In this diocese, there is a Cursillo Movement that promotes the open acknowledgement and sharing of our faith in the Lord. Getting to know the Lord better is an important aspect of deepening our relationship with Him. It gives us the confidence to witness to Him and spread His message via our actions. This spring (current plans are for April if the situation allows), a weekend retreat will welcome men to explore their faith. But the program does not end with the retreat. For me, the retreat has been the beginning of a genuine relationship with other men who regularly meet for prayer, discussions about faith and personal action. We encourage one another and remove the uncomfortableness of speaking about our needs, our progress and even weaknesses.

So, if you are curious about getting to know the Lord personally and finding a supportive group to assist in this search and quest, there is no need to climb a tree like Zacchaeus. Jesus and we are inviting you to "come on down" and relish the goodness of the Lord and the support of fellow men.

If you are interested in learning more or participating, see the box above to this article for contact information.

Bishop's Public Schedule

Dec. 9 — 9:30 a.m. — Department Head Meeting at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

Dec. 10 — Noon — Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 13 — 8 a.m. — Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

2 p.m. — Holy Hour for Vocations at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 15 — Noon — Mass 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.

Retirement Fund for Religious



**Collection Weekend
Dec. 12th and 13th**

***Please give to those who have given
and are giving a lifetime***

"Every vocation is a summons not to stand on the shore, nets in hand, but to follow Jesus on the path he has marked out for us" (Pope Francis)



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On the weekend of December 12-13, the parishes in our Diocese will conduct the annual appeal for the *Retirement Fund for Religious*, a collection that benefits some 30,000 elderly Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests.

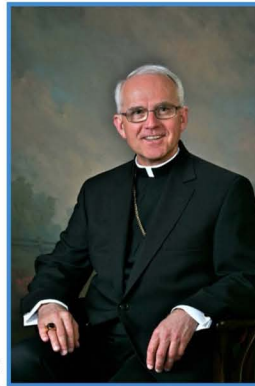
As Christians, we are called to "serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps 100:2). Our elderly religious offer a shining example of what it means to answer this call. During their days of active ministry, they worked tirelessly to build Catholic schools and hospitals, promote social justice, and embrace the neediest among us. In retirement, many continue in volunteer ministry, and all pray for the needs of our Church and world. Inspired by love, their service—past and present—is marked by joy and a deep desire to do the will of God.

We are so indebted to these consecrated religious. I hope you will be able to show your appreciation by supporting the annual collection for the *Retirement Fund for Religious*. The fact that these religious worked for little or no compensation in years past, means that they are now struggling to meet the costs of caring for retired and infirmed members. The additional challenges brought about by COVID-19 have compounded an already difficult situation. The proceeds from this collection offers some financial support for communities in caring for older members. In addition, it helps to ensure that younger members can continue to perform the good works of their elders.

Many fine religious women and men have served and continue to serve the people of God here in the North Country as teachers, health care providers, pastoral associates, administrators, pastors, and assistant priests. We are richly blessed to have a community of contemplatives, supporting us through their ministry of prayer. We are also grateful to those missionaries (who have left their home countries to minister here in our North Country). I encourage you to do what you can to support this collection. Most importantly, please pray for them and for an increase in their number. Know that they are praying for you!

Gratefully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg



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those who have
given and are
giving a lifetime**



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Please give to those who have given and are giving a lifetime



- ◆ Religious communities are financially responsible for the support and care of all members. Income, earnings, and expenses are managed separately from the parish and diocesan structures of the Catholic Church.
- ◆ By 2027, retired religious are projected to outnumber wage-earners by more than three to one.
- ◆ The funding shortage is compounded by rising healthcare costs and decreased income. And, as more religious reach retirement age and leave compensated ministry, income will further decline while care needs increase.
- ◆ There are 31,000 religious past age 70 living in the United States. In 2017, the average annual cost for their care was almost \$44,000 per person.
- ◆ Many elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests worked for little to no pay, and now their religious communities do not have enough money for their care. Please support the Retirement Fund for Religious collection at Mass.

Orders Serving in the Diocese

- Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- Dominican Sisters of Hope
- Franciscan Friars of the Atonement
- Mid-Atlantic Community of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
- Servants of Mary
- Sisters of Charity of St. Louis
- Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod
- Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood
- Sisters of St. Joseph

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for all the
support you have
given us
throughout
the years.*

*Religious of
the Diocese of Ogdensburg*

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Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make your tax-deductible check payable to your parish. Write *Retirement Fund for Religious* on the memo line and give it to your parish collection or send your donation directly to:

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KNIGHTS' MEMORIAL MASS



In November, members of Father Francis X. Chagnon Knights of Columbus Council #3525 of Champlain remembered the 251 departed brothers at a memorial Mass at St. Mary's Church. Council members attended in a body under diocesan COVID-19 protocols. In lieu of the traditional luncheon and ceremony for families and members, after the Mass, a candle was lit at the display of the emblem of the order outside St. Mary's. The sanctuary candle and side altar candles inside were also lit throughout November in honor of the deceased brothers. (Above) PGK Chris Trombley lights the candle while the president of the Champlain Catholic Men's Club, Marty Picard, leads the group in prayer. (Right) Dan Tetreault, Marty Picard, FDD PGK Jack Dawson, GK Bruce, Joe Turner, PGK Chris Trombley, Anthony Leerkes, Claude Boucher, FDD PGK Steve Ashline, Clifford Demers, Richard Cook and Father Duc Nguyen, who celebrated the memorial Mass.



St. Joseph: Safeguard of the family

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

By Dulcie and Tom Semeraro

How do we keep our families safe during these scary times?

We can certainly learn a lot from the life of St. Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. From the stable



St. Joseph's Corner

in Bethlehem to the desert of Egypt and back to Nazareth, Joseph accepted the perilous call of God the Father to protect and care for His only Son.

Joseph shared his strong faith in God, his skills as a carpenter, and his love for others with Jesus.

Many specifics are not known about Joseph, which in itself, is a testament of this humble servant, yet entrusted with

the most paramount job of all humanity, to protect Mary and Jesus. He had a job to do and he simply did it.

Time and time again, we see that "actions speak louder than words," as we can see the results of a job well done. One member of this Holy Family "triangle" does not stand on his or her own. Joseph did not brag or boast to others about his role in God's plan, but instead, remained humble and continued to demonstrate obedience to God, His Father, even when it was beyond his understanding.

So our thanks to St. Joseph, for the role he played in the gift of Jesus.

When our homes are built with a strong foundation of Christ-centered faith, there is nothing that can shake or rattle it. Just like Joseph, a good parent places the needs of the family first, above his or

her own needs, providing shelter, protection, guidance, discipline and, most importantly, love.

So, if we want to safeguard our families, even during these trying times, we have to walk with Jesus, every step of the way. He is our solid rock on shaky ground and our anchor in turbulent waters.

If we could ask St. Joseph today how to keep our families safe, he might very simply echo the words of Our Heavenly Father, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; Listen to Him." (Matthew 17:5)

We pray that all parents work to remain strong, humble and noble like St. Joseph. Protect your children from the darkness of the world. Take the time to walk with your children, sharing with them the light of Christ that is within you. St. Joseph,

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CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Catholic college students still build community, do outreach

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a school year turned upside down by the pandemic, groups of students at the Marianist-run University of Dayton in Ohio have been striving to keep some things constant: supporting each other in their faith and reaching out to the school community. The students, part of seven Marianist Student Communities on campus, have a road map for this because the group houses have been part of the campus for over 25 years. But this year, of course, is different, with the pandemic impacting usual campus routines and forcing students to think up new ways to live as a community. These Marianist Student Communities, called MSCs, with mentors and the university provides resources and formation opportunities. What's different this year, said LeeAnn Meyer, assistant director of Marianist Strategies — Student Programs with the university's Office for Mission and Rector, is there is more of a focus on "making sense of the world; their reality is more difficult than normal." Community life is an intrinsic part of the Marianist tradition steeped in an understanding that a person's faith does not grow in isolation but needs the support and interaction of others.

U.S. gives grant to Catholic groups helping poor in pandemic

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The U.S. government's foreign aid agency awarded thousands of dollars in assistance to two Rome-based Catholic organizations assisting the poor in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. Callista Gingrich, U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, said that USAID will award a \$900,000 grant to the Community of Sant'Egidio and the International Union of Superiors General, which "are two of the finest examples of faith-based organizations that serve some of the most vulnerable populations around the world." "Faith-based organizations are defined by an abiding sense of purpose and are dedicated to aiding those most in need," Gingrich said Dec. 3 during a virtual news conference. "They serve as lifelines for communities experiencing unprecedented hardships and as advocates for the oppressed." The grant, she added, would allow the two organizations to continue to provide "food, clothing and personal protection equipment to the homeless, the elderly and other at-risk people." As of Dec. 3, more than 57,000 people in Italy had died from COVID-19 and over 1.6 million people have been infected since the pandemic began, according to Worldometer, a statistical site monitoring the pandemic.

Pope: Make your heart accessible to people with disabilities

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Pope Francis again insisted that all Catholics with disabilities have a right to receive the sacraments, and he suggested that Catholic parishes make real efforts to welcome and train persons with disabilities to serve as catechists. "Creating a fully accessible parish requires not only the removal of architectural barriers, but above all, helping parishioners to develop attitudes and acts of solidarity and service toward persons with disabilities and their families," the pope said in his message, published Dec. 3. For the church, he said, "our aim should be to speak no longer about 'them,' but rather about 'us.'" The U.N. theme for the 2020 celebration of the international day was "Building Back Better: Toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world."

Vatican reminds bishops of ecumenical priority

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The ministry of a Catholic bishop must reflect the Catholic Church's commitment to Christian unity and must give ecumenical engagement the same kind of attention as work for justice and peace, said a new Vatican document.

"The bishop cannot consider the promotion of the ecumenical cause as one more task in his varied ministry, one that could and should be deferred in view of other, apparently more important priorities," said the document, "The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum."

Prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the 52-page document was released Dec. 4 after its publication was approved by Pope Francis.

The text reminds each Catholic bishop of his personal responsibility as a minister of unity, not only among the Catholics of his diocese, but also with other Christians.

As a "vademecum," or guidebook, it provides lists of practical steps the bishop can and should take to fulfill that responsibility in every aspect of his ministry, from inviting other Christian leaders to important diocesan celebrations to highlighting ecumenical activities on the diocesan website.

And, as the chief teacher in his diocese, he must ensure that the content of conferences, religious education programs and homilies at the diocesan and parish level promote Christian unity and accurately reflect the teachings of the church's partners in dialogue.

Demonstrating the importance of the document,

the online news conference to present it featured not one, but four top Vatican officials: Cardinals Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops; Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples; and Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

With its explanations and its concrete suggestions, Cardinal Ouellet said, the booklet provides the tools for realizing "the ecumenical conversion of bishops and every disciple of Christ who wishes to better incarnate the joy of the Gospel in our time."

Cardinal Tagle said the vademecum reminds bishops in missionary lands that they must not import Christian divisions to new parts of the world and asks Catholics to understand just how much the divisions within Christianity turn off people who "are looking for meaning in life, for salvation."

"The non-Christians are scandalized, really scandalized, when we Christians claim to be followers of Christ and then they see how we are fighting one another," he said.

But ecumenism is not seeking a truce or "compromise as if unity should be achieved at the expense of truth," the document explained.

Catholic doctrine insists there is a "hierarchy of truths," a prioritizing of essential beliefs based "on their relation to the saving mysteries of the Trinity and salvation in Christ, the source of all Christian doctrines."

In conversations with

other Christians, the document said, "by weighing truths rather than simply enumerating them, Catholics gain a more accurate understanding of the unity that exists among Christians."

That unity, based first on baptism into Christ and his church, is the foundation on which Christian unity is built step by step, the document said. The steps include: common prayer; joint action to alleviate suffering and promote justice; theological dialogue to clarify commonalities and differences; and a willingness to recognize the way God has worked in another community and to learn from it.

The document also treated the question of sharing the Eucharist, an issue that has long been a thorny one in ecumenical dialogue as well as within the Catholic Church itself, as demonstrated by recent Vatican efforts to caution the bishops of Germany about issuing broad invitations for Lutherans married to Catholics to receive Communion.

Catholics cannot share the Eucharist with other Christians just to be "polite," but there are pastoral situations in which individual bishops may decide when "exceptional sacramental sharing is appropriate," the document said.

When discerning possibilities for sharing the sacraments, it said, bishops must keep two principles in mind at all times, even when those principles create tension: a sacrament, especially the Eucharist, is a "witness to the unity of the church," and a sacrament is a "sharing of the means of grace."

Bishop says he's coming to Buffalo as pastor

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a Zoom teleconference where he was introduced as the new bishop of Buffalo Dec. 1, Bishop Michael W. Fisher told members of the media that he is coming to his new diocese as a pastor.

He said he would seek to bring the good news of Christ's Gospel to a diocese hit hard by the abuse crisis.

"I hope to walk with them in seeking healing," he said of survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Bishop Fisher, who was ordained as a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington in 1990 and ordained as an auxiliary bishop in that archdiocese in 2018, was named by Pope Francis as the new bishop of Buffalo earlier that morning.

Several reporters asked him about a recent lawsuit brought by New York's attorney general, accusing previous church leaders in Buffalo of covering up cases of clergy sexual abuse for decades.

The Diocese of Buffalo filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in February 2020 as it faced 260 lawsuits under

New York's Child Victims Act, after it earlier had reported a \$5 million loss for fiscal year 2019, which it attributed to the consequences of the abuse scandal.

"I pledge to be truthful and transparent," Bishop Fisher said, adding he would fully cooperate with civil authorities whenever there are cases of criminal wrongdoing, and the diocese would maintain a "zero tolerance" policy toward any abuse of children or sexual harassment of adults.

Stressing the importance of accountability and transparency, Bishop Fisher said, "Trust needs to be seen in our actions and how we carry out our ministry."

The bishop noted that over the years, he has met with abuse victims and conducted retreats for them, and he said he hoped those experiences will help him look at the issue through their eyes.

"I come as a pastor with a pastor's heart," he said, noting that as a pastor and a diocesan official, he had

learned the importance of collaborating with others when facing challenging decisions.

When asked his advice for the Catholic community in Buffalo as the coronavirus pandemic continues to surge across the country, Bishop Fisher — who has served as the Archdiocese of Washington's secretary for ministerial leadership since 2006 — said: "I've personally buried four of my brother priests who died of COVID-19 in the diocese."

The bishop added that he's had family members who suffered from the virus. "I know the devastation it's placed on families and our nation," he said.

Bishop Fisher pointed out how the Diocese of Buffalo has enacted coronavirus safety precautions for its ministries, and he encouraged people to do all they can to stay safe and keep others safe.

"We're in this together. We have to look out for the safety and well-being of our brothers and sisters," he said.

Also asked about the na-

tionwide demonstrations for racial justice in the wake of unarmed people of color being killed during altercations with police, and what the church should do to combat racism, Bishop Fisher responded: "Yes, there is systematic racism in our country and in our church."

The bishop noted that he has two brothers and a nephew who work in law enforcement. "They're appalled when there's this violence toward our African American brothers," he said.

It's important for people to talk with each other about racism, Bishop Fisher said. "We need to be better at listening. As a pastor, I need to listen."

Racism, he said, "is a sin against the dignity of every human being. We need to work on solutions on how we treat one another."

Throughout the press briefing, Bishop Fisher emphasized that he is coming to Buffalo as a pastor, to bring Christ to the people he will serve there.

"I am a parish priest in

my heart and in my very core. Since my ordination, all I wanted to do was to be a pastor," he said.

Bishop Fisher served as a priest at three Maryland parishes, where he said he enjoyed celebrating Masses and administering sacraments such as baptism and witnessing the sacrament of matrimony. As a diocesan administrator, he has worked closely with priests, deacons and religious, and got to know their joys and struggles.

He expressed gratitude to his late parents, "who gave me the gift of life and faith."

Noting that COVID-19 travel restrictions had prevented him from traveling to Buffalo "by plane, train or automobile" for his introductory press briefing, he said he was looking forward to getting to know his new family of faith in that area that is famous for its chicken wings and for the Buffalo Bills football team.

"I hope you will call me 'Bishop Mike,'" he said, adding that as a priest, "the term 'Father Mike' was always endearing to me."

Pope: Tackling threats demands cooperation

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Today, more than ever, an increasingly globalized world urgently demands sincere and respectful dialogue and cooperation, Pope Francis told diplomats.

Such dialogue and coop-

eration must be capable of "uniting us in confronting the grave threats facing our planet and mortgaging the future of younger generations," he said.

The pope spoke Dec. 4 to 10 new ambassadors to

the Vatican, who were presenting their letters of credential. The new ambassadors were from Jordan, Kazakhstan, Zambia, Mauritania, Uzbekistan, Madagascar, Estonia, Rwanda, Denmark and India.

He told them, "You are beginning your mission at a time of great challenge facing the entire human family."

"Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, it was clear that 2020 was going to be a year marked by urgent humanitarian needs due to conflicts, violence and terrorism in different

parts of our world," he told the group.

"Economic crises are causing hunger and mass migration, while climate change is increasing the risk of natural disasters, famine and drought," he said.

In fact, he said, the pandemic is aggravating inequalities "as the poor and the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters risk being neglected, excluded and forgotten."

The crisis, Pope Francis said, has made people realize "that we are in the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented," but also

important and needed for moving forward and for comforting each other.

"It is my hope that your diplomatic activity as representatives of your nations to the Holy See will foster the 'culture of encounter' needed to transcend the differences and divisions that so often stand in the way of realizing the high ideals and goals proposed by the international community," he told them.

"Each of us is invited, in fact, to work daily for the building of an ever more just, fraternal and united world."

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MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

Should I get vaccinated?

Recently, many people have been reaching out with questions about vaccines. So, I thought it would be helpful to mention some of the most common ones and try to provide some answers.

Are there sound medical reasons to oppose vaccination? There can be, but vaccines typically provide a path towards individual protection and herd immunity that involves less burden and risk than becoming infected with a disease. Today's childhood vaccination schedule protects against more than a dozen different diseases. Some individuals, though, may need to decline vaccines if they have a compromised immune system or an allergy to one of the ingredients. When a vaccine is determined to be safe and effective, it will often make sense for healthy individuals to choose, on their own initiative, to get immunized.

Are vaccines safe? The safety profile of vaccines is typically verified by extensive clinical trials involving more than 30,000 participants. Even after successful safety testing, children or adults can develop symptoms or problems, apparently from an inoculation they received. When the problem is further investigated, it may turn out to be a separate health issue unrelated to vaccination. Still, vaccines are not a zero-risk proposal, and on rare occasions, adverse events do occur. No medical intervention is ever completely risk-free. The risk of complications or side effects from vaccines, being reasonably low overall, can be deemed acceptable when com-

pared to the prospect of complications that may arise from the disease itself. For generations, some of those complications included family members living in an iron lung after being ravaged by polio, married individuals rendered infertile from mumps, and infants dying due to whooping cough. Recent generations have been shielded from these types of devastating outcomes through the availability of vaccines.

Are there ethical reasons not to receive vaccines? Certain concerns of conscience arise when cell lines derived from abortions are used in the development and production of vaccines. Vaccines should not be manufactured in this way, and pharmaceutical companies should not make use of these fetal cell lines. The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has noted, however, that when vaccines have been produced this way, it is morally permissible to receive them. When equivalent alternative vaccines that don't rely on such cell lines are available, however, those should clearly be the preferred option.

Why wouldn't it be wrong to receive a vaccine made from aborted fetal cell lines? No moral evil is committed by those who get inoculated with vaccines made from problematic cell lines; rather those who originally exploited aborted children for their cells, or established pharmaceutical company policies that

rely on the abortion-derived cells, commit moral evils. The one receiving the vaccine has no causal connection to these wrongful decisions made previously by others, and the end user cannot be held culpable for their wrongdoing.

Even so, the Vatican emphasizes that when we receive vaccines manufactured in this way, we should take steps to register our disagreement and call on pharmaceutical companies to reformulate their vaccines using alternative and ethically acceptable cell sources. Fortunately, none of the 2020-2021 flu vaccines use aborted fetal material, a common concern as the winter season draws near. However, even if they did, it would be ethically permissible to receive the vaccine as an end user, as explained.

If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available, would we be obliged as Christians and as citizens to take it to defeat the spread of the virus? Each person must evaluate his or her individual situation and make a good prudential judgment regarding the benefit-to-burden ratio when accepting a COVID-19 vaccine. For example, health care workers who have not been exposed to COVID-19 should seriously consider the benefits of getting vaccinated, and their workplace may even require it. The elderly and other vulnerable populations should carefully consider the benefits as well. For younger individuals with very low

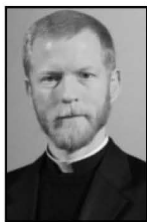
chances of detrimental outcomes there may be less urgency, particularly if they do not have any contact with vulnerable populations. Governments should not compel citizens to accept COVID-19 vaccinations, but rather inform them of the benefits and risks while encouraging them to carefully decide for themselves.

What about the new technologies behind RNA vaccines which have never been used before in humans? The criteria for vaccine safety and efficacy are generally well-established and won't differ fundamentally for a COVID-19 RNA vaccine when compared to other more standard types of vaccines. In light of the various studies that have already been done in ani-

mals, and presupposing rigorous human clinical trials, it should soon become clear whether mRNA vaccines are as safe and effective as other vaccines.

These kinds of questions about vaccinations and human health merit attention, as they manifest an important desire both for sound scientific information and ethical clarity.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.



Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk Ph.D.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

THRIFT STORE RE-OPENED

Canton — St. Mary's Thrift store has re-opened.

Schedule: Mon. and Wed. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Donations only accepted on Tues. and Thurs. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at back door.

Features: Wide selection of blouses, slacks, pants, jackets, tops, and shoes. All sizes available from infant through adult. Low prices. Great for families, seniors and students. Social distancing, masks and safe practices required. Enter by front Main street door.

VIRTUAL PRIEST DISCERNMENT SESSIONS

Zoom in to Priest Discernment. High School Junior men & older are invited to join Father Howard Venette & guests for 60-minute virtual discernment sessions.

Date: Dec. 13

Time: 3 p.m.

Contact: Father Venette at hvenette@gmail.com for meeting 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 parish deanery and livestreamed at www.rcdony.org/livemass with Bishop Terry R. LaValley. At 6:30 p.m. there will be a virtual question and answer session on Zoom with Bishop LaValley, Sister Mary Gregory Munger, SSI, and Seminarians on the topic of vocations.

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

VIRTUAL FAMILY CONFERENCE

Watch the "Iron Sharpens Iron" project from the virtual Family Life Conference at

<https://www.rcdony.org/vflc>

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

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Remembering the reason to rejoice

The words of this Sunday's readings are the closest we have to the joy of Christmas itself. In the second reading, we hear, "Rejoice! Again, I say to you 're-joice!'"

"Why?" we ask. The reason for joy is the same as that of the early Christians. They held to their firm belief that Jesus Christ has paid the price for their sins, and that He would bring them to glory in heaven. Yet, we



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

can be left emotionally unmoved at this teaching. A false "holiday" spirit has robbed Jesus of His own birthday. So, we need to spiritually enter into the hearts of Mary and Joseph as they excitedly await the child's arrival. St. Paul knew that the early Christians would be tested, so he exhorts them (and us) to "pray without ceasing" and "give thanks always." Above all, he warns them

December 13

Third Sunday of Advent

READINGS

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

in today's second reading, "Don't quench the Spirit." In this way they will be "preserved blameless in spirit, soul, and body... for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." For many, Christ came quickly, as their faith led them to martyrdom. But they never lost their joyful

spirit.

Today's Gospel continues the preaching of John the Baptist. How carefully he makes clear to the Pharisees that he is not the Christ, nor the light, but a voice testifying to the light that has come into the world. Fear and doubt thrive in darkness. Just as turning on a light in dark room can take fear away from a child, so the light that increases in us each day of Advent can shrink our fears and bolster our hopes. When the light intensifies to the radiance of faith's assur-

ance, then we know joy.

This Christmas, many of us are suffering from grief at losing a loved one to the coronavirus. Many are suffering from losing their jobs or losing their businesses. Many have their own "passions" to go through. Many are just exhausted from all the social distancing and wearing of masks. But this Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday reminds us that Christ was born in a manger, and so longs to be born in our hearts. If we let Him, He will lighten our sadness and bring us joy.

CALLED TO SERVE

Learning about, from memes

Several people in my circle of acquaintances have been throwing around the word "meme" lately. I admit to not having a clue what they meant, so I just smiled and nodded. Then I rushed home to look "meme" up.

Before I share the answer, it is OK to not know something. If I get 20% of the questions on Jeopardy right, I call that a victory. It is also clear to me that hearing the answer, or the definition, does not guar-

antee I will recall that answer the next time. That is why God helped us invent paper and pencil, or Notes on our phones.

Back to "meme." "Meme is defined as a thought or idea that can be shared, a concept, belief, or practice, that spreads from person to person in a way analogous to the transmission of genes." The analogy threw me, so I ignored it. I am tempted to break that definition apart, but who cares? Sis-

ter says, "use it in a sentence." That was sister's tricky way of finding out if we really knew what we were talking about. "I saw a great meme on Facebook the other day!" There! That's where we get a lot of memes these days... social media.

The meme I saw on Facebook was Jesus is coming, look busy. It was displayed on one of those church message boards in Georgia or someplace. What a great meme! We be-



Deacon
Kevin Mastellon

lieve, as Catholic Christians, that Jesus is coming. He may come sooner for some of us than others and only He knows when the end time for the world we all fret about will happen. The end could be any day, or it might be in a few thousand years.

It was the "look busy" part of that message that really caught my interest. Busy doing what? I am busy being a husband, a father, a deacon. I am busy being a columnist, a reporter, a teacher, and a bunch of other things. Sometimes I am busy as a homeowner, a snow remover, a repairman, a dishwasher, a cook. All these things occupy my time.

But I do not believe that is the "busy" Christ is expecting of us. We need to be busy preparing our soul and the souls of oth-

ers for the day Jesus comes for us. That is the message of Advent that has occurred to me in the last few years.

St. Paul says it beautifully in his letter to the Thessalonians we will hear this Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent. "May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Church wants us to prepare during Advent for the nativity of Jesus. The Church also wants us to prepare for His second coming. If you have not prepared for both, the meme says, get busy.

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



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The joy of Advent through the eyes of children

The Season is upon us, and the calendar now indicates that Advent is here. Advent is a four-week period of prayer and preparation. It is for looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus among us.

We can be filled with joy and love for the Lord. We can feel compelled to share this love with other. Let us remember to open our hearts and our minds as we pray during Advent.

We need to pray for the Good News of Jesus to be heard throughout the world this Advent season. The world now needs so much, let us pray our hearts can turn to love and peace.

Missionary Childhood Association Children's Annual Artwork Contest



Congratulations to Frederick Elhayek from the Archdiocese of Boston for winning the MCA 2020 National Christmas Artwork Contest. His entry is pictured above.

Do you have an artistic student who may be interested in entering? Please go to the Mission Office MCA page at rcdony.org/mission/mca for more information on the contest. Please enter.

The contest runs into January 2021 and winners will be announced in the Fall of 2021.

Best of luck to our little artists.

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

OBITUARIES

AuSable Forks – Adrian "Abie" J. Bombard, 56; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 28, 2020 at Holy Name Church; burial in Holy Name Cemetery.

Bloomington – Marion Elizabeth "Betty" (Wood) Columbe, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 27, 2020 at St. Paul's Church; burial in St. Paul's Cemetery.

Brasher Falls – Evelyn (Brown) Crowley, 99; Mass of Christian Burial May 7, 2021 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

Cadyville – James Henry Andre, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 28, 2020 at St. James Church; burial in St. James Cemetery.

Cadyville – William G. Sill, 57; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 1, 2020 at St. James Church.

Champlain – Maj. Louis A. Davis, 69; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 30, 2020 at St. Mary's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Colton – Elizabeth A. "Liz" (Sullivan) Ford, 92; Private Services to be held; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

Constable – George Francis Dufrene, 90; Services to be held in 2021.

Constable – Mona L. LaPage, 60; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 2, 2020 at St. Francis of Assisi Church; burial in St. Francis of Assisi Cemetery.

Dannemora – Nicholas P. LaCroix, 36; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 25, 2020 at St. Joseph's Church.

Ellenburg – George L. Lagree, 74; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 27, 2020 at St. Edmund's Church; burial in Immaculate Heart Cemetery, Churubusco.

Heuvelton – Velma H. (Polmateer) Herron, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 5, 2020 at St. Raphael's Church; burial in Hillcrest Cemetery.

Lowville – Rachel Ann (Van Nest) Szucs, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 27, 2020 at St. Peter's Church; burial in Beaches Bridge

Lyon Mountain – Patricia L. (Myers)

DuBrey, 88; Private services to be held.

Malone – Theresa M. (Ayers) Boardway, 90; Private Services to be held.

Malone – Eileen (Normile) Burns, 93; Services to be held at a later date.

Malone – Eileen M. LaVine, 94; Private Services to be held.

Malone – Mary (Otis) Wilson, 98; Private Services to be held.

Malone – Patricia M. Batchelder Yando, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 4, 2020 at Notre Dame Church; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

Massena – Samuel A. Cappione, 99; Private Mass of Christian Burial at St. Mary's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Massena – Carolyn G. (Marci) Chase, 100; Private Services to be held at Phillips Memorial Home; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Massena – Reginald H. Mott, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 3 at St. Mary's Church.

Massena – Margaret E. (Schwartzkopf) Sheets, 98; Private Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 7, 2020 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in Pine Grove Cemetery.

Massena – Ada (Kohl) Stoiber, 90; Services to be held in 2021; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Mooers Forks – Betty Jean (Green) Sample, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 30, 2020 at St. Ann's Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Norfolk – Paul F. Mossow, 79; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 1, 2020 at Church of the Visitation; burial in St. Lawrence Cemetery, Louisville.

Ogdensburg – Helen (Leonard) Alverson, 88; Memorial Services to be held in the Spring.

Ogdensburg – Richard A. Brossoit, 79; Funeral Services Dec. 3, 2020 at Fox & Murray Funeral Home; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Ogdensburg – Hector H. Demers, 89; Services to be held in the Spring; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Ogdensburg – Barbara Ann (Halford) Seymour, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 9, 2020 at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Ogdensburg – Michael D. Tynon, 73; Funeral Services Nov. 27, 2020 at Fox & Murray Funeral Home.

Peru – George Arthur "Art" Bailey, 83; Funeral Services Dec. 2, 2020 at the Hamilton Funeral Home Chapel; burial in Immaculate Conception Cemetery, Keeseville.

Potsdam – Wesley Albert Buffham, 87; Funeral Services Dec. 8, 2020 at the Donaldson-Seymour Funeral Home; burial in Madrid Cemetery.

South Colton – Bernice (Shea) Campbell, 86; Services to be held in the Spring at St. Paul's Church; burial in Stark Cemetery.

Ticonderoga – Melanie Anne Granger, 50; Funeral Services Dec. 4, 2020 at the Wilcox & Regan Funeral Home.

Ticonderoga – Barbara (Holfelner) Lenhart, 87; Funeral Services Dec. 5, 2020 at the Wilcox & Regan Funeral Home.

Ticonderoga – Marianne E. Murdock, 70; Funeral Services Dec. 8, 2020 at the Wilcox & Regan Funeral Home; burial in Oakland Cemetery, Springfield, VT.

Waddington – June Henry McQueeney, 88; Services to be held at a later date.

Watertown – Roberta F. (Coleman) Franks, 87; No services at this time.

West Chazy – John W. Light Sr., 74; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 30, 2020 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

West Chazy – Mildred "Millie" (LaValley) Percey, 96; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 23, 2020 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Pro-life medical groups mull COVID vaccines

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The Catholic Medical Association and three other physician-led organizations said Dec. 2 the "expeditious availability of effective vaccines" to fight COVID-19 is laudable.

However, they called for "assurances of safety, efficacy and a full commitment to uncompromised ethical development" of vaccines by pharmaceutical companies. The four groups expressed concern about the use of "abortion-derived fetal cells" in the development of some vaccines.

The statement was issued by the Catholic Medical Association, the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Pediatricians, and the Christian Medical and Dental Associations.

The statement follows recent announcements by Pfizer and its German partner, BioNTech, and by Moderna that their respective COVID-19 vaccines are 95% and 94.5% effective against the disease. The vaccines – which are both administered in two shots – are in production but the companies are waiting for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to review the data and issue a hoped-for emergency use authorization so



CNS PHOTO/BIONTECH SE 2020 HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

A dose of the COVID-19 vaccination made by Pfizer and BioNTech is administered in this undated handout photo.

the vaccines can be widely distributed.

The four physician-led organizations acknowledged in their statement that while "it is true that the animal-phase testing for these vaccines used abortion-derived fetal cells, commendably, it does not appear that production methods utilized such cells," they said.

Shortly after the Pfizer and Moderna announcements Nov. 11 and Nov. 16, respectively, critics claimed the vaccines have been produced using cells from aborted fetuses, leading to confusion over "the moral permissibility" of using the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

But several Catholic lead-

ers, including the chairmen of the U.S. bishops' doctrine and pro-life committees and an official at the National Catholic Bioethics Center, have said it is not immoral to be vaccinated with them because any connection they have to aborted fetus cell lines is extremely remote. Such cells were used only in a testing phase but not in the production phase.

In the case of AstraZeneca and Oxford University, they are working together to produce a COVID-19 vaccine that is sourced from cell lines that were originally abortion-derived, according to the Lozier Institute, a pro-life organization based in the U.S., which studied a range of vaccines under development.

"Fortunately, there are alternatives that do not violate this basic ethical and moral standard," said the Catholic Medical Association and the other physician-led groups in their joint statement.

They noted that over the past several decades, many of the more than 50 approved viral vaccines "have not utilized abortion-derived fetal cell lines for their production," but have been developed with viruses "grown in the laboratory and harvested, then

weakened or inactivated to serve as a safe vaccine."

Others such as the John Paul II Medical Research Institute use umbilical-cord and adult stem cells. "These and other ethical approaches provide encouragement for the future, where no vaccine will violate the dignity of human life in their production," the groups said.

"It is profoundly important to recognize the vaccines that may have been developed with the use of abortion-derived fetal cell lines," the physician-led groups said in their Dec. 2 statement. "This awareness is necessary from the perspective of both the health care professional and the patient, and every participant in this process deserves to know the source of the vaccine used to allow them to follow their moral conscience."

In a Nov. 21 statement, the president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, Mercy Sister Mary Haddad said CHA ethicists, "in collaboration with other Catholic bioethicists," have found "nothing morally prohibitive with the vaccines developed by Pfizer and BioNTech."

She said they made this determination using the guidelines released by the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life in 2005 and 2017 on the origin of vaccines.

CHA encouraged Catholic health organizations "to distribute the vaccines developed by these companies."

In a Nov. 23 memo to their brother bishops, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities,

addressed the moral suitability of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Neither one, they said, "involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development or production. They are not completely free from any connection to abortion, however, as both Pfizer and Moderna made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products."

"There is thus a connection, but it is relatively remote," they continued. "Some are asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching."

Like Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann, John Brehany, director of institutional relations at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia, said a recent interview on the "Current News" show on NET TV, the cable channel of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, that the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were not themselves produced using cell lines derived from aborted fetal tissue.

On Dec. 3, the California Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state's Catholic bishops, said it "affirms" the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines "are morally acceptable." It said it is committed to working closely with Catholic health care ministries and Catholic Charities as well as local government and other entities to promote and encourage people get vaccinated and to "advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations to ensure that they have access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines."

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