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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 75, Number 5

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

MAY 20, 2020

Diocese plans for reopening

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace and Grace be with you. The past two months have been challenging for all of us as we faced the coronavirus. It has forced us to discontinue public celebrations of the Eucharist and to change our way of life in many ways. We long for the opportunity to return to Mass, to return to work, to visit the sick and attend to the dying. These times have truly helped us to appreciate our parish families and those who serve us so generously.

As you are aware, Governor Cuomo has announced plans to open up the State of New York on a region by region basis. The North Country has met the metrics for re-opening and will be eligible to re-open in phases beginning this week (May 15). The good news is that the precautionary measures we have taken the past two months have reduced the number of COVID-19 cases. This good news is tempered by the great suffering and the large loss of life

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FOLLOW ME

Celebrating Laudato Si'

We live in God's country. As we celebrate the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si' (On the Care for Our Common Home)*, we are reminded that we are not mere stewards of this beautiful creation. We are an integral part of God's creation and must learn to live responsibly in the environment in which God has placed us. Careless action (or inaction) can easily destroy our

common home and create a domino effect of destruction which will impact us all, especially our children and grandchildren and generations to come.

Laudato Si' provides us with the lens of Gospel justice through which to view our current global and local environments. The Holy Fa-

ther teaches that the cries of the poor and the cries of the earth are not separate concerns but are intricately connected. He refers to St. Francis of Assisi as an example of one who "shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and inte-

rior peace" (*LS, 10*).

In these recent weeks of isolation, we have seen pictures of cities normally suffocating in smog now the streets are clearly visible through smokeless air. These images, in dramatic fashion, show us the negative effect we can have on the places where we live and move and have our being. Our health and wellbeing are at risk. How many of the children

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Bishop Terry R. LaValley

LEARNING DISTANTLY



A student from St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga completes coursework online as part of the school's remote learning efforts. See the complete story on page 6.

SHARING OUR STORIES



Canton resident Mark McKenna, a civil engineer at Fort Drum, has turned his love of hockey and support of veterans into a unique ministry: sled hockey. McKenna works with disabled veterans and athletes to help get them on the ice and forming community.

FULL STORY, PAGE 8

NORTH
COUNTRY
CATHOLICBox 326
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669
USPS 0039-3400

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Publish 45 issues per year: Weekly except skipping every other week beginning July through Aug. and skipping one week in Dec. by the Diocese of Ogdensburg. 622 Washington Street, Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.

Editorial Office:

622 Washington Street,
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.

Telephone:

(315) 608-7556

E-mail:

news@northcountry
catholic.org

Entered at the

Post Office:

Ogdensburg, NY

13669 and

additional mailing offices as
Periodical Postage.

Subscription:

For one year:

In-Diocese Rate: \$27

Outside of Diocese Rate: \$30

Matters for publication

should be

addressed to

PO Box 326

Ogdensburg, NY 13669

and should be received by

Thursday prior to

publication.

Paper is printed each

Monday;

deadline is Wednesday.

Member, Catholic Press

Association.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to

North Country Catholic,

PO Box 326

Ogdensburg, NY

13669-0326

EDITOR'S NOTE

'It was the best of times...'

Charles Dickens summed it

up well in his famous introduction to "A Tale of Two Cities": "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..."

While "worst of times" is a bit of an exaggeration, that type of duality was on my mind this week as I reflected on what I called my "work-iversary," my two year anniversary of starting

This job has both challenged me and rewarded me in ways I couldn't have imagined back on May 14, 2018, when I walked through the door into what is now my of-

Darcy L.
Fargo

Of course, this job has the typical work challenges – personalities, deadlines, last-minute changes to projects... On top of that, I've discovered challenges that are particular to working in ministry.

There are feelings of unworthiness. I constantly question how I'm qualified to share my ponderings on faith with others when I fail to live my faith well so regularly.

The standard personality conflicts and work disagreements that take place in any office feel harder to process working in ministry. It's

harder partly because I fall into a trap of expecting too much of people. I expect we'll all be Christ-like 100 percent of the time because we work for the Church (even though, again, I realize I fall short regularly). When people fail to act Christ-like, it's easy to think, "if this is how Catholics behave, I'm not sure I want to be Catholic."

And there are other challenges, too, but there are also amazing gifts and rewards.

I've had countless opportunities to talk to the amazing people of the North Country about how they're living out their faith. I see the Lord working in and through others. My faith has been strengthened those interac-

tions.

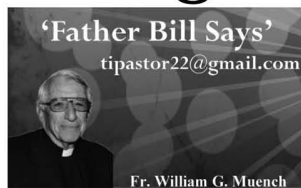
I have the love and support of an amazing diocesan team, as well as the NCC's reporters, photographers, columnists and subscribers. I've lost count of the times I've been helped, been given wisdom or given a kind word exactly when I needed it. I have a folder of emails and a folder of cards from NCC readers who went out of their way to tell me something I wrote meant something to them. I revisit those folders when I have a tough day, and those notes remind me that the struggle has meaning.

This job isn't always easy, but the blessings far outweigh the challenges. It's the best of times.

Exploring monastic living

When I think of a saint for a "stay at home" kind of life, I think of Thomas Merton and all the Trappist monks who spend their life in monasteries at prayer. We try to figure out how to live a day at home, a week at home, two months at home. The Trappist monks spend a lifetime dedicated to the Lord Jesus at home in their monastery. I continue learn more and more about that monastic life, especially through the writings of Father Louis, Thomas Merton.

Let me again share with you my story and how I got in touch with Thomas Merton and the Trappist monks. Way back in high school (a thousand years ago), I attended the public high school in Fayetteville, New York. As Catholic, we attended religious education in what was called released time. Once a week, we Catholics took off last period and went down the street, about a half a mile for religious education at Immaculate Conception Church. The teacher for our class was Sister – oh, no, I completely forgot her name. However, that



Sister had a profound effect on my life, especially my spiritually. I must admit that she also influenced my vocation, also. In addition, she put me on to Thomas Merton.

I remember that I could decide on what to write about for my senior term paper. I mentioned this to Sister – oh, how I wish I could remember her name. She suggested Thomas Merton and the Trappist monks. They truly stayed in the monastery for a lifetime. They were not parish priests or missionary priests, rather they dedicated their lives to the Lord in prayer and work in the monastery, following the Rule of St. Benedict. So, I took Sister's advice. I delved into the story of the Trappist monks, beginning with St. Bernard and his developing the earliest Trappist Monasteries, where the monks

prayed and worked and lived in silence and the writings of the monks throughout the centuries. They studied the Sacred Scriptures and prayed together, prayed the hours of the Divine Office and celebrated Mass each day together.

Working on this term paper, I decided I needed a little personal experience. I discovered there was a Trappist Monastery in Piffard, New York, just south of Rochester – Our Lady of Genesee. I talked my father into driving me there for a day visit. I am certain that he had no idea what he was getting into. The only part of the monastery we could actually visit was the book store, as well as the grounds. However, I was able to talk for a while with the Brother Porter. It was an interesting day. Here was this group of men living and praying and working together in this monastery dedicated to the Lord. I found it truly appealing. I still remember that day well – learning about monks, but also a day of traveling with my father.

So, Sister encouraged me to read Thomas Merton's "Seven Story Mountain." This was the story of Merton's early years, his schooling, and his days at Columbia University and his conversion to becoming a Catholic, influenced by his many friends. Then his discovering the Monastic life, his entrance into the Trappist Monastery in Gethsemane, Kentucky. Merton has written a great deal about the monastic life and prayer. He characterizes the prayer of a monk is the prayer of contemplation. Merton writes this: "Contemplation is really simple openness to God at every moment, and deep peace." I have discovered contemplation as a prayer of silence and solitude – taking some time in quiet prayer and allowing God to become part of your life. As we take time to stay at home with the family and with the Lord, we open our hearts to our Savior. We will all have a story to tell one day of how we stayed at home and the Lord came to be part of our lives, just like the Trappist monks.

Plans for reopening

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

caused by the virus. While the situation is improving, the danger is not completely gone. We must be vigilant as we move forward, to assure that we keep our people safe as we resume our public worship and other activities.

As Catholics, we know that Christian worship and sacraments are essential for the well-being of the human person. The challenges presented by this pandemic have highlighted just how essential our faith is – far more important than many commercial activities that are now permitted. The faithful are seeking the Eucharist, Confession and the Anointing of the Sick in this time of great sickness, isolation and anxiety. We know that the Eucharist is the source of our strength, unity and spiritual nourishment, and is needed now more than ever. The grace and comfort offered by the Sacraments is more than essential.

To help us re-open our churches and resume public worship, we rely on the guidance of the New York State Department of Health's instructions and the guidance of our local public health officials. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Dana McGuire and Dr. Andrew Williams, of the St. Lawrence County Health Department for their guidance and advice in forming this plan for re-opening. Their generous contributions to the formulation of this plan give me assurance that as we move forward toward more normal worship and parish life, we are doing so in a manner that is responsible and safe. Nothing worthwhile is completely without risk, but we must responsibly

manage risks as we implement and monitor our plan.

I am also indebted to members of our committee for reopening our parishes: Dr. Tracy LaFlair, Dr. Lisa Brietenbach, Rita Crowley, PNP, Sandy Lyons, RN, Nancy Levac, RN, and Father Bryan Stitt for their input and work on the plan. It is reassuring to have a team of professionals to guide us in these complex matters. The re-opening of our churches and return to public worship will be measured and gradual. Your cooperation with our guidelines will be greatly appreciated. In preparing this decree, I have relied on Part III of Guidelines on Sacraments and Pastoral Care, Phased Restoration of Public Masses ("Mass Guidelines"), which can be found on the website of the Thomistic Institute at <https://thomisticinstitute.org/covid-sacraments>. Where there are differences between the documents found at the Thomistic Institute and our plan and guidelines, the provisions of our plan and guidelines will be followed in the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

Based on the recommendations of church leaders, the Thomistic Institute, public health officials and members of our team, I am issuing the following guidelines for the re-opening of our churches and public worship. These guidelines will become effective when we are able to resume public worship.

1. Attendance will be limited.

a. As a preliminary matter, a priest who is at high risk or has a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid celebrating public Masses or administering the Sacraments dur-

ing this phase. The same holds true for those who will be assisting at Mass (e.g. deacons, servers, lectors, sacristans and ushers.)

b. Gatherings will be limited to the number of persons mandated by governmental regulations, guidelines or recommendations. At the present time, the federal guidelines state that a church can hold gatherings larger than 10 persons, **provided it can provide for strict social distancing.** Each parish should determine the maximum number of attendees based on government guidance and the particular circumstances of their church. You should consult with state and local health officials to determine any restrictions that may affect your parish.

c. Those who are at higher risk from the virus should remain at home.

d. Those who are feeling sick or anyone with a cough of any sort should not come to church for Mass or any visit.

e. Each parish will assure that the number of persons attending public worship do not exceed the appropriate limit. For examples of how this may be done, please see Mass Guidelines [e.g. more frequent celebrations, first come, first served, rotation system based on first letter or parishioners' last name].

f. Non-household members are to sit at least six feet from each other.

g. Locations that have historically had outdoor Masses may continue to do so, provided that all social distancing protocols are strictly followed. Locations that have not had outdoor Masses may not hold outdoor Masses at this time.

2. Screening may be pro-

vided.

a. Each parish may wish to assure that participants in public worship will be screened, if possible. Such screening will consist of questions to ascertain risks of infection and non-contact temperature screening by medical professionals (nurses, doctors, EMTs). Those taking temperatures and screening parishioners should be prepared to offer prudent follow up where a person is exhibiting symptoms of coronavirus.

3. Social Distancing will be Practiced.

a. All persons, 2 years of age and older, attending Mass will be asked to wear a mask throughout the liturgy.

b. For Holy Communion, please stay six feet back from the person in front of you. For suggestions on how to implement social distancing, see Mass Guidelines, (

c. Each parish should determine the number and location of Communion stations, which should be configured to provide for safe movement of individuals and social distancing. A small table should be placed at each Communion station, with an unfolded corporal and a bottle of hand sanitizer.

d. Each parish shall determine how the distribution of Holy Communion will be safely accomplished in their parish, following one of the options set forth in the Mass Guidelines (see 4. The Distribution of Holy Communion at pp. 7-11.) Strict social or physical distancing must be a priority during the distribution of Holy Communion. During Phase 1, I strongly recommend that parishioners receive the Eucharist in the hand to reduce the risks to the priest and themselves. Those who

decide to receive on the tongue are asked to receive at the end of the line, and the person distributing Holy Communion should purify his or her hands immediately afterwards. Those preferring to refrain from receiving the Eucharist for fears associated with Coronavirus are asked to pray an Act of Spiritual Communion.

e. Distribution of the Chalice will continue to be suspended.

f. There will be no greetings before Mass, holding of hands during Our Father and no exchange of the sign of peace.

g. Please use designated entrances and exits and follow directions for movement in order to avoid congregating or contact with others. Parishes should post signs directing where to enter and exit church and to indicate one-way travel in designated aisles. Special provisions will be available for parishioners with mobility issues or other medical issues.

h. Maintain social distancing everywhere on church property (parking lots, church steps. Refrain from congregating anywhere in or around the church.

4. A general dispensation from the Sunday obligation will remain in effect.

a. All persons who are at risk are asked to stay home for your own protection.

b. All the faithful are dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass until further notice.

c. While there is no obligation to attend Sunday Mass, we encourage all people to grow in their relationship with the Lord, keep holy the Lord's Day, and maintain contact with

Celebrating Laudato Si'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

of our world live in areas where they cannot catch their breath because they lack clean breathable air? Every day, literally millions of people search for fresh water to survive, a resource we, too often, take for granted.

These days of isolation provide us with an opportunity to reflect on our priorities and relationships, especially the importance of family and friends. Let us work together to create

a new normal. As good neighbors, we care for each other by tending carefully to our common home, the earth. We can begin by deciding to consume less and recycle more. We are keenly aware of how poorer countries are becoming the dumping grounds for our throw-away culture. Clearly, this is Gospel injustice.

Perhaps, as we reflect on life these days, we have come to realize, more and more, to appreciate what a

real gift it is for us to be able to call the North Country our common home. Can we make an extra effort to support our local producers by purchasing items made locally?

Local manufacturers, farmers and other businesses are suffering serious economic loss. We can extend a helping hand and caring heart to them by purchasing local products and services, continuing after the current health crisis ends.

Laudato Si' is a gift that begs to be unwrapped further. One way to do this is to be sure to read the informative articles on Environmental Stewardship that you will find in the *North Country Catholic*. This Papal document is an evangelization tool for the entire faith community but especially for our youth who will live with the results of what we accomplish, or fail to accomplish, today. We illustrate our love for them, by showing

proper concern for the land that both feeds our bodies through the produce and labor of farmers and fishermen, and facilitates the re-creation of our souls by inviting us to walk with our God through mountains and valleys, along streams and lakes and then to simply praise our God for the beauty that He has spread before us.

This is indeed God's country! Let us take good care of it. May God be praised!

Plans to reopen

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

their parish by prayer and watching the Mass over the internet or on television. A list of live-streamed Masses is available on our diocesan website.

5. Risk still exists for those attending Mass.

a. Even the best health practices and social distancing cannot remove all risks of contracting or transmitting the coronavirus.

b. Hand sanitizer will be available near the entrances of the church and all are encouraged to perform hand hygiene upon entering and before leaving church.

c. Our churches will be cleaned and disinfected as outlined in the March 12, 2020 Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for COVID-19 For House of Worship (attached). This document may be updated from time to time. Updates will be found at the NYS DOH website: www.health.ny.gov.

d. Missalettes, song books and other common use items will be removed from pews. Single use papers with music, readings and prayers may be avail-

able to facilitate participation.

e. Reminders will be given to participants about the importance of social distancing and personal hygiene.

These diocesan guidelines are based on CDC and NYS health mandates and recommendations. Each parish will tailor its plan to conform to its location, size, circumstances, and local governmental directives. There are some changes that you will notice as we celebrate Mass. The changes are intended to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. These changes include:

- Initially, only a certain number of people will be able to physically go to Mass. This is largely determined by the size of the church and the requirements of social distancing.

- All parishioners will wear face coverings while in church to protect themselves and others.

- There will be no holy water in fonts to reduce the risk of infection.

- No offertory processions.

- No passing of the col-

lection basket. The basket will be placed in a fixed location and parishioners will be asked to drop their contributions into the basket as they enter or leave the church.

- The distribution of Communion will be different.

- No worship aids will be available for use, such as missalettes and hymns. This will reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

- There will be no choirs in the early phases of our return to public worship.

- There will be no congregating in the church, on the steps or at the doors of the church so we can maintain social distancing.

- I extend the dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice.

Our return to public worship will most likely be gradual. The changes to the Mass will require cooperation and patience. We do not want to contribute to a rebound effect that would negate all the progress that has been made in stopping the spread of this virus. Continuing to follow health guidelines will enable us

to resume normal Mass attendance in the near future. Setbacks would push a return to normalcy further into the future. We must put the health and well-being of people ahead of any urge to move too quickly.

Your parish will formulate a safe plan that takes into account its particular circumstances. Let us seek the intercession of Saint Joseph, protector of the

Church and Hope of the Afflicted, as we resume our public worship. Asking God to bless you abundantly, I am

Faithfully yours in Christ,



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



St. Peter's Catholic Church in Massena, NY is seeking qualified candidates to apply for the full-time position of Director of Facilities, effective July 1, 2020. The Director of Facilities is responsible for the security, operation, development, maintenance, and physical appearance of the Sacred Heart Campus of St. Peter's Parish, including Sacred Heart Church, Trinity Catholic School, St. Peter's Parish office and Sacred Heart Convent. This includes, but is not limited to, mechanical systems, janitorial upkeep, utilities, grounds, equipment, and the buildings themselves. These functions and responsibilities include day-to-day performance of campus operations. A valid New York State Motor Vehicle Driver's License is required.

Salary will be commensurate with experience and education. The deadline for submittal of cover letter and resume will be June 1, 2020. No phone calls please. Applicants may submit cover letter and resume to smarion@massenacatholics.com or mail to St. Peter's Parish, Attn: Human Resources, 212 Main Street, Massena, NY 13662.

St. Peter's Parish is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Seminarians adapt to COVID-19 formation

By Deacon Kevin Mastellon
Contributing Writer

WATERTOWN – Seminarians teach candidates for the priesthood what a priest ought to know and make them what a priest ought to be. The Diocese of Ogdensburg is blessed to have 13 men in various stages of preparation for the priesthood. Two will be ordained priests for this Diocese in August by Bishop Terry R. LaValley. Two more will be ordained deacons at the same ceremony. They are expected to transition to the priesthood in a year.

Some of the candidates are still at the college level of their preparation. Others have moved into the major seminary portion of their formation. One definition of a seminary included this description: "A seminary is a school in which priests are trained. A priest is the representative of Christ among us: his mission is to carry on Christ's work for the salvation of souls; in Christ's name and by His power, he teaches us what we ought to believe and what we ought to do: he forgives sins, and offers in sacrifice the Body and Blood of Christ. He is another Christ (sacerdos alter Christus). His training, therefore, must be in harmony with this high office and consequently different in many ways from the preparation for secular professions. He must possess not only a liberal education, but also professional knowledge, and moreover, like an army or navy officer, he needs to acquire the manners and personal habits becoming his calling."

It is that last part, acquiring personal habits becoming his calling, that has been most at risk during COVID-19. Missing from the preparation is the

nearby, always open chapel. Gone are the required gathering of seminarians for prayer each morning, evening, during the day and at night. Meals are no longer taken with fellow seminarians dressed in cassocks.

Aaron Ackey from Plattsburgh is at Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut.

"Holy Apostles had emailed us while we were on our spring break that when we returned, we were going to stay in our rooms and do all on-line classes for the time being," Akey said. "I went back on a Sunday night and by 9 the next morning, they said they were sending me home."

The classroom part of distance learning has been fine for Ackey and other seminarians. Father Christopher C. Carrara, diocesan director of Seminarians, agrees.

"I find that they are coping very well with the situation they find themselves in," Father Carrara said. "And the seminarians are working very hard to see that they have the support they need."

"A big change for me," said seminarian Matthew Conger, "has been the loss of the structure of the seminary, being with the guys on your hallway, having meals with them all, praying with them and attending liturgies with them. It's nice being with my family but it is definitely different."

Conger lives in Ogdensburg and attends Christ the King Seminary in Buffalo. He will be ordained a Transitional Deacon in August.

Leagon Carlin, also from Plattsburgh, is in his second year of major seminary at Mount St. Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He agrees with Conger that the structure

is missed. All the seminarians agree the separation from the seminary environment has placed new challenges, and responsibilities, on each of them.

"Part of the reason we are there (in a seminary) to be formed is to develop that closeness and love of the Lord," Carlin said.

The seminarians each commented on the personal requirement to maintain their prayer life, go to confession when possible and even attend Mass if their pastor allows.

"I didn't want this to happen, but the experience has helped me learn and grow," said Kevin McCullough from Black River. "This has made me more accountable to my professors, my advisors, to myself."

McCullough is completing his 3rd year at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio.

Aside from the unique requirements absence from campus has forced on the students, there is a possible silver lining. Carlin thinks the experience

has been a gift to this generation of seminarians.

"When we are ordained a priest, we are thrown out into the parish and for some it will be the first time on our own," he said. "You have to learn how to schedule your life, your prayer life, and now we are getting a very small glimpse of that. I think in this case, it is a gift."

"This has made us own our prayer more," Aaron Ackey said. "No one is responsible for keeping up my relationship with God but me. There is no one taking attendance. We have varying degrees of success. I can see the difference in myself when I say I wanted to spend that time with God, but I don't. It makes

you all the more resolved to cultivate that relationship."

"I think the guys are doing well," Father Carrara said. "I don't have any particular concerns right now, but they do need the support and structure of seminary formation and their confreres."

None of the seminarians disagreed.

IN BRIEF

Catholic Charities' appeal

Catholic Charities' Mother's Day appeal donations can be mailed to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, 6866 State Highway 37, Ogdensburg, NY, 13669. Donations also can be made at <http://cathcharities.org>.

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Environmental Stewardship

Five years of *Laudato Si'*

Does it seem possible that it has been five years since the Encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home* was released not just to Catholics but to every person who inhabits the planet? In his introduction Pope Francis states "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Everyone's talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation." (L.S. 14)

While we have become more aware of the destruction and pollution caused by human activity and efforts to change it, we know it is not enough. This reality may cause us to feel overwhelmed and discouraged. So, the temptation may be to do nothing and simply pretend it doesn't exist. So where does one begin?

Interestingly enough the name of the Encyclical *Laudato Si* may provide us with a starting place. As we know the title in Latin means "Praise be to You," taken from St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle to the Sun." In this Canticle, St. Francis sees all creation — sun, moon, water, fire, etc. — as his brothers and sisters that praise their Creator by their very being. This Canticle reveals an intimate relationship that Francis has with all creatures and with God. "What is more, St. Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness." (L.S. 12) Perhaps our care for creation needs to begin with a prayer and praise for the wonders God has created. Catholic author Kathleen Fischer notes that cultivating the attitude of wonder may seem like a weak response to a world teetering on the edge of catastrophe. However, the experience of wonder reveals the sacred depth found in ordinary things. It is the beginning of spirituality.

Let's take the advice of the poet, Mary Oliver this week "Be aware. Be amazed. And share it with someone!" Then, praise God and ask for the grace to protect it.

Rest in Peace

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

May 20 — Rev. Eugene Noury, O.M.I., 1961; Rev. P. Andrew L'Esperance, M.S.C., 1962

May 21 — Msgr. John Pendergast, 1998

May 22 — Msgr. Claudius Gobet, 1961

May 23 — Deacon Richard A. Menke, 2003

May 24 — Rev. Francois X. Therien, O.M.I., 1902; Rev. Antoine A. Amyot, 1927; Rev. Julien Racette, O.M.I., 1937; Rev. Joseph O. Levesque, 1938; Msgr. George L. Murray, 1942

May 25 — Rev. J. Hector Migneron, 1958

May 26 — Rev. Thomas J. Kelleher, 1889; Rev. Steven H. Gratto, 2012

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg uses the training, Protecting God's Children for Adults. Due to CoVid-19, there are no live trainings scheduled. If you need to complete VIR-TUS training, contact Jean Grizzuto, jgrizzuto@rcdony.org or 315-393-2920 x 1413, who will coordinate assigning the training to be completed online.

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terri- anne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terri- annyanulavich@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.Report-BishopAbuse.org.

Ticonderoga school is '#bettertogethersaferapart'

By Pamela Arzberger
St. Mary's School

TICONDEROGA — St. Mary's School anticipated the closure of schools on March 11, 2020. At a March 12th emergency Faculty Meeting, Principal Sister Sharon Anne Dalton discussed the need to prepare all options for Distance Learning for the PreK through Grade 8 school. The teachers and support staff went to work immediately compiling online resources, student login and password information, and practicing accessing the programs with the students. On Friday, March 13th the eighth-grade students went to lower grades and taught them how to use Google Classroom. Grades PreK through 1 already had online programs SeeSaw and Class Dojo up and running for home/school communication and academic work.

Schools officially closed on Monday, March 16, and St. Mary's began their distance and online learning program that day. Approximately 85% of the students were prepared and learning online the first day. Within the first week 93% of the students were doing their schoolwork and interacting with their teachers online. During the second week of NY PAUSE, St. Mary's Junior High began classes and meetings online through the group Google Classroom app. At this time, all classes work every school day, and students continue to flourish.

"Our school's great success with Online Learning could not happen without the hard work and dedica-



St. Mary's School students show their home classroom spaces. Students in the school have been learning from home since March 16.

tion of our teachers. They and the parents deserve the credit for our success during this difficult time," said Sister Sharon. "The teachers continue to find new online sources to use as well as using good old-fashioned teaching techniques. The students are doing a fantastic job, and we appreciate the parents guiding them with the technology. Our students are interacting with their teacher every single day by screen visits, class meetings, email, Google Classroom messaging and interactive lessons with educational apps."

St. Mary's School is not only educating its students, but they are also keeping their community connected through social media. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, there is a spirit theme put out on Facebook where students post pictures of different activities. The school has the slogan #bettertogethersaferapart and #stmarysstrong. Since March 23, the school Facebook page has had over 16,000 views of these posts. Students get to see each other virtually and can share fun things or activities they are enjoying during this stay-at-home period. Themes

have included sharing art-work, pets, new chores at home, books they are reading, their online gym class, their home classroom, and favorite superheroes. Students have shared projects such as making rainbows, making signs with messages to classmates, and building snowmen in March. Fun spirit days have been a pajama day, "May the Fourth Be With You," Adulting at Home, and wearing their St. Mary's blue and white. Students have celebrated Easter, Earth Day, and May Day virtually. It has been a very fun way for the school community to be together when they must stay apart.

On Saturday, May 16, the teachers and Staff of St. Mary's were in front of the school with signs and messages for the students and families.

"St. Mary's has been through a lot during our 61 years," Sister Sharon said. "In 2014 our building was destroyed by an arson fire and we rebuilt. This is a challenging time for everyone, but we will get through this together as a dedicated community and as a family. We are, after all, St. Mary's Strong."

STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH AT HOME



PLEASE SEND YOUR DONATION TO YOUR LOCAL PARISH TO HELP SUPPORT THE CATHOLIC HOME MISSION APPEAL

American Samoa, an archipelago of seven islands in the South Pacific and the only United States territory south of the equator, is located over 500 miles closer to New Zealand than it is to Hawaii. Over 97% of the territory's population lives on the largest Island, Tutuila, leaving the small number of residents in the outlying Manu'a islands to be served by one catechist and one priest, who visits monthly to celebrate Mass and to bring sacraments to the faithful. Despite these limited resources, the residents of Manu'a are growing in faith, with more becoming interested in being baptized and welcomed into the Church.

Your generosity has helped sustain this invaluable ministry to the faithful in the isolated environment of the Diocese of Samoa-Pago Pago. By supporting the Catholic Home Missions Appeal (CHMA), you continue a tradition of support for mission dioceses in the United States dating back to 1924.

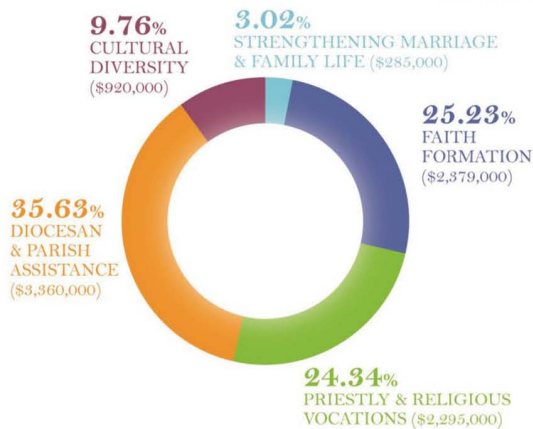
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For more information about the Catholic home missions, visit www.usccb.org/home-missions.

What Is a Home Mission Diocese?

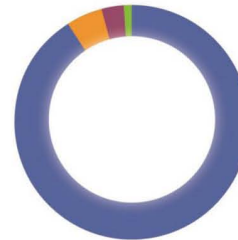
Home mission dioceses are those dioceses in the United States, its territories, and former territories that cannot provide basic pastoral services to Catholics without outside help. Basic pastoral services include Mass and the other sacraments, religious education, and ministry training for priests, deacons, religious sisters, and lay people. Right now, over 40 % of dioceses are considered home missions.

WHAT DOES YOUR GIFT FUND? 2018 FINANCIALS



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- Program Costs: \$569,822
- Promotions and Fundraising Expenses: \$280,078
- Administrative Expenses: \$85,008

Total Expenses: \$10,591,617



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Taking ministry on ice

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

CANTON – Mark McKenna grew up never far from a Catholic Church.

"I grew up across from St. Mary's Church," said McKenna, a civil engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers. "I still across from that church. My faith has been important to me since I was a kid. The caretaker at St. Mary's would pick us up at 6 a.m., noon and 6 p.m. to go over to the church and ring the bells. I started an altar boy in fifth grade, and I continued serving on the altar until senior year of high school. When I was 12, I started working for the church and school mowing lawns, digging graves, cleaning the school... Church has always been part of my life."

His faith and the teachings to serve others combined with McKenna's love of sports to help him launch a unique ministry: sled hockey.

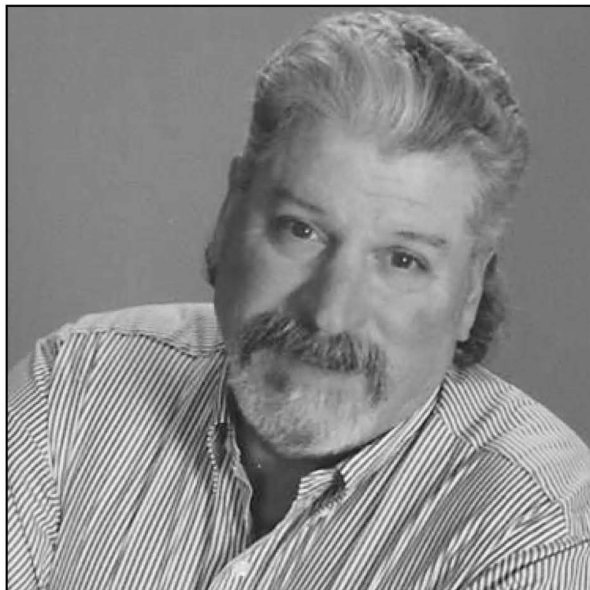
"I've always loved hockey," McKenna said.

While he hoped to play the sport in college, he said his coach felt his engineering program's coursework would be difficult to complete if he played for the school team. Around the same time, McKenna learned of an opportunity to coach youth hockey.

"I coached peewees that year," he said, referring to teams of youth ages 11 and 12. "I was 18 years old. I later moved on to Bantams, ages 13 to 16. I'm still coaching."

Coaching youth, McKenna found multiple opportunities to serve the disadvantaged, inspired by Catholic social teaching and a personal desire to help others.

"I owned a sports shop," McKenna said. "Working in the shop, I met a lot of sin-



Mark McKenna

gle parents who were trying to help their kids play hockey. I come from a blue-collar family. It's getting so expensive to play hockey. It seemed like it was getting exclusive to families who could afford more. I worked with Canton Minor Hockey and CCM (a hockey equipment company) to get scholarships for kids to be able to play and to get starter equipment. The kids had to buy their skates and sticks, but pretty much everything else was provided to them."

Then, sometime around 2010-11, McKenna had an experience while exercising at Fort Drum that showed him he had another calling.

"A kid came into the gym in a wheelchair," McKenna said. "He couldn't reach the pull-up bars. There was this wrestling mat on the floor, and it made it so he couldn't get to the dumbbells. He got frustrated and left. I went to the manager and pointed out that they had equipment issues that made it so people in wheelchairs couldn't use the

gym. They had two pull-up bars. We lowered one to wheelchair height, and we got rid of the mat. I asked the gym manager if they offered anything like sled hockey or wheelchair lacrosse. He had never heard of it. I thought something needed to be done for these guys who are injured."

McKenna set to work to create an opportunity for injured soldiers and athletes to participate in sports for both physical activity and community.

The Mountain Warriors Sled Hockey team was born.

In sled hockey, players are seated on a "sled" and use their hands to both move the sled around and to move, pass and shoot the puck.

Working with coaches from St. Lawrence University, Clarkson University, SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton, McKenna was able to acquire used hockey equipment. USA Hockey, the governing association overseeing most hockey in the United States, offered a sled lending program. A



sled manufacturer based in Canada, one of only two in North America, sent a free sled to the effort.

"I went to the Warriors Transition Unit to recruit soldiers to participate," McKenna said. "I had 24 sign up for it. I needed six more sleds than what I had through the lending program."

McKenna said he worked with the Knights of Columbus, VFW and area businesses to secure the funding for six additional hockey sleds.

"We started with a two-day event – you had to have at least a two-day event to participate in the lending program," he said. "We were in Watertown on a Friday and at SUNY Canton all day Saturday. We had four different learning stations to learn sled hockey. I had different coaches helping out. The next year, we started the team."

While the team is comprised mostly of soldiers, it also includes two individuals from the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, both wheelchair-bound athletes.

This hockey season, the team hosted its eighth annual tournament.

"We've become a hockey family," he said. "And the whole community is involved in supporting it. Local businesses and organizations – including the Knights of Columbus and VFW – provide all of our food and generally support the team. I'm convinced this couldn't be done anywhere but here in the North Country where people support our military, support hockey and are good Christian people."

And the team has meant a lot to the players.

"I've had three different guys come up to me and tell me they would've committed suicide had it not been for sled hockey and this team," McKenna said. "I just have to keep this thing going."

In addition to serving others via sled hockey, McKenna is a member of the Knights of Columbus. He's also looking to start wheelchair lacrosse in the area, largely to benefit a young woman who was disabled in an accident but loves to play the sport.

"My faith has taught me to serve others and treat them the way you want to be treated," he said. "I'm trying to live that faith."

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Events mark St. John Paul II's 100th birthday

WASHINGTON (CNS) – St. John Paul II, the longest reigning pope in modern history, was born May 18, 1920, and the national shrine in Washington dedicated to the pontiff will celebrate the centennial of his birth with a series of virtual events May 16-22. The St. John Paul II National Shrine had originally planned several in-person events, including an academic-style symposium, but adjusted its celebration to an exclusively virtual format because of the COVID-19 impact. One of the highlights is the pontiff's biographer George Weigel will lead an installment of the "Shrine Webinar Series" titled "Centennial Celebration of St. John Paul II's Birth" at 6 p.m. (Eastern time). The webinar will be available at this Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cW-fNlBS5ev9zPRAScRlA. It also will be available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Z5WOAJT57Hk>. A centennial Mass was celebrated May 18 at noon (Eastern time) with a homily focused on St. John Paul.

Fauci to Jesuit high school grads: 'We will get through this'

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, is used to addressing the country about steps to contain the coronavirus, but in mid-May he spoke directly to graduates of the nation's 60 Jesuit high schools with words of encouragement and congratulations. "Please, hang in there. We need you to be smart, strong and resilient. With discipline and empathy, we will all get through this together," he said in a recording sent to Jesuit high schools that many posted on their school websites. Fauci, who earned the nickname "America's doctor" years ago and has advised six U.S. presidents on national health concerns, was Jesuit-educated in both high school – at Regis High School in New York – and college – at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. The idea to have him talk to Jesuit high school graduates came from Jesuit Father Daniel Lahart, president of Regis High School. He told America magazine he had asked Fauci to record a video message for the school's online graduation ceremony but that idea expanded to another video message request after another Jesuit school president said he had a similar idea. So, the Regis president asked if Fauci could do a second, more general message for all Jesuit high school seniors.

Postulator found no evidence St. John Paul covered up abuse

ROME (CNS) – The postulator and the commission involved in investigating the life of Pope John Paul II for sainthood cause found no evidence that the pope knowingly neglected or covered up abuse scandals, the postulator said. Msgr. Slawomir Oder, the promoter of the cause, told reporters in Rome during an online meeting May 15 that he and investigators saw nothing "that could possibly be claimed as (being) a shadow of guilt in regard to John Paul II." However, Msgr. Oder also explained that the investigators did not have direct access to the relevant Vatican archives but had to send the topics they wanted to explore and questions to the Secretariat of State. The Polish monsignor had been asked whether it would have been better to have been more careful or to have waited longer before beginning the pope's sainthood cause given what has come to light concerning past abuses by the late Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legionaries of Christ, and former-Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick. Msgr. Oder told the reporter that during the sainthood process "all questions were faced, even the ones you are talking about" related to abuse. "Extensive research was carried out in the Vatican archives," he said.

Pope: Christianity is a relationship, not just rules

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Christians must follow the Ten Commandments, of course, but Christianity is not about following rules, it is about having a relationship with Jesus, Pope Francis said.

"A relationship with God, a relationship with Jesus is not a relationship of 'things to do' – 'If I do this, you give me that,'" he said. Such a relationship would be "commercial" while Jesus gives everything, including his life, gratuitously.

At the beginning of his morning Mass May 15 in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, Pope Francis noted the day's U.N. celebration of the International Day of Families and asked people to join him praying "for all families so that the Spirit of the Lord – the spirit of love, respect and freedom – might grow in families."

In his homily, the pope focused on the day's first reading and its account of

the first Christian converts from paganism being "disturbed" by other Christians who insisted the converts must first become Jewish and follow all Jewish laws and customs.

"These Christians who came from the pagans believed in Jesus Christ, received baptism and were happy – they had received the Holy Spirit," the pope said.

Those who insisted the converts observe Jewish law and customs had "pastoral arguments, theological arguments and even moral ones," he said. "They were methodical and also rigid."

"These people were ideological more than dogmatic," the pope said. "They reduced the law, the dogma to an ideology: 'You must do this, this and this.' Theirs was a religion of prescriptions and, in that way, they took away the freedom of the Spirit," who had brought the converts directly to Christ

without first having them become Jewish.

"Where there is rigidity, there is not the Spirit of God, because the Spirit of God is freedom," the pope said.

The problem of individuals or groups trying to impose extra conditions on believers was present from the beginning of Christianity and continues in some quarters of the church today, he said.

"In our own time, we have seen some church organizations that seem to be well organized, to work well, but they are all rigid, each member the same as the others, and then we have discovered the corruption that was inside, including in the founders."

Pope Francis ended his homily inviting people to pray for the gift of discernment as they try to distinguish between the requirements of the Gospel and "prescriptions that make no sense."

Pope joins interreligious prayer to end pandemic

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – At a time of global "tragedy and suffering" because of the coronavirus, and in view of the long-term impact it will have, believers of every religion should beg mercy from the one God and father of all, Pope Francis said.

During his early morning Mass, Pope Francis joined leaders of every religion marking May 14 as a day of prayer, fasting and acts of charity to ask God to stop the coronavirus pandemic.

Some people might think, "It hasn't affected

me; thank God I'm safe.' But think about others! Think about the tragedy and also about the economic consequences, the consequences on education," the pope said in his homily.

"That is why today everyone, brothers and sisters from every religious tradition are praying to God," he said.

The day of prayer was called for by the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, an international group of religious leaders formed after Pope Francis

and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of al-Azhar, signed a document in 2019 on promoting dialogue and "human fraternity."

During the pope's Mass, livestreamed from the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, he said he could imagine some people would say that gathering believers of all religions to pray for a common cause "is religious relativism, and you can't do it."

"But how can you not pray to the Father of all?" he asked.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Jesus continues to be present

As the days passed after the Resurrection of Jesus, the Apostles were getting used to their fleeting glimpses of the Risen Christ, appearing here and there so dramatically. He had pretty much cured their depression following the horrible crucifixion on Calvary by finally convincing them that He was alive! They never knew when He would appear



**Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore**

next with new commands to preach the Good News everywhere. Now, He suddenly ascends into the air before their eyes, and is

lost to sight in the clouds. They must have thought in dismay, "He's left us again!" So, what did they do? It was one thing to label themselves followers of the Christ when He was not too far away. It was quite another to think of facing the Jewish leaders without his earthly presence. Still shaken at his seeming abandonment, they withdrew to-

gether to that upper room to pray and ponder what He had taught them. Wisely, they kept near his mother, Mary in those nine

May 24

Seventh Sunday of Easter

READINGS

Acts 1:12-14

1 Peter 4:13-16

John 17:1-11a

days of waiting for the Holy Spirit.

They must have remembered what Jesus had said to them: "If you really love me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father." In other words, I have a better way to remain with you. I will live in you and in the Church through my Spirit and in my Vicar. And did they remember his wonderful farewell ad-

dress in that same upper room just a few weeks before at that strange, sacred meal the night before He died? Did they now understand the reason for his promise of the Spirit and his Institution of the Eucharist?

And they gather in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the Cenacle that held such precious memories, there to await the promised Paraclete. He will teach them everything they need to know to spread the Good News to all the world. The Spirit will also fill them with the courage to be bold and fearless, ready for whatever will await them,

even for martyrdom.

Like the Apostles, we need to prepare ourselves this week for a renewal of all those gifts we received at our confirmation. We must not act as though He's not present. He is present. His being present in the Spirit is far more powerful than his earthly presence would have been. We must go simply and deliberately into our souls daily – into the core of our being – and there listen to Him in silence. Then, strengthened by His grace, we can confidently go about our Mission. We need that grace more than ever in these critical days of the coronavirus!

CALLED TO SERVE

'Detailed coordination of a complex operation'

Logistics is defined as "the detailed coordination of a complex operation involving many people, facilities, or supplies." We will call the operation Mass. Many people are the faithful who are praying for a return to church. Church is the "facility" we have in mind, and the "supplies" are everything from the unconsecrated bread to hand sanitizer. Perhaps you get the gist of these thoughts. It will take a massive logistics effort to bring us all back to

church at some point in the future. I suspect the time will not be universal throughout the diocese. I suspect once Bishop LaValley gives his OK to celebrating Mass and the sacraments publicly, pastors will be challenged to make the homecoming work in their churches. When the pastor is comfortable and the bishop is comfortable with a particular parish plan, that is when the doors will open in your church.

"Bishop LaValley wants

us to become aware of the changes we will have to make once public worship is allowed." We are warned. When the day comes for your parish church and my parish church to open the doors to congregations, things are not going to be as they were.

You might find the size of the congregation limited. Ushers will count heads and tell some folks "you can't come in just now." That is a long way from telling folks in the pew to "move-in" so we can make room for more Mass goers. I am betting some ushers will tell their pastors they do not want to be the one who says "you can't come in."

There might not be any Holy Water in the fonts.

Masks will be the order of the day. Everyone not in the sanctuary will have to wear a mask. Communion will be distributed in one kind and how and when we receive communion might be different.



**Deacon
Kevin Mastellon**

The bottom line is, it would be irresponsible for pastors to just throw open the doors and invite everyone and anyone back to Mass. The responsible approach during this pandemic, and the one I think the bishop is considering, is to follow the recommendations of the health community, federal and state agencies and unique local circumstances before welcoming parishioners back to church. Even then, we will have parishioners who do not think we should have opened the

church doors. There will be some who, for health reasons, should not have come to church but will. There will be some who just do not like the changes (that sounds familiar) and so will not come back.

There is one phrase missing from the definition of logistics: "and rarely is everyone happy with the plan." But the end result is the important one: to bring our people back to the celebration of God's Word and Jesus' Sacrifice, to offer our prayers of thanksgiving and hope and to receive Him in Communion. Pray for the logisticians.

Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown.

He is the Director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

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Death and burial in the 'beautiful valley'

By Father Daniel Chapin

It was Holy Week 2017 – Holy Thursday – in the central Bolivian city of Cochabamba, nestled in a valley of the Andes Mountains; the beautiful, April sunny afternoon displayed blue skies and soaring white clouds. I was preparing to head over to the Parish of Our Lady of La Salette, where I had been helping out since my arrival six months earlier. I had been asked by the pastor to help wash feet at the evening's Mass of the Lord's Supper, something I have always found to be profoundly moving.

Suddenly, a call came in from the parish: a family was requesting a priest to offer prayers at the funeral and burial of their newborn son. I raced over in a taxi to the parish where a man on a motorcycle was waiting to take me to the family home a few blocks away in a barrio called the "Beautiful Valley." When I arrived at the home there were many family, friends and neighbors keeping vigil near the body of little



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

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director
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mbrett@rcdony.org

two-month old Jhonatan Gabriel. He was in a small, white casket surrounded by flowers and candles. I noticed a sign that read "St. Matthew's Funeral Home."

I greeted the children and adults; it struck me that there were no elderly present. A dog lay sleeping in the shade of the table on which was placed Jhonatan's casket. I knew right away who the mother was – she was the one with the grief-stricken face. The parents informed me that Jhonatan was a twin and had been sick with a cold and brought to the hospital, where he died. His twin brother was also sick but was getting better. There were two other brothers, 5 and 2 years old. I was told that none of the children were baptized. Prayers

were offered and Scriptures read. Then we all piled into taxis and headed to the cemetery.

A sign at the entrance read "Cemetery of the Beautiful Valley: no drunks, no minors, no medicine men." A large map showed the different burial sections, the largest one being "in ground," where the poorest are buried. Jhonatan was to be placed in the section for babies: row 147, niche 7. I reflected on the number 7 in the Bible as signifying perfection, fulfillment, completion; how little Jhonatan's life was fulfilled and complete at just two months and my life at 70 was still not. Looking around, many niches had only one date listed – birth and death on the same

day.

Two men with mouth and nose covered arrived to prepare a slab of cement and bricks that would be used to seal the niche. It was evident these men had done this way too often. I thanked them and wondered how frequently they received expressions of gratitude. I blessed the niche, prayers were said and a "Hail Mary" was recited at the end. As the casket was about to be placed in the niche, Jhonatan's parents began to weep profusely, as did I. Our tears fell onto his casket (a kind of Baptism of Desire) as goodbyes were uttered; the body was placed, the niche sealed and beautiful, white flow-

ers were offered. I embraced the parents and promised prayers; the customary Mass to be celebrated nine days later in the parish was requested. Before leaving the cemetery, liquor was offered, then Coca Cola followed by coca leaves.

A short time later, I was at the parish, in imitation of Jesus washing the feet of my brothers and sisters, disciples all, and my thoughts flowed back to the "Cemetery of the Beautiful Valley" and to our tears that bathed little Jhonatan Gabriel. I could not have been better prepared to enter into the spirit of the Sacred Triduum: passion, death...Resurrection.

OBITUARIES

Adams – Richard J. Hurley, 86; Private Funeral Mass at St. Cecilia's Church; burial in St. Cecilia's Cemetery.

Adams – Jean (Bellon) Shelmidine, 90; Private Mass of Christian Burial May 14, 2020 at St. Cecilia's Church; burial in Rural Cemetery.

Carthage – Sharon Marie Walters, 43; Private Funeral Services to be held at St. James Church; burial in St. James Cemetery.

Malone – Luva A. Patnode Bova Bourcier, 97; Private Mass of Christian Burial to be held at Notre Dame Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Chateaugay.

Malone – Beverly (Bouvier) Cox, 87;

Graveside services to be held at a later date at Notre Dame Cemetery.

Malone – Joseph T. Leone, 86; Graveside services to be held at St. Joseph's Cemetery at a later date.

Morrisonville – David W. Pereira, 77; Memorial Mass to be held at a later date at St. Alexander's Church; burial in St. Alexander's Cemetery.

Ogdensburg – June (Hutt) Valley Jenno, 97; Private Funeral Services to be held May 19, 2020 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Philadelphia – Andrew R. Kilcer, 68; Private Mass of Christian burial to be held.

Plattsburgh – Bertha T. (LaBier) Parrott, 95; Private Funeral Services to be held; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Redford – Theresa M. (Anderson) Cary, 89; Memorial Mass to be held at a later date; burial in Church of the Assumption Cemetery.

Schroon Lake – Therese S. (Marchand) Vaillancourt, 85; Private Services to be held.

Watertown – Frances A. (Badalato) Jackson, 95; Private Services to be held. Burial in Brookside Cemetery.

West Chazy – Lauria M. (Gagnier) Weightman, 98; Mass of Christian Burial to be held at a later date at St. Joseph's Church.



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New aid bill cuts benefits to Catholic schools

CLEVELAND (CNS) – Catholic leaders expressed deep reservations about a new \$3 trillion tax cut and spending bill in response to the economic fallout caused by the coronavirus pandemic that would restrict support for Catholic school students.

Unveiled May 12 by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, or HEROES Act, includes a provision that would rescind funding of equitable services to nonpublic schools, including Catholic schools, that had been established in the CARES Act, an earlier \$2.2 trillion emergency aid package.

Other provisions in the Democrats' bill that has rocked the country's private education sector include the lack of direct assistance to families for tuition expenses or tax incentives that can be used for tuition; a measure that cuts out nonpublic schools, except in limited cases for children with disabilities, from \$90 billion in school aid; and it rescinds a discretionary fund utilized by the secretary of education established under the

bipartisan CARES Act.

Disallowing emergency aid to one part of an affected community and allowing it for another runs contrary to long-held social policy, Catholic education advocates said.

Within days of learning of the bill's content related to nonpublic schools, Bishop David M. O'Connell of Trenton, New Jersey, urged the state's Catholics in a post on the website of The Monitor, the diocesan newspaper, to contact members of Congress to express their concern about the legislation.

Saying the bill has "a lot of good things," he cautioned that "some real problematic areas" exist.

"We're trying to urge Congress to maintain equitable access to federal funding for nonpublic schools and their (students') families as they have in previous legislation," Bishop O'Connell told Catholic News Service May 15.

In the first 24 hours after the post, the bishop said, more than 7,000 messages were sent to Congress, including 5,200 from the Trenton Diocese.

"We just want to make sure that as we face the

economic difficulties we're all facing, that those who have children in non-public or Catholic schools have the equal opportunity to provide what the government offers us. We want to make sure we get our fair share."

Urged on by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, state Catholic conferences have mobilized as well around the bill as well to stop what education advocates consider a major step back from long-established federal policies.

"The key thing to this bill is not that it is an education bill, it's an emergency relief bill. When in history have we excluded those suffering from an emergency from federal relief?" said Jennifer Daniels, associate director for public policy in the Secretariat of Catholic Education at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"When Congress releases emergency relief bills, it's available to everyone who is suffering from that emergency. All we're saying is that private schools are suffering right next to the public schools, and we should have access to emergency relief funds. All we want is our fair share and for our children to be served in an equal manner, Daniels told CNS.

The private education sector has rallied to oppose the provision spe-

cific to school funding.

A May 14 letter to Congress from Michael Schuttloffel, executive director of the Council for American Private Education, expressed "extreme disappointment" with the "unworkable" education provisions in the Heroes Act.

The USCCB is a member of the council, which is known as CAPE.

"If passed, these provisions would eliminate from eligibility for aid almost all students enrolled by their parents in private schools," Schuttloffel wrote, adding, "To approve such policies would be to send a message that the House of Representatives is only concerned with the safety of some of America's students and teachers, not all."

The letter raised concern that the HEROES Act education provisions reopens the CARES Act "to restrict which private school students will be eligible for relief voted on by Congress, and signed by the president, over a month ago."

Presentation Sister Dale McDonald, director of public policy and educational research at the National Catholic Educational Association, said the bill as written would harm nonpublic schools across the country because it "reinterprets" what is emergency aid versus what is tradi-

tional education aid.

State Catholic conferences across the country have been alerted to the bill's measures. The conferences have joined a nationwide effort to make sure the provisions are dropped from any final bill.

The bill includes \$1 billion for state, city and tribal governments to avoid layoffs; \$200 billion for "hazard pay" for front-line workers; a new round of cash payments for individuals and households; \$175 billion in housing assistance for rent and mortgage payments; \$75 billion for medical testing; a 15% increase in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; subsidies for laid-off workers to pay for health insurance premiums and maintain COBRA; an employee retention tax credit for businesses; and \$25 billion for the U.S. Postal Service.

The House of Representatives debated the bill May 15 and was expected to pass it largely along party lines.

However, the likelihood of the Republican-controlled Senate taking up the measure as written is slim. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, told reporters at the Capitol there was no "urgency" to act and that consideration of any relief measure by the chamber would not happen until after Memorial Day.

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