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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 76 Number 32

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 22, 2021

Merry Christmas!



Is there room for God in my heart?

CNS PHOTO/BOB ROLLER

A Nativity with an empty crib is displayed outside St. Anthony's Catholic Church in North Beach, Md., on Dec. 15, 2021. In his annual Christmas letter, Bishop Terry R. LaValley asks us to consider whether we have room in our hearts for God and others. See the full letter on Page 3.

Pope: Dialogue needed to confront pandemic

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The ongoing pandemic serves as a reminder that the world cannot move forward without cooperation and solidarity, Pope Francis told a group of ambassadors beginning their service at the Vatican.

In its effort to overcome COVID-19, the international community must come to the realization that "we are one human family; each of us is responsible for our brothers and sisters, none excluded," the pope told the new ambassadors from Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Namibia, Lesotho, Luxem-

bourg, Chad and Guinea-Bissau.

"This is a truth that should compel us to confront not only the current health crisis but all the problems plaguing humanity and our common home – poverty, migration, terrorism, climate change, to name a few – in a solitary way and not in isolation," he said.

The seven new ambassadors were at the Vatican to present their letters of credential to Pope Francis Dec. 17.

In his address, the pope said that at the beginning of the year, many believed

vaccinations "heralded a quick end to the pandemic."

However, despite the great progress that has been made, the international community must "intensify its efforts of cooperation so that all people will have ready access to vaccines."

"This is not a matter of convenience or courtesy, but of justice," the pope said.

Pope Francis said that while the pandemic "has brought out the best of humanity in terms of individual and collective acts of generosity, service and sac-

rifice," diplomats and the countries they represent must do more in promoting a "culture of encounter in service of the common good of our human family."

"Your work, dear ambassadors, is often done in silence and without public recognition," the pope said. "Yet you already understand what the world needs to learn from the pandemic: the need to cultivate relationships and facilitate mutual understanding with people of diverse cultures and backgrounds in order to work together for building a more just world."

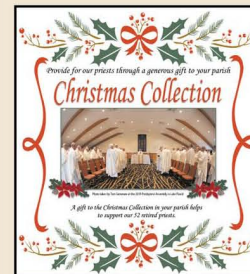
No NCC next week

To allow our staff an opportunity to celebrate the Christmas holiday, there will be no North Country Catholic on December 29.

The next edition will be January 5.

Merry Christmas from all of us at the North Country Catholic.

GIVING BACK



The 40 retired priests of the diocese who currently receive pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes in the Christmas collection. Also, 12 priests age 70 and older who remain active in their ministry in the Diocese of Ogdensburg are receiving partial retirement benefits.

FULL STORY, PAGE 6

NORTH
COUNTRY
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Feeling the Christmas spirit

I hadn't been feeling the Christmas spirit.

I was caught up in the busyness of life and feeling the general weariness a lot of us are feeling after such an extended period of these pandemic times.

Knowing I was feeling that way as we prepared for and entered the Advent season, I loaded my November schedule with fun and adventure for me and my family.

I previously mentioned a trip my son and I refer to as "football tour 2021." In this one four-day weekend, Jake was able to meet my best friend from college and her husband (also a college friend),

we visited the Pro Football Hall of Fame, we watched our beloved Pittsburgh Steelers get destroyed from fantastic seats with a super fun crowd, and we visited three professional football stadiums and pro shops in less than 24 hours (Cincinnati, Cleveland and Buffalo).



Darcy L.
Fargo

Driving home, we were just outside of Syracuse when I looked over and noticed a tear running down Jake's face.

"Are you ok, buddy?" I asked.

"I don't think you understand how big this weekend was in my life," he responded. "This was awesome. All of it."

I realize some of his emotional response was likely

caused by the cumulative effects of fatigue and overstimulation, but this line from a Christmas classic pretty much summed up how I felt:

"And what happened, then? Well, in Whoville they say that the Grinch's small heart grew three sizes that day."

He reminded me that it's a season about gratitude and love.

This is the season when we are grateful in a special way that God loved us enough to send his Son, our Savior, to become man and dwell among us. It's when we are grateful in a special way that our Savior continues to dwell among us and love us, and we continue to be called to closer relationship with him.

A season of gifts and giving, it's also a good time to

reflect on and be grateful for the gifts we're given in our lives, the blessings God has bestowed on us, including and especially the people he places in our lives.

Jake's gratitude and the season has had me reflecting on the gifts I've received. There are far too many to count. If I had to list them out in order of significance, it wouldn't take long to get to, "the *North Country Catholic*." The readers, supporters, columnists, photographers, reporters and sources I've encountered in the nearly four years I've been here have truly been a gift in my life.

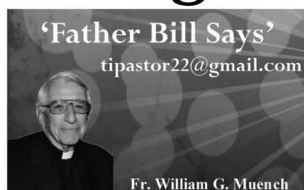
We at the *North Country Catholic* wish you a merry Christmas. We pray it's full of joy, love, gratitude, the peace of Christ and – I'll add – the Christmas spirit.

The images of the season

"God's gift to us is the love of his Son; Our gift to God is our love for each other. It means so much to share God's love with you at this Christmas time and all year long."

Today I would like to begin by sending to you a prayer for you and your families. My prayer is that your Christmas is filled with joy and peace and love. I hope that you have a happy Christmas. May your Christmas be filled in every way by the Lord Jesus, the Jesus who became one of us, who lived with us, who died for us, who rose again to new life, the Jesus who became one of us as an infant to transform our world with love.

Christmas is a time filled with so many images – wonderful ways to help us understand the miracle of the birth of our Savior. An image that comes to my mind immediately is that of a trip. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem for the census.



They stayed in a stable, for there was no room at the Inn. The shepherds were in the fields, and they traveled to Bethlehem to see Jesus as directed by the angels. The magi traveled a great distance to find Jesus, following a star.

I associate Christmas with traveling because most of the years that I have been a priest, Christmas meant a morning Mass in the parish and then a drive of a distance to spend the day with my family. As the years went by, it meant staying some time with my sister's family and then I traveling further to spend time with my brother's family. And there were many years that I would then travel back to the

parish because there would be something happening the next day. So, I would truly join Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the magi as travelers on Christmas day.

Another image that is part of the Christmas story is the times of darkness and the times of light.

The shepherds were in darkness until the angels came to them in a bright light. The magi traveled under the guidance of the light of a star.

Isaiah looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. He wrote this: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadows a light has shone."

Today we live in a world that is darkened by war, violence, sickness and suffering. All of us have experienced darkness in our personal lives and in our families – sorrow, disappointment, illness, pain, sin, guilt and loneliness.

Fortunately for us, the lamp, Jesus, lit in our world continues to burn. It shines amid devastation. It is a persistent and defiant light which no darkness can overpower.

Each of us can be a source of light to a darkened world. But unless our own lamp is lighted, we won't be able to enlighten anyone else. There is great joy in being in the light. But there is an even greater joy in being a source of light to others. God has called us out of darkness into the wonderful world of his son. We must live as children of the light. The effect of the light is seen in goodness, right living and love.

Finally, I would like to quote my friend, Thomas Merton, "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence – for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name."

FOLLOW ME

Keeping room in our hearts for God, others

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

At our Christmas Vigil Mass, we will hear St. Luke tell us that God was born in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior this year, it is fitting that we ask ourselves: Is there room for God in my heart?

Today, there is so little room in our hearts for

many—the unborn, the poor, those suffering from mental illness, the migrant, the victim of unjust discrimination, the elderly, the addict, the lonely, the imprisoned, indigenous peoples, the abused, the terror-stricken refugee. So many women, men and children are hurting. They are members of our families. They are us!

We enter this Advent Season, preparing for the celebration of the birth of

Jesus, grateful for blessings received, but also keenly aware of our Christian duty to be the hands and tender heart of Christ to those who currently warrant scarce attention from us. This Christmas, let us resolve, inspired by our own time spent with Jesus, to see His Face in our sisters and brothers who we too often neglect. We yearn to make room in our hearts and in our lives for the hurting. Their human dignity demands it. Our Christian dignity impels us.

We pray that the beauti-

ful acts of generosity that characterize the Christmas Season, will be transformed from seasonal gestures of charity to lifelong acts of justice and mercy. Such personal transformation will give tangible evidence that we are Christ-led, Christ-fed, and Hope-filled. We can do great things in Christ Jesus, the Savior whose birth we celebrate with such joy and gratitude. Our God's unconditional love and boundless mercy became flesh and bones in the Person of Jesus Christ so that we

might extend God's compassion and love.

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



**Bishop
Terry R.
LaValley**




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



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

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www.northcountrycatholic.org

- Read local stories and commentaries
- Search archived papers
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happening with the
Diocese of Ogdensburg.

*May the Hope of Christmas
shine brightly on you and
your loved ones.*

*And may the wonder,
love and peace of our savior
Jesus Christ,
be with you this season
and all year through.*

*Merry Christmas
from
St. Peter's Parish, Massena!*



Safe Environment training keeps up with times

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

OGDENSBURG—As the Safe Environment training and the world continues to change, the Diocese of Ogdensburg continues its efforts to ensure the safety of youth and vulnerable adults.

Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator John Morrison said a new version of the “Protecting God’s Children” videos used for adult Safe Environment training in our diocese was released in August.

“This update had been in the works by VIRTUS for a long time,” Morrison said. “Progress was delayed by the pandemic, which halted their ability to shoot footage.”

In addition to giving the video a more modern feel, the new version builds upon earlier releases in a number of ways.

“The new video weaves in portions of the old video with new footage and information,” Morrison said. “There’s more emphasis on the use of technology. There’s more diversity. There are fewer interviews with offenders and more interviews with experts about the process of abuse, how offenders groom victims or potential victims, how technology is used. An adult survivor who has spoken nationally presents his story, and it’s a tremendous story of hope and healing.”

The new video, like its predecessor, teaches five steps for preventing abuse.

“The first step is knowing the warning signs,” Morrison explained. “The second step is screening and selecting employees and volunteers. The third step is monitoring all environments, including the internet and digital com-

munication. Fourth: be attentive to children and youth. Lastly, and it’s the hardest one for people to do, communicate concerns. Unless people are 100 percent sure, their natural tendency is not to say anything. They don’t want to falsely accuse someone. But if someone has a concern, they need to bring it to the appropriate channels to be addressed. It’s not necessarily labeling a person an abuser. Sometimes it’s a matter of calling a person’s attention to how his or her behavior is being perceived by others and why it’s concerning. The key is just communicating the concern.”

To roll out the new version of the video in diocesan training, diocesan facilitators needed to be trained on the new content.

“We needed certified trainers on staff to train

the facilitators,” Morrison said. “Steve Tartaglia and Pam Ballentine completed the training required to obtain that certification, and they’ve been working to train our facilitators.”

Thus far, 20 of 25 facilitators have completed training on the new module.

ONLINE TRAINING

Though facilitators are prepared to teach the new “Protecting God’s Children” program to classes of adults, in-person classes have not yet resumed due to the resurgence of the coronavirus.

“We went to an online model in March of 2020,” Morrison said. “We had anticipated and hoped to resume live, in-person training, but with the surges in COVID, we’ve stepped back and plan to continue offering the training online, and we’ll reassess again after the holidays. Our preference is

for live, in-person training, and our facilitators are excited to get back to live training, but we have to make sure we’re doing it safely. We’re hopeful and optimistic we can get back to live trainings early in 2022.”

While live classes are not being offered, Morrison said the online program has been effective at allowing training to continue.

“So far, 97 percent of the people assigned online training have completed it,” he said. “And we’re using the new version of the training for the online program.”

VULNERABLE ADULTS

The “Protecting God’s Children” training for adults complies with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. A new training being offered by the diocesan Safe Environment office goes beyond the Charter requirements.

“We’re starting to offer the vulnerable adults training,” Morrison said. “The Charter’s definition limits that to those who habitually lack use of reason. In his ‘Vos Estis,’ Pope Francis expanded who we consider vulnerable adults. It’s not in the Charter, but we’re looking at our obligation to ensure we’re protecting vulnerable adults. We’re looking at offering this training in our food pantries and thrift store operations. People attending soup kitchens and thrift stores, in some cases, could fit the definition of vulnerable. We’re trying to roll out this training and ensure we’re doing our due diligence.”

For more information on any of the available Safe Environment trainings, contact the Safe Environment Office at 315-393-2920.

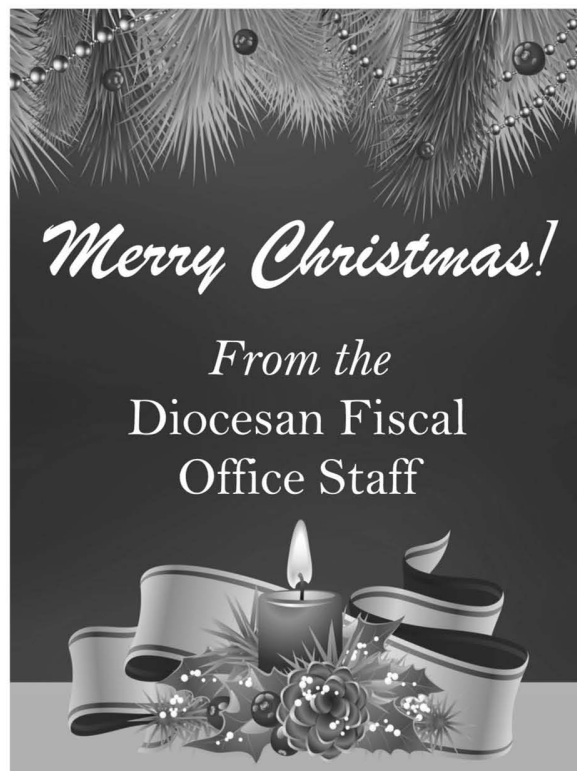


Thanks be to God
for His
unspeakable gift . . .
the gift of His
Son.



Office of Episcopal Delegate
for Religious

Sr. Bernadette Marie, SSF
and Jeannie Trizzulo



Developing opportunities for deacon formation

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

OGDENSBURG – Deacons in the Diocese of Ogdensburg now have more opportunities than ever to continue their formation.

According to Deacon Kevin Mastellon, director of Permanent Deacons in the diocese, formation sessions are being offered focusing primarily on the deacons who were ordained in October but also to aid more experienced diocesan deacons.

“The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has forever suggested we offer continuing formation for men after they’re ordained as permanent deacons,” Deacon Mastellon said. “With this most recent class of deacons, we decided to introduce that concept. We started earlier this month with a session we held electronically because of COVID and travel. We called it ‘Rectory 101.’ It was an opportunity to see how they’re doing, if they’ve hit any surprises, if they’re feeling comfortable in the liturgy and if they’re involved in other things besides serving during liturgy.”

The session also included a presentation from Kathleen Mastellon that focused on ministries supporting women and children, including Elizabeth Ministry, Walking with Women in Need and the Early Childhood Family Life program.

“While we were focusing on what we’re doing in Watertown, we wanted to introduce some concepts

that they might be able to replicate in their pastoral settings,” Deacon Mastellon said.

For the first year of the program, four sessions are planned. Future sessions this year will cover topics such as the Living Stones process.

“We’re hoping to open some of these subjects up to the whole deacon community,” Deacon Mastellon said. “Some topics aren’t just of interest to the new deacons, they may be of interest to all deacons. With the Living Stones discussion, we hope to talk about where we are in the process, what needs to be done for planning going forward and how the deacon might fit into that.”

Another session will be dedicated to spiritual formation.

“We want to address all the aspects of the order of the deacon,” Deacon Mastellon said. “We’re thinking of something that’s not necessarily a retreat but addresses the spiritual development of the individual. We’re hoping that opportunity will be open to all deacons, as well.”

Deacon Mastellon said he envisions the fourth session focusing on developing the deacons’ homily skills.

“The fourth session will be closer to their anniversary of ordination,” he

said. “At that point, one year after ordination, they can begin the process of seeking full faculties to preach at Sunday liturgies and Holy Days. We want to take that time to do some homiletics retraining. It would be open to anyone seeking faculties to preach – the newly ordained, but it might apply to others who have been ordained previously and never sought preaching faculties.”

Early feedback from the continuing education series has been positive, Deacon Mastellon said.

“I think this group hungers for continuing formation,” he said. “We’re formed in our clerical call to work in the church and work in parishes, but we’re constantly learning and being formed by Christ in his image. These guys in particular are very interested in continuing that process.”

Additionally, Deacon Mastellon said the diocese is working to identify other ways deacons can continue to advance in education and formation.

“For a number of years, our diocese has had a relationship with the University of Notre Dame’s John S. Marten program,” he said. “That program provides opportunities for dioceses to link to-

gether to do some of the formation work for deacons in formation. Now, the guys in formation take a number of classes online through Notre Dame as part of their four-year program. Some courses continue to be offered in-person at Wadhams Hall – homiletics, social justice, canon law – and some courses are offered online.”

Deacon Mastellon said the diocese has determined existing deacons could participate in course offerings through the Notre Dame program.

“There are a plethora of offerings, not just the ones we use as part of our formation program,” he said. “There’s a long list

available. We wondered if they could be available to our guys at a reasonable rate. The answer was ‘yes.’ If the guys want to continue their formation through online courses, they’re able to do that through Notre Dame.”

The deacons continue to explore other similar programs, as well, to determine if even more offerings could be accessible.

“There are a number of these programs around the country,” Deacon Mastellon said. “It’s nice to have a variety of choices and options for formation. We’re excited to have options for our guys and a variety of ways they can continue their formation.”



May the Lord Jesus Christ bring you peace this Christmas Season and a Blessed New Year!

St. Raphael's Church, Heuvelton & Ss. Philip and James, Lisbon

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to make the

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Environmental Stewardship

Simple Advent,
abundant life

Advent began with John the Baptist calling us to make straight our paths, level the mountains and hills in our lives, smooth out the rough ways.

So here we are just a few days away from celebrating the mystery of God coming to dwell among us. And we might ask ourselves how have the "paths" in my life changed even a little during Advent?

One way that could make our "highway" to the Lord smoother is to contemplate the holy family as they traveled to a faraway City to comply with a civil mandate. They are about to welcome into the world a newborn and not just any newborn, but the Son of God. What would they have been able to carry with them on a donkey? As they packed for the trip, we can imagine Joseph says "Keep it simple, Mary; it's a long trip!" We too are on a journey... one that eventually leads us to the Eternal City. We might imagine Joseph asking us "What do you really need for your journey?"

In an article entitled "Do I really need this? The case of too Many Spatulas" by Brenna Davis, Ignatius Solidarity Network quoted from a 2014 story in the *Los Angeles Times* that stated in the United States the average person owns over 300,000 items.

While you and I may not take time to count all of the things we own, but we can imagine that estimate is not too far off for any of us.

To limit the number of things in her house that take time and mental energy to maintain, Brenna pledged to ask herself these questions: Do I truly need this item? How long do I think this item will last? Is it something that could be repurposed or recycled at the end of its usable period?

As we complete our preparations for Christmas how might Brenna's questions help us eliminate some of the non-essentials, now and in the future?

This will enable us to focus our attention more on the abundant life that God's love gifts to us.

52 priests benefit from retirement fund

The 40 retired priests of the diocese who currently receive pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes in the Christmas collection. Also, 12 priests age 70 and older who remain active in their ministry in

the Diocese of Ogdensburg are receiving partial retirement benefits.

Your gift this year will help support not only priests currently receiving support from the Priests' Retirement Fund but also benefits to be paid to future retirees.

This Christmas, parishes are asked to contribute 75% of the Christ-

mas collection to the Plan, with the parish keeping the balance. While your gift helps pay pensions to retired priests, it will also help the diocese make provisions for pensions for other priests as they retire in the future.

Actuarial studies are performed annually to assure the diocese is preparing for its future obligations to retired priests. The firm of Frank J. Walters and Associates has determined that adequate provisions are being made in 2021-22 to fund the Plan.

On July 1, 2021, an increase of \$20 in the monthly benefit paid to retired priests of the diocese became effective. It is the diocese's goal to provide a pension increase when able to do so.

Estimated pension payments in this fiscal year amount to \$1,020,000. One hundred percent of the cost of health insurance for retired priests is also funded through the Plan, the budget in 2021-22 for this benefit is \$250,000.

Retired priests of the diocese receive pensions

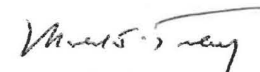
from the Social Security system. Because priests' income is typically modest, their Social Security pensions are not large and most rely heavily on pensions from the diocese for a good portion of their financial support.

The value of investments of the Priests' Retirement Fund decreased over a one-year period from \$12,243,764 on June 30, 2020 to \$11,356,662 on June 30, 2021. In 2020-21, the Fund repaid \$2.25 million owed the diocese's Operating Fund since the Fund enjoyed outstanding investment performance (+27%) during the year. The diocese's Investment Advisory Committee, diocesan administration, and the investment portfolio's investment managers closely monitor monies invested in support of the Plan.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese is also assisted through extraordinary gifts. Information about gift opportunities to benefit the Priests' Retirement Fund is available from the Diocese's Executive Director of the Development Office, Scott Lalone. He can be reached in Ogdensburg at (315) 393-2920 or through e-mail to slalone@rcdony.org.

Your personal generosity to the Christmas collection in your parish will support all retired priests of the diocese and benefit longer term the diocesan and religious priests serving you today.

Your priests, retired and active, will appreciate your support tremendously!



Michael J. Tooley
Diocesan Fiscal Officer

Rest in Peace

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

Dec. 22 – Rev. Edgard Thivierge, O.M.I., 1975

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dec. 29 – Rev. John A. Mullen, 1887

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

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

Jan. 1 – Rev. Earl Leo Taylor, 1974

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

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

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

Bishop's Public Schedule

Dec. 22 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 23 – Noon – Staff Christmas Party at Bishop's Residence

Dec. 24 – 4 p.m. – Christmas Vigil Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 25 – Midnight – Midnight Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

9:30 a.m. – Mass at Notre Dame Church in Ogdensburg

Dec. 26 – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 27 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 29 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 31 – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Jan. 1 – 9 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Jan. 4 – 3:30 p.m. – NYSCC Executive Committee Conference Call

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terri-

anne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terri-
anneyanulavich@yahoo.com

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.

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg uses the training, Protecting God's Children for Adults. If you need to complete VIRTUS training, contact Jean Grizzuto, jgrizzuto@rcdony.org or 315-393-2920 x 1413.



*Support And Pray
For Vocations*

VIRTUAL EVENTS

NYS DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Syracuse – Have you felt the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as a Catholic Priest? Retreat to be held for those men interested age 18 years to 35.

Date: Jan. 2

Place: Virtual

Features: This retreat can assist in discerning a call to priesthood. Every year the dioceses in New York State, predominantly the upstate ones, participate in a discernment retreat in Syracuse. Those who have attended found it a spiritual opportunity to grow closer to the Lord and to think and pray about discernment. Discerners will be joined by seminarians, vocation directors and Bishop Lucia who will be celebrating the Mass.

Contact: If you are interested, please contact Father Chris Carrara, Vocation Director or Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, Vocation Coordinator. RSVP for the Retreat by Tuesday, December 28 to vocation@syrdio.org.

THE CHOSEN SEASON 2

Join the Office of New Evangelization and the parishes of St. Mary of the Fort in Fort Covington/St. Mary in Waddington for a viewing and discussion of the second season of "The Chosen" either in-person or via zoom.

Date: Starting Jan. 4

Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8

Place: Virtual or in-person at St. Mary's Parish Center, Waddington or Fort Covington Adult Center

Features: It is highly recommended that participants have seen season 1 before participating in this second series.

Contact: Online registration is required at rcdony.org/chosen.

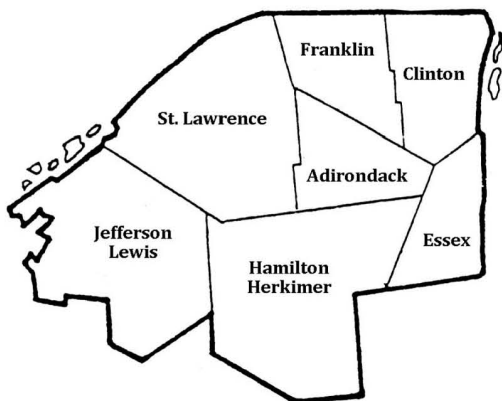
BROWNBAG CHAT

The Office of New Evangelization will be running a new Brownbag Chat on Wednesdays.

Date: Starting Jan. 5

Time: Noon to 1 p.m. via zoom

Features: We will use the Revive Parishes Series by Bishop Andrew Cozzens on The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church. We anticipate running the series in seven sessions. In each session, we will watch a video and have an informal discussion. In this groundbreaking new course, Bishop Cozzens breaks open the new document published by the USCCB: "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church."



The North Country Catholic welcomes contributions to "Around the Diocese."

Parishioners are invited to send information about activities to:

North Country Catholic, PO Box 326,
Ogdensburg, NY 13669; fax, 1-866-314-7296;

e-mail news@northcountrycatholic.org

Items must be received in the NCC office by the Thursday before publication.

Contact: If you would like to join us this series of lunch-time chat discussions, please sign up online at rcdony.org/brownbag. For more information, contact Marika Donders at mdonders@rcdony.org

ADIRONDACK

PRAISE & WORSHIP

Lake Placid – Monthly praise and worship to be held.

Date: First Friday of the month

Time: 7 p.m.

Place: St. Agnes Church

Features: Fellowship and snacks afterwards. Will be livestreamed on St. Agnes Facebook page.

CLINTON

BRUNCH

Lyon Mountain – Lyon Mountain American Legion to have brunch.

Dates: Dec. 19; Jan. 9 and 23

Time: 9 to Noon

Cost: Adults, \$10; Children under 12, \$7

Menu: Scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, pancakes, garlic parmesan wings, breaded mushrooms, homefries.

ESSEX

LATIN MASS

Port Henry – Extraordinary Form Latin Mass to be held each Sunday.

Schedule: 1 p.m. on Sundays

Place: St. Patrick's Church

Features: The traditional Latin Mass celebrated according to the 1962 Missal of St. John the XXIII.

LATIN CHRISTMAS MASS

Port Henry – Extraordinary Form Latin Mass to be held Christmas Day.

Time: 11 a.m.

Place: St. Patrick's Church

Features: The traditional Latin Mass celebrated according to the 1962 Missal of St. John the XXIII.

JEFFERSON-LEWIS

RESPECT LIFE

PRAYER GATHERING

Watertown – Liferight to hold a respect life prayer gathering.

Date: Jan. 24

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Watertown Municipal Building

Features: Join as we pray for renewed respect for all human life, particularly those most vulnerable.

Refreshments to follow at the First Presbyterian Church. Social distancing guidelines will be followed.

ST. LAWRENCE

PRAYER AND ADORATION

Massena – Commissioned Lay Ministers are invited to gather for Adoration and Rosary.

Date: Every third Wednesday of the month

Time: 6:30 to 7 p.m.

Place: Sacred Heart Church

11TH AND 12TH GRADE RELIGION PROGRAM

Ogdensburg – St. Mary's Cathedral Parish is kicking off its 11th & 12th grade religion class. Youth in the applicable grades from outside the Cathedral Parish are welcome to attend.

Date: Monthly Dec. 19, Jan. 23, Feb. 13, March 13, April 10, May 15

Time: 5 p.m. to 7:30

Place: Brzana Hall below St. Mary's Cathedral

Features: We have no curriculum; YOU will help decide what we discuss! Lots of discussion, less lecture. Games with prizes. Dinner included. We ask families to consider taking a month and providing dinner. Classes are self-contained units. Can't make it in October, you are still invited for November, December... No makeup assignments! Guests welcome! Bring a friend!

Contact: If you have questions or concerns that can't wait, contact Deacon Jim Crowley via email jcrowley@rcdony.org or Jessica Hargrave via email jhargrave@rcdony.org.

DIOCESAN EVENTS

LOVING AUTHENTICALLY

Commissioned Lay Ministers and can-

didates are invited to this program that is designed to strengthen the participant's conviction about the truth, beauty and importance of church teaching on natural law and sexual morality and to give participants a basic understanding of the ethical basis of the teaching.

Schedule: Two remaining opportunities to attend: Jan. 29 at Emmaus Room, St. Peter's Church, Plattsburgh; April 23 at St. Peter's Church, Lowville.

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Presenters: Deacon John Fehlner & Dr. Maura Fehlner, Mr. Steve Tartaglia and other members of the Family Life Department.

Features: Cost is free and all are welcome. Must watch an 80-minute video prior to the event. Link to video will be sent after registration. Bring your own lunch.

Contact: Register at: <https://www.rcdony.org/lovingauthentically>. If you have questions, contact Family Life Director, Steve Tartaglia at startaglia@rcdony.org or call 315-393-2920

PRESENTATION OF FORGIVEN

A Continuation of the Eucharist Initiative. Explore the transforming power and the healing grace of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Discover the merciful way that God calls us back to Himself when we have sinned.

Date: March 26

Time: 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Place: Clayton, Watertown, Lowville, Norfolk, Ellenburg, Plattsburgh, and Saranac Lake

Features: All are welcome. More details including how to register soon to come.

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth, Peace" ~ Luke 2:14

Wishing your family a peaceful and blessed Christmas!

St. Bernard's of Montjoux Parish



Provide for our priests through a generous gift to your parish

Christmas Collection



Photo taken by Tom Semeraro at the 2019 Presbyteral Assembly in Lake Placid

*A gift to the Christmas Collection in your parish helps
to support our 52 retired priests.*

The Son of my love

Editor's Note: The Following was written ahead of the end of the Year of St. Joseph on Dec. 8.

By Bishop Douglas J. Lucia
Diocese of Syracuse
For the North Country Catholic

I don't know if anyone has noticed, but Christmas shows have been running on the Hallmark Channel for months now and holiday music can be found among the various channels of Sirius Radio and on You Tube.

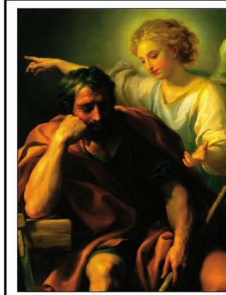
We might feel it is a bit too soon! Nonetheless, in these days of limited daylight, along with a continuing health emergency and political and social crises, I have heard it said more than once that folks will take hope wherever it can be found.

What really excites me is the time is drawing near to display creche scenes and nativity sets. Something I have enjoyed doing since I was a kid is simply to sit in front of the Nativity scene and just gaze at the figures which comprise it.

I know that Jesus is central to the scene, but I have been fascinated also by the shepherds, the Magi, Mary, and especially Joseph.

I often ponder and wonder: What is he thinking?

Yet, while no verbal an-



St. Joseph's Corner

swer is forthcoming, his posture before the child suggests to me not only adoring, but with staff in hand, accompaniment as well.

The Christian songwriter, Michael Card composed a few years ago a Christmas song entitled, "Joseph's Song."

Its lyrics focus on Joseph's ponderings, but also on his desire to do God's will in and with his life:

*How can it be, this baby
in my arms, sleeping
now, so peacefully. The
son of God, the angel
said, how could it be? O
Lord I know he's not my
own, not of my flesh,
not of my bone. Still
Father let this baby be the
son of my love.*

*Then Joseph prays:
Father show me where I
fit into this plan of
yours. How can a man
be father to the son of
God? Lord, for all my life
I've been a simple car-
penter... how can I raise*

*a king? How can I raise a
king?*

"How can this be?" Joseph is not the first person in the Nativity scene to wrestle with this question. In the Gospel of Matthew (1:18-25), we find God's messenger inviting Joseph to dream God's dream and enter the journey that God has set out on in the world – a journey of redemption – a journey of faith, hope, and love.

My sentimental journey is meant to strike chords in our hearts that invite us to take up the new song that Jesus' birth brought into our world.

It begs the question also of how do we continue to carry the tune and sing out the Good News of Jesus Christ as did the angels on that first Christmas night?

My point is simply this:

without the figures of the Nativity set, there is no Nativity scene. Analogously, without new figures to replace worn figures, there is no Nativity scene.

So how do you and I help portray the "hidden mystery" that is contained therein into the present moment?

Again, I turn to Joseph and Mary who allowed the mystery of God's call and their vocation in life to grow over time.

Both would come to know that through the working of the Holy Spirit – through openness to God's presence in their lives – that God would continue to work through them, and with them, and in them, as they brought forth into the waiting world the Word Incarnate.

Like Joseph and Mary, you and I are being invited to consider how we fit into God's plan, into the bustling scene of Christ's birth into the world.

I know "Silent Night" is a popular Christmas song. However, let's face it, if there was no room where travelers lodge – Bethlehem had to be quite packed and filled with commotion.

Not much different from our times giving credence to the Letter to Hebrews when it states: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (13:8).

What role are we being asked to take on then as: husband, father, wife, mother, priest, deacon, consecrated person, lay minister in response to our baptismal calling to walk as a child of the light and to keep the flame of faith burning brightly in today's world?

When St. Teresa of Avila was planning her Carmelite Reform, she needed to buy a house. She had no money at all and knew no one either willing or able to donate it.

So, she dedicated the proposed project to St. Joseph, and entrusted the purchase of the house and its future to him.

Her trust in St. Joseph was not misplaced.

"Ite, ad Joseph." We do go to Joseph today and seek his help in continuing to build the Kingdom of God in the time and place we find ourselves now; so that the son of God's Love, will be also "the son of my love."

St. Joseph, pray for us!

*Like Mary,
"by virtue of baptism,
every Christian is a
"Christopher",
a bearer of Christ,
to his/her
brothers and sisters."
Pope Francis*

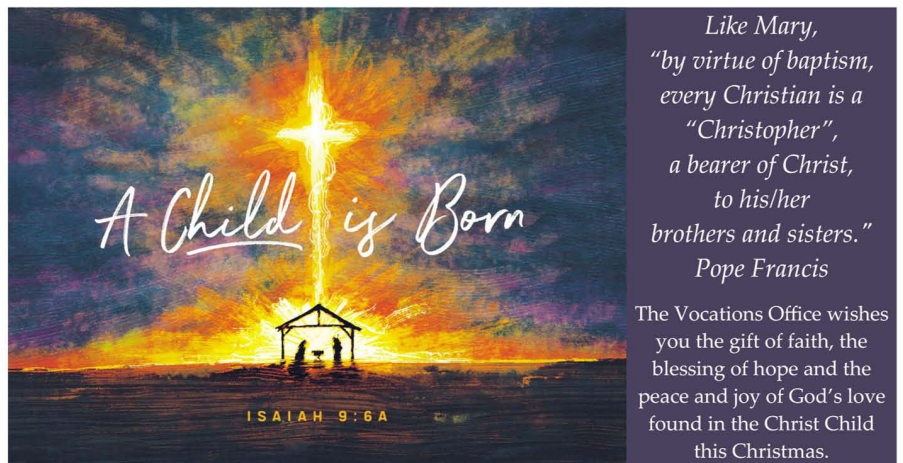
The Vocations Office wishes you the gift of faith, the blessing of hope and the peace and joy of God's love found in the Christ Child this Christmas.

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Catholic groups challenge mandate on gender transition

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Several Catholic hospitals, a Catholic university and Mercy sisters who run health clinics filed a challenge to a federal mandate for performing gender transition procedures with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit Dec. 15.

The groups are continuing a fight they had previously won when two lower federal courts struck down what has been described as the Affordable Care Act's "transgender mandate," saying it was a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The Biden administration has appealed both decisions at the 8th Circuit.

Becket, a Washington-based nonprofit religious liberty law firm that is representing some of the Catholic groups, described this case on its website as challenging a policy that threatens Catholic doctors, hospital and clinics "with multi-million-dollar penalties for sex discrimination unless they perform controversial gender-transition procedures."

Luke Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at Becket, said in a Dec. 15 statement that both federal courts which took up "this controversial mandate have struck it down as bad for patients, bad for doctors and bad for religious liberty."

He also said the federal government "has no business forcing doctors to perform controversial procedures that could be deeply harmful to patients," and he hoped the appeals court would issue "a commonsense ruling" that is good for everyone.

In 2016, the federal government began implementing a mandate requiring doctors to perform gender transition procedures on any patient, including children, and required private insurance companies – except plans run by Medicare and Medicaid – and many employers to cover gender reassignment therapy or face severe penalties and legal action.

In August 2016, Becket, joined by eight state governments, filed a lawsuit in Texas on behalf of Franciscan Alliance, a religious hospital network sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, and the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, defending them from this government mandate.

Becket filed a parallel lawsuit in federal court in November 2016 on behalf of Catholic groups in North Dakota including the Sisters of Mercy, the University of Mary in Bismarck, and SMP Health System, sponsored by the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation.

The state of North Dakota also joined Becket's legal challenge.

In 2016, the federal court in North Dakota put the rule on hold, and in 2019 the federal court in Texas struck it down. The

two courts said the policy was an unlawful overreach by a federal agency and a likely violation of religious liberty.

In 2020, the Trump administration put in place conscience protections for doctors opposed to the mandate, but the effort was blocked by the courts.

On Jan. 21, 2021, the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota Eastern Division struck down the transgender mandate. On Aug. 9, 2021, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas granted the plaintiffs permanent relief from the mandate.

In November, the Supreme Court turned down an appeal from a Catholic hospital in California that was sued for refusing to perform a hysterectomy on a transgender patient.

The court's decision, issued without comment, sent the lawsuit back to state court.

When the Catholic hospital was sued in 2016, a trial court sided with it, but an appeals court reversed that decision.

So the hospital appealed to the Supreme Court in 2020, saying its case "poses a profound threat to faith-based health care institutions' ability to advance their healing ministries consistent with the teachings of their faith."

A brief filed by the Catholic Health Association said the appeals court decision "portends ill for all religious organizations that serve the public following the precepts of religious teaching."

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Maryknoll has largest lay missionary class since 2005

OSSINING, N.Y. (CNS) – Thirteen new Maryknoll lay missionaries were officially sent into mission Dec. 11 to minister in six countries around the world: Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Kenya, Tanzania and the U.S.-Mexico border. During a "sending ceremony" at the Queen of Apostles Chapel on the Maryknoll campus in Ossining, Robert Ellsberg, publisher of Orbis Books, encouraged them to follow what Pope Francis calls "journey faith." In this journey faith, he said, "we find God along the way, in history, in the twists and turns of experience, in our unexpected encounters and relationships with others. In this model, we don't have all the answers in advance. We learn and grow along the way," he continued. "Stumbling, doubts and uncertainty are all part of the journey. It can be risky, but it is dynamic – it is open to conversion and learning new things. It is open to the surprising promptings of the Holy Spirit." Ellsberg added that journey faith demands "a continuous willingness to go beyond ourselves, to move beyond our certainties, our comfort zones, our familiar shores and harbors, to cast our nets into the deep waters, to go where the spirit is calling us."

Church leader calls Israeli travel policy 'discriminatory'

JERUSALEM (CNS) – A prominent Catholic leader expressed anger at an Israeli policy that allows a Jewish "roots" program to bring in participants despite a ban on travelers. An Israeli spokesman denied the claim. Allowing young Jews from abroad to come to Israel on the Birthright program while not allowing Christian pilgrims and tourists in during the Christmas season is discriminatory, Wadie Abunassar, an adviser to the Assembly of Catholic Bishops, wrote on his Facebook page. As the omicron COVID-19 variant began to spread late in November, Israel closed its borders to foreign travelers, extending the ban until at least Dec. 21. However, it has been allowing participants on the Birthright roots program to enter Israel. "Such discrimination is illegal ... and unethical," Abunassar wrote. "Racist discrimination should never be accepted in any way! I urge the Israel authorities to treat all those who want to visit the country equally without any discrimination between one religion and another."

Goup calls for Catholic recognition of Anglican ordinations

ROME (CNS) – A group of Catholic and Anglican theologians has publicly called on the Vatican to review and overturn a papal document from 1896 that declared Anglican ordinations "absolutely null and utterly void. Where we once walked apart, we now walk together in friendship and love," wrote members of the Malines Conversations Group after tracing the history of ecumenical agreements between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion and, especially, reviewing examples of collaboration and gestures of recognition. The judgment made by Pope Leo XIII in his apostolic letter "Apostolicae Curiae" in 1896 "does not accord with the reality into which the Spirit has led us now," said members of the group, which is an informal Catholic-Anglican dialogue that began in 2013. Members of the group, who are not appointed to represent their churches but keep their respective ecumenical offices informed of their studies and discussions, presented their document Dec. 15 at Rome's Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. The 27-page document is titled, "Sorores in Spe – Sisters in Hope of the Resurrection: A Fresh Response to the Condemnation of Anglican Orders."



Abortion, vaccine cases top busy 2021 for court

WASHINGTON (CNS) – This past year was busy for the nation's high court, particularly with issues of interest to Catholics regarding abortion, religious liberty, COVID-19 vaccine mandates and the death penalty.

This fall, all eyes were particularly on the court with its two cases looking at abortion laws in Texas and Mississippi.

After hearing oral arguments in November, the court ruled Dec. 10 that a new Texas law that bans most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy can stay in effect but that abortion clinics could continue to challenge it.

And at the start of December, the court took up its biggest abortion case in decades, examining Mississippi's abortion law which bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. This case is seen as having the potential to upend the court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

During oral arguments, the majority of justices seemed willing to allow the Mississippi law, which has been blocked by a federal judge, but it was unclear if they would take this further and overturn Roe.

If the court ultimately sides with Mississippi, it could lay the groundwork for abortion restrictions from other states because it would be the first time the court would allow an abortion ban before the point of viability – when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own.

The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that states cannot restrict abortion before viability, at around 24 weeks.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Mis-

issippi's Catholic dioceses of Jackson and Biloxi supported the state's law in amicus briefs.

As the arguments got underway Dec. 1, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said in a statement: "We pray that the court will do the right thing and allow states to once again limit or prohibit abortion and in doing so protect millions of unborn children and their mothers from this painful, life-destroying act."

But while several Catholic leaders have spoken in favor of dismantling Roe v. Wade, Catholics across the board have not. Last year, a survey by the Pew Research Center showed 68% of U.S. Catholics said Roe should not be overturned and 56% said abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

This divide on abortion, also apparent across the country, was on full display on the steps of the Supreme Court the day of the oral arguments in the Mississippi case when people were chanting, shouting or holding aloft signs with messages that either called abortion murder or said it was an essential right.

A ruling on that case is not expected until next summer.

On Dec. 13, the Supreme Court turned down two emergency requests from New York seeking religious exemptions from the state's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The workers' appeal – that the mandate violated their constitutional right to freely exercise their religion – was rejected by a federal court in New York.

The high court had denied a similar appeal in October from health care workers in Maine that had been rejected by lower courts. In both of these decisions, Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch said they would have allowed religious exemptions.

The court looked at another case from Maine this year in its review of a school choice program for students in rural areas that excludes schools that offer religious instruction.

Most of the justices seemed to think the program was discriminatory and found fault with how state education officials determined just how religious a school was in order to consider if the school could participate in the tuition program.

The state program remains in place because it had been upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit.

In a similar case, Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue, the Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that states are not required to subsidize private education, but they also can't exclude religious schools from receiving tuition funding simply because they are religious.

The USCCB praised that ruling, saying it means "that religious persons and organizations can, like everyone else, participate in government programs that are open to all."

The Maine case, Carson v. Makin, takes the Montana decision a step further, asking if the state can prevent students from using state funds to attend schools that provide religious instruction.

A ruling is expected in the summer and it could

have a significant impact on tuition aid for religious schools.

In the court's examination of the death penalty this year, it also specifically focused on the role of chaplains in the execution chamber.

The plea to allow spiritual advisers to pray aloud with death-row inmates or place hands on them in prayer during executions faced an uphill battle as some of the justices questioned if this would open up other requests or impose a safety risk.

The nation's high court has looked at spiritual advisers accompanying inmates during executions four times in recent years with differing opinions.

Several spiritual advisers from different faith traditions joined an amicus brief in this case filed

by the American Civil Liberties Union. The brief included Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille, who is a longtime opponent of the death penalty; Sister Barbara Battista, a Sister of Providence of St. Mary of the Woods in Indiana; and Benedictine Father Mark O'Keefe.

They said their role was "not simply to stand by mutely, but to minister to the prisoner as he meets death, providing spiritual comfort and a final opportunity for the individual to engage with his faith at the most critical time."

The USCCB similarly filed an amicus brief joined by the Texas Catholic Conference that said the role of spiritual advisers to prisoners "is of particularly grave importance at the moment of death."

REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

— PRAYER SUGGESTION —

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

(With ecclesiastical approval)

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

Or whatever the Lord
inspires you to offer Him

January



Holy Name
Of Jesus

JANUARY

2022

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9 REV. FRANCIS J. FLYNN	10 REV. J. MICHAEL GAFFNEY	11 REV. ADRIAN GALLAGHER	12 REV. JOSEPH W. GIROUX	13 REV. GARRY B. GIROUX	14 REV. L. WILLIAM GORDON	15 POPE FRANCIS			
16 BENEDICT XVI POPE EMERITUS	17 REV. ALEX GUMPOL	18 REV. ROLLAND A. HART	19 REV. ALBERT J. HAUSER VF	20 REV. PETER G. HELFRICH	21 REV. MICHAEL J. JABLONSKI	22 RETIRED PRIESTS			
23 REV. DANIEL J. KEEFE	24 REV. PAUL J. KELLY	25 REV. JOHN P. KENNEHAN VF	26 REV. THOMAS E. KORNMEYER VF	27 REV. STEVE KOVACEVICH	28 REV. DONLAD F. KRAMBERG	29 DECEASED PRIESTS			
30 REV. ARTHUR LABAFF VF	31 ALAN J. LAMICA								

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THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

NEW EVANGELIZATION BLOG

Book review: *The Source of Life*

By Marika Donders
Director, Office of
the New Evangelization

The Source of Life: Exploring the Mystery of the Eucharist is a collection of catechetical talks that Christoff Cardinal Schönborn of Vienna gave to his congregation at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

The book covers three main themes. First is the celebration of Mass itself and the Jewish roots of the liturgy. The book examines how Jesus celebrated the last supper and what he meant by the words, "This is my Body, and This is my Blood?"

The second theme is

looking at the Mystery of the Eucharist and what is meant by words such as memorial, sacrifice, consecration, and presence.

Lastly, the book explores how we enter into the Eucharist by looking at reception of communion, Eucharistic fellowship and who can receive Eucharist.

This is a book to be read slowly, one chapter at a time, as if you are receiving the talks. You would not expect to go to one talk after another or sit through ten talks in a row.

Similarly, I would recommend reading this one chapter at a time and allowing yourself time to

reflect on the content and the ideas presented.

I could very easily see this book as a resource at adoration: to read a chapter (or a section of a chapter) and just sit with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to discuss the content with Jesus in prayer.

This is also a wonderful book for catechists to learn for themselves about the Eucharist and how to enter more fully into communion, but also as an example of how to catechize others by the example that Cardinal Schönborn gives.

Although the content of the book is highly theological and teaches in

depth about the meaning of the mystery of the Eucharist, it does so in the context of storytelling and by reflecting on normal experiences.

You do not need a theology degree or a theological dictionary to read and enjoy this book.

If you have ever taken Eucharist for granted, this book is also for you.

The last few chapters of the book focuses on the practical aspects of preparing for Mass and Communion. How often have do we go to Communion on autopilot? How does knowing that I am going to receive communion tomorrow change how I live today?

It also answers such difficult questions as why the Eucharist is not open to everyone, and why our Eucharistic Fellowship has boundaries.

If you have questions about the Eucharist or simply want to seek a deeper understanding of this most marvelous Sacrament, I highly recommend *The Source of Life: Exploring the Mystery of the Eucharist* by Christoff Cardinal Schönborn.

To read more blog entries, including book reviews, from the diocesan Office of the New Evangelization, go to rcdony.org/evangelization.html.



KEEPING TRADITION & MEMORIES ALIVE

Deputy Grand Knight Corey Swinwood, Chancellor Russ Backus and Past Grand Knight John Taillon of the Canton Knights of Columbus prepare to deliver chocolates and roses to the widows of the Council for Christmas.

AT THE MOVIES

SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME

NEW YORK (CNS) – Action, humor and drama are skillfully combined in "Spider-Man: No Way Home" (Columbia), the lavish final installment of a trilogy of films starring Tom Holland as the Marvel Comics superhero.

Pure catnip for fans of the webslinger's saga, the movie will engross even those less committed to his history and carries sufficient ethical gravitas to make it probably acceptable for older teens.

Opening scenes find the human arachnid's alter ego, Brooklyn teen Peter Parker, in a pickle. Not only has his secret identity been revealed, he's also at the center of a raging public debate, fueled by sensationalist reporter J. Jonah Jameson (J.K. Simmons), about whether he's a crimefighter or a murderous villain.

After this controversy turns out to have a seriously adverse effect on the lives of both his girlfriend, MJ (Zendaya), and his best pal, Ned (Jacob Batalon), Peter – with his previous patron, Tony Stark, dead – turns to sorcerer Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) for help. But the wizard's spell goes awry, and he inadvertently al-

lows a quintet of Spider-Man foes from throughout the multiverse to come to earth.

As these extraterrestrial troublemakers – including Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), Doc Ock (Alfred Molina) and Electro (Jamie Foxx) – unleash havoc, Peter must weigh whether to send them back where they came from in a manner that could be fatal for them or choose a more challenging, but more humane, alternative. Predictably, he gets solid guidance from his loving guardian, Aunt May (Marisa Tomei).

Returning director Jon Watts serves up giddy visuals and high-budget special effects. Below this glossy surface, meanwhile, co-writers Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers' script delves into themes of altruism, the desire for revenge and, of course, the great responsibility that attends great

power. They do so, moreover, in a way entirely congruent with Judeo-Christian morality.

The value of the life lessons our youthful protagonist learns along the way to a surprisingly poignant wrap-up may sway many parents to allow those in the same demographic to

absorb them as well. All the more so since his adventures are virtually gore-free and his heartfelt romance, throughout a series of vicissitudes, refreshingly chaste.

The film contains steady but stylized violence, at least one sexual reference, a single profanity, several

milder oaths, a handful of crude terms and occasional crass language. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III – adults. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG-13 – parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



*Merry Christmas and
a Blessed New Year
to everyone across the Diocese.*

From the faith communities of
St. Patrick's, St. Anthony's
&
Holy Family Churches
Watertown





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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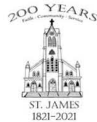
*The magic of Christmas is not in the presents,
but in His presence*

*Prayers & Blessings to you and yours
during this Holy Christmas season & always*

**** Merry Christmas from Sister Mary Ellen and Alexis ****



Wishing a season of Joy and
peace to all throughout the
Diocese of Ogdensburg.



Merry Christmas from St. James and St. Mary's Parish and the
Students and Staff at Augustinian Academy.



Artwork created by Cheyanne Walseman, Grade 7.

OBITUARIES

Black River – Jackie N. O'Brien, 86; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 17, 2021 at St. Paul's Church; burial in Black River Cemetery.

Carthage – Gilles J. Langevin, 78; Funeral Services Dec. 18, 2021 at Bezanilla-McGraw Funeral Home; burial in St. James Cemetery.

Dannemora – Erma J. (Ritchie) Brousseau, 94; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 17, 2021 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Gouverneur – Judith M. (Curtis) De-Castro, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2021 at St. James Church.

Hogansburg – Timothy "TJ" Jock, Sr., 86; Mass of Christian Burial to be held at St. Regis Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Massena – Regina Erestine (Rainville) Pelifian, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Private Mass of Christian Burial at Church of the Sacred Heart; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Massena – Dominic Terminelli, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 16, 2021 at St. Mary's Church.

Mooers Forks – Margaret T. (Roberts) Dragoon, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 14, 2021 at St. Ann's Church; burial in Town of Ellenburg Mausoleum.

Ogdensburg – Jude Thaddeus Carville, 75; Graveside services at St. Mary's Cemetery in Spring.

Plattsburgh – Theresa C. (Buskey) Lemieux, 96; Private Services to be held.

Potsdam – Theresa Hayes Logan, 92;

Private Mass of Christian Burial at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Saranac Lake – Richard P. Gansfuss, 76; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2021 at Fortune-Keough Funeral Home.

Waddington – Beverly A. (Dumas) Lalonde, 89; Memorial Mass to be held in the spring at St. Mary's Church; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Watertown – Linda L. (Sharp) Beyette, 79; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2021 at the Reed & Benoit Funeral Home; burial in North Watertown Cemetery.

Watertown – Clarence A. Jobson, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 22, 2021 at Holy Family Church; Burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

On Our Knees prayer campaign continues

United in prayer for the Dobbs Supreme Court Case, from October 22 - June 22 all are asked to pray for the protection of life in our nation.

Background: January 22, 1973: Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision began the era of abortion on demand in the USA.

• 2018: Mississippi passed a law protecting unborn children after 15 weeks of gestation, when the baby has a heartbeat, eyes that open, ears that hear, and can move and kick. The law was challenged and the case, known as Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization, is being heard by the Supreme Court.

• Dobbs v Jackson is a landmark case that could potentially overturn Roe v Wade. The possibility for future laws protecting the unborn hangs in the balance.

• December 1, 2021: oral arguments for the case were heard. A decision is expected in June 2022. More information at www.prayfordobbs.com

*O come, O come
Emmanuel!*

*May the Joyful anticipation
of the Lord's birth fill your
hearts with Hope and Love.*

from the Office of Youth Ministry!

Merry Christmas!

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Learning from the Holy Family

Every year, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary, & Joseph – on the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas. And that means a celebration of family life – births, weddings, funerals, anniversaries. In the first reading, we hear about a joyful birth, that of Samuel. After years of prayer, Hannah and Elkanah are



**Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore**

granted a son. As soon as Samuel is weaned, the mother fulfills her promise and gives him up to the Lord's service at the shrine at Shiloh. What's the point? Trusting in the Lord bears fruit. Children are a gift from God, and they always belong to God. Parents do not own their children. They are guardians to whom God

entrusts their education and upbringing.

So, we call Jesus and Mary and Joseph the Holy Family, and paintings always place a halo over their heads. In order for us to see how this family encountered problems just like other families, the Gospel chosen for this Sunday is about Jesus' boyhood years. Joseph is by now a carpenter in Nazareth, and Mary is a busy housewife and mother of a teenager! As parents, Mary and Joseph are well aware of their responsibilities. Being God's divine Son does not prevent Jesus, however, from acting with all the inexperience and spontaneous behavior of any normal 12-year-old. What an exciting experience for a boy

December 30

Feast of the Holy Family

READINGS

1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Luke 2:41-52

from a small town to travel to Jerusalem for the Feast! Fascinated with the learned teachers He found in the Temple, he loses track of time and, like most teenagers, doesn't think about the terror that a missing child can cause for parents. After three frantic days of searching, they find him, only to hear Jesus rather naively ask, "Didn't you realize I had to be in my Father's house?" No, they don't understand, but they tuck it away in their hearts, along with a lot of other unanswered questions. Mary and Joseph, like millions of other parents, were act-

ing as good, responsible caregivers who are having difficulty understanding their son. So, what else is new! Teenagers don't understand themselves either. Was Jesus just carried away with impatience to start His ministry? For Joseph and Mary, the fact that Jesus was divine made his actions all the more mystifying to them.

What Jesus did after that is really the great lesson for all families: He humbly bowed to their authority. When he saw how upset they were, he promptly left the Temple, and went back obediently to Nazareth where he "advanced in age and grace and wisdom."

The second reading gives a great recipe for successful family relationships. What makes a family "holy?" It's all so simple? Just love, commu-

nicate with, and forgive one another, and keep the commandments! Of course, simple answers like that are the hardest to accept! John says we must believe in the Son and keep his commandments. Joseph was totally committed to heading this "holy family" because the angel told him to; Mary, at the risk of her reputation, gave birth to Jesus, and was a faithful, protective mother because God wanted it; and Jesus was a faithful son, subservient to human parents because his heavenly Father willed it so! Our families would find their disagreements, stressful relationships, and resentments that spoil the joy of family harmony so much easier to solve by imitating the faith and loving trust of the Holy Family and their help to us in the coming New Year.

CALLED TO SERVE

At Mass, the deacon sets the table

There are times the transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist seems like a scene change in a theatrical presentation. It might feel that way, but that is not the case.

The Liturgy of the Word at Mass ends with the celebrant's closing prayer to the intercessions the deacon has placed before God on behalf of the congregation.

Please sit.

Some folks think we sit just to make it easier for the ushers to take up the collection. Maybe, but there is so much more.

This part of the Mass is called the Preparation of the Gifts. The gift we make

to the collection basket is important to the parish.

Let me detour for a second to say a word about electronic giving. I am a big fan of electronic giving. It helps the pastor and finance council plan. It makes life easier for the donor. How many times have you said, "Oh no, I forgot my envelope!"

If you feel self-conscious about not putting something in the basket, have envelopes sent to you but check the box "I give online." Put that envelope in the basket. Embarrassment avoided. And don't forget to visit the electronic giving site annually to adjust your donation amount if you like.

Back to the offertory. The deacon role at the altar takes me back to the reason for deacons in the first place. We are told in the Acts of the Apostles that the apostles said, "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table." So, they chose seven guys to handle the task.

Among other things, deacons today are ordained to serve at liturgy. The role may seem inconsequential, but it is really significant. The deacon prepares, sets the table, for the feast to follow.

He first accepts the gifts of bread and wine to be offered, consecrated and shared when they are presented during the offertory procession. Then he hands the plate (called a paten) with bread on it to the celebrant. That simple action is symbolic. The deacon represents the congregation, the people of God, when he hands the gift to the celebrant.

Next, the deacon prepares the chalice, mixing the wine with a drop of water. The mingling is accompanied by the words "By the mystery of the

water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." That is a powerful reminder of our baptism into the Body of Christ. Again, representing the congregation, the deacon hands the gift of the wine in the chalice to the celebrant.

The table is prepared. The priest will wash his hands and then invite us to ask God to find the gifts we have presented to him for sacrifice acceptable.



**Deacon
Kevin Mastellon**

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

Christmas Peace to All

At this time of giving, we are reminded of the greatest gift ever— Jesus Christ.

During this Holy Season, may you experience the priceless gift of love that came with the birth of our Savior.

Wishing you and your families a Blessed Christmas!



Saint Lawrence Society

The Permanent Deacons of the Diocese of Ogdensburg



We would like to take this opportunity to thank our contributors. Those whom graciously and generously donate financially, physically and spiritually to those in need.

Your support renews trust, hope, and faith for those in dark times.

Your contributions positively change North Country lives every day ... and every day matters.

A Blessed Christmas and New Year to you all!

Catholic Charities - Diocese of Ogdensburg

