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NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY 8, 2023

BUILDING BRIDGES



Students at St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga participated in a bridge-building competition recently. Three teams participated: The Two Musketeers (Jonah Giordano and James DeFranco), TNCC (Tony, Noah Construction Company) and Crimson Ducks (Elena DeFranco and her partner). Each team competed to see how much weight their bridge could hold. This was calculated with how much their bridge weighed to achieve an efficiency score. Taking first place by holding 114# and receiving a 258.7 efficiency score was The Two Musketeers. Second place holding 104# with an efficiency of 176.1 was the Crimson Ducks. TNCC came in third, holding 27# with an efficiency of 90.8. Pictured, from left, Noah Wells, Tony Francis, Jonah Giordano, James DeFranco, 7th-grader Elena DeFranco and coach Mrs. Donna LaBounty

TO HAVE, TO HOLD & TO HONOR



Megan and Tyler Bourgeois in 2023, with daughters Elizabeth and Meredith, and their new son, Ambrose. Tyler is a project manager for solar company SOLTEC; Megan, a nurse, now stays home with their children. Together they are focused on "raising happy, healthy, holy children." Read about Megan and Tyler and their journey to and through marriage as the North Country Catholic celebrates National Marriage Week and World Marriage Day. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Marriage Week and World Marriage Day provide an opportunity for the Catholic Church to focus on and celebrate the vocation to marriage and family life. This year, National Marriage Week will be celebrated February 7-14 and World Marriage Day will be celebrated on Sunday, February 13.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

Pope: Congolese Catholics are 'lung' for Church

The enthusiasm, joy, and missionary zeal of Congolese Catholics give oxygen to the whole Church, Pope Francis said during his final meeting in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday.

"As a Church we need to breathe the pure air of the Gospel, to dispel the tainted air of worldliness, to safeguard the young heart of faith. That is how I imagine the African Church and that is how I see this Congolese Church," he said during an encounter with the country's bishops.

Pope Francis met 57 of the 74

current and retired bishops of the DRC at the headquarters of the national bishops' conference of Congo (CENCO) before heading to the country's N'djili International Airport for a flight to South Sudan, which he visited Feb. 3-5.

The pope said during his Jan. 31-Feb. 3 visit he saw the Church in the DRC as "a young, dynamic and joyful Church, motivated by missionary zeal, by the good news that God loves us and that Jesus is Lord."

"Yours is a Church present in the lived history of this people, deeply rooted in its daily life, and in the forefront of charity," he

told the bishops. "It is a community capable of attracting others, filled with infectious enthusiasm and therefore, like your forests, with plenty of 'oxygen.' Thank you, because you are a lung that helps the universal Church breathe!"

According to the Vatican, there are more than 52 million Catholics in the DRC, almost half of the country's total population of over 105 million people. The country, which covers 905,600 square miles, is divided into 48 Catholic dioceses.

After praising the beautiful features of the Church in the DRC,

Pope Francis said he was sorry to have to speak of another side to the bishops' country.

"Sadly, I know that the Christian community of this land also has another face," he said. "It is the face of a Church that suffers for its people, a heart in which the life of the people, with its joys and trials, beats anxiously. A Church that is a visible sign of Christ, who even today is rejected, condemned and reviled in the many crucified people of our world; a Church that weeps with their tears, and like Jesus, a Church that also wants to dry those tears."

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Given a complement

I say it almost every time someone asks about my husband.

"Adam is the anti-me. I'll talk to anyone and everyone. You could meet him 20 times, and he'd still only say five words to you."

Almost universally, the response is, "opposites attract."

I don't like to think of us as "opposites."

That word feels somewhat adversarial to me. I prefer

to say, "we complement each other."

Darcy L.
Fargo

I hate driving on winter roads. Adam doesn't mind it, so he drives in those conditions. He hates driving in cities or unfamiliar places. I don't mind that, so I handle that kind of driving. Adam's not so great at managing schedules and the more administrative part of running a household, so I handle most of that. I'm not

good at fixing things or building, so he takes care of those tasks. Adam is methodical and deliberate in making decisions, which balances out my tendency to be impulsive and adventurous.

Oxford Languages defines "complement" as "add to (something) in a way that enhances or improves it; make perfect."

Adam's not perfect. I'm not perfect. When we put our skills, talents and personalities together, though, there's not much we can't

do, but we're still not perfect. Similarly, our marriage isn't perfect.

Despite our imperfections, we're trying to do what our Lord calls us to do, and we're trying to help each other get to heaven.

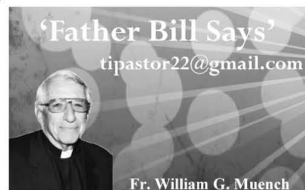
We're using our imperfect love to work together to get to perfect love, to become complete. It fits the definition of "complement" pretty well.

That's also worth talking about almost every time someone asks about my husband.

Spending time with Sacred Scripture

The Second Vatican Council encouraged, even demanded, that Sacred Scriptures, be a necessary, important part of the life of the Catholic Church. I remember well that the Scriptures were an important part of my life. I grew up loving the Scriptures. As a priest, they are who I am. The council came at the beginning of my priesthood, leading me to never forget the importance of the Scriptures for my ministry.

Let me tell you about a conversation I had with a friend, a member of the Madonna House Community. She was telling me, and some others, about her conversion – her finding God. Someone encouraged her to read the Bible. So, she decided to accept the challenge and to read the whole New Testament. She said that after reading the whole New Testament, she didn't understand. She thought maybe she missed something. So, she decided to read the whole New Testament again. After, she had to admit she still didn't understand, but she also had to admit that she could truly say how much her whole life had changed – all for the good. She was a dif-



Fr. William G. Muench

ferent person.

The Second Vatican Council had a profound effect on transforming the love and the reading and the studying of Sacred Scripture for all of us as Catholics. This was so truly needed. Before the council we, Catholics, were not good at talking about Sacred Scriptures. They were not an important part of our spirituality. We had the Scriptures – every time Mass is celebrated, since the earliest days, there are readings of several Scriptures. However, the Council Fathers realized that the Scriptures were not a good part of the life of the Church.

One of the documents published by the council is the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. In this document, there are four chapters that concern the Sacred Scriptures. The council begins this section by reminding us of our belief in the Scriptures. The Fathers wrote this: "For,

since they are inspired by God and committed to writing once and for all time, they present God's own Word in an inalterable form, and they make the voice of the Holy Spirit sound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles."

The Council goes on to make it clear that the Scriptures should inspire all the Church does and accomplishes. Here is another sentence from this document: "It follows that all the preaching of the Church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture." Since the days of the council, priests and deacons are encouraged and required to begin preparing for the celebration of Mass by studying and praying over the Scriptures assigned for that Mass. We speak now of a homily at Mass, intended to help the people of God to understand the message of this day's Scriptures, bringing the people to the Word of God. Pastors are encouraged by the council to open wide the Bible to the people of God.

The council also gave full support to the many professional Scripture Scholars and their efforts as they ac-

cept the challenge to determine the meaning of the Scriptures. There have been controversies in times past whether it is good to allow certain intellectuals to work on the Scriptures, the Word of God. In the words of the council, "This Sacred Synod encourages these sons of the Church who are engaged in biblical studies constantly to renew their efforts, in order to carry on the work they have so happily begun, with complete dedication and in accordance with the mind of the Church."

Personally, my priesthood began with and was profoundly influenced by the Second Vatican Council. So, the Scriptures have been and continue to be important and profoundly influence all that I have done as a priest. My homilies and my retreat talks begin with the Scriptures. St. Jerome wrote, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

One more thing from the Council, "Let them (all of us) remember, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man."

MARRIAGE WEEK: TO HAVE, TO HOLD, TO HONOR

Love, marriage, faith and family

By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Staff Writer

In 2016, the couple met on a blind date. One year later they married with their eyes wide open.

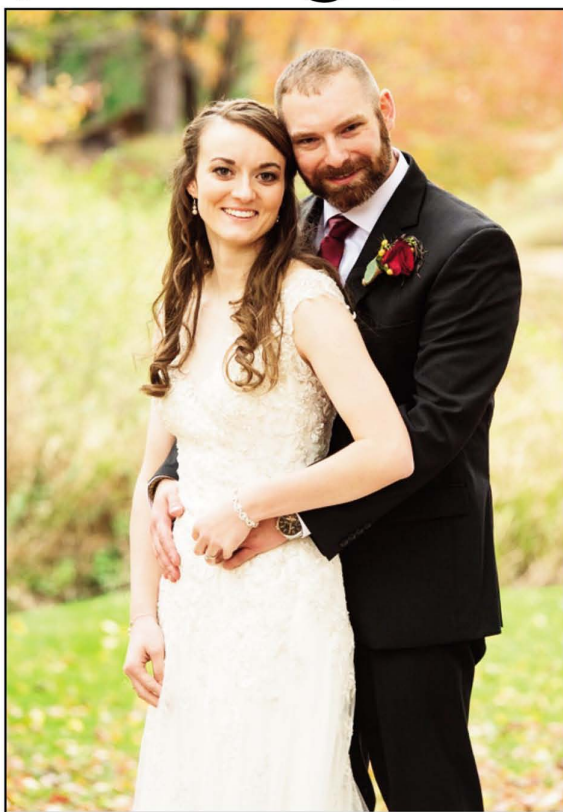
Tyler and Megan Bourgeois were introduced by mutual friends who convinced each that the other “would be a good match because we were Catholic.” And in fact, the matchmakers got that exactly right, the couple explains as they reflect on their relationship.

From the beginning, “We just connected well. It was good to know we were both Catholic, and that faith would not be an obstacle,” they observe. “We both agreed that faith is the most important aspect of a strong marriage. We were excited to start a relationship, to have a partner, someone on your team – who, yes, is a different person, but has the same worldview and values.”

Tyler and Megan were married October 13, 2017, at Megan’s home parish of St. Stephen’s in Croghan.

Their common commitment to faith and teamwork has strengthened their relationship and deepened their love. It has also proved foundational for appreciating the joys and surviving the sorrows that have come their way as they settled into marriage and started a family.

“Marriage,” they offer, “has been what it is supposed to be. We have had some really beautiful and exciting times.



Megan and Tyler Bourgeois on their wedding day. The couple was married October 13, 2017, at Megan’s home parish of St. Stephen’s in Croghan. They now live in Boonville with their family.

The births of our children (Meredith 4 ½; Elizabeth 2 ½; and Ambrose 3 months) of course stand out for us! It’s been a great blessing to have our little kids; they’re fun, energetic, and funny to watch! The innocent joy that children have is such a beautiful thing to witness. Of course it can be challenging, three kids under five, when they’re all having a bad day, or are mad, or crying, or pestering each other – no fun. We’re working on growing in virtue, especially in patience. But we see the great blessing that a family is.”

“Sometimes it’s really

great, others not so much. But at the end of the day, we are on the same page with the important things; we are a team. Whatever we are going through, we’re not going through it alone. It really is a blessing to know that you have a solid teammate to face those challenges with. If we simply put first things first – the Church, living our faith well with our family, and embracing Catholic traditions all week and all year long – then we don’t have to feel alone. And of course we think that is what marriage is supposed to be: the struggles are supposed to

make you better!”

The couple speaks openly about their toughest struggle. “The biggest challenge we have faced is losing two babies through miscarriage. We lost both Emmanuel René and Gabriel Frances in the same year. Of course, there is no resolution to something like that, but we just generally leaned into our faith and all the beautiful wisdom of the Church. She really is an expert in humanity, and there is so much she can help you with if you know it is there and seek it out.”

But this is not a merely theoretical approach to grieving the loss of beloved children.

“From the practical perspective, we keep their memories alive. During the summer, when the cemetery is open, we often visit Emmanuel after church on Sunday. The girls talk to him at his grave, tell him about their week, and then get ice cream. We also ask both Emmanuel and Gabriel to pray for us at the end of Grace before meals and at the end of night prayers.”

How did this loss affect Tyler and Megan’s relationship?

“It’s been tough,” they acknowledge. “But like we said before, if you have the right mindset,

put first things first, thank God for all your blessings even in the hard times, you grow through it. We grew closer through those experiences because we relied on each other and each of us had the opportunity to be supportive of the other (imperfectly, of course). Through that you build trust. You start to believe, not just know, that the person you’ve dedicated your life to is really there to be your partner. They’re on your team, and you are not alone.”

For these teammates, taking their faith seriously is primary. Part of that involves actively supporting one another’s faith efforts.

“We try to encourage each other in the faith, we try to live our faith as part of our daily lives. We try to make time for each of us to attend different retreats, and we all attend Family Guggenheim. Faith helps us have an awareness that we need to offer each other grace and space in our daily lives. We belong to St. Joseph’s parish in Boonville (which Tyler has attended all his life). In the past, we have taught Confirmation preparation there, and helped out with building and beautification projects.”

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MARRIAGE WEEK: TO HAVE, TO HOLD, TO HONOR

Natural Family Planning considered

By Suzanne Pietropaoli

Natural Family Planning Director

Congratulations! Perhaps you are newly married, or perhaps you are still busy getting ready for the big day. Issues and adjustments of all kinds demand your attention, and it might be easy to let some things just slide.

Even so, starting a new life together is the perfect time for the two of you to have a heart-to-heart talk about family planning.

Really? Wasn't that all settled at the clinic or the doctor's office?

Well, that is the first thing to consider: being a fertile woman is not a disease that needs medical treatment. The ability to conceive and bear children is a good and healthy thing, and the alternating phases of female fertility and infertility have been well documented for nearly a century.

Today any woman can learn to understand her own fertility by observing its physical signs or biomarkers. These reflect the hormonal changes that govern the female cycle and indicate times of fertility and infertility within that cycle. Natural Family Planning teaches women to identify and evaluate these changes.

This knowledge gives her an entirely natural, healthy, highly effective (98-99% effective) way to plan a family – simply by abstaining during the fertile time of the cycle.

Also, because Natural Family Planning is true family planning, the same knowledge enables couple to identify the

optimum time for conception when that is their family planning intention.

NFP is also unique because responsibility for conception is shared by both husband and wife. After all, since a woman is fertile only a few days each cycle and a man is continuously fertile from puberty until death, it hardly makes sense that she should bear the burden of risky contraceptives.

And yes, the hormonal contraceptives currently used by 61 million American women carry significant health risks. Learn all you can, even if you may need a magnifying glass to read the fine print in the package inserts.

This information will alert you to some of the immediate medical hazards risked by women who use the Pill and other chemical contraceptives including Norplant, patches, Yaz, rings and IUDs. In addition to raising the risk of blood clots, heart attacks, strokes, gallbladder disease and depression, these chemicals substantially increase the lifetime risk of breast cancer. Learn more at <https://bcpinstitute.org>, website of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute. Let the facts inform your choices.

There are also other values to consider in your approach to family planning.

Couples who choose contraceptive drugs and devices view fertility as a problem – HER problem, which she must fix. But of course, a fertile woman is not broken or defective, but is per-

fectly healthy. Natural Family Planning recognizes this truth and educates couples to accept and respect the woman in her totality. NFP empowers women: family planning is no longer a female "problem," but a responsibility shared by husband and wife. Knowledge is always powerful, and learning to understand and respect how our bodies are designed has a powerful influence on couples who use it. It fosters attentiveness, appreciation, patience, and communication, which tend to strengthen a couple's relationship.

It is also important to consider this question in light of God's plan for married love. Especially in a culture that regards sex as something that human beings fashion for themselves, it is essential to consider sexuality from the perspective of the God who made it, and all of us.

When you stand before the altar of God on your wedding day, you promise yourselves to one another in a love that is

free, permanent, faithful and open to the gift of children.

This is the kind of love with which God loves us, and it is the absolutely unconditional love for which we all long. It is the love that God intends should be embodied in every act of sexual intercourse, an act that by its nature says: "I love you totally. I give all of myself to you forever, and I freely and completely accept all that you are."

Yet contracepted intercourse says something quite different: "I love you, but not all of you. I give myself to you, but not all of me. I withhold my fertility /I will not accept your fertility." In this way, married love can become conditional, demanding and divisive rather than uniting a couple in giving and receiving the total gift of each to the other.

At every level – health, effectiveness, relationship, faith – God's plan is good. Time spent learning it yields tremendous benefits over a lifetime.

NFP methods and modes of learning have evolved to include many

online options, as well as in-person classes. Different NFP methodologies appeal to different people, and there is certainly something that will suit your preferences.

The Catholic Church, which has always taught and continues to teach that God made sex to be both unitive AND procreative, has endorsed natural methods of birth regulation for the better part of a century and supported research and teaching organizations. Such organizations approved by the Church thus have long histories of reliability, which is not the case for the many random fertility awareness methods currently crowding the internet.

The most comprehensive single site for this information is hosted by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops: <https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning>.

We also invite you to connect with our diocesan NFP Office at www.rcdony.org/nfp or email us at apietropaoli@rcdony.org.



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Catholic Schools: A place of encounter

By Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin, SSJ
Diocesan Superintendent of Schools

Catholic Schools Weeks is an annual celebration of Catholic Education in the United States. The national celebration begins on the last Sunday of January and extends through the following week. A number of our schools will celebrate during the national celebration January 31 – February 4. Others choose to celebrate the week at a different time.

Schools typically observe the week with Masses, open houses, special activities for students, families, parishioners and the wider community. Catholic Schools Week is an opportunity to reflect on the mission of Catholic schools and their distinctive features.

As I prepared to write this article, I recalled April 17, 2008. I was at Catholic University of America with the diocesan Catholic school superintendents and Catholic university presidents from across the United States.

We were invited by Father David O'Connell, the president/rector of Catholic University to attend a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI during his apostolic visit to the United States. The meeting and the address which the Holy Father delivered that day remain a cherished and inspiring memory.

"Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God . . . in Jesus Christ who reveals his transforming love and truth" (Pope Benedict, Catholic University of America, 4/17/2008).

A Catholic school is a place of encounter, a place to meet Jesus Christ, to learn about Him, to experience His redeeming love and to grow in a relationship with Him. Drawn by the power of the Gospel,



PHOTO BY COLLEEN MINER/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Students from St. Bernard's School in Saranac Lake carried the torch in the torch relay for the International University Sports Federation (FISU) World University Games in January. The students were aided by Principal Andrea Kilbourne-Hill, a former Olympian (not pictured), and teacher Allison Miller.

this encounter leads students to lead a life in imitation of Jesus.

Survey data indicates that parents choose Catholic schools for their strong academic program, orderly, disciplined environment and a secure and safe environment. Strong academic programs, an orderly and secure environment, however, do not address the unique mission of a Catholic school.

The foundation of our mission is a person, Jesus Christ. It is His life and His message that a Catholic school imparts. It is the Catholic world-view integrated throughout the academic program and lived and shared throughout the total school program that distinguishes a Catholic school.

"A school's Catholic identity

is not simply a question of a number of Catholic students. It is a conviction – do we really believe that only in the mystery of Jesus does the mystery of the human person become clear" (Pope Benedict XVI, CUA, 2008).

Catholic schools see education as a process that forms the whole person in terms of eternal life. The specific purpose of Catholic education is the formation of students who will be good citizens of this world, love God and neighbor and enrich society with the leaven of the Gospel and by the example of their faith.

We believe every human person is created to enjoy one day the beauty and joy of eternal happiness. As communities of faith, Catholic schools instill in students their destiny to be-

come saints – citizens of eternal life.

Every academic institution imparts values – ideals for which a student is prepared to pursue and eventually achieve. The difference in a Catholic school is not found in "what makes the difference" but rather in "who makes the difference." Christ is the difference that defines who we are and why we exist. He is the one who leads our students to a bright future in this world and eventually in eternal life.

"Being a Christian," Benedict XVI wrote, "is not the result of a lofty ideal, but the encounter with an event, a person, who gives life a new horizon and a definitive direction."

Let me take this opportunity to thank the parents who have chosen a Catholic school for their children.

I realize that in many instances this choice brings with it a financial sacrifice. This sacrifice, however, is an investment in your child's future that will result in benefits for your child, the Church and society.

Likewise, I want to thank the administrators and teachers in our Catholic schools. I am most appreciative for their commitment to our Catholic schools. The Second Vatican Council said it so well. ". . . Let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs" (Decree on Catholic Education, #8).

Theirs is a supernatural calling and not simply the exercise of a profession.

"The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior. (The Catholic School, #43)

We are indeed blessed to have administrators and teachers who are willing to assume this noble task.

Environmental Stewardship

It is not too soon

Though we may be watching snowflakes cover the earth, it is not too soon to think about new life and springtime.

While the trees may look like they are lifeless, arborists tell us something different. During the winter, trees are resting and getting their roots in deeper so they can burst forth with new life when the warmth of spring comes.

One activity for this time of year could be to learn more about trees and what God may have to teach us through them.

Did you know that trees are mentioned more than 50 times in the Scriptures? It begins in the Book of Genesis with the tree of life in the garden, the wood of the Cross and the tree of life in the Book of Revelations. In between, we find all kinds of references from roots, buds, blossoms, stumps to branches and vines. They provide fruits, nuts, shelter, and medicines for us. In the Jewish tradition there is celebration of trees called Tu Bishvat, the Jewish "Birthday" of the Trees or Feast of Fruits. It celebrated late January or early February.

One plan for springtime could be to learn more about the trees in your own back yard or neighborhood. What species are they? When do they bare seeds? What do they provide freely for us and other creatures? Have you ever noticed what they sound like in a gentle breeze or a wild wind?

A few facts about trees that may have lessons for us humans.

Tree roots are as massive beneath the ground as the branches are above the ground.

Trees like to be together so they can interconnect their roots in order to strengthen each other in winds and storms.

When one tree begins to experience an attack from a bug or some type of disease, it will relay this information through chemical coding to others so that they can begin to alter their natural defenses to protect against the immediate danger.

Are there any lessons that we might put into practice?

Rest in Peace

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

Feb. 8 – Msgr. Patrick Bernard Riley, 1981

Feb. 9 – Rev. Claude M. F. Sallaz, O.M.I., 1873; Rev. Joseph Weldon Barry, 1945; Rev. Howard James Kennedy, 1971

Feb. 10 – Rev. Zephirin Pelouquin, M.S.C., 1944; Msgr. William J. Argy, 2005

Feb. 11 – Deacon David P. Wells, 2017

Feb. 12 – Rev. Richard O'Donnell, 1949

Feb. 13 – Rev. Richard J. Maloney, O.M.I., 1893; Deacon Edward F. McAuliffe, 1986; Rev. Harry E. Giroux, 2012

Feb. 14 – Msgr. Gerald F. Kellogg, 1979; Rev. Charles Joseph Richard, 2007

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg has scheduled sessions for Protecting God's Children for Adults. Pre-registration online is required. Participants may preregister at www.virtus.org.

Feb. 24 – 1 p.m., Diocesan offices, Ogdensburg

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact **Victims Assistance Coordinator**, Terrianne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955;

terrianneyanulavich@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.

Parish nurse training to be offered in Plattsburgh

PLATTSBURGH – Mercy Care for the Adirondacks, a mission sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, will offer the Foundations Course for Faith Community Nursing (parish nursing) on March 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, and 25. Attendance at all six sessions is required.

The in-person course is open to Registered Nurses of all faiths and will be offered at St. Joseph's Outreach Center in Plattsburgh.

Mercy Care provides the training at no cost to participants in the Diocese of Ogdensburg but pre-registration is required.

The Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course is supported by a grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation.

To register please visit www.adkmercy.org. For more information, contact Lexi Bevilacqua at abevilacqua@adkmercy.org or 518-523-5446. Mercy Care for the Adirondacks has trained more than 50 parish nurses throughout the North Country.

HOW DOES A PARISH NURSE HELP?

Volunteer Faith Community nurses (often referred to as parish nurses) provide health education, advocate for clients, connect them with resources in the community, listen and provide support in times of illness. Their focus is on the whole person with special emphasis on the spiritual. The volunteer parish nurse does not do hands-on nursing or duplicate what is available through the public health nurse, but does bring his or her nursing experience and faith to the service of others. As a volunteer Parish Nurse, you are offered the opportunity to choose the number of hours you will be able to give.

CLERGY AND VOLUNTEER PARISH NURSE EXPERIENCE

Clergy in churches where there is a parish nurse presence have expressed their appreciation of this ministry.

Father John Yonkovig, pastor of St. Agnes Catholic Church in Lake Placid remarked, "Our Parish Nurses have been invaluable during this time of Covid-19 and ongoing aftermath."

Penny McGill, R.N., Mercy Care parish nurse said, "I have found that parish nursing is less about physical care and more about nourishing the human spirit."

FACULTY

- Sister Catherine Cummings, RSM,



Parish Nurses bring their nursing experience and faith to the service of others.

Ed.D., R.N., Mercy Care's Mission Director, Course Coordinator

- Jane Stratton, MS, RN, NPD-BC-BC, Parish Nurse Educator, Lead Faculty and Primary Course Instructor

- Donna Beal, Mercy Care Executive Director

- Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ, Faith Formation Educator, Sister of St. Joseph of Watertown, NY

- Angela Sheehan, RN, MS, NPP, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Private Mental Health Practice, Faith Community Nurse Educator, Rensselaer and Saratoga Counties

- Rev. Paul Kelly, Chaplain, Elderwood of Uihlein at Lake Placid

- Mandy Snay, MPH, RD, CDN, Director of Health Planning & Promotion, Clinton County Health Department

- Kasey Stewart, Ph.D., Coordinator, North Country Hub Enhanced-Multi-disciplinary Team, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Ogdensburg

- Barbara J. Hofrichter M.Div., D. Min, U.C.C. (Pastor Retired), Hospice Bereavement Coordinator (Retired)

Parish Nursing is one of the fastest growing specialties in nursing. It has spread rapidly throughout the country. Care is given in accordance with each individual's values and spiritual beliefs.

Mercy Care's mission is to enhance in every dimension the fullness of life of elders living in their community. For more information, please visit Mercy Care's web site at www.adkmercy.org.

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Smithsonian staff kick out students for wearing pro-life hats

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNA) — A group of Catholic students was wrongly kicked out of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum because museum staff reacted with hostility to their matching blue pro-life hats, their supporters say. Twelve students from Our Lady of the Rosary School in Greenville, South Carolina, and their chaperones had attended the March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 20. They wore blue pro-life stocking caps that said "Rosary Pro-Life." After the rally, they visited the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, famous for its exhibits of the original 1903 Wright Flyer and the Apollo 11 Command Module. Though other visitors wore various kinds of hats, according to attorney Jordan Sekulow of the American Center for Law and Justice, the students were treated differently. Sekulow said the students "were accosted several times and told they would be forced to leave unless they removed their pro-life hats." At least two students are being represented by the American Center for Law and Justice. The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum said it has already made changes after the incident.

Video found of priest who developed Big Bang theory

(CNA) — A Belgian television station has rediscovered a 20-minute video in which Father Georges Lemaitre, considered the father of the Big Bang theory, explains what the origin of the universe may have been like. Lemaitre was a Belgian astrophysicist known for being the first academic to propose the theory of the expansion of the universe from a massive explosion of what he called a "primordial atom" or "cosmic egg." Until now, only photographs of Lemaitre were preserved, the most popular being the one where he appears alongside Albert Einstein. However, the VRT television station recently found a video in its archives in which the father of the Big Bang explains his theory. Lemaitre points out in the interview that the expansion of the universe was not accepted at first because it made the idea of a creation necessary. The full video in French of the interview with Lemaitre can be seen on the VRT YouTube channel.

American tourist desecrates statue of Christ in Jerusalem

On Feb. 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple and the Virgin of Candlemas, a vandal desecrated an image of Jesus in a Catholic church in Jerusalem. The Associated Press reported that the attack occurred at the Church of the Flagellation located on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, the route Christ walked to Mount Calvary. The suspect in the attack is an American tourist who was detained by Israeli police officers. Authorities did not immediately release the man's name. As he was arrested, the man shouted, "You can't have idols in Jerusalem, this is the Holy City!" According to police, he is undergoing psychological evaluation. Father José de Jesús Aguilar, deputy director of radio and television for the Archdiocese of Mexico, posted a video showing the man's arrest. "Unfortunately today, Brother Francisco Benito, a great friend of the custodians in Jerusalem, sent me an image in which a fanatic threw down a sculpture of Christ in one of the chapels on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem," the priest explained. "All the different religious communities seek peace in Jerusalem. On this day, when we remember that Christ is the light of the world, let us pray for his light to shine in Jerusalem and let's pray for peace there," the priest said.

20 AGs warn CVS, Walgreens against abortion pills

By Tyler Arnold
Catholic News Agency

As CVS and Walgreens continue to seek federal approval to sell an abortion drug, 20 attorneys general whose states restrict abortion warned the pharmacy chains against fulfilling mail orders within their states.

Last month, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the sale of mifepristone through pharmacies if the companies receive FDA certification. The drug can be used to abort a preborn child up to 10 weeks of gestation, according to the FDA; however, the World Health Organization has stated it can be used up to 12 weeks of gestation. Walgreens and CVS are both seeking certification to sell the drug but have not yet received approval or begun to sell it.

After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, several states enacted abortion laws that outright ban abortion in most cases or impose a cut-off earlier than 10 weeks. In these states, the bans often apply to surgical abortion and abortion-inducing drugs. Some states also specifically ban the sale of abortion-inducing drugs through the mail. After CVS and Walgreens expressed their intent to distribute the abortion drug through mail orders, a coalition of 20 attorneys general sent letters to the companies, warning them they cannot sell the drug in their states.

"As attorney general, it is my responsibility to enforce the laws as written, and that includes enforcing the very laws that protect Missouri's women and unborn children," Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, who led the coalition, said in a statement. "My office is doing everything in its power to inform these companies of the law, with the promise that we will use every tool at our disposal to uphold the law if broken."

The letter states that companies must "keep apprised not only of federal law but also of the laws of the various states." It adds that these laws reflect a commitment to "protect the lives and dignity of children" and women.

Explaining their concern, the state officials cite research published in 2015 that found that abortion-inducing drugs are nearly six times more likely to cause complications for women than surgical abortions. They also note that

abortions performed away from medical professionals carry an added risk.

In the letter, the attorneys general also caution that mail orders of abortion-inducing drugs "invite the horror of an increase in coerced abortions" because there is no medical oversight and "a person can obtain an abortion pill quite easily and then coerce a woman into taking it." The attorneys general also expressed the opinion that mailing abortion drugs violates federal law, which is contrary to a Department of Justice opinion issued earlier this year.

A spokesman for Walgreens told CNA that the company is aware that it may be unable to provide the drug in every location.

"We are not dispensing mifepristone at this time," a Walgreens spokesman said. "We intend to become a certified pharmacy under the program; however, we fully understand that we may not be able to dispense mifepristone in all locations if we are certified under the program."

CNA reached out to CVS for comment but did not receive a response by the time of publication.

Some pro-life groups praised the attorneys general for defending preborn children against the abortion drug within their respective states.

"Ohio Right to Life is thankful for Attorney General Dave Yost and the 19 other attorneys general who united to not only uphold and protect our state laws but also federal law," Ohio Right to Life President Mike Gonidakis said in a statement.

"This is what true pro-life leadership looks like, and we are proud to stand behind them," Gonidakis added.

"Not only is the lackadaisical distribution of mifepristone via the mail illegal per federal law, but it is also extremely dangerous for women," he said. "We have stated since the very beginning that this FDA approval is nothing short of anti-women and prioritizes a political agenda over medical safety. It is time for the Biden administration to prioritize the health and safety of women and children."

The Utah-based Sutherland Institute, which promotes religious freedom and family values, also approved of the attorneys general's actions. Bill Duncan, a religious freedom policy fellow with the institute, told CNA that the letter is an "appropriate exercise of their responsibility."

CLINTON

PREPARATION FOR PARISH NURSING

Plattsburgh - Mercy Care for the Adirondacks will offer preparation for the role of Parish Nurse.

Date: Beginning March 10

Place: St. Joseph's Outreach Center

Features: This course is open to registered nurses and others who are interested in health ministry in their parishes or with Mercy Care. Parish Nurses (Faith Community Nurses) promote wellness by health screening, health education, advocating for clients, connecting them to services in their community, listening and providing support. There is no charge, but registration is required. It is a 36-contact-hour course offered on Fridays and Saturdays in March.

Contact: For further information, please contact Alexandria (Lexi) Bevilacqua, Program Director at abevilacqua@adkmercy.org or 518-523-5446.

ADORATION

Plattsburgh - Adoration to be held weekly.

Date: Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

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

Place: St. John's in the Holy Family Basement

Features: Come to an out of the way place and rest awhile in Jesus' Presence. Pray for the sick, suffering, vocations, our priests, country and peace in the world.

Contact: For more information, to become a substitute or to sign up for an hour, please contact 518-563-3773.

JEFFERSON-LEWIS

SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER

Evans Mills - The Indian River Council 7471 Knights of Columbus will be having a spaghetti & meatball dinner.

Date: Feb. 11

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

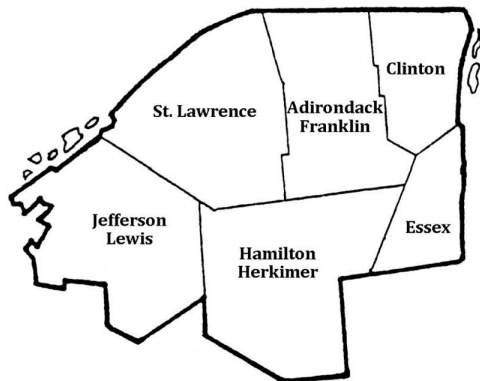
Place: St. Mary's Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$9; Seniors, \$8; Children 12 and under, \$5; under 5, Free; Quart of sauce, \$6

Contact: For more information call 315-629-4678

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Carthage - A pancake breakfast to be held to benefit Augustinian Academy



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.

sponsored by the Father John Cosmic Council 291 of the Knights of Columbus

Date: Feb. 12

Time: 8 a.m. to Noon

Place: St. James Community Room

Cost: Adults, \$9; Seniors, \$7; Children under 10, \$4; Family of 4 or more, \$27

Contact: For more information call 315-493-3224

CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER

Lyons Falls - St. John's Church will have a drive thru chicken and biscuit dinner.

Date: Feb. 15

Time: 5 p.m.

Cost: \$12

Menu: Chicken and homemade biscuits, real mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetable, cranberry sauce, and a Valentine dessert.

Contact: To guarantee your dinner, please call 315-348-8945 or 315-348-8477. Any questions, contact 315-766-6897.

HOLY HOUR AND DIVINE MERCY

Houseville - A Holy Hour of Adoration with the Divine Mercy Chaplet will be observed the first Sunday of the month.

Date: March 5

Time: Following 11 a.m. Mass

Place: St. Hedwig's Church

Contact: 315-348-6260

SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALL DINNER

Evans Mills - The Indian River Council

7471 Knights of Columbus will be having a spaghetti & meatball dinner.

Date: March 11

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

Place: St. Mary's Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$9; Seniors, \$8; Children 12 and under, \$5; under 5, Free; Quart of sauce, \$6

Contact: For more information call 315-629-4678

WOMEN'S PRAYER AND HEALING RETREAT

Watertown - The Department of Faith Formation will be having a Women's Prayer and Healing retreat.

Date: March 31

Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:30

Place: Sisters of St. Joseph Hearshide Room

Cost: \$20

Features: The retreat will be run by Sister Mary Michael Fox, OP, a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville.

Contact: To register go to, www.rcdony.org/healingretreat

ST. LAWRENCE

MEAL DRIVERS NEEDED

The St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging is seeking drivers for home delivered meals in Brasher Falls, DeKalb, Canton, Gouverneur, Morris-town, Ogdensburg, Potsdam and Star Lake.

Features: These drivers deliver nutritious meals to older adults. Many are homebound and receive a lunchtime meal Monday through Fri-

day. A critical component of this program is the daily wellness check that is provided by this service. Drivers receive a mileage reimbursement. Typical deliveries take place between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Routes can be between one hour and two hours. You can volunteer for one day a week or several.

Contact: If you are interested please contact Danielle Durant at 315-386-4730.

BISHOP BARRON STUDY PROGRAM

Massena - St. Peter's Parish will have an 8 week study program using Bishop Barron's "Conversion".

Date: Tuesdays starting Jan. 31

Time: 2 p.m. or 6:30 p.m.

Place: St. Mary's Social Hall

Contact: St. Peter's Office at 315-769-2469 or visit website at massenacatholics.com for info and registration

THE CHOSEN 1 & 2

Massena - St. Peter's Parish will be showing "The Chosen" 1 and 2.

Date: Season 1 starts Wednesdays Feb. 1 and Season 2 starts Mondays Jan. 30

Time: 6 p.m.

Place: St. Mary's Social Hall

Contact: Call St. Peter's Office at 315-769-2469 or visit website at massenacatholics.com for info and registration.

TRIVIA NIGHT

Canton - St. Mary's Church to have a trivia night.

Date: Feb. 11

Time: Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; Trivia starts at 6:45 p.m.

Place: St. Mary's Parish Center

Cost: \$20 (Age 21+) and includes two beverages (beer or wine) and 2 slices of pizza and popcorn.

Features: Join us for a night of fun, fellowship and food. Free childcare available. Door prizes and Grand Prize. Team of 4-6, single players are welcome.

Contact: Call today to reserve your team's spot with your team name-call the rectory at 315-386-2543.

ST. JAMES GALA

Gouverneur - St. James School will have their 2023 Gala, "Return to Vegas".

Date: Feb. 11

Time: 5:45 p.m. to Midnight

Place: St. James School

Cost: \$75, includes dinner, drinks, dancing, admission to auctions, door prizes, games, raffles and new surprises at our premiere event! Must be 21 years of age.

Features: Return to our Vegas themed night to try your luck and help us raise a buck! Join us for all our party favorites including the treasure chest keys, silent and live auctions, Pay and Pick game, raffles, prizes, full course meal, famous dessert bar, cash bar and dancing!

Contact: For more information please contact 315-287-0114 or St. James School 315-287-0130

MONTHLY BRUNCH

Norfolk - Parish of the Visitation and St. Raymond's will have their monthly Knights of Columbus Brunch.

Date: Feb. 12 (Second Sunday of each month)

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Place: Fr. Amyot Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$10; under 12, \$5; under 5, Free; Omelets, add \$3; Take-outs available

Contact: For more information contact Grand Knight Gil Gonthier 315-212-5166.

ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

Ogdensburg - The Legion of Mary will pray the rosary with devotions for First Saturday.

Date: March 4

Time: 8 a.m.

Place: Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg

Features: Rosary with devotions

FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

Massena - Sacred Heart Church to have first Saturday Rosary Devotion.

Date: March 4

Time: 3:15 p.m.

Features: First Saturday Rosary Devotion to OUR Lady of Fatima. Confessions will be available. Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 p.m.

MEN'S PRAYER GROUP

Massena - First Saturday of the month, men's prayer group to meet for Mass and Adoration.

Date: March 4

Time: 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Place: St. Mary's Church

Features: Coffee and donuts after service in the parish center

Contact: Bob Brothers at 315-842-2886

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

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40 CANS FOR LENT

Canton – The Knights of Columbus in Canton invite you to participate in the "40 Cans for Lent" program as part of your Lenten journey.

Features: Simply donate one can of food or a non-perishable item for each of the 40 days of Lent. Donations can be made at any of the doors at St. Mary's Church 68 Court St. in Canton. Lent provides an opportunity for each of us to live generously- to show gratitude for God's gifts to us and to share those gifts with others.

DIOCESAN EVENTS**SURVIVING DIVORCE**

The Family Life Office is offering the Surviving Divorce Program, starting late February in Gouverneur, Canton and Potsdam/Colton.

Dates: Facilitators at each site will contact registrants to establish exact dates and times for the meetings.

Cost: \$25

Features: Surviving Divorce features twelve video presentations that cover topics such as shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage. This program is for the newly separated and divorced and those still struggling with issues many years later.

Contact: Register online at www.rcdony.org/survivingdivorce. For more information contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920 or sttartaglia@rcdony.org.

LOVING AUTHENTICALLY

All are invited to attend this free seminar, Loving Authentically: Sex, Happiness and Catholic Teaching designed to deepen our understanding of how Church doctrine on sexual morality connects with our happiness.

Schedule: Three times and locations to attend. Feb. 12, 2023 at Newman Center, Plattsburgh 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; April 22, 2023 at St. Bernard's Saranac Lake 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; May 20, 2023 at St. Mary's Ticonderoga 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Features: Program will be a showing of "Unprotected: A Pope, the Pill, and the Perils of Sexual Chaos." With Q & A led by Natural Family Planning Directors, Angelo and Suzanne Pietropaoli and Catholic

Theologian, Maura Hearden Fehlner, Ph.D. Lunch will be provided.

Contact: to register go www.rcdony.org/lovingauthentically. For more information contact Stephen Tartaglia at 315-393-2920 or sttartaglia@rcdony.org

RITE OF ELECTION

Ogdensburg – The Rite of Election (ROE) this year will be held the first Sunday of Lent. Come to the Cathedral to experience this liturgy and offer prayer and support to the Catechumen and Candidates preparing for full initiation into the Catholic Church this Easter.

Date: Feb. 26

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Place: St. Mary's Cathedral

Contact: Anita Soltero at asoltero@rcdony.org or 518-310-3669 with questions.

YOUTH LENTEN RETREAT

Lenten Retreats for youth in grades 7 to 12 to be held.

Schedule: March 4 at Sacred Heart Church (Dostie Hall), Watertown 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. with Mass at 4:30 p.m.; March 18 at St. Peter's Church (Emmaus Room) 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. with Mass at 4 p.m.

Features: During this retreat, youth will be able to have fun while putting together the "Best Lent Yet" plan! There is no fee to attend and, retreatants are encouraged to attend the Mass offering.

Contact: Registration is required to attend. The deadline to register is: March 1. To register visit: www.rcdony.org/lentenretreat When registering, please choose the date and location that works best for you. For more information, contact Tom Semeraro @ 315-393-2920 ext. 1415

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT

Massena – The Vocation Office and the Office of Youth Ministry is sponsoring a Middle School Retreat (Grades 6-8) in the St. Lawrence/Franklin region of the Diocese.



Date: March 22

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

Place: St. Mary's Social Hall

Features: The purpose of a Middle School Retreat is to guide young women and men to prayerfully consider what God's plan is for their lives. Retreat is open to students in Grades 6-8 both in Catholic schools and public schools. It is a retreat day and is considered a legal absence.

Contact: Contact your pastor, Catholic school principal, or Religious Education Coordinator for a registration form.

DAY OF REFLECTION

Ogdensburg – The Department of Faith Formation will be hosting a Day of Reflection.

Date: April 1

Time: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Place: Wadhams Hall

Cost: \$30, lunch is included

Features: Sister Mary Michael Fox, OP, a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville will present "Blessed, Broken, Given: Living Eucharistia"!

Contact: To Register go to www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection

YOUTH RALLY

Lake Placid – "We are Jesus in the World" Youth Rally to be held for Middle and High school age students.

Date: April 22

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with Mass to follow at St. Agnes Church

Place: High Peaks Resort

Cost: \$35, includes full day pass, lunch, snacks, games and giveaways.

Features: A super presentation from Monet Souza and a bouncing concert from Catholic recording artist, Joe Melendrez. Closing Mass will be offered by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

Contact: To register please go to www.rcdony.org/youth/rally If you have any questions please contact

Jeannie Grizzuto at the Youth Office, 315-393-2920.

GUGGENHEIM SUMMER CAMP

2023 registration is open. New this year is a mini session for youth 11-13 years old along with the annual sleepaway camp weeks for ages 11 to 18.

Dates: The season starts July 5th and ends Aug. 11th.

Cost: Mini session is \$200 and the weeklong sessions is \$425 per camper. Meals and accommodations are included in the registration fee.

Features: There are so many fun things to do at camp! Like arts and crafts, Project Adventure, Liturgy, rappelling, hiking, basketball, or soccer. Guggenheim has its very own beach where you can swim, tool around on our watercrafts and play watersports. Evenings at camp are packed with fun activities like bonfire time, a dance, outdoor movies, and camp-wide games. Summer Camp Guggenheim is a fun place where you can make great friends, escape the craziness of the world, and just chill with cool people like you.

Contact: To sign up for camp please visit:

www.rcdony.org/youth/camp or call, Jeannie Grizzuto at 315-393-2290 ext. 1413

SIDEWALK ADVOCATES FOR LIFE

Experience Sidewalk Advocated for Life's new virtual basic training 2.0.

Features: Sidewalk Advocates for Life employs peaceful, prayerful, loving, and law-abiding outreach outside of abortion centers to aid mothers in crisis and connect them with life-affirming resources in the effort to save their preborn children and end abortion. By God's grace, this effort has witnessed over 9,000 women turn around at abortion centers and CHOOSE LIFE!

Contact: To get started, fill out the

brief application at sidewalkadvocates.org/trainingapp. Upon receipt, we'll be in touch with next steps for accessing the online training.

SUMMER CAMP YOUTH DIRECTOR

Saranac Lake – The Diocese of Ogdensburg is seeking an energetic and dedicated individual for the position of Summer Youth Camp Director at the Guggenheim Center.

Features: Summer Camp Guggenheim has been a "home away from home" for young people ages 12 to 18 years old since 1972. Hike, Swim, Praise, and a whole lot more! Summer camp Guggenheim is a high energy camp filled with exciting activities and opportunities for campers to experience their faith and joyfully celebrate it.

Contact: To apply please visit: www.rcdony.org/information/employment Questions or inquiries Tom Semeraro, Director of Youth Ministry 315-393-2920 ext. 1415 www.rcdony.org/youth

NEIGHBORING DIOCESES**CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE**

Syracuse – Diocese of Syracuse Catholic Men's Conference, Ignite 2023 to be held.

Date: March 25

Time: 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Place: SRC Arena & Event Center

Cost: \$55 through March 7, \$65

after March 7, \$70 at the door

Features: Scheduled speakers include Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Christopher Stefanick, Mike McGlenn and Gus Lloyd. Open to men ages 16 - 96. We are expecting a close to sell-out crowd based on the slated speakers.

Contact: For more information and to register: <https://www.ignite-catholicmen.org>

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*Support And Pray
For Vocations*

CALLED TO SERVE

Laws: Rules so we behave ourselves

The first time I seriously looked at the Book of Leviticus in the Bible was probably during an Old Testament course in Formation for Ministry. I was stunned to learn that a Jew had 613 laws to follow just to prove to God that he loved him.

That seemed like a lot of laws and some of them were curious to this westerner.

Like, "any animal that has hoofs you may eat, provided it is cloven-footed and chews the cud." (Leviticus 11:2-3 in case you were wondering.)

I am guessing that's beef, so I looked it up. Cloven-footed, which is new to this kid from Queens, are two-toed animals like cows, sheep, goats, deer, llamas, alpacas, buffalo etc. Pigs are out, according to Leviticus, for a number of reasons. I've never tasted alpaca. I did have some reindeer once, but that's another story. Back to laws.

I've broken a modern law or two in my day. Nothing serious, I don't think, but I'm sure I have been bad.

I'm sure I've gone through a red light or a stop sign. Perhaps I violated an open container law in my college days. This sounds like boasting or pushing my luck, but I have never had a mark on my driver's license.

I may have deserved a few but was not given a

ticket. Thank you, officers!

The laws of which I speak are serious but relatively minor. Stop and think about all the laws, federal, state and local laws that we could potentially violate.

I read somewhere there are 30,000 enacted laws in this country. That 613 seems like a walk in the park now.

What started me on this path was the readings for next weekend, the Sixth Sunday in Or-

dinary Time.

The response to Psalm 119 is "Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!" The prayer over the offerings refers to "those who do (God's) will."

The scripture readings all talk about laws. I have not come to abolish the law, Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel, but to fulfill them.

What laws? Those commandments God gave Moses etched on a couple of slabs are laws. The people of that

time needed "don'ts" to understand. Don't steal, don't murder, don't covet people or things and so forth. We need those don't reminders too.

Jesus says we are in big, eternal trouble, if we break even the least of these commandments. The verdict is even more ominous for me if I teach someone how to violate a commandment. That goes for you too!

The rules in Leviticus were intended to teach Israelites how they could remain pure, sanctified in the eyes of God. All 613 laws are in-

tended to help people stay holy, as God is holy. Jesus revealed more about God in his time on earth. Jesus gave us the do's; the Beatitudes. They are the virtues and values in life that result in blessings and rewards.

The Ten commandments and eight beatitudes. Together these simple laws constitute the real road map for Christian perfection.

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



Deacon
Kevin Mastellon

TO HAVE TO HOLD TO HONOR

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Email: apietropaoli@rcdony.org
Website: www.rcdony.org/nfp

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

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Sr. Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director

622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669

(315) 393-2920; fax 1-866-314-7296

mbrett@rcdony.org

Destruction, hope in Myanmar

The Burmese army set fire to the ancient Church of the Assumption, built in 1894 in Chan Thar, a village inhabited by Catholics in the region of Sagaing, located in the northeast of Myanmar.

During the action on January 15, soldiers also set fire to the nearby convent of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary (FMM), who were forced to flee with some 3,000 villagers. Their homes, numbering around 500, were also destroyed, and only rubble remains of the village. Local sources of *Fides* note that clashes continue in the area, as the area is considered a stronghold of the People's Defense Forces (PDF) rebels, who oppose the Burmese military junta that came to power with the coup of State in February 2021.

Sister Rita, one of the nuns who fled, told *Agenzia Fides*: "We asked the inhabitants of the village to leave their homes, not to oppose the soldiers and not to resist, to avoid massacres and brutality. The soldiers want to crush any resistance from the civilians. They enter the villages, occupy buildings like schools and churches and camp there. From there, they carry out raids from house to house to flush out the rebels. They stayed in our church for three days and when they left they set fire to the church and our convent".

The nun affirms that "by a miracle," the church's adoration chapel was not affected by the flames. "We see there a sign from the Most High: even in this brutal and senseless violence, the Lord is always with us. Our region was known to be one of the most peaceful and harmonious in the country. Now it's a place of devastation and rubble. It's terrible." [...]

The local community remembers with sadness that at least eleven children died following a regular army airstrike on a civilian populated area in Sagaing on September 16.

The Archbishop of Mandalay, Marco Tin Win, notes: "We are living in a time of great suffering. Half of the territory of the Archdiocese of Mandalay is affected by the clashes and this worries us greatly. We are helping thousands of internally displaced persons, in five centers set up in five Catholic parishes: we are doing what we can".

"While violence rages especially in some areas," says the Archbishop, "we do not lose hope because we know we have the Lord with us. The faithful have confidence in Him and the fact that the chapel of adoration of the destroyed church was spared by the flames is a symbolic fact which consoles the faithful and reminds them that our only refuge is the Lord."

— Article from *FIDES* missionary news service of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

All about trust and choice

Today's readings are all about the choices we make, whether good or bad.

In the first reading from Sirach, we are told that if we choose to keep the commandments, they will save you.

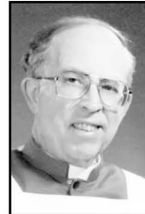
It's all about trust and choice. We should choose anything but injustice or sin.

In 1st Corinthians, we are assured that if we make good choices, nothing we can imagine will match the joys of eternal life.

In Matthew's Gospel, we are told that we will be the greatest in heaven if we adhere strictly to even the letter of the law.

How very important it is for us to avoid anger against our brother? If we do so, we should go and ask forgiveness before we dare to bring our gift to the altar.

What follows in the Gospel narates the great importance of eliminating anything that causes us to sin. Absolute honesty



Monsignor Paul E. Whitmore

February 12

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READINGS

Sirach 15:15-20

1st Corinthians 2:6-10

Matthew 5:17-37

will make our "yes" mean "yes" and our "no" mean "no." Only the exercise of great love can give us the strength to make these right choices.

This week is a good time for us to meditate on the power of these readings. Only God's wisdom and grace will help us to make these right choices.

OBITUARIES

Alexandria Bay — Dean C. Honeywell, 85; Funeral Services Feb. 7, 2023 at Costello Funeral Home.

Altona — Joseph Peryea, 51; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 31, 2023 at Holy Angels Church.

Brushton — Donald L. "Duck" LaBarge, 69; Memorial Services Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Mary's Parish Center; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Cape Vincent — Gary E. Mason, 79; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 1, 2023 at St. Vincent of Paul Church.

Carthage — Helen G. (LaParr) DeLong, 91; Private Services to be held; burial in Fairview Cemetery.

Colton — Richard V. Manning, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 3, 2023 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in Chapel Hill Cemetery.

Ellenburg — Betty (Bushey) Carter, 93; Memorial Mass in spring at St. Edmund's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Hopkinton — Anne Regan Fiedler, 95; Mass of Christian Burial in the spring at Holy Cross Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery, Potsdam.

Malone — Dawn Marie (DeLosh) Gokey, 85; Mass of Christian Burial

Feb. 3, 2023 at Notre Dame Church.

Massena — Tom A. Portolese, 66; Mass of Christian Burial to be held in the spring; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Norwood — Robert E. Reagan, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 31, 2023 at St. Andrew's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Ogdensburg — Wayne A. LaRose, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 2, 2023 at Notre Dame Church.

Ogdensburg — Carrie L. (Badlam) Moore, 98; Funeral Services Jan. 31, 2023 at the Oswegatchie Mausoleum.

Ogdensburg — Judith (Cree) Ryan, 81; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at Notre Dame Church.

Ogdensburg — Kathleen Murnen Silver, 82; Funeral Services Feb. 10, 2023 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Olmstedville — Geraldine Joan (Kelly) Meehan, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 6, 2023 at St. Joseph's Church.

Plattsburgh — Richard Benware, 83; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 2, 2023 at St. Peter's Church; burial in St.

Peter's Cemetery.

Plattsburgh — Serge W. Guay, 73; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. John's Church.

Port Henry — Michael William Vanderhoof, 51; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 2, 2023 at St. Patrick's Church.

Potsdam — Jay F. Eseltine, 73; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 1, 2023 at St. Mary's Church.

Ticonderoga — James Joseph Guyette Sr., 86; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Parish cemetery.

Watertown — Lenore M. (Vorce) LaDuke, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Watertown — Timothy J. Randall, 67; Funeral Services Feb. 6, 2023 at D.L. Calarco Funeral Home, Inc.

West Chazy — Howard Chauvin, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Joseph's Church; burial parish cemetery.

West Chazy — Thomas E. Sanders, 76; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 30, 2023 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in Town of Plattsburgh Community Mausoleum.

Parish poll to measure engagement

LAKE PLACID – The parishioners at St. Agnes Catholic church may think they need their hearing checked this weekend when Father John Yonkovic asks them to take out their cell phones during his homily. The reason is that all regular parishioners will be taking part in a Gallup survey to measure parish engagement.

The Gallup company was founded in 1935 by George Gallup and has, for the past 87 years been known for conducting public opinion polls. They have built a strong reputation for excellence, reliability, the confidential nature of their polls, and their ability to measure the “unmeasurable.”

Gallup built its reputation by creating systems that accurately measure former intangibles such as customer and employee engagement, which are keys to the success of any organization. Through careful research, Gallup designed a census-style survey to gauge spiritual engagement and the spiritual health of faith communities.

Over the past months, St. Agnes has embarked on a process of “divine renovation” and will be using the Gallup ME25 survey as a tool to help measure, manage and maximize the engagement of their faith community. Gin Shaw, the parish renewal director at St. Agnes is a former educator and public-school administrator and knows the value of measurement tools firsthand. Just as a school system uses tests to assess student progress, Shaw knows that improvement can only be clearly defined with the use of a good assessment tool.

The ME25 survey will be accessed during Mass by a dedicated internet address and every regular parishioner 18 years or older will be asked to answer the 25 questions only once. Their responses will be completely confidential and will provide a baseline of data from which action plans for the future of the parish will be made.

Every faith community was greatly impacted by the pandemic years. Churchgoers got out of the habit of attending services each weekend and have been slow to reengage. The result has been an enormous increase in people feeling disconnected, lonely, depressed, and hopeless. Why? Because humans are wired for belonging and many felt that sense of belonging in our places of worship pre-pandemic.

When the cessation of large gatherings caused churches to shutter their doors, that sense of belonging was disrupted, and for many it has been difficult to reclaim. This has provided the Church with an opportunity for change, and Father John is optimistic.

“God has promised us a future full of hope,” he said.

KNIGHTS SUPPORT SLED HOCKEY



PHOTO BY ROB CLEMMER

Grand Knight Bob Clemmer (right) of Sarto Council 1059 presents a \$500 donation to the Wounded Warrior Sled Hockey Team. The check was received by Mark McKenna, Knights of Columbus district deputy and president and coach of the Sled Team.

Cardinal pans administration for contraception plan

By Matt McDonald
Catholic News Agency

The Biden administration’s proposal to force employers to offer contraception in their health insurance plans even if they have moral objections to it is “disheartening,” Cardinal Timothy Dolan said Wednesday.

On Monday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a proposed rule that would leave in place the current exemption for religious employers but take away the exemption based purely on moral grounds.

Dolan, reacting two days later, said the Trump-era rule issued in 2018 “provided appropriately clear and robust protections for the exercise of religious beliefs and moral convictions, free from government

punishment,” but that the Biden administration’s new proposal wrongly removes at least some of those protections.

“While we are pleased that the proposed regulations appear, at this early stage of review, to retain the bulk of the existing religious exemption, their elimination of protections for moral convictions is disheartening,” said Dolan, the archbishop of New York and chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Religious Liberty, in a written statement.

“It is past time for HHS to leave well enough alone in this regard,” Dolan said.

A spokesman for Health and Human Services could not immediately be reached for comment Wednesday af-

ternoon.

The dispute is over regulations connected to the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, commonly known as Obamacare.

When the law came into effect, the Obama administration sought to force employers to cover the full cost of contraception for their employees through their health insurance plans. Various religious organizations and companies filed suit, leading to a patchwork of court decisions exempting some from the requirement and not exempting others.

The Trump administration’s 2018 rule included carve-outs for religious employers and employers with moral objections to contraception.

Biden officials say women need free contraception.