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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 78 Number 36

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

JANUARY 24, 2024

## Follow me: 'Believers can't be silent'

My sisters and brothers, we now live in a society that speaks persuasively about protecting the environment and rescuing species on the brink of extinction. But then it promotes and funds the mass killing of unborn children and contemplates the killing of the sick and elderly in the name of their "dignity." A persevering effort is needed to present to God our united will to put an end to the carnage resulting from abortion.

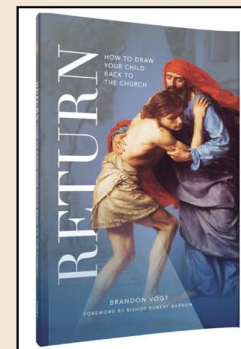
FULL STORY, PAGE 3

## 1,000TH POINT



Seton Catholic's Aiden Pearl recently celebrated scoring his 1,000th career point with the Seton Knights. Pearl will graduate in June with the Class of 2024.

## REVIEWING 'RETURN'



Diocese of Ogdensburg Director of New Evangelization Marika Donders reviews Brandon Vogt's book "Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church." The book presents strategies for bringing Christ to individuals who are away from their faith.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

## Pope continues discussion of vice, virtue

By Matthew Santucci  
Catholic News Agency

(CNA) - In a continuation of his catechetical series on vice and virtue, Pope Francis on Wednesday dedicated his general audience to highlighting the difference between love and lust, arguing that "in Christianity, there is no condemnation of the sexual instinct."

Centering his reflection on the "human experience," the pope drew upon the Song of Songs, also referred to as the Canticle of Canticles or the Song of Solomon, which he called a "wonderful poem of love between

two lovers" that reveals falling in love "is one of the most astonishing realities of existence."

The pope observed that in this process there is an altruistic factor in which "a person in love becomes generous, enjoys giving gifts, writes letters and poems. He stops thinking of himself to be completely focused on the other."

"To love is to respect the other, to seek his or her happiness, to cultivate empathy for his or her feelings, to dispose oneself in the knowledge of a body, a psychology, and a soul that are not our own, and that must be contemplated for the beauty

they bear," the pope said to the faithful gathered in the Paul VI Audience Hall.

The Holy Father noted, however, that this notion of love requires "patience," especially if it is "naive," whereby "the lover does not truly know the face of the other, they tend to idealize them, they are ready to make promises whose weight they do not immediately grasp."

The pope said that while "falling in love is one of the purest feelings" there is the risk that it could be "polluted by vice."

"This 'garden' where wonders are multiplied is not, however, safe from evil" as it has been

"defiled by the demon of lust," a vice that is "particularly odious" because it "destroys relationships between people," Francis said.

Reflecting on the modern paradigm of dating and romance, the pope asked: "How many relationships that began in the best of ways have then turned into toxic relationships, of possession of the other, lacking respect and a sense of limits?"

"These are loves in which chastity has been missing: a virtue not to be confused with sexual abstinence, but rather with the will never to possess the other," the Holy Father continued.

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# 'A beautiful gut punch'

I remembered loving the song and music video when it was first released just over 20 years ago, but I had no idea why YouTube suggested it to me recently.

I clicked on it anyway.

The song/video: Johnny Cash's cover of "Hurt," a song originally written and performed by Trent Reznor, the lead singer of the industrial rock band Nine Inch Nails.

Cash's cover of the song was release in 2002, just a year before he died.

I forgot something about that song/video when I clicked: It's the

only song/video that has ever made me cry, and I was born in the '80s and grew up in the '90s, so I've watched a lot of music videos.

**Darcy L.  
Fargo**

I remembered pretty quickly when I started to feel tears welling up in my eyes shortly after the first chorus. The video and Cash's performance feel like a beautiful gut punch.

Later, as I continued down the YouTube rabbit hole, the platform started suggesting what are commonly called "reaction videos," videos of people experiencing that same song/

video for the first time.

I found myself watching video after video with titles like, "Hip Hop Artist Reacts to Johnny Cash for the first time," or "Vocal Coach reacts to 'Hurt' by Johnny Cash."

Normally, I don't see the appeal of reaction videos. I never understood watching someone else watch a music video. But I found myself watching what likely added up to over an hour of such videos over a few days.

Why? I wanted to see if others had the same intense reaction I had. I wanted to share that experience with others. In some way, I guess it made my response feel normal, even though it was so out

of the norm (like I said, I've never cried because of any other video).

It's also part of what I love about our faith: it's a shared experience. We're all journeying together, having intense reactions and experiences together and trying to grow in our relationships with the Lord together. We make each other feel a bit more normal in our struggles, in those moments of profound awe, in the full range of what we experience as we try to get to heaven together - even some beautiful gut punches. It's a common experience, a team sport.

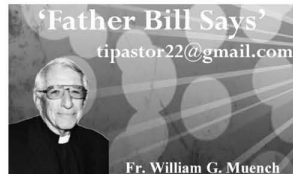
I'll remember that for longer than 20 years, I hope and pray.

# 'What are you looking for?'

Do remember the first time you met Jesus? I don't mean the first time you learned something about Jesus, but rather the first time you opened your heart for the powerful presence of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. The time your life was truly changed by the presence of Jesus.

Recently, we had a Sunday Gospel reading from St. John that was the story of when St. John himself first met Jesus. His story told us of the very first time that St. John, himself, experienced the presence of the Lord Jesus. St. John shows us the day that his life was to become all about Jesus.

The story is fascinating since we know that he was telling us about something that happened to him 60 years ago. He remembers that day in detail, even mentions the time of day. John and Andrew were standing near St. John the Baptist. We are told that St. John the Baptist noticed Jesus' walking by

**Fr. William G. Muench**

and point him out saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God." John the Baptist testifies that Jesus will be a Savior, just as that blood of a lamb saved the Hebrew families at the time of the Exodus.

John and Andrew follow Jesus. Jesus noticed them and turned and asked them, "What are you looking for?" They respond, "Where are you staying?" Jesus answered, "Come and you will see." We are told that they spent the whole day with Jesus.

I would like to tell you that I believe that each time we participate at Mass - in fact, each time we enter the Church, even each time we begin to pray to the Lord Jesus - Jesus turns to ask each of us, "What are you looking for?" How would you an-

swer the Lord. As for me, I want Jesus to come into my life at this time, into my heart in every way, always ready to guide me on this day as I journey along the road to becoming a saint.

Now, I would like to share with you the first time I remember meeting Jesus. Actually, it was several years after I had become a priest before I found Jesus as my Lord and Savior, before Jesus truly transformed my life. Oh, I knew a great deal about Jesus in those days, and I had learned all that I should do and accomplish as a priest. But, in all honesty, my ministry as a priest was not alive, not on fire with Jesus. I had not discovered all that Jesus expected from me.

I know that it was when Jesus found me, changed me in every way. It was when Jesus sent into my life many wonderful people, they were true saints. In those days, Jesus blessed me with some powerful experiences through which

Jesus truly entered into my life, Jesus truly found me, helped me, changed me. Jesus became a part of all that I am, all that I needed to be a dedicated priest and person. Jesus put me on the road for the journey to become a saint one day.

So, you must find Jesus. You must become open so that Jesus can find you in that special, powerful way. It begins with the Eucharist. Each time you receive Holy Communion, Jesus wants to join you in a strong relationship, a mighty friendship, a friendship that will change who you are and that will lead you ever closer to the Lord Jesus.

It is all about Jesus. Jesus wants to walk with you. Jesus wants to be close to you. Jesus finds us when we are open and listen to him. We must become aware of the Lord's presence. We must hear his word, his message, his challenge.

Then you are on the road to becoming a saint.

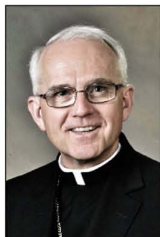
FOLLOW ME

# 'Believers can't be silent'

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

One might ask: "Is there a declared war on the preborn?" It is unlikely that there ever existed a war with one side totally and completely incapable of any form of self-defense whatsoever. That is the dilemma of the preborn today. Our nation will never be a "shining city on a hill," as President Ronald Reagan once said, as long as the bottom of that hill is littered with the corpses of tens of millions of its innocent preborn babies.

My sisters and brothers, we now live in a society that



**Bishop Terry R. LaValley**

speaks persuasively about protecting the environment and rescuing species on the brink of extinction. But then it promotes and funds the mass killing of unborn children and contemplates the killing of the sick and elderly in the name of their "dignity." A persevering effort is needed to present to God our united will to put an end to the carnage resulting from abortion.

Today, people of faith are facing a multitude of threats to religious liberty. Bringing our religious beliefs to bear on public policy is not just a privilege, but a right. Regardless of what some of our political leaders say, Believers can't

be silent in public life and be faithful to Jesus Christ at the same time. Equality begins in the womb!

The Church of Ogdensburg continues to hear the silent scream of the baby in the womb and seeks to defend and protect the right to life of every child. Colleen and John Miner, Directors of our Respect Life Office, coordinate the steps we take in promoting and protecting the dignity of every human life.

Every year at this time, we are given the opportunity to support the effort this local Church makes in promoting the Culture of Life. These include, most recently, helping five Gabriel Projects in Potsdam, Brasher Falls, Massena, Plattsburgh and Ogdensburg.

Needed help was offered to the Plattsburgh Pregnancy Center, Malone Catholic Charities, Walking with Moms in Need, Birthright, Liferight, Light of Truth Radio and the diocesan Natural Family Planning and Family Life Office efforts.

Thank you for your prayers and generous support of the 2024 Respect Life Collection and for all your efforts to build a Culture of Life by changing hearts and minds.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend  
Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg

Support the **Respect Life Collection** of the **Diocese of Ogdensburg** in our parishes the weekend of **January 27 & 28**



Proceeds will be distributed through grants to various North Country parishes, organizations, and programs for the support of a variety of respect life initiatives.

Thank you for your generosity toward this most special need.

Please continue to pray that all will recognize, honor and protect the precious gift of life.

[www.rcdony.org/pro-life](http://www.rcdony.org/pro-life)

## BOOK REVIEW

## 'Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church'

*Editor's Note: The following book review is offered by Marika Donders, director of the Office of New Evangelization for the Diocese of Ogdensburg. Additional book reviews can be found at <https://www.rcdony.org/evangelization.html>.*

**Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church**  
**Author: Brandon Vogt**  
**Word on Fire Publishing**

As head of the Diocesan Office of Evangelization, I often have conversations with parents and grandparents whose children have left the faith.

There are several topics that come up in many of these conversations ranging from what they could have done differently to keep their children in the pews to the other extreme that as long as their kids a good people, it doesn't really matter if they go to church or not.

Brandon Vogt's book *Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church* is a helpful re-

source for parents and others who want to draw children, family members or acquaintances back to the practice of the faith in the Catholic Church.

Brandon Vogt begins by looking at the roots of the problem: why kids leave the Church, where they go once they leave, as well as myths about fallen away Catholics. Some of these myths include that marriage and having children will draw those who have left the Church back to the faith; that taking kids to Mass and sending them to Catholic School is enough to keep kids Catholic; that it must be the parents' fault if kids leave; and that now that they have left they won't listen to you about coming back. It is hopeless.

The fact is that you can draw children (and others) back to Church, and this book covers the basics giving a step-by-step strategy for what you can do, and mistakes you can avoid.

These steps start with prayer and equipping yourself, since you can-

not give what you do not have.

The book offers strategies for planting seeds, for starting the dialog, for moving the dialog forward, inviting and then closing the loop by asking for a commitment. In all evangelization, we often skip that last step, which is very important.

The last part of the book gives resources and ways to answer major questions and objections that you might hear.

These objections may be personal difficulties, or objections to moral teachings or doctrine. The Church has answers to all these questions and objections even when you don't.

There is never anything wrong with answering with "I don't know, BUT I CAN FIND OUT!" And know, that although you are in a privileged position to draw those whom you know best back to Church, you do not need to shoulder the mission alone: It is God who gives faith, and you have a community of faith supporting you to reach your child, family member or friend to draw them back.

If there is someone you want to bring back to the practice of the faith in the Catholic Church, I highly recommend this resource of *Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church* by Brandon Vogt.

## Fr. Carlin to begin further studies

Recent decisions from the Vatican have necessitated the sending of priests for further studies in Canon Law to assist in the diocesan Matrimonial Tribunal and Office of Canonical Affairs.

Bishop Terry R. LaValley has asked Father Leagon Carlin to attend St. Paul University to begin studies for the fall semester of 2024.

Bishop is grateful to Father Carlin for his willingness to undertake these important studies. Father Carlin will join Father Shane Lynch, who will begin his last year of studies in the Fall of 2024.

Please pray for Father Carlin and the parish family of St. Peter's in Massena, where he is currently serving.

## Funeral held for Sister Mary Henrita Robillard

Sister Mary Henrita Robillard, a Holy Spirit Adoration Sister, died December 27, 2023.

Born in Ogdensburg as Rita Ann Robillard, she was the daughter of Henry and Mary (Revell) Robillard.

She was the sister of Msgr. Thomas Robillard, a deceased priest of the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

According to North Country Catholic archives, Sister Mary Henrita attended St. Mary's Grade School and High School before entering the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration, known as the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters or Pink Nuns in 1947.

She professed in 1950, making her final vows five years later. Her religious name was a combination of her given baptismal name, Rita, and her parents' names.

Sister Mary Henrita spent seven years as a contemplative missionary in Argentina. She has served with the sisters in Austin, Texas, St. Louis, Missouri, Lincoln, Nebraska, and most recently in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

She described her vocation as "a life where I can serve in a way which encompasses the Trinity."

"For me, the Trinity means the guiding, creating hand of a loving Father, designing my vowed life of union with his Son and the redeeming cross, with the gift-flames of grace from the Spirit to sanctify me in his service," she was quoted as saying in the NCC.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Jan. 3 at the Chapel of Divine Love in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

No further information was available.

Memorial donations may be made to the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters at 2212 Green Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130.

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# Five practices to help strengthen your faith life

By **Diego Lopez Marina**  
Catholic News Agency

In the constant search for spiritual growth and connection to the sacred in everyday life, discovering new ways to strengthen your Catholic faith can be transformative. Here are five ways that could renew your life of faith in 2024.

## 1. Direct your gaze toward Mary.

On Jan. 1, Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to entrust the new year to the Virgin Mary, noting that “she, with tenderness, will know how to reveal her fullness, because she will lead us to Jesus, and Jesus is the fullness of time, of all time, of our time, of the time of each one of us.”

The most effective way to seek Mary’s intercession in daily life is through praying the rosary, which provides spiritual protection and guidance to believers in their relationship with God.

## 2. Learn more about a saint.

Look for books that focus on the biography of specific saints. Many Catholic bookstores or online stores offer a wide selection.

You can also learn from them by watching documentaries or movies that accurately represent their lives. The recent film “Heaven Can’t Wait” shows the testimonies of 10 people whose lives changed after learning the story of Blessed Carlo Acutis. “Padre Pio” has also been released, which tells the story of the Capuchin friar, blessed with the stigmata of Christ, during his first years of priesthood.

Another way is to participate in prayers and devotions dedicated to the saints, to learn more about their lives and contributions to the Catholic faith.

## 3. Study the Bible and the documents of the Catholic Church.

Spend time studying and meditating on everything from the Scriptures to papal documents. Read the Bible daily, reflect mainly on the passages of the four Gospels, and try to apply their teachings to your daily life.

Many people find spiritual and moral guidance in the Bible. Sacred texts often provide ethical and moral principles that can serve as a guide for daily life.

Additionally, reading the Bible allows you to maintain a connection with God. It is a means to understand God’s

will and strengthen your relationship with him.

The second essential book is the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the summary of the faith of the Catholic Church. The structure of this book concentrates almost all the important topics for Catholics in short readings. For an even more condensed version, you can read the abridged Compendium of the Catechism.

## 4. Enjoy good reading.

There are also many other books that can guide a Catholic’s spiritual life, among them “The Way” by St. Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer; St. Augustine’s “Confessions”; “The Spiritual Exercises” of St. Ignatius of Loyola; and “The Imitation of Christ” by Thomas à Kempis.

The latter, written more than 500 years ago, is considered the second-most-read book after the Bible. The work is composed of four books, where the author traces the progress of the soul up to and including his union with God in holy Communion.

## 5. Spend time with Jesus.

Above all, a Catholic must spend quality time in front of the Blessed Sacrament, which means being present in front of the real presence of Jesus Christ. Prayer before the Eucharist is an act of adoration and respect toward the divine presence. It is considered a sacred time to address God, express gratitude, praise, and worship.

On the solemnity of Corpus Christi 2023, Pope Francis affirmed that the Eucharist “is par excellence the sacrament of love.”

“It is Christ who offers himself for us and asks us to do the same, so that our lives become bread that feeds our brothers,” he added.

Regular prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is a practice that contributes to spiritual growth. It offers a time dedicated to reflection, contemplation, and intimate connection with the divine, which can strengthen one’s relationship with God.

It is also an ideal time to pray for the Church, for religious leaders, for peace in the world, and for personal and community needs. It is a powerful act of intercession.

*This story was first published by ACI Prensa, CNA’s Spanish-language news partner. It has been translated and adapted by CNA.*

# Funeral Mass celebrated for Sr. Jane Mennis

A Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Jane Mennis, an Ursuline Sister, was celebrated on Jan. 17 at the Ursuline Province Center in New Rochelle, New York.

Sister Jane (born Mary Andrew), died peacefully at Andrus on Hudson, Hastings on Hudson, on January 10, 2024. She was 94.

Born in New York in 1930, she was the daughter of Evelyn and James Mennis. In 1952, Jane entered the Ursuline community after completing her studies at the College of New Rochelle.

Sister Jane had a long and varied ministry. She was a faculty member of Ursuline schools in Bethesda, Maryland, Malone, New York, New Rochelle, NY; Bronx, New York, and Athens, Greece.

She eventually became a director of Religious Education in the Bronx and a Pastoral Associate in Witherbee and Chateaugay, New York.

As a sociology major, Sister Jane deeply desired to help people in need. She volunteered at Moriah Shock State Prison in Mineville, New York, and Bare Hill



Sister Jane Mennis, OSU

Correctional Facility in Malone. She also volunteered at the Children’s Center of Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

Sister Jane had a lifelong love of learning, as evidenced by her attendance at workshops and courses in her field throughout her life.

She is survived by her brother, John, and her sister, Sister Dorothy Mennis, RC. Her parents, Evelyn and James, predeceased her.

Memorial donations may be sent to the Ursuline Sisters development fund, 1338 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10804.

Lloyd Maxcy & Sons Beauchamp Chapel is in charge of arrangements.

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**Environmental Stewardship****The apocalypse**

When watching or reading the news, it seems to some that we are rapidly approaching the apocalypse. Some mystics and prophets believe that before any destructive events, the Creator will bathe individuals affected with special graces to enable those with an open heart to better understand the upheaval ahead. This grace is given to build a deep sense of trust in God and an inner peace that everything will work out for the better. It should also be noted that the term apocalypse is a Greek term used to express revelation.

Locally, climate change is one of the issues threatening to eliminate our way of life. Floods, severe winds and unstable weather patterns negatively impact agriculture and are forecast by scientists to become more destructive unless changes are implemented. It has been said, "God does not punish us for our sins, but punishes us by our sins." The throw-away culture we embraced is now coming back to erode our comfortable lifestyle.

We need to become more engaged in developing a healthier environment if we want to mitigate the intensity of the trials to come. We need to open our hearts to receive the graces being given during these times, as we can otherwise become discouraged when learning about events here and elsewhere.

Along with harming the environment, we also harm many of our spiritual brothers and sisters who have a different cultures, skin color, ethnic background or sexual orientation. Try to protect all life, the handiworks of God. Trust that God has a plan for our world that will eventually lead us into peace, joy and love. We must try to cultivate and nurture a sense of hope and spread that feeling to all others around us.

By Tom Kalenowski  
St. Bernard's Church,  
Faith & Ecology Member

**Rest in Peace**

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

- Jan. 24** – Rev. Joseph N. Beaudry, 1897; Rev. M. A. Ryan, O.S.A., 1924  
**Jan. 25** – Rev. Eugene Gauvin, O.M.I., 1890  
**Jan. 26** – Rev. Antoine Paillier, O.M.I., 1916; Rev. Henry Thamelng, O.F.M.Conv., 1929; Rev. Leon Lamothe, O.M.I., 1937; Rev. Daniel E. Cahill, 1945; Rev. John Emmett Weir, 1990; Rev. Earl W. Nichols, 2002  
**Jan. 27** – Rev. Emile H. Mission, O.S.A., 1973; Rev. Mr. Adam S. Crowe, 2009  
**Jan. 28** – Rev. James A. McKenna, 1895; Deacon Richard E. Winter, 2004  
**Jan. 29** – Msgr. James T. Lyng, 1965; Deacon John L. White, 2019  
**Jan. 30** – Rev. John T. Sullivan, 1884; Rev. Eusebius Schlingmann, O.F.M., 1937

**Protecting God's Children**

**The Diocese of Ogdensburg** has scheduled sessions for Protecting God's Children for Adults. Pre-registration is required. Preregister at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). Upcoming sessions:  
**Jan. 30** – 10 a.m. – St. Peter's Parish, Massena

**Bishop's Public Schedule**

**Jan. 24** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 25** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 26** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 27** – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral.

**To Report Abuse**

**If you have a complaint** of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victims Assistance Coordinator, Terriane Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; [terrianeyanulavich@yahoo.com](mailto:terrianeyanulavich@yahoo.com) Phone: 518-358-3145, Ext. 7179 days; 518-569-0612 evenings; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; [ccarrara@rcdony.org](mailto: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](http://www.ReportBishopAbuse.org)

# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

**Pope issues new regulations for Vatican spending**

Pope Francis amended the Vatican's financial regulations Jan. 16, enshrining a spending limit into law that requires Vatican offices to get permission before making large purchases. The pope published two apostolic letters – which the Holy Father issued *motu proprio* ("on his own impulse") – that make changes to some of Francis' former financial reform laws from June 2020, updating them to align with the 2021 apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, the pope's signature reform of the organization and structure of the Roman Curia. The first *motu proprio*, titled "On the Limits and Modalities of Ordinary Administration," requires Vatican offices to get approval from the Secretariat of the Economy for purchases over 2% of their total annual operating budget. The *motu proprio* adds that purchases under 150,000 euros do not require approval. The Secretariat for the Economy oversees the financial aspects of both the Roman Curia and the Vatican City State administration, including a review of financial reports.

**Pope Francis to hold private Lenten retreat**

Pope Francis and the Roman Curia will take their traditional Lenten retreats separately and not as an organized group for another year, the Holy See Press Office announced on Tuesday morning. For the fifth consecutive year the joint retreat between the Holy Father and the Curia has been canceled. Curial officials will make their own retreat arrangements to commence the 40-day penitential season of Lent. The tradition of a weeklong papal retreat dates back to the pontificate of Pius XI. It was first held in 1925 during the season of Advent. In 1964 Pope Paul VI changed the date of the retreat to the first week in Lent. In 2014 Pope Francis changed the location of the tradition from the Vatican to the town of Ariccia, which sits in the Alban Hills, 20 miles southwest of Rome. This year's retreat will start on the first Sunday of Lent, Feb. 18, following the recitation of the Angelus at noon. It will conclude the afternoon of Friday, Feb. 23. As in the past, the Holy Father's regular activities are fully suspended during the retreat.

**Dictatorship releases bishops, priests, seminarians**

The dictatorship of Daniel Ortega on Sunday released and sent to the Vatican two imprisoned Nicaraguan bishops along with 15 priests and seminarians. Nicaraguan media outlets La Prensa and Confidential first reported on the release, indicating that among those released was Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa and Bishop Isidoro Mora of Siuna. Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez of Managua, exiled due to persecution by the Ortega dictatorship, confirmed the news of the release of the bishops, priests, and seminarians in tears: "Our pastors are free." The released clerics arrived in Rome on Sunday afternoon and were welcomed as "guests of the Holy See," according to Vatican News. The Ortega dictatorship issued a statement thanking Pope Francis and Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and his team "for the very respectful and discreet coordination that made possible the trip to the Vatican of two bishops, 15 priests, and two seminarians."

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# U.S bishops report: Religious Americans' lives possibly at risk in 2024

By Peter Pinedo  
Catholic News Agency

After a year of renewed attacks on churches and religious centers, the U.S. bishops said in a new report released today that attacks on houses of worship constitute the "largest threat to religious liberty in 2024" and could threaten "the very lives of people of faith."

Titled the "State of Religious Liberty in the United States," the report is released annually by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty.

The report said that while the committee "was founded in response to increasing legal threats to the free exercise of religion," the bishops felt "compelled to decry foreseeable threats to the very lives of people of faith here in the United States."

"There is no greater threat to religious liberty than for one's house of worship to become a place of danger, and the country sadly finds itself in a place where that danger is real," the bishops said in the report.

The bishops' report is based on data gathered by the Committee for Religious Liberty, led by Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana.

Rhoades wrote that the report has "sought to raise awareness about our religious liberty concerns" and represents "one more resource to help all Catholics as they seek to live out their faith in this great country."

"This report outlines the major issues that have occupied the Committee for Religious Liberty over the past year," he said. "It reveals a wide range of concerns, such as federal agencies misusing laws meant to aid pregnant women in order to promote abortion, threats to the safety of our Jewish and Muslim neighbors, and the FBI's suspicion of Catholics who worship in the Traditional Latin Mass."

According to the bishops' re-

port, "recent years have seen an alarming rate of vandalism, arson, and other property destruction at Catholic sites."

Since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* in the June 2022 Supreme Court *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, attacks against the Catholic Church as well as pro-life organizations have risen considerably. The bishops said that annual hate crime statistics gathered by the FBI in 2022 reported anti-Catholic crimes as nearly 75% higher than for any other bias.

All this is compounded with, the bishops said, a "general failure" on the part of the "federal government to apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators of such attacks."

The bishops said that "were this threat limited to a continuation of the property crimes that have been perpetrated on Catholic churches over recent years, perhaps it would not be the committee's chief concern. However, boiling tensions over the Israel-Hamas conflict have elevated the chances of a terrorist attack on a synagogue or mosque."

Meanwhile, they said, the "highly charged atmosphere around the 2024 election might lead far-left extremists to escalate the severity of attacks on Catholic churches, and far-right extremists may view Catholic churches and Catholic Charities facilities as targets for anti-immigrant sentiment or, worse, violent action."

In response, the bishops urged the faithful to "do our part to foster a society free of hatred" by speaking up for the inherent equal dignity of all people, bearing public witness to Christ's call to care and compassion for the vulnerable, and praying for peace.

The bishops also told the faithful to be conscious of threats while at houses of worship and to encourage their pastors to use the "Protecting Houses of Worship" resources made available by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

ty.

The bishops' report tracked many concerning trends affecting people of faith in both the political, legislative, and legal spheres as well as the cultural sphere.

On the cultural end, the report said there was a rise in antisemitic and anti-Muslim sentiment as well as continued acts of vandalism and intimidation toward Catholics and other Christians.

The bishops mentioned the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team's decision to publicly honor an openly anti-Catholic hate group called the "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" during last year's "Pride Month" game in June.

Combining the political and legal with the cultural, the bishops noted the growing controversy in schools surrounding gender identity, a debate they said "has manifested more intensely in schools than in any other [area]."

"The controversies over public schools' embrace of gender ideology," the bishops said, "has lent momentum to the push for school choice, as religious parents look for school environments that are compatible with their beliefs."

This, however, has resulted in more legal battles as some states such as Colorado and groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and others have acted to keep religious schools from receiving any public funding because they say the schools discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Additionally, "at least three states — Washington, Vermont, and Delaware — have introduced bills to eliminate the clergy-penitent privilege," potentially forcing priests to break the seal of confession or face legal consequences, the report said.

Religious liberty and the federal government

The partisan division in both houses of Congress kept it from taking much action, either

positive or negative, regarding religious liberty.

Several bills considered by Congress, however, do pose significant threats to religious rights should they ever be passed into law. The bishops said that the Equality Act, considered by Congress in 2023, "raises the greatest threat to religious freedom currently before Congress."

According to the report, the Equality Act is a sweeping bill that would likely require taxpayer funding for abortion, force religious doctors and hospitals to perform abortions, require employers to cover abortion in their insurance plans, mandate doctors to suggest children receive transgender surgeries, force doctors to perform such surgeries, threaten parents' custody of their children if they object to transgender services, and much more.

Regarding another federal law, the report noted the effort by some Republicans to repeal the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, which, the bishops said, "has been used almost exclusively to protect abortion clinics and has never been used to protect a church."

"The lopsided enforcement of the FACE Act has long been noted but received renewed attention in 2023, as increasing attacks on pro-life pregnancy resource centers went largely unpunished, while some actions brought against protesters outside abortion clinics seemed unjustifiably severe," the bishops said, noting Catholic father and pro-lifer Mark Houck, whose home was raided by armed agents.

Additionally, the report also cautioned against other bills such as the Secure the Border Act and the Protecting Federal Funds from Human Trafficking and Smuggling Act that would curtail the Church's ability to give aid in the humanitarian crisis at the southern border by restricting funds from going to such groups as Catholic Charities.

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

## BROWN BAG SERIES

The Office of New Evangelization will be running a new Brownbag Chat Series on the topic of Catholic Social Teaching.

**Date:** Wednesdays starting Jan. 24

**Time:** Noon to 1 p.m.

**Place:** online

**Features:** Each session will include a short video and discussion. For background information we will read the Statement from the USCCB Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish

**Contact:** To register, go to <https://www.rcdony.org/brown-bag>. A link will be sent to those who register. For more information, contact Marika at [info@rcdony.org](mailto:info@rcdony.org).

## PRIESTHOOD DISCERNMENT

Are you a single Catholic man who is hearing the Lord's call to the Priesthood? Consider joining others virtually who are listening and seeking to respond.

**Date:** Jan. 28, Feb. 11, Feb. 25

**Time:** 4 p.m. to 5

**Place:** On-Line

**Features:** High school age men and older are invited to join fellow discerners and Father Howard Venette to discuss this vocation.

**Contact:** You must register in order to attend, please go to [www.rcdony.org/priesthooddiscernment](http://www.rcdony.org/priesthooddiscernment)

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

## WOMEN'S LENTEN STUDY

Plattsburgh – Walking with Purpose to have a Women's Lenten Study.

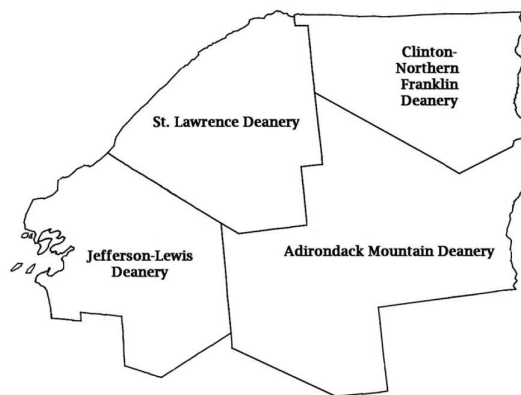
**Date:** Thursdays, Feb. 15 to March 21

**Time:** 10 a.m. to 11:45 or 6:30 p.m. to 8:15

**Place:** St. John's Dwyer/McAvoy Parish Center

**Cost:** Suggested donation, \$20

**Features:** Discover God's plan for friendship, how to navigate toxic relationships, let God reshape how you experience intentional relationships, and explore what it



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

e-mail [news@northcountrycatholic.org](mailto:news@northcountrycatholic.org).

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

takes to have deep connections.

**Contact:** Janice Tobin C/T 518-569-5370

## 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. Experience His healing, love and mercy.

**Contact:** For more information, to become a substitute or to sign up for an hour, please contact 518-563-3773. Signing up is not necessary to attend.

## DEVOTION AND HOLY HOUR

St. Regis Falls – All are invited to the monthly first Saturday Devotion and Holy Hour for Vocations.

**Date:** First Saturday of the Month

**Time:** Following the 4:30 anticipated Mass

**Place:** St. Ann's Church

**Features:** Prayer after Mass, Night Prayer, Prayer for All Souls and the Holy Souls, Novena in Honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, The Reparation Rosary of the with private meditation on the 15

Mysteries, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament reposed in the Tabernacle, and Prayers for the Holy Father and his intentions.

## HOUSE SITTERS

Ellenburg Center – Our Lady of the Adirondacks House of Prayer is looking for many Volunteer "House Sitters."

**Features:** Lunch, beverages and snack items on hand. Training will be provided on the history of the House of Prayer, its mission, and the various ways to carry out this ministry of hospitality for those seeking time to listen to our Lord, browse in the library, or visit the "Gift Shop". Flexible schedule (and hours) are fine.

**Contact:** If interested in volunteering for one day a month, or week, or more, please call Sarah Anderson at 518-534-9976.

## JEFFERSON-LEWIS

## RESPECT LIFE PRAYER VIGIL

Watertown – Liferight is sponsoring its annual Respect Life prayer vigil.

**Date:** Jan. 22

**Time:** 6 p.m.

**Place:** Watertown Municipal Building

**Features:** Please dress warmly and join us for prayer, reflection, and worship songs. Refreshments to follow at St. Patrick's Church.

## CHICKEN &amp; BISCUIT DINNER

Lyons Falls – There will be a drive-thru chicken and biscuit dinner.

**Date:** Jan. 30

**Time:** 4:30 p.m. to 6

**Place:** St. John's Church Hall

**Cost:** \$12

**Menu:** Chicken and gravy with homemade biscuits, mashed potatoes, vegetable, applesauce and dessert.

**Contact:** Deliveries are available! To ensure your dinner, please call 315-348-8945 or 315-348-8577. The day of the dinner, please call 315-348-6599.

## HOLY HOUR &amp; DIVINE MERCY

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

**Date:** Feb. 4

**Time:** Following 11 a.m. Mass

**Place:** St. Hedwig's Church

**Contact:** 315-348-6260

## SPAGHETTI &amp; MEATBALL DINNER

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

**Date:** Feb. 10

**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

**Contact:** For more information call 315-629-4678

## PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Carthage – Pancake breakfast to be held to benefit Augustinian Academy.

**Date:** Feb. 11

**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

**Menu:** Scrambled Eggs, Pancakes, French Toast, Ham, Sausage, Baked Goods, Juice, and Coffee

**Features:** Event is sponsored by Carthage K of C, Father John

Cosmic #291 and Ave Maria Circle.

**Contact:** For more information call: 315-493-3224

## LENTEN MISSION

Croghan – Lenten Mission to be held with the theme "Walking to Calvary: A Eucharistic Journey".

**Date:** March 10, 11, & 12

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Place:** St. Stephen's Parish

**Schedule:** March 10, Alone with the Alone: The Eucharist and Prayer; March 11, Jesus' falls: Meeting Him in my failure; March 12, Meeting Mary on the Way: Her Eucharistic Love

**Contact:** For More Information, Please Contact Stephen's Parish, 315-346-6958

## ST. LAWRENCE

## UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF THE BIBLE

Massena – An 8-part Bible study that helps you to get "the big picture" of the Bible.

**Date:** Tuesdays, Jan. 23 to March 12

**Time:** 2 p.m. to 4 or 6:30 p.m. to 8:30

**Place:** St. Mary's Social Hall or through zoom for evening session

**Cost:** Free will offering

**Features:** Many people want to read the Bible, but they give up because it seems complicated. Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible helps you to get the "big picture" of the Bible, showing how fourteen narrative books tell the complete story from Adam and Eve to Christ and the Church. Light refreshments will be available.

**Contact:** For more information call 315-769-2469 or [massenacatholics.com](http://massenacatholics.com)

## ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

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

**Date:** Feb. 3

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Place:** Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg

**Features:** Rosary with devotions



# Scorsese: Script ready for 'A Life of Jesus'

By Francesca Pollio Fenton  
Catholic News Agency

Oscar winner Martin Scorsese recently confirmed that a script for his new movie, "A Life of Jesus," is now finished.

In an interview with The Los Angeles Times on Jan. 8, Scorsese said he co-wrote the screenplay with critic and filmmaker Kent Jones and plans to shoot it later this year. The film will be based on Shosaku Endo's book "A Life of Jesus."

Scorsese said he envisions the film being about 80 minutes long, which would be one of his shortest films ever made, and will focus on "Jesus' core teachings in a way that explores the principles but

doesn't proselytize."

"I'm trying to find a new way to make it more accessible and take away the negative onus of what has been associated with organized religion," Scorsese said.

"Right now, 'religion' — you say that word and everyone is up in arms because it's failed in so many ways," he added. "But that doesn't mean necessarily that the initial impulse was wrong. Let's get back. Let's just think about it."

In an effort to not "be locked into a certain period," the film will take place in present day because the director wants "the film to feel timeless," he explained.

The inspiration for the film

came in May 2023 after Scorsese met Pope Francis at the Global Aesthetics of the Catholic Imagination, a conference that brought together artists and creatives from across the world. After this meeting, Scorsese said, "I have responded to the pope's appeal to artists in the only way I know how: by imagining and writing a screenplay for a film about Jesus."

Catholicism and religious themes have played a role in some of Scorsese's previous works such as "Silence" and the controversial 1988 film "The Last Temptation of Christ."

Scorsese was raised Catholic and attended a Catholic high school before attending a

preparatory seminary for one year.

In an interview with La Civiltà Cattolica on Dec. 9, 2016, he told Jesuit priest Father Antonio Spadaro: "When I was younger, I was thinking of making a film about being a priest. I myself wanted to follow in Father Principe's [his parish priest] footsteps, so to speak, and be a priest. I went to a preparatory seminary but I failed out the first year."

Scorsese added that despite not attending Mass regularly, "my way has been, and is, Catholicism. After many years of thinking about other things, dabbling here and there, I am most comfortable as a Catholic."

## Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

### FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

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

**Date:** Feb. 3

**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:** Feb. 3

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Place:** Sacred Heart Church

### MONTHLY BRUNCH

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

**Date:** Feb. 11 (Second Sunday of each month)

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

**Place:** Father 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.

### ADORATION

Ogdensburg - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to be held every Wednesday.

**Time:** 3 p.m. to 6

**Place:** The Deacon Winter Chapel at St. Mary's Cathedral, enter through the glass doors on the Green Street side.

**Features:** Everyone is welcome and encouraged to spend time with Christ.

### ALPHA

Massena - You are invited to ALPHA.

**Date:** Tuesdays starting April 2

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

**Place:** St. Mary's Social Hall

**Features:** Free to all and includes a free meal.

**Contact:** Parish office at 315-769-2469 or go to massenacatholics.com for info or to register.

### CATHOLIC PARENTING

Potsdam - A series of workshops from the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute to be held on Catholic Parenting.

**Date:** First Sunday of the month

from Oct. to April

**Place:** St. Mary's Rectory, second floor

**Features:** Attend all or only those that interest you. Child care can be provided. Event is free.

**Contact:** For more information contact Mike Neaton at 315-335-6302 or Liz Tarbox at formation-stp@gmail.com

### HOLY HOUR

Canton - Holy Hour for Vocations to be held.

**Date:** Every Tuesday

**Time:** 4:10 p.m.

**Place:** St. Mary's Church

**Features:** Holy hour followed by Mass at 5:15 p.m. and confessions at 5:45 p.m.

### ROSARY FOR LIFE

Canton - Rosary for life to be held.

**Date:** Every Sunday

**Time:** 4:25 p.m. preceding the 5 p.m. evening Mass

**Place:** St. Mary's Church

### ADORATION

Norwood - St. Andrew's Church to offer Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every Friday.

**Time:** After 8:30 a.m. Mass until Noon

**Features:** Sign up not required.

### MEAL DELIVERY DRIVERS NEEDED

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

**Features:** Drivers deliver hot, nutritious meals to older adults. Many are homebound and receive lunchtime meals Monday through Friday. A critical component of this program is the daily wellness check provided. 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. Volunteer for one day a week or several. Any help is appreciated.

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

### DIOCESAN EVENTS

### CHRISM MASS

Ogdensburg - All the faithful of the Diocese of Ogdensburg are invited to join Bishop LaValley in the annual Renewal of Priestly Commitment, the Blessing of the

Holy Oils, and the consecration of the Sacred Chrism for use in all the churches of our Diocese.

**Date:** March 21

**Time:** 11 a.m.

**Place:** St. Mary's Cathedral

**Features:** This ritual symbolizes that we are one family in Christ. The Chrism Mass may be viewed at <https://www.rcdony.org/live-mass>. The Chrism Mass program will be available at the same link shortly before the Liturgy.

### HEALING MASS

Potsdam - Bishop LaValley has scheduled a Healing Mass for those hurt by the Church on Divine Mercy Sunday.

**Date:** April 7

**Time:** 2:30 p.m.

**Place:** St. Mary's Church, Potsdam



## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

## 'Christ can remove the unclean spirits'

So many of our movies today are filled with scenes of the paranormal. Machines that change into creatures; people who convulse; the normal becomes weird, and the weird becomes normal.

These types of movies feed our fascination for the unexplainable. So, today, when we hear a Gospel that speaks about unclean spirits, perhaps we return to those images we saw during our latest movie experience or even what we used to call Friday Night Fright Night.

Today's Gospel makes two points: the unclean spirits and the prophet who can cure the unclean spirits. So, who is the prophet, and who or what are the unclean spirits?

Jesus is without a doubt the prophet. In the first reading, there is a prediction about

the prophet who would come. This prediction was made to Moses, who, like a prophet, spoke on behalf of God to the people. Over the centuries many other prophets appeared, all of whom spoke on behalf of God.

Jesus is the greatest of prophets because he is God incarnate in the world. Unlike the other prophets who spoke on behalf of God, Jesus is God. His words are so powerful that they can remove unclean spirits.

In Jesus' day, when people acted strangely, convulsed, lost control of their faculties, they were said to be possessed by unclean spirits. These unclean spirits wreaked havoc with individuals, bringing chaos and destruction to their lives. Today, when we observe strange behavior, we usually have some med-

January 28

Fourth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time

## READINGS

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Mark 1:21-28

*This homily is offered  
courtesy of a priest of  
the Diocese of Ogdensburg.*

ical or psychiatric term to explain the condition.

However, that does not mean that unclean spirits, whether or not we have a name or a medication for them, do not exist. They still do.

Evil spirits can manifest themselves in various ways. An evil spirit may be something in us keeping us from being the kind of person we would like to be. For example, we may have

something in us that keeps us from praying the way we would really like to pray.

Or, perhaps, we may have something in us that keeps us from loving

the way we would like to love - especially the members of our own family.

Or, perhaps, we may have something in us that keeps us from being as generous as we would like to be.

For example, we all have a responsibility when it comes to spreading God's kingdom on earth. Yet, how much time, energy, or money

do we devote to this?

Christ can get at the root and core of our beings and transform us just as he gets to the core of bread and wine and transforms them into the body and blood of Christ, just as

he gets to the core of a person at baptism and removes original sin, just as he gets to the root of a person and forgives sins committed after baptism.

This transforming Christ can remove the unclean spirits in our lives no matter what shape those unclean spirits may take. This cleansing can happen only if we invite Christ into our lives and ask him to remove our unclean spirits, especially in the sacrament of penance. After all, we may have tried many other remedies in our lives for these unclean spirits only to have them fail. In our prayer today let us invite this Jesus into our hearts to remove any unclean spirits so that we may be always able and ready to proclaim and live the good news of the Gospel.

## CALLED TO SERVE

## 'Déjà vu all over again'

Kathy and I were happily enjoying our breakfast omelets today when I happened to glance out the bay window that faces our backyard. The snow was blowing horizontally.

Today is January 17, 2024. There is nothing significant about the date. It just seemed appropriate to share that with you. It is the feast of St. Anthony the Hermit. St. Anthony, pray for us.

I have already cancelled or rescheduled a bunch of appointments that would have required me to drive somewhere. That is not happening.

There is no point get-

ting the snow blower out, yet. The exercise would be fruitless since the blowing snow, now falling at a rate of three inches per hour, would fill in any path just opened.

I could wring my hands and pace. That would be useless too. In fact, St. Paul tells the Corinthians in a reading for next weekend, the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, "I should like you to be free of anxieties."

Directive received!

The horizontal snowfall reminded me of a weekend in January back in 1977. The area east of Lake Ontario had a bona fide bliz-

zard that weekend. So did Buffalo. Their snow blew off Lake Erie.

I was working for WWNY then as a reporter and sometimes on-camera host of the newscasts. The Blizzard of '77 started on a Friday night. On Saturday morning the News Director, Bob Tompkins, told me to stay home for the weekend and plan to relieve him on Monday.

There we were, cooped up at home, trying to entertain a four-year-old who wondered why she couldn't go out and

play in the snow. The reason was fairly obvious to her parents; we were certain she would get blown away and we were reluctant to begin a search for her a block away. In a blinding snowstorm. Explain that to a four-year-old.



Deacon  
Kevin Mastellon

What occurred to me today, since I have plenty of idle time to think, is that we believe everyone in the North Country is in the same boat.

Not true.

In fact, some of you reading this might wonder, "what snowstorm?"

In this tiny portion of God's creation my plight, monumental to me, is in fact quite incidental.

The thing to remember is that we are created to love and worship God and treat all his creation well.

Soon I'll join my neighbors and have a snowblower convention. Meanwhile we will relax. And thank God for the roof over our heads, heat and food on the table.

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



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

**The Society for the Propagation of the Faith  
Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director**

622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669  
(315) 393-2920; fax 1-866-314-7296  
mbrett@rcdony.org

# World Missionary Childhood Day

Some make Advent calendars to sell, others study a song to perform, others make donation boxes and go to schools and parishes to support projects for children all over the world with the donations collected.

These are the different “faces” of the missionary initiatives carried out throughout the year by the children and young people of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood (POSI) in the more than 120 countries in which it is present. “Children pray for children, children evangelize children, children help children” is the slogan of the organization, which celebrated its 180th anniversary last year.

The organization was founded in 1843 by Bishop Charles Forbin de Janson, who, struck by stories from missionaries living in China about the plight of children, came up with the idea of involving French children so they could help their Chinese peers through prayer and material assistance. Prayers and donations form the basis of the children’s mission work, which culminates in World Missionary Childhood Day.

This day, dedicated to prayer and solidarity, was established by Pope Pius XII introduced on December 10, 1950, and celebrated for the first time on January 6, 1951. Children and young people around the world often celebrate it on different dates depending on local circumstances.

The Pope also recalled the initiative on Epiphany, January 6, and thanked the children: “The Epiphany is Missionary Childhood Day. I greet missionary children and young people throughout the world. I thank them for their commitment in prayer and in concrete support of the proclamation of the Gospel and, in particular, the promotion of young people in the mission territories. Thank you, thank you very much!” From Spain (January 14) to El Salvador (January 28) and Nigeria (January 28) to Mexico (February 18), there are a variety of activities for Missionary Childhood Day and which, in this year, they will follow the underlying theme of “spiritual cooperation” indicated by the International Secretariat of POSI stated as the main topic.

“I invite you to be witnesses of the Gospel of joy, peace, friendship and fraternity that Jesus taught us,” emphasizes the Secretary General of POSI, Sister Roberta Tremarelli, in her Christmas message to children and young people. “I invite you to continue to proclaim the Good News in every family; may the Lord accompany you in these days in your initiatives to support and promote the Society founded by Bishop Charles De Forbin Janson, who cared for children “who died and could not get to know Jesus.”

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

## OBITUARIES

**Akwasasne** – John T. White, 83; Funeral Services Jan. 16, 2024 at the Akwasasne Homemakers; burial in St. Lawrence Cemetery.

**Alexandria Bay** – Concetta “Connie” (Sparacino) Cavallario, 94; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2024 at St. Cyril’s Church; burial in St. Cyril’s Cemetery.

**Brushton** – Evangeline Florence Dillabough, infant; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 15, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church.

**Canton** – Thomas A. Frank, Sr., 74; Funeral Services Jan. 16, 2024 at the Lawrence Funeral Home & Cremation Services; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.

**Chateaugay** – Walter L. Bordeau, Jr., 81; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 18, 2024 at St. Patrick’s Church.

**Constableville** – Raymond L. Jedrich, 84; Memorial Mass in Spring at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Boonville.

**Constableville** – Gerald “Bub” Morczek, 72; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 18, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Patrick’s Cemetery.

**Croghan** – Monica A. (Adams) Twombly, 65; Funeral services to be held at a later date; burial in St. Stephen’s Cemetery.

**Elizabethtown** – Marijane Dobbs Egglefield, 90; Mass of Christian Burial at a later date at St. Elizabeth’s Church; burial in Riverside Cemetery.

**Malone** – Diane Lynn (Clark) Towle, 70; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 22, 2024 at Notre Dame Church; burial in St. Joseph’s Cemetery.

**Massena** – Jeanne M. (Bissonnette) Deshaies, 95; Services in the spring.

**Massena** – Lynn Marie (Desjardins) Draper, 65; Funeral Services Jan. 19, 2024 at Phillips Memorial Home; burial in Holy Cross Cemetery, Hopkinton.

**Massena** – Joseph F. Trombino, 81; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 17, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church.

**Morrisonville** – Loretta M. (Kelley) Foster, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 17, 2024 at St. Alexander’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Norwood** – Jane T. Claffey, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 16, 2024 at St. Andrew’s Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – Richard G. Lockwood, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 19, 2024 at St. Mary’s Cathedral; burial in St. Mary’s

Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – Barry P. Skipka, 69; Funeral Services Jan. 17, 2024 at Fox & Murray Funeral Home.

**Plattsburgh** – George E. Boueye, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 18, 2024 at St. Peter’s Church; burial in St. Peter’s Cemetery.

**Plattsburgh** – Jeff Pescia, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2024 at Our Lady of Victory Church.

**St. Regis Falls** – Willis W. Chapman, 75; Funeral services Jan. 19, 2024 at Hammill Funeral Home.

**St. Regis Falls** – Patricia Ann (Sweet) Kimpton, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2024 at St. Ann’s Church.

**Watertown** – George A. Grapotte, Sr., 94; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2024 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

**Watertown** – Joan Marie Henry, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2024 at Holy Family Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

**Watertown** – Theresa M. (Crescenzi) Puccia, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 16, 2024 at St. Anthony’s Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.



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# 33 Canadian churches razed by fire since 2021

By Joe Bukuras  
Catholic News Agency

Arson attacks against churches in Canada are on the rise, according to a Canadian news outlet, which reported that since May 2021, 33 churches in Canada have been burned down to the ground.

The outlet, CBC News, reported that 24 of those devastating fires were intentionally set, while two were determined to be accidental. The rest were ruled to be suspicious or are currently under investigation.

That number represents a marked increase in the number of churches destroyed by fire. Between Jan. 1, 2019, and May 2021, 14 churches in Canada burned down, according to the outlet's review of police and court records along with media reports.

The new data comes on the heels of dozens of attacks on Catholic churches in Canada over the past few years following several unsubstantiated reports in early 2021 of "mass graves" found at former Catholic and Christian residential schools for Indigenous children.

More than 150,000 children attended the government-funded schools, the last of which closed in 1997. Some children died at these schools from sickness and many were likely buried at cemeteries near or on school property, according to anthropologist Scott Hamilton's 2015 report on the burial of residential school children.

Some of those burial sites are still maintained, while others have de-



ARCHDIOCESE OF GROUARD-MCLENNAN PHOTO/B.C. CATHOLIC

**The loss of St. Bernard's Church in Grouard, Alberta, Canada, on May 22, 2023, makes a sad moment for those with memories of the church, said Grouard-McLennan Archbishop Gerard Pettipas. Two men have been arrested in connection with the fire.**

cayed, and lack of documentation has made them difficult to identify, according to the report. The 2021 reports that circulated about the burial grounds drew attention to the experience of the Canadian Indigenous community in part because of the testimony of many former students who said they had experienced abuse at the schools.

A 2015 report on the schools, commissioned by the Canadian government, included the testimony of former students who said they were sexually and physically abused at the schools. That report also says that the schools were created to separate Indigenous children from their families in order to "indoctrinate" them "into a new culture."

The Canadian Catholic bishops have paid out millions of dollars to survivors of abuse and have issued public apol-

ogies for the Church's role in the abuse in the schools.

Thirteen of the church fires occurred in small or rural towns, while 14 took place in churches located on reservations and Indigenous people's territories known as First Nations' land.

Approximately 50% of the fires affected Catholic churches, while the rest were in churches of other denominations such as Anglican, evangelical, and United.

Arrests have been made in just nine of the church fires since 2021, the outlet reported, adding that police say no motive has been determined in the attacks.

In May 2023, a historic 121-year-old Catholic church in Northern Alberta burned to the ground, The B.C. Catholic reported.

The archbishop of Grouard-McLennan, Gerard Pettipas, said that St. Bernard's Church was

"irreparably destroyed" and the arson marked "a sad moment for the many people who have fond memories of this church."

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Catholic Church burned to the ground in August 2022 in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, Global News reported. Two men were charged with arson following the fire.

On June 28, 2021, in the province of Alberta, a fire was extinguished in the early morning hours at the Siksika Nation Catholic Church, which police said they believed was set deliberately.

Two other Catholic churches in the same region of British Columbia, Sacred Heart Mission at Penticton Indian Band and St. Gregory Mission at Osoyoos Indian Band, burned down in June 2021.

"For many years, our priests have been wel-

comed to minister in these mission churches, and it is our hope that this ministry will continue. Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone affected by the fires and we are grateful that no one died or was physically injured," Nelson Bishop Gregory Bittman said following those two fires.

While the CBC News report recorded 33 churches that burned to the ground, many more churches have been victimized by attacks.

According to the Canadian website True North, 96 Christian churches in the country have been vandalized, burned, or desecrated since May 2021, when it was first announced mass graves were found at residential schools.

Some Indigenous leaders spoke out against the vandalism and arson early on.

In 2021 a fire destroyed the Sacred Heart Mission at Penticton Indian Band and St. Gregory Mission at Osoyoos Indian Band.

The Penticton Indian Band said in a statement: "We, along with the Osoyoos Indian Band, who also lost their church (Oliver area) are in disbelief and anger over these occurrences as these places of worship provided service to members who sought comfort and solace in the church."

The statement said that while it is "not our place to say who to worship," the Sacred Heart church building played an important role in the community. "Since 1911 some of our community's first memories are of us gathering in that church," the statement said.