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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 78 Number 45

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

MARCH 20, 2024

## Creating a culture of vocations

On March 9 dozens of faithful from around the North Country gathered at Visitation Church's Fr. Andrew Amyot Parish Center in Norfolk for the "Creating a Culture of Vocations in the Parish" workshop sponsored by the diocesan department of vocations and LEAD.

The event included a presentation from Leticia Ramirez, who offered strategies for creating a culture of vocations in parishes.

Bishop Terry R. LaValley also addressed the gathering.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

## RESTORATION AND RECONCILIATION



Statues of (from left) St. Joseph, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and St. Therese of Lisieux have been restored and returned to St. Mary's Church in Canton, where they were rededicated. The three statues were damaged in an act of vandalism almost exactly a year before the rededication Mass. See the full story on Page 4.

## REMEMBERING FR. SESTITO



A Mass of Christian Burial for Father Joseph N. Sestito will be held Friday, March 22, in Rome, New York. Father Sestito died Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at age 95. In addition to serving in several parishes in the diocese, Father Sestito served as a military chaplain for 24 years.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

## Pope Francis discusses nature of virtue

By Darcy Fargo  
Editor

(CNA) - Pope Francis on Wednesday opened a new chapter in his ongoing catechetical series on vices and virtues, shifting his reflection to the origins and nature of virtue itself and underscoring its value for human formation.

"Virtue is a 'habitus' of freedom. If we are free in every act, and every time we are required to choose between good and evil, virtue is what enables us to have a tendency towards the right choice," the pope observed in his weekly gener-

al audience held in St. Peter's Square.

The pope did not read Wednesday's address, instead relying on an aide to deliver the remarks on his behalf. The Holy Father has been assisted in his public remarks since late February when the Vatican announced he was suffering from "mild flu" symptoms.

Building upon the notion of virtue as an integral, and innate, characteristic that enables humans to differentiate between good and evil, the pope noted that "it is not an improvised or somewhat random good that falls from heaven sporadical-

ly" but "a goodness that stems from a slow maturation of the person, to the point of becoming an inner characteristic."

The Holy Father pointed to the saints, arguing that they should not be thought of as "the exceptions of humanity" or "a sort of restricted circle of champions who live beyond the limits of our species" but as "those who become themselves fully, who fulfill the vocation proper to every man or woman."

"Therefore," the pope continued, "the exercise of the virtues is the fruit of long germination, requiring effort and even suffering."

The Holy Father also stressed the importance of developing virtuous actions and attitudes against the backdrop of what he characterized as "these dramatic times of ours in which we often have to come to terms with the worst of humanity."

"In a distorted world, we must remember the form in which we were shaped, the image of God that is forever imprinted upon us," Francis continued.

"What a happy world it would be if justice, respect, mutual benevolence, broadmindedness, and hope were the shared normality and not instead a rare anomaly," the pope observed.

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# What did you expect?

"You're teaching people on it when you don't like how someone is driving. My friend seemed incredulous. I've experienced it."

He wasn't wrong. Somehow, I had never considered how inconsistent and incompatible it all seemed. I was thinking about that conversation recently while enjoying silent time during my commute to work.

"Your personality also makes you push a fake brake in the passenger seat and grab the door like your life depends

**Darcy L. Fargo**

on it when you don't like how someone is driving. I've experienced it."

He wasn't wrong. Somehow, I had never considered how inconsistent and incompatible it all seemed.

I was thinking about that conversation recently while enjoying silent time during my commute to work.

How could someone who hates being a passenger and reacts strongly to other people not driving to her standards thoroughly enjoy

taking new drivers out to learn?

The answer zapped my brain like a lightning bolt that can only be from the Holy Spirit: Expectations.

When I'm riding with someone else, I expect him or her to be a good driver. What's a good driver? Someone who drives exactly like me, of course. It makes me anxious and nervous when that doesn't happen.

When I'm riding with a person who has sat behind a steering wheel only one or two times, I expect him or her to take turns faster than I'd like and to struggle centering the car in the

lane.

My expectations drive my reactions.

I do it in my faith life, too. I sometimes expect God to answer my prayers the way I envision or on my timing. When that doesn't happen, I easily fall into feeling hurt, sad or angry. I blame God, when my expectations and I are really causing the hurt and anger.

I'm trying to be more aware of my expectations and how they influence how I react to people and situations.

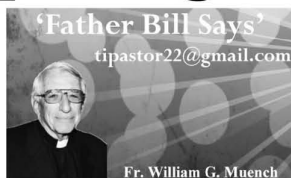
And I'm asking God to give me the grace to not let my expectations drive me.

## Preparing for Holy Week

Time to prepare ourselves for Holy Week. This is the holiest week of our Church year. During this week, we will walk with Jesus as we celebrate his crucifixion and his resurrection. We celebrate these events in Jesus' Passion and death so that we will again realize all that Jesus did in saving us all.

Today, please join me, as we consider Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Before Jesus was arrested, he gathered with his apostles to celebrate the Passover - his Last Supper with them. Even to today, Jewish families continue to celebrate the Passover. This is a family event, a meal at home. This Passover remembers that their people were once slaves in Egypt. The Old Testament Book of Exodus tells us the story. God sent Moses to rescue the Hebrew people, bringing a series of plagues upon Egypt and freeing them to leave and travel to the Promised Land.

The last of those plagues was the death of the first



born of each family. To protect the Jewish families, each family was to procure and prepare a lamb for this Passover meal. They were instructed to take some of the blood of the lamb and put it over the door of their houses. The angel of death would pass over that home. They were saved by the blood of the lamb.

For us, followers of Jesus, we are saved by the blood of the Lord. Jesus has become our lamb of God. We celebrate this each time we celebrate the Holy Mass, instituted for us by Jesus at the Last Supper. So, on Holy Thursday, we remember the Lord's Last Supper with a special Mass and procession in celebration of this Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Our Church has added a special ceremony to our

Holy Thursday Mass, the washing of the feet. In Jesus' time, it was a common practice, as a sign of welcome to visitors, that a servant would wash the feet of a guest. This was a desert land, most people walked barefoot. At the Last Supper, Jesus in humility stepped forward to wash the feet of his apostles. Then, Jesus instructed the apostles that they must demonstrate their dedication as followers of Jesus by washing the feet of their brothers and sisters. So, at our Holy Thursday Mass now, the Church asks each pastor to imitate Jesus by washing the feet of several parishioners as a demonstration of their dedication to their people.

Now, on Good Friday, there is no Mass. We gather as a parish to celebrate the crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus. This service begins with a reading of the Passion of Jesus from the Gospel of St. John. Then we add a series of prayers and intentions, praying for the world and for our Church.

Then, we venerate the cross of Jesus. A deacon processes with a large cross from the back of the Church, stopping three times to sing, "Behold, the wood of the cross on which hung the salvation of the world." We all respond, "Come let us adore." Then we all approach the cross to personally venerate it. This is a moment of prayer as we turn to the crucified Lord seeking a new and strengthened faith in our lives. Jesus dies to teach us that we are a saved people; may we live like saved people.

Then in our service there is a Communion Service. The Blessed Eucharist was consecrated at the Holy Thursday Mass. We receive the Holy Eucharist with deep gratitude for all that Jesus did for us. We must be a grateful people; we must live like grateful people.

Our time of prayer on Holy Thursday and Good Friday lead us to the joyful celebration of the Lord's Resurrection.



# Father Joseph Sestito 'was a good priest'

By Darcy Fargo  
Editor

He loved his family, his time in the military and his priesthood.

Father Joseph N. Sestito died Wednesday, March 13, at age 95. An obituary is included with this article.

Father Bill Muench was a classmate of Father Sestito's at Wadhams Hall and the two frequently traveled together.

"He was a good priest," Father Muench said. "He liked being a priest, and he liked serving as well as he could. He was only an associate in a few parishes in our diocese, but he loved his time in parishes. Even his military assignments - a lot of them were like parishes, serving on bases."

Father Sestito served as a military chaplain from 1967 to 1991.

From 1967 to 1991, he served as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy, serving in North Carolina, Washington State, Vietnam, the Gulf of Tonkin, Alaska, Rhode Island, Illinois and Maryland.

In 1970, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service providing worship and counsel to U.S. troops and aiding in the distribution of food and clothing to Vietnamese orphanages, schools and hospitals.

In addition to coordinating and celebrating Masses and other religious programs, and providing counsel to U.S. troops, Father Sestito's Bronze Star Medal citation noted the priest "participated in the Civic Action Program and was instrumental in distributing large volumes of food and clothing to local orphanages, schools and hospitals."

"His religious fervor

and compassionate spirit inspired all who observed him and were a major factor in the high morale enjoyed by his command," the citation reads.

In 1973, Father Sestito, then a lieutenant commander and stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin, became the first Navy chaplain to conduct Divine Services aboard all four the nuclear-powered surface ships in the U.S. fleet at the time, the USS Enterprise, USS Truxton, USS Long Beach and USS Bainbridge.

After his time in the military, he served as temporary administrator in two diocesan parishes before retiring and relocating to Manlius, New York, to be near family.

"He was very close to his family," Father Muench said. "He was very good to them and very involved with them. He was very close to his parents and his two sisters, and he was also close with his nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews."

In retirement, Father Sestito continued to assist at parishes near his residence in the Diocese of Syracuse, and he stayed in contact with families he had met throughout his priesthood.

"He was always very good about keeping his closeness to the families he met along the way," Father Muench said. "He'd visit them and stay close to them in many ways. That was important to him."

Father Sestito immersed himself in a hobby, woodworking, in his retirement.

"I think he probably owned every woodworking machine ever invent-

## Funeral Mass is March 22

A Mass of Christian Burial For Father Joseph N. Sestito will be celebrated on Friday, March 22, 2024, at 11 a.m. at St. John the Baptist Church, Rome, New York. Bishop Terry R. LaValley, bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, will be the principal celebrant, and Father Sean O'Brien, of the Diocese of Syracuse, will deliver the homily.

Reception of the Body will be on Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 4 p.m. at the church. Calling hours will follow until 6 p.m., when calling hours will conclude with the Liturgy of the Hours. Additional calling hours will be held Friday morning from 10 to 10:45 a.m.

Burial will be in Saint John the Baptist Cemetery in Rome.

Father Sestito passed away peacefully on March 13, 2024, at the age of 91.

He was born on October 20, 1932, to Joseph and Marianne (Amato) Sestito in Rome, New York. His parents predeceased him, along with brothers-in-law John Stoehr and Edwin Booton, as well as his niece, Celine Kelly McIndoe.

He is survived by his sisters, Marietta Jean Booton Stoehr and Doreen (Brian) Kelly; nieces and nephews, Debra Booton McCoy (Robert McCoy), Edwin Randolph (Sandra) Booton, Ivy (Kevin) McDonough, Bethany (Larry) Robinson, Brian (Deborah) Kelly, Kristin Kelly (Karl Hahn), and Brendan (Rebecca) Kelly; as well as many great nieces and nephews, great-great nieces and nephews, and cousins.

After graduating from Rome Free Academy in Rome, New York, he attended St. Andrew's Seminary and St. Bernard's Seminary, both in Rochester, New York. He then went to the Diocese of Ogdensburg, studying at Wadhams Hall from 1954-55 before going on to St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland, for his theological studies. In 1959, he earned his degree in Theological Studies from St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland. On May 16, 1959, he was ordained into the priesthood at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg, New York.

Father Joe began priesthood as a parochial vicar at St. Patrick's and St. Anthony's Churches in Watertown, New York, and provided religious instruction at Immaculate Heart Academy during his time there. He later served as parochial vicar at Church of the Sacred Heart in Massena, St. Augustine's Church in Peru, and St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid.

In 1967, Father Sestito joined the United States Navy and proudly served his country from 1967 to 1991 as a chaplain. He was a Vietnam Veteran who served at numerous naval stations, including New River, North Carolina; Marble Mountain Air Facility, Da-nang, Republic of Vietnam; Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island, Washington; on the USS Bainbridge, Gulf of Tonkin; Naval Submarine Base New London, Connecticut; Naval Air Facility Adak, Alaska; Navy Chaplains School, Rhode Island; Great Lakes Training Center, Illinois; and Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Maryland.

He was awarded the Bronze Star on June 12, 1970. In 1973, Father Sestito, then a lieutenant commander stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin, became the first Navy chaplain to conduct Divine Services aboard all four of the nuclear-powered surface ships in the US fleet at the time. Captain Joseph Sestito retired from the Navy on November 1, 1991.

After retiring from the Navy, Father Sestito returned to the North Country and served as temporary administrator for St. Anthony's Church in Watertown and then St. Martin's Church in Port Leyden, New York.

Upon his retirement, he moved to Manlius, New York, and assisted at St. Ann's Church. After living in Manlius for about 15 years, he returned home to Rome, New York, to be closer to his two sisters. There, he assisted at St. John the Baptist Church, St. Paul's Church, and St. Joseph's Church (Lee Center, New York).

Father Joe was a man of many talents. As a young man, he enjoyed working WKAL radio in Rome. During his Navy years, he took classes and enjoyed oil painting. In retirement, he became a prolific woodworker, and he loved cooking. He had quite a sense of humor was always ready with a joke. More than anything, Joseph enjoyed spending time with his family, all of whom will miss him dearly.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to Catholic Relief Services at <https://www.crs.org/ways-to-give> or by mail at Catholic Relief Services, PO Box 5200, Harlan, IA 51593-0700.

To send condolences, please visit <https://barryfuneralhome.com/>

Arrangements are Barry Funeral Home, 807 West Chestnut Street, Rome, New York.

# The statues are home once more

By Suzanne Pietropaoli  
Staff Writer

"The beauty of images moves me to contemplation," wrote St. John Damascene, "as a meadow delights the eye and subtly infuses the soul with the glory of God." Even now these words, written nearly 1,300 years ago, continue to speak to the beauty and power of sacred images. They would seem also to speak to the great joy St. Mary's parishioners felt at the recent return of three beloved statues a year after they were stolen and severely damaged.

St. Mary's pastor Father Bryan Stitt recalls the morning he discovered the statues were missing from their accustomed places in the parish's Divine Mercy Chapel. A serene and beautiful space where daily Mass is celebrated, it is also a favorite spot for folks looking for a quiet place to pray.

"Early in the morning of January 27, 2023, I walked into the chapel and saw that the statues were gone," Father Stitt said. "My first thought: the work crew had moved them to start preparing for the floor refinish. A quick text confirmed that the work crew had not done this."

Amid an Exodus 90 meeting with college students that morning, followed by Sunday Mass, and a parish pancake breakfast, the pastor had to consult with police; they could only search for the statues if Father Stitt pressed charges, which he did.

The statues had not gone far and were recovered quickly. But each of the 5-foot-tall plas-



**Father Bryan Stitt, pastor of St. Mary's in Canton, delivers his homily at the Mass rededicating church statues that were previously damaged in an act of vandalism in front of the statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, one of the restored statues.**

ter statues had sustained significant damage. Because each one was around 100 years old and had historical significance within the parish, there was additional emotional pain among parishioners.

The statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel came to Canton upon the closure of St. Paul's Church in Pyrites, which had been a mission, and later an oratory, of St. Mary's throughout the 20th century. The St. Joseph statue had been donated to St. Mary's generations ago by a parishioner and had had a place of honor in the church ever since.

The statue of St. Therese of Lisieux has a unique parish connection, according to Father Stitt. It was gifted to St. Mary's following a most unusual occurrence involving the saint, a French Carmelite nun who died in 1897 and was canonized in 1925. In 1930, a group of Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul arrived in Canton to staff the parish's fledgling grammar school. Two years later, in their convent on Court Street, not far from the Church, something extraordinary happened.

"The Sisters had finished Vespers one evening when a little girl appeared near the tabernacle," Father Stitt said. "Since St. Therese had been canonized only a few years before, these sisters recognized their young visitor. They remained in the chapel and prayed through the night. When the priest arrived to say Mass in the morning, the girl disappeared, leaving a rose behind. When the matter was brought to the bishop, he approved that this visitation was authentic." Shortly after, a parishioner purchased a statue of St. Therese for the parish.

The loss of these three statues, so lovingly gifted so long ago, was very painful for the priest and people of St. Mary's. There was anger as well, but the focus was clearly on finding both justice and mercy in the situation. Justice obviously required that those responsible for removing and nearly ruining the treasured statues would also be responsible to pay for their extensive restorative work. The effort to bring mercy into this situation moved the parish

toward a process of restorative justice, which involves face-to-face meetings with those who cause harm.

"We came up with a fitting plan for healing," notes Father Stitt. "This led to a genuine Christian experience of respecting the dignity of all involved."

On Sunday, January 28, 2024, 364 days after the vandalism, the people of St. Mary's gathered for Mass, for the blessing of the restored statues and the re-dedication of Divine Mercy Chapel.

In the congregation were descendants of those who bought the statues, one of the artists who worked on the repair, and one of those responsible for the damage, as well as a host of parishioners happy for this long-awaited day. It was a day for rejoicing and for reconciliation.

In his homily, Father Stitt did not evade the bad actions that made the day necessary but was careful to also remind his listeners that each one of us is a sinner in need of reconciliation with God and with one another.

"If we've been afraid to face our sins and seek God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, let's think of this day," he said. "And if we've thought ourselves not strong enough, let's think of this day, of the face of that Divine Mother holding her Son enthroned in her arms. Let us look at the face of one who made bad decisions a year ago but allowed light and grace to win the day. And let us look at the unveiled face of the Lord and know him, the Holy One of God!"

## 'A good priest'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

ed," Father Muench said, laughing. "He made a lot of things like chairs and bookcases. I have a bookcase he made in my room still. He made a lot of things for his family and others he stayed close to. He was very happy to do those things."

While he was originally from outside of the Diocese of Ogdensburg and spent most of his priesthood serving away from the diocese, Father Sestito still enjoyed his connections with the North Country, Father Muench said.

"Every once in a while,

he'd come with me up to the North Country for a visit," he said.

Father Muench also remembered his friend as an avid reader who "had a thousand ideas for making the Church all that it should be. He was a nice guy. We got along very well."

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# Learning to create culture of vocations

By Mary Beth Bracy, consecrated virgin  
Contributing Writer

Sometimes people think the future of the Church is bleak and worry about the shortage of vocations, however, there are reasons to hope. On March 9 dozens of faithful from around the North Country gathered at Visitation Church's Fr. Andrew Amyot Parish Center in Norfolk for the "Creating a Culture of Vocations in the Parish" workshop sponsored by the diocesan department of vocations and LEAD.

Bishop Terry R. LaValley provided the opening remarks, sharing, "Vocations is a focused priority and has been for years in our diocese... I was reflecting on my own vocation, on how I landed where I am."

Bishop LaValley recalled the Navy promo "It's not just a job, it's an adventure," with the depiction of a sleek Navy aircraft carrier and an impressive launching pad.

Perhaps it was "the search for the wild blue yonder . . . the restlessness led me to consider possibilities out there," he said.

So, he quit college and entered the Navy.

"It took more than slick promotions to enter seminary," Bishop LaValley continued. "My family and parish provided me the terra firma where God has taken me for a ride... a wonder-filled adventure. I thank God for the vocation I have been gifted... The Lord calls each to a mission recognized with discernment."

The parish, moms and dads play a crucial role, the bishop added, in helping young people develop "a personal relationship with Jesus and preserving holiness. It is our sacred duty to bring the Good News to others."

Nationally renowned presenter Leticia Ramirez began by echoing these sentiments.

"We are all called to be saints... we have a universal call to holiness, a call to a spousal relationship with Christ - this is our big vocation."

Then she spoke of the "little vocation" each individual has whether to priesthood, the consecrated life, or sacramental



Photo by Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ

**Speaker Leticia Ramirez discusses efforts to create a culture of vocations with priests, deacons, ministry leaders and others at a presentation sponsored by the Vocations Office and LEAD. The event was held on March 9 at the Father Andrew Amyot Parish Center in Norfolk.**

marriage.

Current vocational statistics in the United States are sobering: 3,500 parishes are without a resident priest; next year 50% of priests will be at retirement age; the number of religious is back to where it was 100 years ago; and 40% of individuals do not believe in sacramental marriage. We are in "crisis... but we are a people of hope, we can make a difference and we can have an impact," Ramirez emphasized.

Although her experience may sound unique from most - Ramirez has two sons who are priests and a brother who is a bishop - she said "My family is not different than yours... It's about helping children hear God's voice and answering His call... Parents create a culture of vocations in their homes."

Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, S.S.J., Vocation coordinator for our diocese, also emphasized the importance of cultivating vocations on a parish level because "where families are vocations are." She always encourages young people to pray for their future spouse.

Ramirez spoke about a four-fold approach that her ministry has found successful in fostering vocations at parish level: prayer, awareness and education, youth, and affirmation. Promoting Adoration is key in

parishes where there is an increase of vocations. "Embed praying for vocations in what you already do at the parish level," Ramirez said, in offering Holy Hours, spiritual bouquets, and in the Universal Prayer.

Six priests have come from her parish's "Vocation Task Force" efforts. Sometimes little things, like passing out prayer cards to mothers and grandmothers and asking them to pray for vocations, or simply having conversations with people about what a vocation is, are transformative. She also spoke of the need to affirm our priests, deacons and consecrated religious by uplifting them and celebrating their birthdays and anniversaries.

In parishes with more vocations, she has observed that other factors are helpful as well. For example, a supportive pastor who visits classes and talks about his vocation story; nurturing youth ministry, where individuals are brought in to talk about their vocations; and developing a vocation ministry where there are special events, announcements, and resources available for education.

Sometimes, it's person-to-person conversations as well, reflected Ramirez.

"When I go to Mass and Adoration (and have seen a young

person coming for a while), I may say: 'Have you thought about religious life or priesthood?' There first response may be 'Oh no!' So, I respond, 'That's all right. Pray that you may see what God is calling you to do.'"

When her sons thought they had figured out what they wanted to do in life, Ramirez reminded them to spend time in prayer so that they would know what God wants.

"Most young people will have heard at least six invitations - if not more - before they'll respond," noted Ramirez.

One question that we can all ask young people, she said, is: "What is God calling you to do to serve Him in this life?"

Again, Ramirez highlighted the role of parents.

"The catechists aren't the ones who are going to answer to God one day, you are," she tells them, "It's a responsibility to bring up your children in the faith."

Some participants shared ideas about activities that involve families in their parishes. Father Mark Reilly, pastor of St. Peter's Parish in Massena, talked about his monthly "Super Sunday" gathering where families attend Mass together, stay for breakfast, prayer, whole group catechesis, and various age group breakout sessions, then join the whole group again for an activity and closing prayer.

Ramirez talked about how to build youth ministry and begin a vocation group in parishes. The hope is that participants and those who were unable to attend will work together to begin vocation ministries in their parish. Attendants were given either a free copy of the book "The Harvest" or of "Hundredfold," both which contain ready-made activities and lessons to help educate youth and involve adults to create an atmosphere that is fertile in growing vocations in the parish. More information, practical ideas, and free resources are available on the [vocationministry.com](http://vocationministry.com) website. They also have a free newsletter that you may sign-up for on their site and may be followed on social media at Vocation Ministry: Hundredfold.

## Environmental Stewardship

## Like St. Patrick

Celebrations of St. Patrick's Day this weekend included many events, but generally those events don't include discussions of the Celtic spirituality promoted by this saint. Celtic tradition emphasizes our connections to the earth and all the substances and forces of nature God created.

Because the earth sustains us, an attitude of reverence must be developed for it. Many Celtic spiritual leaders even teach that the earth is holy, like the chalice that holds the precious blood of our Savior. Though this cup is not Jesus, it periodically contains His very physical presence. Likewise, in Celtic spirituality as celebrated by St. Patrick, it is believed that the spirit and being of God moves through the matter of the planet from creation through its life span, imparting God's fingerprints on everything. While these objects are not themselves divine, we they could be compared to any object around the tabernacle.

This coming Thursday is World Water Day as proclaimed by the United Nations. Water is viewed by scientists as the most important substance for establishing and sustaining life. It is for this reason that astronomers focus much of their time and efforts scanning the universe for the presence of water.

As Christians, we are called to help maintain clean water for all. While we are blessed with an abundance of fresh water here in the North Country, many lack this essential compound. With the planet experiencing unprecedented heating, dehydration is becoming a critical a health issue.

Give thanks to God for the abundance of this gift bestowed on us. We should also contribute to organizations that help billions of people who lack clean drinking water. And we must be conscious not to contaminate the ground water, or run-off from rains that flow into local aquatic systems. The importance of water can be emphasized enough as it was the substance that Jesus used in His first miracle at Cana.

## Bishop's Public Schedule

**March 20** – 11:30 a.m. – Mother Cabrini Health Foundation Annual Bishops Meeting via Zoom

**March 21** – 11 a.m. – Chrism Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**March 22** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**March 23** – 9:30 a.m. – LEAD Annual Day of Reflection at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**March 24** – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

1 p.m. – Lenten Penance Service at St. Mary's Cathedral

**March 25** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**March 26** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**March 27** – 9 a.m. – St.

Joseph's Home Board of Managers Meeting at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg

Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

## Rest in Peace

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

**March 20** – Most Rev. Joseph H. Conroy, 1939

**March 23** – Msgr. Paul T. Joly, 1987; Deacon David L. Clark, 2020

**March 24** – Rev. George Roskwitalski, O.F.M. Conv., 1980

**March 25** – Rev. Michael D. Charbonneau, 1909

**March 26** – Rev. Jean P. Bernard, O.M.I., 1885; Rev. Thomas J. Rodgers, O.S.A., 1971; Msgr. William E. LaVallee, 1976

## Protecting God's Children

**The Diocese of Ogdensburg** is able to schedule sessions of the training, Protecting God's Children for Adults. To arrange for training, call 315-393-2920 or email jgrizzuto@rcdony.org

# Mass of Christian Burial celebrated for Sr. Patricia Ann Murtagh

A Mass of Christian burial for Sister Patricia A. Murtagh, RSM, (Sister Mary Benedicta), was celebrated on Saturday, March 16, 2024, in the Sacred Heart Chapel at Mater Christi School (former Mount Saint Mary Convent), 100 Mansfield Avenue, Burlington, Vermont

Burial followed in the Mount Saint Mary Cemetery.

Sister Patricia A. Murtagh, of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, died at McClure Miller Respite House on Feb. 28, 2024, in her 77th year of her religious life. She was 95.

Sister Patricia was born in Montpelier, Vermont, on Dec. 3, 1928, the daughter of Anne (Morse) and George Murtagh.

She entered the Sisters of Mercy on Sept.

## 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: 518-358-3145, Ext. 7179 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](http://www.ReportBishopAbuse.org)

8, 1946, and professed her vows on Aug. 25, 1949.

Sister Patricia received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Trinity College, Colchester, Vermont. She did Post-Graduate studies in Science at The University of Vermont and Murray State College in Murray, Kentucky, and Clinical Pastoral Education from Andover Newton Theological School in Tewksbury, Massachusetts.

Sister Patricia taught in parochial schools in Burlington, Barre and Middlebury, Vermont. She also taught religion classes in the surrounding parishes and was an active part of the Diocesan Religious Education Program for the Developmentally Disabled. Sister served in parish ministry and as the director of Religious Education in Woodstock, Enosburg Falls, and Northfield, Vermont.

She ministered for several years in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, based in Keeseville, New York, as pastoral associate and director of Religious Education.

She represented the Sisters of Mercy of Vermont on the Council for Religious in that Diocese, and as Vice President, President and Treasurer.

Sister Patricia ministered at the Howard Mental Health Services in Burlington, and the Tewksbury St. John's Hospital in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. She also volunteered at

Birthright and Hospice.

Sister Patricia chose as her motto in religious life, "Through Him, and With Him, and In Him," taken from the prayer from the Liturgy of the Eucharist and knowing that only in close relationship with Jesus do we walk our journey through life confident of God's loving support, fed in the Eucharist and thus enabled to grow in and share the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

All her life, Sister Patricia kept her hands busy with sewing, knitting, crocheting and embroidering. In her years of "retirement," she discovered a hidden talent for drawing and painting using acrylic, pencil, pen/ink and pastels.

She is survived by her sister-in-law, Terri Murtagh, and her nieces, nephews, cousins, as well as her sisters in faith, the Sisters of Mercy.

She was predeceased by her parents; her brothers, Rev. George O. Murtagh, and Tom Murtagh; and her sisters, Rose Mary Murtagh, Helen Peslin and Betty Hutchinson.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to the Sisters of Mercy in support of their ministerial works. Attn: Sister Laura Della Santa, 356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 101, Colchester, VT 05446.

Arrangements are in the care of Ready Funeral Home, South Chapel, 261 Shelburne Road, Burlington, Vt.



# Vatican's Holy Land collection to aid Gaza humanitarian efforts

By Matthew Santucci  
Catholic News Agency

This year's Vatican financial appeal for the Holy Land highlights the urgent humanitarian crisis facing the beleaguered population in Gaza and the pope's plea for peace.

"The outbreak of the war in Gaza, after the events of Oct. 7, paralyzed the Holy Land. The lack of pilgrims and tourists has put thousands of families in difficulty," Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, said in a letter released March 8.

The Vatican has overseen the "Pro Terra Sancta" fund, or the Pontifical Collection for the Holy Land, since 1974, when Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation *Nobis in Animo*, designated Good Friday as the day for the collection to be taken up by parishes around the world.

This year Good Friday falls on March 29. U.S. Catholics can donate online at <https://myfranciscan.org/good-friday/> or at their parishes.

Typically, 65% of the funds collected are earmarked for the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, which has maintained the holy places of Christianity in the region for more than 800 years.

The Franciscan Custody also uses the funds for humanitarian and social activities, including help in defraying "the health costs of families and for their basic necessities" as well as providing housing for needy people and young families who "pay symbolic rents."

The remaining 35% is given to the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches to support seminarians and priests as well as educational and cultural activities.

According to last year's summary report, the Pontifical Collection raised the equivalent of just over \$7 million, of which about \$3.7 million was used to support the formation of seminarians and religious brothers and sisters.

Another roughly \$2.5 million was allocated for educational activities,

which include the academic formation of "almost 3,300 young people, mostly Palestinian Muslims," at Bethlehem University in the West Bank, run by the De La Salle Brothers.

This year's appeal comes against the backdrop of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, which has had a devastating effect on the civilian population.

"With the breaking out of the way the aid has been intensified in order to support the basic and primary needs of the population exhausted by the bombardments and overcrowded within the compound of the buildings of the parish," the summary report stated.

"Pope Francis has never ceased to express his closeness to all those affected by the conflict in the Holy Land," Cardinal Gugerotti wrote. "The Holy Father intends to carry out a project with humanitarian purposes in Gaza or the West Bank, which can help the population resume a more dignified life and create job opportunities once the war is over."

The Pontifical Collection provides community aid and assistance for parochial activities for Holy Family Parish, the only Roman Catholic parish in Gaza.

According to the summary report, beneficiaries included 135 persons who are part of the Holy Family Parish community, as well as "600 persons who became homeless within the parish at the beginning of the war."

The Pontifical Collection, in collaboration with Caritas and the Latin Patriarchate, also has provided aid for 33 children suffering epidermolysis bullosa - a group of rare inherited diseases that causes the skin to blister - in the Gaza Strip through the "Butterfly Program."

Gaza is one of the poorest and most densely populated areas of Palestine.

Since the outbreak of the war more than 30,000 civilians have been killed in the enclave, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

## CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

### DOJ: U.S. prisons must offer transgender-related care

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) this week signaled that prisons throughout the United States must provide prisoners with transgender-related medical care, including "hormone therapy" and other gender-related requests. The department said in a press release on Tuesday that the Utah Department of Corrections (UDOC) had "violated the Americans with Disabilities Act" when it "failed to provide" a male prisoner with access to "hormone therapy." The prisoner in question had claimed to identify as a woman and had "repeatedly requested" access to female hormones as well as special accommodations such as "female clothing" and the modification of "pat search policies." The individual's gender dysphoria "worsened during [his] incarceration" at UDOC, the DOJ said. The department in its finding ordered UDOC to "adopt, revise, and implement relevant policies, practices, and procedures" in order to bring its practices in line with the DOJ's preferences, including "providing health care services for gender dysphoria consistent with UDOC's treatment of other medical conditions." The DOJ indicated in its announcement that its findings apply to all U.S. prisons.

### Archbishop: 'There is real danger of civil war in Haiti'

The archbishop of Port-au-Prince and president of the Haitian Bishops' Conference, Max Leroy Mésidor, shared his perspective on the difficult situation facing his country and the pastoral work of the Church in the midst of violence, kidnappings, and chaos. "Yes, there is a real danger of civil war breaking out in the country. The armed gangs act like an organized army. They are very well equipped and very well armed. The police cannot keep up with them," Mésidor told *Aid to the Church in Need* in a March 6 interview. The archbishop noted that in some regions, even his own, "there are groups of citizens who try to stand up to the gangs. So there are often clashes between these groups and the gangs, and also between the police and the gangs." Haiti, a nation that has struggled with instability for years, is now facing what some describe as a "low-intensity civil war." On March 3, the Haitian government declared a 72-hour state of emergency after armed gangs stormed the national prison in Port-au-Prince.

### Judge blocks Texas effort to close Catholic nonprofit

A Texas judge has temporarily blocked the state attorney general's efforts to close an El Paso-based Catholic nonprofit accused of facilitating human smuggling. El Paso County District Court Judge Francisco Dominguez ruled on Monday that Attorney General Ken Paxton could not revoke Annunciation House's license to operate for now or force it to immediately turn over documents. This allows the nonprofit to continue operations as normal for the time being. In his ruling, obtained by CNA on Monday, Dominguez accused Paxton of running "roughshod" over Annunciation House "without regard to due process or fair play." Located just a few minutes from the U.S.-Mexico border, the El Paso-based Annunciation House offers migrants temporary shelter, food and clothing, and advocates on their behalf.

## GET THE POPCORN

# Cabrini: A Mother Like No Other

*Editor's Note: While the previous installment of this feature indicated "Killers of the Flower Moon" would be reviewed next, the following is offered as a bonus review. "Killers of the Flower Moon" will be reviewed in the next installment.*

March 8 marked International Women's Day. That fact may be significant, but even more significant was the launch of a new movie from Angel Studios entitled "Cabrini," the story of Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini and her exploits on behalf of Italian immigrants in New York City at the end of the 19th century.

Besides "Cabrini," last year Angel Studios produced "The Sound of Freedom" which explored the tragedy of child trafficking. Several streaming service provide access to their other productions.

The Web can provide much information about Mother Cabrini, Italian citizen by birth eventually the first United States citizen Catholic to become a canonized saint. Sophia Institute Press, in the wake of this new movie, has highlighted several books about Mother

Cabrini such as *The World is Too Small* words from her cited in the movie.

Mother Cabrini's religious community, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, had established under her direction several orphanages in Italy. However, even as a small child, Francesca Cabrini had dreamed about becoming a missionary to India and China. Her many requests for the Holy See's permission to undertake this missionary activity were rebuffed with one cardinal, as we see in the movie, telling her to go back to where she belongs.

Since "no" was not part of her vocabulary, Mother Cabrini eventually meets with Pope Leo XIII who asks her to respond to the many cries for help that he has received from Italians migrating to New York expecting to find "streets paved in gold" but have instead found almost insurmountable challenges and conditions beyond the pale.

We hear it said that Church and State should not join forces. Mother Cabrini seemed to be an object of unification for the two because, once arrived in the United States, both the

archbishop and the mayor of New York, independently, but of for different reasons, said "no" to the work of the newly arrived sisters.

The movie relates the real human tragedies existing among these early immigrants. The sisters reached out to the orphans living in terrible conditions on the streets and sewers of New York City. In providing for their basic needs, the sisters also began instructing them about the faith, their dignity as children of God, and in the basic skills that they would need especially English.

Since they did not highly regard the immigrants, civil officials did their best to keep them out of sight and out of mind. Not wanting to disturb the fragile relationship between the city and the Church, the archbishop forbade Mother Cabrini from soliciting donations from people whether or not they were Catholic.

With determination and her inability to understand "no," Mother walked into the office of the editor of the New York Times and cajoles him to visit the immigrant neighborhoods and observe the reality unnoticed by non-immigrants. His subsequent articles in the paper prompted unsolicited gifts

so that the sisters could continue their work.

Inadequate healthcare existed in the city at this time. Doctors recognized her creative management skills. She responded by assembling the leadership from other ethnic communities to raise money to fund this critical need. Her determination was not favorably seen, but eventually her wisdom and educated others so that they worked with her to establish hospitals, more orphanages, and eventually Catholic schools.

No one can question whether Mother Cabrini was a woman of faith, faith that led to her eventual canonization. For some unknown reason, the movie portrays actions motivated by faith but does not articulate the gospel message. Viewers could come to the conclusion that she was an ambitious, stubborn woman, rather than a woman trying to fulfill the message of Jesus Christ and bring others to the value of the Gospel.

Bottom line: "Cabrini" can feed our faith and perhaps motivate us to do even more for our Church and our faith. Would that every parish had a Cabrini like parishioner. Experience the movie.



Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin

## A GROWING VOICE

## Changing the focus

Anyone who knows me knows I love books and movies, music and TV shows, and I often quote them in my daily conversations.

Whether it's movie lines, song lyrics, or random comments from celebrities, I can fill my day with quotes from anywhere and make them humorously relevant.

In fact, my mother once told me that if I could memorize

biology as well as I into it one of the most memorize my favorite complex fan theories that doesn't even apply. I can remember tiny funny things that some celebrities have said. So why, when it comes to paying attention during Mass, saying my prayers, or honoring God's Word, do I always seem to



Erin Savarie

I can take a simple fall short? As Lent draws slow-

ly to a close, I want to make it my goal, and I invite you to join me, to change this perspective a little.

Maybe, instead of quoting a line from that great summer movie, I could recall some of the great prayerful experiences I've had at Camp Guggenheim. Perhaps, rather than singing a line from a Taylor Swift song about finally finding love, I can share the first time God really

touched my heart.

In any case, I think we can all try to focus more on God and keep Him at the center of our lives, and that is what I shall strive to do.







**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

# ‘We must remain on the side of the people’

In Haiti, the country is in ruins, the entire region is isolated since gangs control access to the capital. People and goods can only enter the country through complicated air bridges or at the risk of loss of life and property.

“This means that even medicines and essential goods, food that does not come directly from one’s own fields cannot be delivered, and those that are delivered are always more expensive. The sick cannot be treated or even reach more equipped hospitals, in other areas of the country, not only in the capital, which means there is a lack of milk for children and food”, complains Maddalena Boschetti, a consecrated Camillian who is a “Fidei donum” missionary for the Diocese of Genoa.

“Across Haiti, not just in the capital,” continues Maddalena, who cares for disabled and sick children and their families in northwest Haiti, “insecurity and gang violence kill. It’s not just the violence on the streets of Port- au-Prince and in the big cities, but also by depriving those who no longer have the means of life and are struggling to survive in the poorest areas of the province. The hospital has no space, there are few and essential medicines, palliative care [quality of life care for those with serious a illness] does not exist. There is only pain. There is no possibility of doing a histological examination [tissue examination] or a mammogram; x-rays are of very poor quality.”

“This is a glimpse of life today in Haiti... That is why the presence of the Church and the missionary Church in this country, as in all other countries where there is war, is so important,” concludes the missionary.

“We must remain on the side of the people and continue to witness with our lives in the service of God and man that the people of Haiti, a people of martyrs, are not alone. We must put ourselves at the service of those most in need, not to abandon them, to tell them that their lives have value”.

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

## OBITUARIES

**Brushton** – Gerald D. Snyder, 87; March 11, 2024 at St. Alexander’s Church; Mass of Christian Burial March 19, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church.

**Canton** – Gerard “Rod” Tozzi, 74; Mass of Christian Burial March 16, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church.

**Canton** – Bonnie Bova Tracy, 69; Mass of Christian Burial March 18, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church.

**Croghan** – Norma Jean (David) Ver Schneider, 90; Mass of Christian Burial March 15, 2024 at St. Stephen’s Church; burial in St. Stephen’s Cemetery.

**Hogansburg** – Josephine N. Carney Tarbell, 90; Private Services.

**Malone** – Constance Peacock Davis, 75; Mass of Christian Burial March 16, 2024 at Notre Dame Church; burial in St. Patrick’s Church, Chateaugay.

**Massena** – Viola “Vie” R. Murphy, 90; Services held out of the diocese; burial in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Batavia.

**Massena** – Elaine C. (Larmay) Sauders, 97; Private Services.

**Massena** – Edith A. (LaBaff) Sherman, 92; Mass of Christian Burial March 12, 2024 at Church of the Sacred Heart; burial in Fairview Cemetery, Parishville.

**Morrisonville** – David C. Buffett, 87; Mass of Christian Burial

March 11, 2024 at St. Alexander’s Church.

**Morrisonville** – Barbara (Rock) Sorrell, 85; Mass of Christian Burial March 12, 2024 at St. Alexander’s Church; burial in St. Alexander’s Cemetery.

**Norfolk** – Margaret M. “Meg” LaDue, 81; Graveside Services May 18, 2024 at Visitation Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – Edmund J. Cole, 80; Mass of Christian Burial March 15, 2024 at Notre Dame Church.

**Ogdensburg** – Robert A. England, Sr., 82; Graveside services March 12, 2024 at Notre Dame Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – John Harold Powers, Jr., 79; Mass of Christian Burial March 16, 2024 at St. Mary’s Cathedral; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.

**Plattsburgh** – Rose M. (LaBarre) Oliver, 91; Mass of Christian Burial March 18, 2024 at St. Peter’s

Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Port Henry** – Norman Homer Monette, 86; Mass of Christian Burial March 11, 2024 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in South Moriah Cemetery.

**Redford** – David Edward Dupras Sr., 89; Mass of Christian Burial March 14, 2024 at Church of the Assumption.

**Ticonderoga** – Roberta G. (Demmerer) Abbott, 85; Mass of Christian Burial March 18, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Mary’s Parish Cemetery.

**Ticonderoga** – Patricia M. (Cerne) Brennan, 86; Memorial Mass March 16, 2024 at St. Mary’s Church.

**Watertown** – Margaret Rose “Peg” (LaRose) Aumell, 87; Mass of Christian Burial March 14, 2024 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in Brookside Cemetery.

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The Diocese of Ogdensburg

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## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

## Filled with drama

March 24

**Palm Sunday  
of the Lord's Passion**

## READINGS

Mark 11:1-10

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Mark 14:1-15:47

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

We all have more than enough drama in our lives: at work, at school, in the family, in the community. We often look at going to church on Sunday as an opportunity to escape the drama of everyday living to be in the consoling arms of Our Lord.

Palm Sunday does not free us from drama. Rather, Palm Sunday affords us the opportunity to swap our drama with the drama experienced by Christ.

The celebration begins with the blessing of palms and the story in the Gospel of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The mood quickly changes in the first reading when we hear: "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard."

Those words from Isaiah come alive in the subsequent suffering imposed upon Jesus.

The mood becomes even more somber as we move into the responsorial Psalm. Over and over again in the refrain we speak these haunting words: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Being forsaken or even the hint of being abandoned certainly heightens the drama and the sense of utter loss.

Paul introduces some thoughts of splendor and joy in his writing to the Philippians. Amid the turmoil of Jesus' suffering, of Jesus emptying himself, of being obedient to the point of death, he emphasizes that Jesus is Lord, is God.

Mark fills his narra-

tion with the many participants, some named and some unnamed. Simon the leper, the woman with the alabaster jar, Judas Iscariot, a man who has a room to rent are only a few. More and more personalities appear, each contributing in some way to the drama, each adding his or her own self to the depth of this story.

To the individuals who had active roles

in the story are added the many bystanders who call for Jesus' crucifixion. We may think of them as rabble rousers, uncouth mobs. We can accuse all we want. However, are we much different in denying Christ's way of life when we sin or when we decline to promote Christ's teaching about the dignity of life, respect for one another, commitment to the truth. They said "no" to Christ and his teaching. Do we sometimes, in our own ways, echo that "no?"

On this weekend, we begin the most important week of Jesus' life. Perhaps, this week could also become the most important week of our lives. The liturgy encourages us to follow him with a lively faith.

Palm Sunday stands as the opening scene of this week's drama. Don't forget Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and, if you can, Holy Saturday. Each day reflects an important aspect of our Christian Lives. Holy Thursday remembers the gifts of priesthood and Eucharist. Good Friday relives the suffering of Christ, the reality of the cross and crucifixion, and that his salvific act was for all people, especially underlined in the 10 prayers of intercession prayed during the liturgy. The Easter Vigil calls to mind our incorporation into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus especially through Baptism.

Hopefully, your Holy Week will be filled with spiritual drama.

## CALLED TO SERVE

## Those pesky internet questions

Who thinks up those suggested questions websites require in the name of security? Questions like: "The first name of your favorite cousin on your maternal grandmother's side?" I plead the Fifth Amendment and skip that one.

One of my choices is always, "name your first pet." I don't know if Gung Ho, our Pekinese dog when I was a kid was our first pet, but he certainly had a memorable name.

I also like "name the make of your first car." That one is easy. It was a Chevy wagon my Uncle Charlie purchased for me at the Long Island BOCES for fifty bucks. I called that car "Bus" because it was huge.

Bus made the trip from Potsdam to Queens a few times when I travelled from college to home. I always carried a five-gallon can of "reconstituted oil" in the "way-back." Bus was the kind of car that required an oil fill every 50 miles or so.

Bus is always my answer. The Simca runs a close second. The Simca wasn't really my car, but I drove that little box of a car one summer while Paul was working in Virginia. I could have chosen that one, but Bus always wins. Remind me to tell you about the Simca some day. Great story.

Back to the point of all this.

One of the questions posed by a website is

"Name your favorite Pope."

That is an unusual yet clever question. There have been seven in my lifetime. I had to look that up.

John XXIII (that is 23rd for those of you not into Roman numerals) is my favorite pope among those who reigned during my time but only because he had the most profound effect on my life. I had to shift gears during John's papacy from being a trained altar boy who learned all the Latin responses to serving Mass in the vernacular (English) and coping with

all the other Vatican II changes.

Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI had an influence, to varying degrees, on my years prior to and during my married life and my clerical life. Pope Paul was in the Chair of St. Peter when Kathy and I were married. John Paul was pope when I was ordained a deacon.

Pius XII was pope when I was little. He is remembered for his anti-Nazi assistance to Jews and others escaping Hitler. The sisters who taught us in grammar school made sure we knew who the sitting

pope was. John Paul I was pope for only about a month. May he rest in peace.

I am comfortable with Jorge Mario Bergoglio as pope. Pope Francis speaks his mind and I agree with him most of the time.

My favorite pope of all time is Peter. How can you not like a guy who gets it wrong a lot but has a heart of gold and lands on his feet regularly?

So, there's my answers: Gung Ho, Bus, and John XXIII. Hack me if you dare.

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



Deacon  
Kevin Mastellon



MARCH 20, 2024

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

**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:** Mar. 24, Apr. 14, Apr. 28

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

**Place:** Online

**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)

**FRIENDSHIP GROUP MEETING**

Our next Friendship Group meeting will be held, Father Craig MacMahon, OMV will return to talk with us about the second half (Chapter 13 - conclusion) of "Struggles in the Spiritual Life," by Father Tim Gallagher, OMV and answer your questions.

**Date:** March 21

**Time:** 7 p.m.

**Place:** Zoom

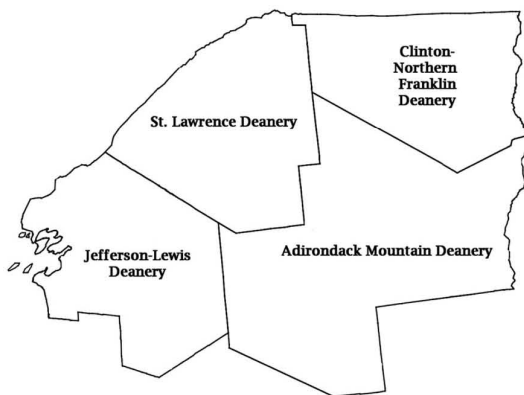
**Features:** In chapter after chapter, Father Gallagher presents a particular struggle as experienced by fictional characters and then provides the advice he gives to those who come to him for spiritual direction about that struggle. You'll gain confidence as you journey through desolation, and you'll learn to reject the enemy's ploys to infect you with a sense of hopelessness.

**Contact:** If you weren't able to make it to the last meeting, there is still time to order the book and catch up on the reading at [sophiainstitute.com](http://sophiainstitute.com) (When you enter Friendship25 at the checkout, you will receive 25% off your order.) If you haven't signed up for the Friendship Groups, here is the link: <https://mailchi.mp/sophiainstitute/friendship-groups>

## ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN

**LENENT PROGRAM**

Lake Pleasant – St. James Church



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

Parishioners are invited to send information about activities to:

North Country Catholic, PO Box 326,  
Ogdensburg, NY 13669

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

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

to host Bishop Barron's 4-week presentation on the Eucharist.

**Date:** March 20 and April 3

**Time:** 5 p.m.

**Features:** The Seder meal will be celebrated on March 27. The four presentations will follow a simple shared Lenten meal of soup and bread. Please join fellow parishioners and friends to enjoy a time together developing a deeper understanding of love for the Eucharist.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

Stations of the Cross to be held during Lent.

**Schedule:** Half an hour before the 8 a.m. Mass at St. James, Lake Pleasant and the 10 a.m. Mass at St. Ann's, Wells.

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

**FAITH, FELLOWSHIP AND REFLECTION**

Ellenburg - Join Us for "Faith, Fellowship, and Reflection.": Experience the Lenten journey like never before!

**Date:** Every Thursday during Lent

**Time:** 5 p.m. Mass, followed by soup and salad and then a video from the Symbolon Series

**Place:** St. Edmund's parish hall  
**Features:** "Symbolon: The Catholic Faith Explained" offers a systematic presentation of

our Catholic Faith, guiding you through its "big picture" with our Creed as the compass. Led by trusted Catholic teachers, this series delves into the breadth and richness of our faith. All are welcome to attend this transformative Lenten program.

**FISH FRY**

Plattsburgh – Holy Cross Parish to have fish fries during Lent.

**Date:** Fridays Feb. 16 to March 22

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

**Place:** Holy Cross Parish Center

**Cost:** \$14

**Menu:** Haddock, coleslaw, beverage, tartar and cocktail sauce, roll with butter, dessert and the following sides on these dates, Mac & cheese on Feb. 16, 23 and March 15; French Fries on March 1, 8 and 15

**Contact:** 518-563-0730 for more information.

**LENENT SERIES**

Ellenburg – Join us for a series of Lenten Talks, Sharing and Prayer.

**Time:** 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Place:** Adirondack House of Prayer

**Schedule:** March 23, Discipleship in Three Stories in Mark: come and discover the process of discipleship illustrated by

three stories in the Gospel of Mark followed by a simple lunch and a Holy Hour based on the discipleship of the Woman at the Well; April 23, Eucharist and the Call to Discipleship: Join us for a presentation on the Eucharist and the Call to Discipleship followed by a simple lunch and a Holy Hour.

**Features:** These events are free and open to all. A donation to help cover lunch will be gratefully accepted.

**Contact:** For registration, contact Sarah at 518-534-9976 or Email: [olaprayhouse@gmail.com](mailto:olaprayhouse@gmail.com)

**PALM SUNDAY BRUNCH**

Altona – Palm Sunday Brunch to be held.

**Date:** March 24

**Time:** 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Place:** Holy Angels Hall

**Cost:** Adults, \$15; Children 6-12, \$8; 5 and under, Free  
**Features:** Bake Sale, Gift Basket Raffle and 50/50.

**Contact:** for more information call 518-236-5632

**SURVIVING DIVORCE**

Plattsburgh – The Family Life Office will be offering the Surviving Divorce program.

**Date:** April 4 to June 20, Thursday evenings

**Place:** Newman Center

**Features:** Surviving Divorce features twelve video presentations that cover topics such as shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage. This program is for the newly separated/divorced and those still struggling many years later. The program helps participants restore their hope, and begin authentic healing.

**Contact:** To register, go to [www.rcdony.org/survivingdivorce](http://www.rcdony.org/survivingdivorce). For more information, contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920.

**DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**

Altona – St. Ann's Church to have Divine Mercy Celebration.

**Date:** April 7

**Schedule:** 2 p.m. - Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; 2:15 p.m. to 2:45, Confessions; 3 p.m., Singing of the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy and Benediction.

**Contact:** For inquiries, please call 518-236-5632

## JEFFERSON-LEWIS

**SPAGHETTI DINNER AND BASKET RAFFLE**

Adams – St. Cecilia's to have a Spring Spaghetti Dinner and Basket Raffle.

**Date:** March 23

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

**Cost:** Adults, \$10; Seniors, \$8; Children 10 and under, \$5

**Features:** Each basket has a value of \$20 or more. Baskets can be viewed at St. Cecilia's Kehoe Center. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5. Sales begin the weekends of March 9 & 10 and 16 & 17. Drawings will be held at 6 p.m. on March 23. [www.stceciliaandqoh.org](http://www.stceciliaandqoh.org)

**DIVINE MERCY CELEBRATION**

Watertown – Divine Mercy Sunday will be celebrated along with the Divine Mercy Novena beginning on Good Friday.

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

**Schedule:** March 29 at 3 p.m., The Novena will begin with a background of the Divine Mercy, and by praying the Chaplet in the Church.

April 7 at 3 p.m., There will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Singing of the Chaplet, confession, and a procession. You may bring a Divine Mercy picture to be blessed. **Features:** The Divine Mercy Devotion consists of making a Novena of chaplets by praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy beginning on Good Friday, March 29, making a good confession & celebrating the Feast of Mercy in church, April 7th the first Sunday after Easter; being merciful to others, placing our complete trust in Jesus, making a good confession, & receiving Communion on the Feast of Mercy

# Around the diocese

Sunday without the stain of mortal sin. The Promise - Total forgiveness of sins and punishment.

**Contact:** Judy Boulton at 315-783-7349 or Kim Tyler at 315-486-4542, or by visiting [www.thedivinemercy.org](http://www.thedivinemercy.org)

## DIVINE MERCY

Houseville - Divine Mercy to be celebrated.

**Date:** April 7

**Time:** 2 p.m.

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

**Features:** Celebrants will be Father Douglas Decker and Father Severinus Torwoe as homilist. The Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament will take place at 2 p.m. followed by the Sacrament of Reconciliation until 3 p.m. At the same time, 2 to 3 p.m., "The Miracle Box" will be shown in the church hall. Adoration will continue at 3 p.m., followed by the homily, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Benediction, the Blessing of Holy Cards and Petitions and veneration of the Divine Mercy Image. Concludes with a reception.

**Contact:** 315-348-6260 for more information.

## ST. LAWRENCE

## ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

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

**Date:** April 6

**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:** April 6

**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:** April 6

**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:** April 14 (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.

## 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](http://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](mailto:formation-stp@gmail.com)

## DIOCESAN EVENTS

## CHRISM MASS

Ogdensburg - 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.

## LEAD DAY OF REFLECTION

Ogdensburg - Welcome Catechists, Catechetical Leaders, Commissioned Lay Ministers & Candidates and all Parish Ministers to the Lead Annual Day of Reflection.

**Date:** March 23

**Time:** 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Place:** Wadhams Hall

**Cost:** \$25 per person

Theme: "What are you looking for?" John 1:38

**Features:** This event will be led by Bishop LaValley. Includes Mass, two talks, discussion, holy hour, benediction, and opportunity for confession.

**Contact:** Register at [www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection](http://www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection)

## LEAD EVENTS

The following is a list of LEAD (Leaders for Evangelization and Discipleship) events that will be held across the diocese.

**Schedule:** March 23, Ogdensburg, Wadhams Hall, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., "What Are You Looking For? Day of Reflection", John 1:38, [www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection](http://www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection), \$25

April 7, Watertown, Hearthiside, SSJ Motherhouse, 1 p.m. to 3, "Sacred Scripture the Big Picture", No Cost

April 10, Virtual, 6p.m. to 8, "Vocation of the Catechist", No Cost

April 11, Plattsburgh Regional Office, 1 p.m. to 3, "Child Methodologies and Learning Styles Part 1", No Cost

April 14, Massena, St. Mary's Social Hall 1 p.m. to 3, "Catholic Social Teaching", No Cost

April 27, Massena, St. Mary's Social Hall, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., "Using CHOSEN as a Tool for Catechesis", <https://www.rcdony.org/Chosen1>, \$10

**Features:** We are all called to know our faith and to share it with others. LEAD offers quality diocesan and regional events to support the varied work of parish ministries. These opportunities include spiritual, personal and professional development, networking and days of reflection. All involved in parish ministries are invited to attend LEAD events. If there is a cost associated with the event, parishes may receive a bill.

**Contact:** To register go to: [www.rcdony.org/certworkshops](http://www.rcdony.org/certworkshops) unless otherwise noted.

## 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

## RACHELS VINEYARD

Saranac Lake - A Rachel's Vineyard After-Abortion Healing Retreat to be held.

**Date:** May 24-26

**Place:** Guggenheim Lodge

**Features:** If you or a friend are suffering after abortion loss, you are not alone. Find hope and healing at the spring Rachel's Vineyard Retreat.

**Contact:** Register online: [www.rcdony.org/pro-life](http://www.rcdony.org/pro-life) or contact The Respect Life Office for more information: [cminer@rcdony.org](mailto:cminer@rcdony.org) or [www.rachelsvineyard.org](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org) for a list of locations.

## CAMP GUGGENHEIM

Saranac Lake - Registration is now open for Camp Guggenheim.

**Schedule:** Session 1: June 30

to July 3 (11-13 yrs old); Session 2: July 7 to July 12 (12-15 yrs old) \$425; Session 3: July 14 to July 19 (12-15 yrs old) \$425; Session 4: July 21 to July 26 (12-15 yrs old) \$425; Session 5: July 28 to Aug. 2 (12-15 yrs old) \$425; Session 6: Aug. 4 to Aug. 9 (16-18 yrs old) \$425

**Cost:** Session 1, \$200 per Camper. Session 2-6, \$425 per camper

**Features:** Are you ready to have a week of summer camp like no other? Since 1972, young people have called Guggenheim "home away from home." Located on the shores of lower Saranac Lake, Summer Camp Guggenheim is a great place to make friends, draw closer to Christ and have a whole bunch of fun in a natural setting.

**Contact:** For more information or to register go to [www.rcdony.org/youth/camp](http://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp) by June 1

## FOSTER GRANDPARENT

FGP is a local program that shows you how you can apply the skills and wisdom you have acquired throughout your life to make a difference in the lives of others. Get involved in the community and build relationships to last a lifetime. All you need to join is the ability to give the kind of comfort and love that sets a child on the path toward a successful future. If you're 55 or older and want to share your experience and compassion, you have what it takes to be a Foster Grandparent. You'll also receive a small bi-weekly, non-taxable stipend that cannot be held against any current benefits you may already have as well as paid mileage for your travel. Additionally, you receive paid holidays, vacations, sick and personal leave. Opportunities available in Franklin, Essex, Clinton, St. Lawrence and Jefferson County.

**Contact:** Melissa Howard, Volunteer Coordinator at (518) 359-7688 or E-mail: [mhoward@catcharities.org](mailto:mhoward@catcharities.org)