

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Jesus 'comes right  
into our  
midst' | Page 3

A look back  
on the stories  
of 2025 | Page 4

The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 80 Number 36

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

JANUARY 14, 2026

## No NCC next week

Due to circumstances outside our control, there will be no *North Country Catholic* published next week.

The next edition will be dated January 28.

## 'Ours is the work of God'

*Bishop Terry R. LaValley offers his reflections on ahead of the Respect Life Collection.*

On this 250th anniversary of the birth of this **one nation, under God**, we rightly defend individual liberty. We know that one of the greatest teachings of our faith is the defense of the freedom of will, the right to do as one sees fit, even if we should, by our sins, choose something contrary to the will of God.

This freedom of choice sounds so attractive. However, it is not absolute. We have allowed the concepts of independence and freedom to become so bloated that nothing can stand in their way...

No human law, no decision of a court, no State legislature can go contrary to God's law, no matter what the polls tell us.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

## CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR SEMINARIANS



On Dec. 18, as part of their 'Pennies from Heaven Program,' the Thousand Islands Council #350 of the Knights of Columbus presented \$1,000 checks to each of the Dioceses of Ogdensburg seminarians at the annual Christmas party at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg. Each summer the Knights collect donations after weekend Masses at St. Mary's Church in Clayton. These funds, along with donations from the local Knights and matching funds from The Knights of Columbus Supreme headquarters, are used to fund the Pennies from Heaven account. Seminarians use the money to pay for miscellaneous expenses. Pictured are, from left, seminarians Kevin McCullough, Deacon Dennis Ombongi, Deacon Michelet Boncoeur, Bishop Terry LaValley, Bob Heckmann KofC Past Grand Knight, Ladouceur Flarissaint and Deacon Tyler Fitzgerald.

# Pope Leo: God is found in humble places

By Victoria Cardiel  
Catholic News Agency

Celebrating the solemnity of the Epiphany in St. Peter's Basilica on Jan. 6, Pope Leo XIV said God's saving presence is revealed not "in a prestigious location" but "in a humble place" and urged Catholics to protect what is holy and newly born — "small, vulnerable, fragile" — in a world that often seeks to profit from everything.

"The child whom the Magi adore is a priceless and immeasurable good. It is the Epiphany of a gift. It does not occur in a prestigious location but in a humble place," the pope said

in his homily, delivered during a Mass that also included the closing of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, the last Holy Door to be shut at the end of the jubilee year.

Reflecting on the Gospel account of the Magi's journey (Matthew 2:1-12), Leo contrasted the joy of those who seek Christ with the fear of Herod, who "tries to take advantage of the wishes of the Magi by manipulating their quest."

"Fear does indeed blind us," he said. "Conversely, the joy of the Gospel liberates us. It makes us prudent, yes, but also bold, attentive, and creative; it beckons us along ways that are

different to those already traveled."

"Loving and seeking peace means protecting what is holy and, consequently, that which is newly born like a small, vulnerable, fragile baby. Around us, a distorted economy tries to profit from everything. We see how the marketplace can turn human yearnings of seeking, traveling, and beginning again into a mere business," he said.

The pope pointed to the "stream of innumerable men and women, pilgrims of hope" who crossed the Holy Door during the jubilee and asked what the Church offered them — and what she must offer go-

ing forward.

"Millions of them crossed the threshold of the Church. What did they find?" he asked, adding that "the spiritual searching of our contemporaries, much richer than perhaps we can comprehend, invites us to earnest reflection."

After the jubilee year, he continued, Catholics should examine whether they have learned to recognize God's presence in those they encounter: "After this year, will we be better able to recognize a pilgrim in the visitor, a seeker in the stranger, a neighbor in the foreigner, and fellow travelers in those who are different?"



NORTH  
COUNTRY  
CATHOLICPO Box 326  
Ogdensburg, NY 13669  
USPS 0039-3400**Bishop Terry****R. LaValley**

President

**Rev. Joseph A. Morgan**

Vice President

**James D. Crowley**

Secretary-Treasurer

Darcy L. Fargo

Editor &amp;

Communications Director



Publish

45 issues

per year:

Weekly except

skipping every

other week be-

ginning July through August

and skipping one week in

December by the

Diocese of Ogdensburg.

622 Washington Street,

Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.

**Editorial Office:**

622 Washington Street,

Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.

**Telephone:**

(315) 608-7556

**E-mail:**news@northcountry  
catholic.org**Entered at the****Post Office:**

Ogdensburg, NY

13669 and additional mailing

offices as

Periodical Postage.

**Subscription:****For one year:**

In-Diocese Rate: \$27

Outside of Diocese Rate: \$30

Matters for publication  
should be addressed to  
PO Box 326

Ogdensburg, NY 13669

and should be received by

Wednesday prior to

publication. Paper is

printed each Friday;

deadline is Wednesday.

Member, Catholic

Press Association.

**POSTMASTER:**

Send address changes to

North Country Catholic,

PO Box 326

Ogdensburg, NY

13669-0326

# From football to fades

He did it!

My son, Jake, completed barber school in the Central New York region on Jan. 7.

For almost five months, Jake was living in a small studio apartment by himself. In addition to attending classes four days each week, he taught himself to navigate the public transportation system. He attended a Syracuse University football game, a couple Syracuse Mets (minor league baseball) games and a Syra-

cuse Crunch (minor league hockey) game. He went to the mall in Syracuse eleven billion times, and he even attended the opening day festivities for IKEA. He visited all the Catholic churches near him, as well as the cathedral and a basilica.

Darcy L.  
Fargo

And he found a trade he loves. He really enjoys being a barber!

I'm incredibly proud of him for successfully completing school and learning a trade, but I think I'm even more proud of him for

stepping outside his comfort zone and trying to grow and learn.

Also, it boggles my mind that God put Jake on a path that led him to a trade he loves essentially through our love of football.

As part of our effort to see all 30 NFL stadiums, we visited New York City/New Jersey for the last week of the NFL regular season in early 2024. While there, I thought it would be fun for Jake to experience a city barber-shop.

Jake got an amazing haircut and his first straight razor shave in a barber shop at the pe-

riphery of the garment district of Manhattan. He loved the cut and experience, but he also saw that barber making a decent amount of money every 15-20 minutes. His interest in barbering was born.

If you had asked me in the days immediately following that trip, I would've told you it was the worst football trip we've ever taken. It was very, very cold, and a lot of fans were behaving badly at the game.

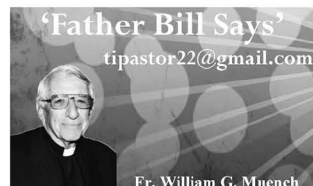
But God took that "worst football trip" and made it one of the most impactful.

It just took me a while to realize He did it.

## Different ways to pray

My next presentation for the OCIA group is in a couple of weeks on prayer and living a prayerful life. I know there are many books and articles written about prayer. What I decided to do was to ask AI to prepare a good outline for me to follow for my presentation on Prayer. It turned out to be a great outline. Today I would like to share with you my planned presentation - how I will follow this outline given to me.

The first thing that was mentioned for me was that this outline would be a pastoral presentation rather than an academic one, a reflection as much as an instruction. I was encouraged to begin with a question - a little discussion - "When was the last time you felt truly listened to?" You know? When I considered this, I had to take a moment to decide what my answer would be. I wonder, do people listen to my homilies? But, you know, last week I went to confession, and I know my confessor did listen to me.



Fr. William G. Muench

We believe that God listens to us in prayer.

So, I was asked to begin by considering why we pray. I believe we pray because God speaks to us first. God has touched my life in baptism and continued to reach out to me, leading up to my vocation. The Lord has blessed me with many gifts. I know that prayer was essential as I grew in faith. Prayer has helped me in discernment. Prayer has been important to show me how to live a good life. And also, prayer has been important in perseverance when life brought me trials.

Scripture teaches us that Jesus prayed often and is our best teacher of prayer. Jesus prayed before making major decisions as when he chose the first apostles. Jesus prayed at time of joy and sorrow as

at the Last Supper. Jesus prayed in solitude and in silence. We know that he taught the apostles the Lord's Prayer. This prayer begins with petitions of praise and a call to forgiveness. Each time we pray the Our Father, we pledge to depend on our God.

Basically, there are four forms of prayer: There is adoration - loving God for who He is. There is contrition - being a humble sinner before God and seeking forgiveness to change life and draw closer to the Lord. There is Thanksgiving - praying in gratitude to God for his blessings and his guidance to lead us to a live a grateful life. Then there is prayer of supplication - a time to bring our needs and the needs of others to the Lord. Each time we celebrate Mass, each of these forms of prayer form part of this prayer.

There is time of struggle in prayer that we must learn to solve. There are distractions, and we must develop ways to bring our mind and heart and atten-

tion back to prayer, possibly by pausing to say a familiar prayer. Then there is dryness; we know that many great saints wrote about times when God did not seem to be involved. The Lord teaches us that God is ever present to us even when prayer feels empty.

Prayer and the Sacraments - our best prayer as a Catholic is the Mass. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we stand before the Lord humbly and honestly praying for God's forgiveness and guidance. We pray as we live and we live as we pray. Prayer leads to action, charity and peace. There are so many times that we should enrich our day with short prayers. We should learn to be ready to offer even ordinary moments to our God with a short prayer.

I encourage you to find something practical like a frequent moment of prayer each day - maybe a stop for a few minutes of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in a visit to a Church.



# Respect Life: 'Ours is the work of God'

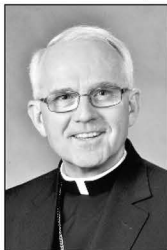
## Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On this 250th anniversary of the birth of this **one nation, under God**, we rightly defend individual liberty. We know that one of the greatest teachings of our faith is the defense of the freedom of will, the right to do as one sees fit, even if we should, by our sins, choose something contrary to the will of God.

This freedom of choice sounds so attractive. However, it is not absolute. We have allowed the concepts of independence and freedom to become so bloated that nothing can stand in their way. "I have a right to be unburdened with the care of a child." "I can do what I want with my own body or that of a loved one. Period!" "Grandpa is old anyway and he'll never get better. I would feel better if we just helped him to end his life."

No human law, no decision of a court, no State legislature can go contrary to God's law, no matter what the polls tell us. The unborn, the poor, the elderly, those who suffer disabilities, the immigrant, the ref-

ugee, the dying, the prisoner everywhere and always is to be treated as a child of God. Ours is to be a Culture of and for Life, not the dark Culture of Death.



**Bishop Terry R. LaValley**

The light of the Gospel that our Church for life seeks to spread sometimes seems pretty dim amidst the overwhelming darkness of such violence all around us today. It's good to remember ours is the work of God. Every time we become discouraged, let us go to Mary and heed her words to those standing around with empty wine jars at Cana: "Do whatever He tells you." Jesus will meet our every need.

The Diocese of Ogdensburg is blessed to have so many individuals and groups who help to build a Culture of Life. We are certainly grateful to Colleen and John Miner for leading our diocesan Pro-Life efforts. Some of those efforts include those parishioners who participate in the Gabriel Project and provide needed assistance to mothers who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy.

In my pastoral visits during the Jubilee

of Hope, I saw parishioners visiting the homebound, those in nursing homes and our hospitals. Our chaplains in correctional facilities remind the incarcerated that they are not forgotten but are loved by God. Our Catholic Charities has been there for our neighbors providing them with direct care and advocacy to which they are entitled as precious children of God. All our parishes, through pastoral outreach and the support of prayer, uphold the dignity of the human faces that are encountered.

God bless you for your prayers and support for the most vulnerable among us. Thank you for your response to this year's **Respect Life Collection**. The many grants from this collection help build a Culture of Life by transforming hearts and minds here in our beloved North Country.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

*+ Terry R. LaValley*

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

## Jesus 'comes right into our midst'

*Editor's note: The following is Bishop Terry R. LaValley's homily for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 10-11.*

Three old buddies go out on Lake Champlain early one July morning for a day of leisurely fishing. Not long after they reach the middle of the lake, their creaky, wooden rowboat springs a rather serious leak. The two fellows in the back of the boat grab their recently emptied paper coffee cups to bail the water out of the bottom of the boat. Now, picture the scene.

As they frantically toss cupful after cupful of water over the side, they notice their buddy simply sitting undisturbed in the front of the boat with his fishing line still in the water. In utter exasperation, they demand: "Why are you just sitting there? Why don't you grab your cup

and start bailing, too?" Their friend calmly answered, "But the hole is in your end of the boat."

Imagine if Jesus had adopted that attitude when it came to His acceptance of John's baptism of repentance. He could have said, in effect: "Sin is a problem on your end, not mine. It's my prerogative as the sinless One, the Son of God, to skip this ritual that doesn't really apply to me." The Son of God could have had the attitude - "the hole in the boat is on your side - you do the bailing!"

By accepting the baptism of John, Jesus resists "pulling rank" and remaining aloof from the messiness of human sin; instead, He puts Himself "in the same boat" as the rest of humanity even as the "voice from heaven" confirms His unity with the Father and the Spirit.

Think of the stereotypical "boss's son" who can make life miserable for workers in the family business; he manipulates and lords it over them. Jesus hates this kind of status and attitude and chooses empathy and service. Shortly after His baptism, Jesus is tempted in the desert and taunted: "If you are the Son of God, prove it." Yet, He resists this invitation to a power play and proves His relationship to God through obedience and trust.

What God the Father tells Jesus after His baptism is what He wants to say to each one of us: "You are my beloved child; with you, I am well pleased." Jesus came to earth in order to call forth God's love on sinful humanity, to lift us back into membership in God's family. Through the years, the image of a big boat, a ship, has been used as

an image of the Church, the family of God. We encounter many headwinds these days and the seas are rough, but with Jesus beside us, we will never capsize.

I've mentioned before that on the wall next to the door in my chapel at my house there is a print of a boat on stormy seas. Jesus is sitting in the back of the boat, asleep. Two frightened men in front are holding on for dear life. As I leave my chapel each morning, I gaze at that picture and wonder what kind of stormy seas I will face in the day ahead. It's a reminder for me to remember Who's in the boat with me. All will be well.

God sees our misery, our sinfulness and instead of being repelled by it, He comes right into our midst. He actually puts Himself as close to us as possible, sharing even in our sufferings.

He knows it's hard for us to trust Him and follow Him, so He decided to come and sit by our side along the rough and turbulent waters of life, to be our strength in times of struggle, to assure us that He will never abandon us. That's why He took our place in the waters of baptism and on the wood of the Cross.

Later in the Gospels, we hear the genealogy of Jesus, tracing His ancestry all the way back to Adam. In that genealogy, Adam is described as the "son of God" because he had been created directly by God, as the first human. So, from the beginning, we were called to be members of God's family.

Our baptism is so important. It opens up new vistas for us. God believes in us. In Victor Hugo's novel, *Les Misérables*, the newly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



# 2025 Bishop's Fund reaches goal

By Valerie Matthews

Director of Bishop's Fund Appeal  
& Stewardship

With a grateful heart, Bishop Terry R. LaValley is pleased to announce that through the generous support of over 5,900 households, the 2025 Bishop's Fund Appeal has reached its goal of \$1,370,000.

In responding to the generosity, Bishop LaValley commented "I am deeply grateful to the many parishioners throughout the North Country and beyond who have so generously supported the ministries and programs of the Diocese of Ogdensburg with their contributions to the annual Bishop's Fund Appeal. United We Bring Hope! Your thoughtfulness and generosity are truly a sign of hope to all whom we serve. Thank YOU! I also wish to extend my deep appreciation, once again, to our priests and deacons whose strong leader-

ship and personal contributions support this vital appeal each year. We are so blessed with Valerie Mathews coordinating our Bishop's Fund Office. With Scott Lalone, Executive Director of our Development Office and Lorraine Carney, Office Assistant, we are led by very competent and joy-filled members of our faith family. I am extremely grateful for their generous service."

As of January 9, 2026, the Bishop's Fund Appeal has collected \$1,371,232.22 in gifts received with \$111,180.66 remaining in pledges promised. The Bishop's Fund Office will continue to receive payments on pledges until the close of the fiscal year on June 30, 2026.

The Bishop's Fund Appeal continues to provide the following programs and ministries of the Diocese of Ogdensburg: Education of Seminarians; Family Life Ministry; Natural Family Planning; Respect Life Ministry;

Formation for Ministry Program; Office of the New Evangelization; Continuing Education and Formation of Priests; Priests' Graduate Studies; Vocations; Permanent Deacons; Deacon Formation; Tuition Assistance Program; Campus Ministry Program; Matching Gifts to Catholic Schools; Department of Faith Formation; Youth Ministry; Young Adult Ministry; Gugenheim Center; Department of Worship and the Bishop's Good Samaritan Fund.

It is our hope that at least 6,800 households will participate in the year's Bishop's Fund Appeal. We are currently 837 households away from our participation goal. All funds received over this year's goal will provide additional emergency grants to individuals and families in need through the Bishop's Good Samaritan Fund. During the year, many families and individuals reach out to their pastor for help with unex-

pected emergencies. Pastors, on behalf of a parishioner or community member requests Bishop LaValley's assistance to help the person or family in need. Requests for assistance continue to be on the rise as people are experiencing high medical costs, increased fuel and utility costs, home, furnace, and car repairs. The Bishop's Good Samaritan Fund also provides assistance to food pantries, soup kitchens, outreach centers and snack pack programs so that they many continue to assist families in need.

If you have made a pledge to the 2025-2026 Bishop's Fund Appeal, you are encouraged to mail your final pledge payment before June 15, 2026. If you have not made a gift or wish to make an additional gift, donations can be mailed to: The Bishop's Fund Appeal, PO Box 150, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 or made online at [www.rcdony.org/giving/donate-now-bishop-s-fund](http://www.rcdony.org/giving/donate-now-bishop-s-fund).

## Year in review: A look back on 2025

*The following is the North Country Catholic's annual look back at the news highlights of the previous year. It was omitted from last edition due to space constraints.*

- Jan. 3 - The Vocations Committee for St. Mary's Cathedral Parish in Ogdensburg, St. Raphael's in Heuvelton and Saints Philip and James in Lisbon holds their first trivia night to raise funds to help support diocesan seminarians. The event has become an annual event, and the second trivia night was to be held Jan. 5, 2026.

- Jan. 15 - Knights of Columbus Monsignor Morris L. Dwyer Council #255 in Plattsburgh announces that they had reached a donation milestone at their annual grant award dinner. The Knights donated over \$1 million to local charitable organizations since 2007.

- Jan 29 - Bishop Terry

R. LaValley announces that the generous support of more than 6,200 households enabled the Bishop's Fund Appeal to surpass its goal of \$1.3 million.

- Jan. 27 - Catholic Schools around the diocese mark the start of Catholic Schools Week.

- January - Father Scott R. Seymour is appointed executive director of Catholic Charities. The organization says it continues to build on its 106 years of service.

- Feb. 12 - At the Education Council of Immaculate Heart Central in Watertown, the school's Board of Governors appoints Amy Mitchell as the school's new principal effective July 1.

- Feb. 13 - Sister Mary Camillus O'Keefe, a Sister of Mercy of the Americas, celebrates her 100th birthday shortly before the sisters in the Lake Placid convent relocated to a Sisters of Mercy

home in Westchester.

- March 5 - Pilgrimage Passports highlighting Jubilee Year of Hope pilgrimage locations around the diocese, are released. Copies are distributed in the pilgrimage churches and in the North Country Catholic.

- March 9 - Catechumens and candidates from around the diocese gather with Bishop Terry R. LaValley at St. Mary's Cathedral for the annual Rite of Election and Call to Conversion.

- March 19 - Bishop Terry R. LaValley announces the approval of plans for 21 pastoral care areas as part of the 2025-30 Living Stones planning process.

- March 22 - A women's discernment event, "Let Go, Let God," a joint project of the diocesan Vocations Office and Campus Ministry, is held at St. Mary's Church in Canton.

- March 26 - Bishop

Terry R. LaValley announces the retirement of Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, diocesan Vocations coordinator, and Sister Bernadette Marie Collins, episcopal delegate for Religious. Both Sisters of St. Joseph, their retirements became effective July 1. Bishop LaValley appoints Deacon Garry Stevens to fill both roles.

- April - Augustinian Academy reaches its goal of collecting 1,000 pounds of plastics, products that typically can't be recycled, to be recycled into composite decking and manufacturing materials. For its efforts, the school receives both a bench made of the recycled materials and recognition in the Green Apple Awards, a project of the Diocese of Ogdensburg Laudato Si Committee and the Diocese of Syracuse Education Office.

- April 10 - Bishop Terry R. LaValley is joined by priests from around the

diocese at St. Mary's Cathedral to celebrate the annual Chrism Mass.

- April 18 - The Immaculate Heart Central Mystery Players conclude their 45th season on Good Friday with their prayer in performance at St. Patrick's Church in Watertown.

- April 23 - Bishop Terry R. LaValley celebrates Mass for the deceased pope.

- April 26 - Highway to Heaven, a Jubilee Year of Hope event focused on the Eucharist, is held at St. Agnes Church and School in Lake Placid.

- May 7 - The conclave to select a new pope begins.

- May 8 - On May 8, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost is elected Pope Leo XIV by the College of Cardinals as the 266th successor of St. Peter, making him the 267th pope and the first from the United States.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



# Year in review

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

• May 20 – Bishop Terry R. LaValley celebrates the annual Jubilee Mass, part of the Presbyteral Assembly held in Lake Placid. Honored jubilarians – priests celebrating milestone anniversaries – include Father John L. “Jack” Downs and Father Gilbert B. Menard, 70 years; Father L. William Gordon, 60 years; Father Lawrence Marullo, 50 years; Father Guy F. “Bill” Edwards, Father Michael I. Miller, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, and Father Raymond J. Moreau, 40 years; and Father Theodore A. Crosby, Father Joseph W. Giroux, and Father Michael H. Marzan, 25 years.

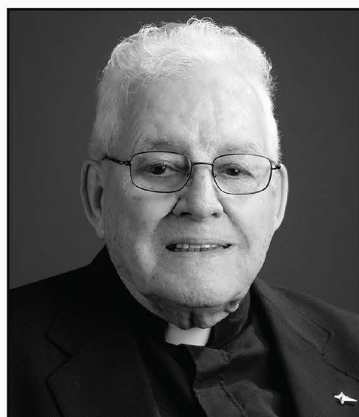
• May 22 – Dr. Michael Szostak, a concert organist from Warsaw, Poland, performs at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Ogdensburg, a Jubilee Year of Hope event.

• May 22 – An Indigenous Human Trafficking Listening Session in Akwesasne draws participation from Patrick Dussault, Herbie Herne, Felicitas Frugo Onetti, Amie Barnes, Joyce Muchan, Dr. RJ “Dolly” McDonald, Father Jerome Pastores, Chief Lisa Francis Benedict, Lisa Zeran, Chief Cindy Francis Mitchell, Hattie Taylor, Father Scott Seymour, Diane Noiseux, Bishop Terry R. LaValley, William La Page, Shelly Jacobs, Susan Griskonis, Matt Rourke, Father Michael Carson, Colin McNamara, Hawi Thompson, John Bay, Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, and Julia Kaplan Toce.

• May 24 – Bishop Terry R. LaValley ordains three deacons, Deacon Michelet Boncoeur, Deacon Dennis Ombongi and Deacon Tyler Fitzgerald, at Sacred Heart Church in Massena. The three men are seminarians for the diocese and are scheduled, God willing, to be ordained to the priesthood in 2026.

• May 28 – Bishop Terry R. LaValley announces 14 priest assignment changes, including three retirements. Father Douglas A. Decker, Father Robert L. Decker and Father Donald A. Robinson. Father Sony G. Pulickal became pastor of the Catholic Community of St. Peter and St. Mary and St. Hedwig in Lowville; Father James V. Teti became pastor of St. James Ma-

## MAY THEY REST IN PEACE



Father Gilbert B. Menard

We remember in prayer the following clergy and consecrated religious who passed into eternal life in 2025.

### THE HOLY FATHER

**Pope Francis** died April 21 at age 88 in Vatican City on Monday of the Octave of Easter.

### PRIESTS

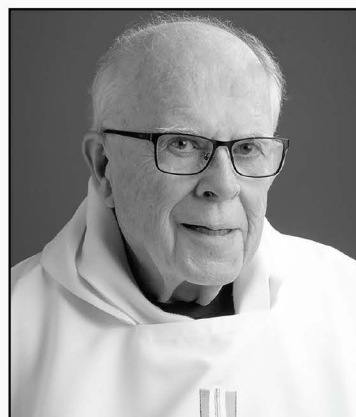
**Father Gilbert B. Menard** died at Plattsburgh Rehabilitation and Nursing Center on Aug. 8 at age 96; and **Father Joseph P. Kennehan** died at St. Joseph’s Home in Ogdensburg on Oct. 12 at age 89.

### DEACON

**Deacon Bruce Wayne Daugherty**, who served in Watertown, Clayton and Alexandria Bay, died March 17 at age 72.

### CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS

**Sister Mary Virgilyn Grabowski**, a Felician Sister, died Jan. 11 at age 81; **Sister**



Father Joseph P. Kennehan

**Teresa Byrne**, an Ursuline Sister, died Feb. 14 at age 94; **Sister Marilyn C. McGillan**, a Sister Adorer of the Precious Blood, died March 21 at age 87; **Sister Anna Dumas**, an Ursuline Sister, died May 11 at age 77; **Sister John Helen Main**, a Grey Nun of the Sacred Heart, died May 11 at age 86; **Sister James Marie Kelly**, a Sister of St. Joseph, died May 12 at age 89; **Sister Mary Audrey Hallahan**, of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, died July 6 at age 95; **Sister Anne Boyer**, a Grey Nun of the Sacred Heart, died Aug. 18 at age 95; **Sister Joan McCarthy**, an Ursuline Sister, died Oct. 29 at age 100; **Sister M. Stephanie Frenette**, a Dominican Sister of Hope, died Nov. 3 at age 84; **Sister Claire Michel Fortier**, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis, died Dec. 16 at age 93; and **Sister Helen Hurley**, a Dominican, died Dec. 18 at age 89.

jor Church in Lake Pleasant and St. Ann’s Church in Wells; Father Albert J. Hauser, became Senior Parochial Vicar of The Roman Catholic Community of Brownville and Dexter in Brownville, St. Andrew’s Church in Sackets Harbor, St. Cecilia’s Church in Adams, and Queen of Heaven Church in Henderson; Father Joseph W. Giroux became pastor of the Catholic Community of Moriah in Port Henry, St. Elizabeth Church in Elizabethtown and St. Philip of Neri Church in Westport; Father Severinus Torwoe became pastor of St. Alphonsus-Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Tupper Lake, St. Hen-

ry’s Church in Long Lake, and St. Therese Church; Father Bryan D. Stitt assumed additional duties as pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Potsdam and St. Patrick’s Church in Colton; Father Shane M. Lynch became pastor of The Roman Catholic Community of Brownville and Dexter in Brownville, St. Andrew’s Church in Sackets Harbor, St. Cecilia’s Church in Adams, and Queen of Heaven Church in Henderson; Father Medenel Angrand assumed additional duties as pastor of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Crown Point; Father Clement Rimonds, HGN, assumed additional duties as pastor of The

Catholic Community of St. Philip of Jesus and St. Joseph in Willsboro; Father Matthew S. Conger became parochial vicar of St. André Bessette Parish in Malone; Father Jude Nnadibuagha became parochial vicar of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Watertown; Father Jose Kanyiankunnel John, HGN, became parochial vicar of Holy Cross Parish in Plattsburgh; Father Scott A. Belina became parochial vicar of St. Mary’s Church in Potsdam, St. Patrick’s Church in Colton and The Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary’s in Canton; Deacon Paul White, in addition to The Catholic Community of Moriah in Port Henry, was assigned to St. Elizabeth Church in Elizabethtown and St. Philip Neri Church in Westport; Deacon James M. Snell, in addition to The Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary in Canton, was assigned to St. Mary’s Church in Potsdam and St. Patrick’s Church in Colton; Deacon Richard L. Burns, in addition to St. Mary’s Church in Potsdam and St. Patrick’s Church in Colton, was assigned to The Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary in Canton; Deacon Lawrence R. Ambeau, in addition to St. Cecilia’s Church in Adams and Queen of Heaven Church in Henderson, was assigned to The Roman Catholic Community of Brownville and Dexter in Brownville and St. Andrew’s Church in Sackets Harbor; Deacon Gerald F. Bouchard, in addition to The Roman Catholic Community of Brownville and Dexter in Brownville and St. Andrew’s Church in Sackets Harbor, was assigned to St. Cecilia’s Church in Adams and Queen of Heaven Church in Henderson.

• May 28 – Father Mark R. Reilly, pastor of St. Peter’s Parish in Massena and dean of the St. Lawrence Deanery, is awarded the LeMoyné College Ignatian Award, Daniel J. Mulhauser, SJ, Veterans Service. The award recognizes exceptional support to the veteran and/or military community.

• June 5 – Sister Louella Pelletier, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis, celebrates her 60th jubilee.

• June 6 – Bishop Terry R. LaValley presided at a ceremony

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



## Environmental Stewardship

## God made the cold

All aspects of nature have a purpose. The components of our world were specifically and purposefully crafted by God to play some role in the workings of His elaborate and magnificent web of life. While many facets of our universe are especially enjoyed by humans, like sunsets, singing birds and bacon, others like leeches, mosquitoes and broccoli are viewed in an opposite way.

Possibly none of the God's handiworks are treated with such disdain as the bitter cold. Some philosophical individuals insist cold is not a creation but air that experienced a lack of God's creative attention. Regardless, cold is fundamental to shaping the overall ecology of northern regions.

Countless species of plants and animals are unable to tolerate our winter, which prevents them from residing in this region. 150 years ago, the opossum, turkey vulture and several species of ticks and spiders found life north of the Mohawk Valley impossible because of the weather conditions. Over the decades, climate change has enabled many forms of life to gradually spread northward and establish a presence.

It may seem tempting this time of year to mitigate the cold by accelerating global warming for a month or two by raising your carbon footprint. Unfortunately, the climate doesn't work this way. As good stewards of God's creations, we should do just the opposite. We should try to reduce our heating needs as much as possible. Keeping a home warm is one of the biggest energy requirements for most people, and if you heat with fossil fuel, it probably is the most impactful to the atmosphere.

Intense cold, like lightning, fire and flowing water, is a component of nature that can profoundly impact its surroundings. Being outdoors on a sub-zero night when the air is calm can be as uplifting as watching a sunset over a lake in summer. Cold is a gift from our Creator, and we should thank Him for it rather than question His sanity in devising it.

## Bishop's Public Schedule

**Jan. 14** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 19-23** – New York State Bishops' Retreat at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat and Spirituality Center in Venice, Florida

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

**Jan. 27** – 9:45 a.m. – Episcopal Council Meeting at Bishop's Residence followed by Lunch

**Jan. 28** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

## Protecting God's Children

**The Diocese of Ogdensburg** is able to schedule sessions of the training, Protecting God's Children for Adults. This required training addresses child abuse, the methods and means by which abusers commit abuse, and the five steps to prevent abuse from occurring and stop it from continuing. To arrange for training, call 315-393-2920 or email lshoen@rcdony.org

## To Report Abuse

**If you have a complaint** of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terrienne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terrienneyanulavich@yahoo.com; Phone: 518-569-0612; 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

## Rest in Peace

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

**Jan. 14** – Rev. John M. Neenan, M.S.C., 1879; Rev. Benedict Scharff, O.F.M.Conv., 1964; Deacon Francis Bradley, 2000

**Jan. 15** – Msgr. James Joseph Lacey, 1942

**Jan. 16** – Msgr. James Alexander Fix, 1969; Rev. Herbert Skurski, O.F.M.Conv., 1996

**Jan. 17** – Rev. Francis A. Menard, 2009

**Jan. 18** – Rev. Hugh Shields, 1881; Rev. Telesphore Campeau, 1935; Rev. Paul Martin Hagan, 1980

**Jan. 19** – Rev. Arthur P. Condon, 1966; Rev. Aloysius R. Isele, 1974

**Jan. 20** – Rev. William D. O'Byrne, 1928; Rev. Joseph Erhard, O.M.I., 1936; Rev. Victor Viaud, O.M.I., 1937; Rev. Joseph Pontur, 1940

**Jan. 21** – Rev. Albert W. Giroux, 1991; Rev. Adam Zajdel, O.F.M. Conv., 1997; Rev. Patrick C. Callaghan, O.F.M., 2001

**Jan. 22** – Rev. James Edward Joy, 1950

**Jan. 23** – Rev. Jeremiah C. Manning, 1909

**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 Thameling, 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

## Beverly Murray died January 4

Services for Beverly J. Murray, 90, Clayton will be held in the spring.

Beverly passed away Sunday afternoon, January 4, 2026, at St. Joseph's Home, Ogdensburg where she had resided since August 2019.

Beverly was born December 16, 1935 in Syracuse, the daughter of William J. and Helen M. (Baldwin) McCloy. She was a graduate of St. Anthony of Padua and Powelson Business Institute, both in Syracuse. On October 22, 1955 she married John R. Murray at St. Anthony of Padua Church, Syracuse with Fr. James Nicholson officiating. Deacon Murray died April 8, 2024.

Beverly's pride and joy was in raising her eight children and being a homemaker. Beverly also was an executive secretary for many years at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. Having spent her childhood summers in Brockville, Ontario, Beverly held a lifelong passion for the St. Lawrence River and the Thousand Islands. The purchase of their retirement home on the River in Clayton was the fulfillment of a lifetime's dream.

Beverly was a former communicant of Our Lady of Lourdes, Syracuse, where she was a member and former president of their Altar Rosary Society and St. Mary's Church, Clayton. Beverly volunteered at Hawn Memorial Library, the Opera House, and Antique Boat Museum and was a member of Clayton Traveler's Club. She enjoyed reading, spending time with her



Beverly Murray

grandchildren, and her days on the River.

Beverly is survived by her seven children, John R. Murray Jr., Chittenango, Linda Stagnitta and Thomas Booth, Alexandria Bay, William P. Murray and wife Hazel, Nicaragua, David A. Murray, Phoenix, AZ, Daniel J. Murray and wife Wendy, Sumter, SC, Scott A. Murray, Syracuse, and Christopher J. Murray and wife Jessica, Clayton; eight grandchildren and ten great grandchildren; and several nieces, and cousins. Along with her husband, she was predeceased by her son Steven F Murray, two daughters-in-law, Cheryl and Becky Murray, and sister, Marilyn Hirsh and husband Richard.

The family would like to thank the staff at St. Joseph's Nursing Home for their care and devotion to Beverly and in lieu of flowers, please make donations to St. Joseph's Foundation at 950 Linden St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669.

Arrangements are entrusted with Cummings Funeral Service, Inc., Clayton and online condolences to Beverly's family may be posted at www.cummingsfuneral.com.



# A look ahead: 2026 Midterms hinge on races in Maine, North Carolina

By Daniel Payne  
Catholic News Agency

Key elections in November 2026 could reshape the balance of power in the U.S. government, potentially upending the current Republican trifecta in Washington and offering a referendum on President Donald Trump's second term in office.

Thirty-three seats in the U.S. Senate are up for election, while two states will hold special elections. All 435 districts of the U.S. House of Representatives, meanwhile, are holding elections.

Republicans presently control the White House and both chambers of Congress, but their majorities in both legislative chambers are narrow; Democrats need only a net gain of four seats to flip the Senate and a net of three districts to take control of the House.

As is often the case, many of the races are seen as foregone conclusions, with Republican and Democratic candidates in most states and districts comfortably assured of victory. Yet key toss-up races could end up shifting some control of the national government to Democrats.

Chief among them is the Senate race in Maine, where GOP Sen. Susan Collins is facing reelection in a state Trump lost by about 7 points in 2024.

Maine has voted strongly in favor of Democratic presidential candidates for many years — the last time a Republican president took the state was 1988 — and while Collins has easily won election or reelection five times there since 1996, this year's race could present a more significant challenge for the Republican, due in part to Trump's declining favorability ratings.

Collins, who identifies as Catholic, next year may find herself racing against state Gov. Janet Mills, who is currently vying for the state's Democratic nomination. The University of Virginia's Center for Politics switched Maine to a "toss-up" election in October, citing Collins' middling approval numbers and Mills' potential challenge.

The Center for Politics points to three other "toss-up" Senate elections in 2026, those of Georgia, North Carolina, and Michigan.

In North Carolina, Republican Sen. Thom Tillis will not seek reelection, presenting an opportunity for Democrats to pick up another seat. Former state Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper has declared his candidacy there, as has former Republican National Committee Chair Michael Whatley.

A Democratic stronghold for years, the North Carolina state government has overall leaned more Republican since around 2010, though GOP presidential candidates have done well there for longer. Yet the state has overwhelmingly voted for Democratic governors for decades with few exceptions, and Trump's vulnerability — polls show high levels of disapproval of the president there — could give Democrats a boost in a state they likely need to win to obtain control of the Senate.

In Georgia, Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff is expected to defend the seat he won in 2021, though he could be ousted in the primary election in May, when Republicans will also choose their candidate.

In Michigan, meanwhile, Democratic Sen. Gary Peters is retiring, leaving Democrats scrambling to elect a new candidate; no clear challenger has yet emerged in either party there, with a primary election set for Aug. 4.

Though Michigan hasn't elected a Republican senator in about 25 years, the state's critical role in national elections will likely render it a competitive race into November. Trump beat Kamala Harris for the state's electors by just over 1% in 2024; he lost that state to Joe Biden in 2020 by about 3%.

Analysts, meanwhile, say the U.S. House is a potential flip for Democrats. The Center for Politics projects a tentative 211-208 Democratic majority there.

Outgoing Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi, meanwhile, predicted last week that Democrats would "win the House back" in November, declaring that Republican control of Congress will be "over" in 2027.

## CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

### Bishops invite faithful to pray novena for life Jan. 16-24

The United States bishops have invited Catholics to pray an annual Respect Life novena for the protection of the unborn. The Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is sponsoring the "9 Days for Life" prayer that will begin on Friday, Jan. 16, and end on Jan. 24. The novena is to be prayed in observance of the annual Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children on Jan. 22. The 2026 "9 Days for Life" marks the 14th time the novena has taken place. Since it began, the prayer has reached hundreds of thousands of people in over 100 countries spanning six continents, according to the USCCB. To sign up, visit [9daysforlife.com](http://9daysforlife.com).

### Trump urges GOP flexibility on taxpayer-funded abortion

President Donald Trump is asking congressional Republicans to be more flexible on taxpayer funding for abortions as lawmakers continue to negotiate an extension to health care subsidies related to the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Some federal subsidies that lowered premiums for those enrolled in the Affordable Care Act expired in December. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that the average increase to premiums for people who lost the subsidies will be about 114%, from \$888 in 2025 to \$1,904 in 2026. The exact costs will be different, depending on specific plans. Trump has encouraged his party to work on extending those subsidies and is asking them to be "flexible" on a provision that could affect tax-funded abortion. Democrats have proposed ending the restrictions of the Hyde Amendment, which bans direct federal funding for abortions in most cases. "Now you have to be a little flexible on Hyde," the president said. "You know that you got to be a little flexible. You got to work something [out]. You got to use ingenuity. You got to work. We're all big fans of everything, but you got to be flexible. You have to have flexibility."

### Holy Door closes as faithful prepare for special 2033 jubilee

As Pope Leo XIV closes the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica on Jan. 6, the feast of the Epiphany, and the 2025 Jubilee Year comes to an end, the Catholic Church begins to anticipate another jubilee — one that will mark 2,000 years since Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Although traditionally a jubilee only happens every 25 years, the Holy Door is slated to reopen for a special 2033 Jubilee when the Church will celebrate the Holy Year of the Redemption. To mark the occasion, Pope Leo has called on people to travel to the Holy Land, where Jesus once lived and died. The pope spoke about the special celebration at a meeting with Christian leaders in Istanbul on Nov. 29 during his visit to Turkey. His address, marking the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, discussed the importance of the historic council as well as evangelization and a call for prayers for future meetings, according to the Holy See Press Office. The Holy Father concluded his talk by inviting listeners "to travel together on the spiritual journey that leads to the Jubilee of the Redemption in 2033, with the prospect of a return to Jerusalem," the press office said.



## ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN

**ALPHA**

Lake Placid – ALPHA to be held, all are invited no matter your background or beliefs.

**Date:** Starting Feb. 22 on Sundays for 11 weeks There are breaks for Spring vacation and Easter

**Time:** 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

**Place:** St. Agnes School

**Features:** Meet new people and unpack the Christian faith together. Alpha is for anyone who's curious. No judgement, no pressure. Each session unpacks a big question of life, faith and purpose and is designed to spark conversation. This is a free event and includes a delicious lunch.

**Contact:** For more information contact Debra Lennon at lennondebra26@gmail.com, 518-524-4388

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

**CELEBRATION OF LIFE PLANNING**

Ellenburg Center - The Bereavement and Community Support Committee of Saint Bernard's and Saint Edmund's Parishes invites the public to a "Celebration of Life Planning Expo."

**Date:** Jan. 17 (if inclement weather, it will be Jan. 24)

**Time:** 10 a.m.

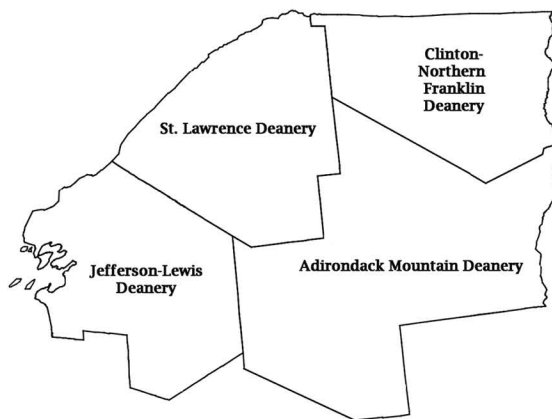
**Place:** St. Edmund's Parish Hall

**Features:** This free community event will provide helpful resources for families wishing to prepare for their end-of-life needs—spiritually, practically, and with peace of mind. Participants will include grief counselors, estate planners, legal and financial advisors, funeral directors, clergy, musicians, caterers, florists, monument and memorial specialists, cemetery and mausoleum representatives, and local organizations that assist families during times of loss.

**Contact:** For more information, contact Mary Ellen Tomo at (518) 569-4447

**WINTER BREAKFAST**

Altona – Step into the magic of



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@northcountycatholic.org.

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

winter and enjoy breakfast with the company of friends.

**Date:** Jan. 25

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Place:** Holy Angels Hall

**Cost:** Adults, \$13, Children 5-12, \$7; under 5, Free

**Menu:** Eggs, Egg cups, Sausage, Bacon, Pancakes, French toast, Cinnamon Rolls, Home Fries, Coffee, Tea and Juice.

**Features:** There will also be a lottery tree. Breakfast is prepared by the Mooers K of C.

**SOAKING PRAYERS SESSIONS**

Plattsburgh – Come enjoy a relaxing prayer opportunity the first Monday of the month.

**Date:** Feb. 2, March 2, April 6, May 4 and June 1

**Time:** New time, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30, no more evening sessions.

**Place:** Newman Center

**Features:** Session includes a praise and worship segment followed by scripture readings, soaking prayer and healing prayers. Led by Eve McGill, Living Waters Ministry. All are welcome.

**Contact:** evemcgill16@charter.net

**FIRST FRIDAY**

Champlain – St. Mary's to have Mass, Exposition and Benediction every first Friday of the month.

**Date:** Feb. 6

**Schedule:** 9 a.m. Mass followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. 11 a.m. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

**HOT DINNERS**

Malone – St. André Bessette Parish to offer free community hot dinners.

**Date:** Every Wednesday

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

**Place:** St. André Outreach Center

**Features:** Food is prepared by the BOCES Culinary Arts Students. Eat in only.

**HOUSE SITTERS**

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

**Time:** The responsibility is to arrive by 10 a.m. on your chosen day(s) and remain on premises until 2 p.m. to welcome visitors.

**Features:** snack items on hand along with tea, coffee, soda, and bottled water. Training will be provided on the history of the House of Prayer, its mission, and the various ways to carry out this gentle ministry of hospitality for those seeking time in a home of Mary to listen to our Lord, browse in the library. Flexible schedule and hours are fine.

**Contact:** If interested in vol-

unteering for one day a month, or week, or more, please call Sarah Anderson at 518-534-9976.

## JEFFERSON-LEWIS

**PANCAKE BREAKFAST**

Carthage – Pancake Breakfast to be held in support of Augustinian Academy, sponsored by the Carthage K of C Father John Cosmic #291 and Ave Maria Circle.

**Date:** Jan. 11, Feb. 8

**Time:** 8 a.m. to noon

**Place:** St. James Community Room

**Cost:** Adults, \$10; Seniors, \$8; Children under 10, \$5; Family of 4, \$30

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

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

**HOLY HOUR AND DIVINE MERCY**

Houseville – Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Divine Mercy Chaplet will be observed the first Sunday of the month.

**Date:** Feb. 1

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

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

**Contact:** 315-348-6260

**SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER**

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

**Date:** Feb. 7

**Time:** 4 p.m. to 7

**Place:** St. Mary's Parish Center

**Cost:** Adults, \$12; Seniors, \$10; Children 12 and under, \$5; under 5, Free; Sauce or meatballs available for \$6 per quart

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

## ST. LAWRENCE

**MONTHLY BRUNCH**

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

**Date:** Jan. 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.

**BIBLE STUDY**

Massena – Come join us for the most popular Catholic Bible study of all time that will take you around the world, uncovering the story of salvation.

**Date:** Tuesdays starting Jan. 20 for 8 weeks

**Time:** Two time options, 2 p.m. to 4 or 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 with the option to join in by zoom in the evening

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

**Cost:** free will donation to cover the materials

**Contact:** www.massencatholics.com Email: massenabm@rcdony.org

**ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS**

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

**Date:** Feb. 7

**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:** Feb. 7

**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.

**MENS GROUP**

Massena – Men's group to meet the first Saturday of every month.

**Date:** Feb. 7

**Time:** 9 a.m. Mass with meeting to follow

**Place:** Sacred Heart Church



## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

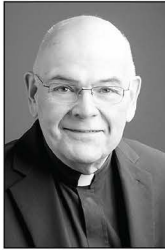
## Following God's call

The name Michelangelo is familiar to us. We speak his name with reverence based on the outstanding art that he produced, art which portrays in graphic reality the realities of our Christian faith – the pieta, the white marble sculpture portraying the crucified Jesus in the arms of his mother Mary but also portraying the love and warmth felt by the two; the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, filled with a myriad of biblical scenes among which we see the reality of the final judgement with heaven and hell as outcomes. His art presents not only the historical realities, but also the human reactions to those realities.

Towards the end of his life, in his 70s, he wrote to his nephew: "Many believe – and I believe – I have been designated by God for this work. In spite of my old age, I do

not want to give it up; I work out of love of God in whom I put all my hope." Michelangelo regarded his talent as an artist, exercised towards the Church and the community, as a vocation not merely a job or a commission.

Today's three readings speak about people being called. In Isaiah, the servant is destined to lead the people back to God. Then, in his letter, Paul describes himself as the apostle, the one sent to the Church of Corinth. Finally, in the Gospel, we have that eerie John the Baptist saying about Jesus: "Look, here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," words that we repeat before receiving Holy Communion. What do all three, the servant, Paul and Jesus, have in common? They are all called; they all have a mission to accomplish.



Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin

January 18

Second Sunday  
of Ordinary Time

READINGS

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6  
1 Corinthians 1:1-3  
John 1:29-34

We call this vocation.

All three had a mission, and all three brought something special to that mission. Consider Michelangelo. He was just a human being like the rest of us, admittedly a talented one, but a mere human, nonetheless. He understood that his role and contributions to life were God-inspired and God-sustained. If he was great, it was God's greatness working through him. If he brought light to others, it was God's light. He may not have used the word "mission," but he certainly had one.

Look at ourselves. What about our talents, our abilities? What do we do with them? Like all the great saints, we, too, can use our gifts, talents, our

intellects to reflect the beauty of God, to reflect the greatness of God. Or we can pretend and use that intellect and ability to promote ourselves. Of course, we should be proud of our talents; of course, we should work at improving them; of course, we should use them for our own and our family's benefit. But do we always recognize the source? Do we understand how tremendously important our talent is and how much we could use that talent to spread God's goodness to those around us? Our world be so much better if we used our God-given gifts for building up others rather than tearing them down.

Here's another quote from Michelangelo: "The greatest danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark." When we look to Jesus, to Paul, to all the great saints, we will find peo-

ple who always set the bar high. It is very easy to achieve goals in life when we set the bar low. Jesus set the bar very high for himself as well as for his followers. But the reward of eternal life is also very high.

Do you remember the TV show: "I Get That A Lot" where famous personalities try to pretend they are someone else and, when asked if they are so and so, respond: "I get that a lot." Wouldn't it be interesting if someone were to say to me or you: "Gee, you're just like Jesus" or "you act a lot like Saint Paul" or "you're smart like Thomas Aquinas" or strong like Saint Ignatius or humble like St. Theresa of Lisieux... and the list could go on.

We are called to greatness, to something more. We have the tools and resources. Let's respond to that vocation to greatness and, above all, make sure that the only horn we toot is the one that will give honor, glory, and praise to our God.

## Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

## DIOCESAN EVENTS

## THE RESCUE PROJECT

Ogdensburg – Come join us for a 9-week experience to hear how AWESOME the Good News of the Gospel really is!

**Date:** Starts Feb. 1 until Palm Sunday

**Time:** 12:30 p.m.

**Place:** Brzana Hall at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Features:** Each session of this free program consists of a video presentation unpacking the story of the Gospel followed by small group discussion.

**Contact:** Register online at <https://www.rcdony.org/rescue> For more information; contact

Marika Donders at [mdonders@rcdony.org](mailto:mdonders@rcdony.org)

## RITE OF ELECTION

Ogdensburg – The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion to be held.

**Date:** Feb. 22

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

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

**Contact:** RSVP deadline: Feb 11 to [Asoltero@rcdony.org](mailto:Asoltero@rcdony.org)

## SURVIVING DIVORCE

Canton – The Family Life Office will be offering the Surviving Divorce program again starting in late February.

**Time:** Meeting dates and times will be determined by the

needs of the participants.

**Cost:** The program is free but we happily accept \$25 donations to offset the cost of materials.

**Features:** Surviving Divorce features twelve video presentations that cover topics such as shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage. This program is for the newly separated and divorced and those still struggling with issues many years later. It will help them find answers to their questions, restore their hope, and begin authentic healing.

**Contact:** To register, go to <https://www.rcdony.org/sur>

livingdivorce. For more information, contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920.

## DAY OF REFLECTION

Norfolk – All Catechists, Catechetical Leaders, Commissioned Lay Ministers, Youth Leaders and Candidates in Formation for Ministry are invited to a Day of Reflection.

**Date:** March 21

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mass will be at 9 a.m.

**Place:** Norfolk Parish Center  
**Cost:** \$15 includes lunch (soup and sandwich)

**Features:** Presented by Sr. Janet Schaeffler, OP. The theme will be "In Step with Christ: Embracing Discipleship and

Accompaniment".

**Contact:** Register by March 12 at [rcdony.org/dayofreflection](http://rcdony.org/dayofreflection)

## HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Ogdensburg – Save the Date! Highway to Heaven: The Journey Continues! Featuring Fr. Jonathan Meyer, popular YouTube sensation and National Preacher of the Eucharistic Revival. Join Bishop LaValley for Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, sacred music, and more. Additional details coming soon!

**Date:** May 16

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

**Contact:** Mary Beth Bracy at [marybethbracy@gmail.com](mailto:marybethbracy@gmail.com) for more information.



## CALLED TO SERVE

## A visit to the Jordan

The Church now celebrates Ordinary Time. The Christmas season, liturgically speaking, ended with the Baptism of the Lord. We recalled that baptism at last weekend's Masses.

You all know the story. In fact most of us have a vivid picture in our mind of Jesus walking along the bank of the Jordan River and eventually being baptized by his cousin, John, in that river. Then the voice of God the Father from the heavens saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

For years, the Holy Land was on my bucket list of places in the world I wanted to visit. Fortunately, I crossed that trip off my list in 2023. Deacon Greg Kandra, then of the

Brooklyn-Queens Diocese led a pilgrimage to the Holy Land that I participated in.



Deacon  
Kevin Mastellon

We visited many of the sites that we read about in the Bible. We walked where Jesus walked when it was time for his public ministry. The experience helped me appreciate the places Jesus went and the distances people travelled, mostly on foot, between locations.

The Jordan River was a real shocker to me.

My mental picture of the river assumed a St. Lawrence River type width and flow. That may have been the case two thousand years ago, but not today. According to an on-line source "In modern times, up to 95% of the water is diverted for human purposes (mostly agriculture), and

the flow is less than 10% of the past average."

The 150-mile river flows from the hill country in northern Israel, on the Syrian/Lebanon borders, down through the Sea of Galilee, between the nation of Jordan and the area Israeli's call the West Bank, then continues into the Dead Sea.

The river was wide in Jesus' day but not today. Where we were, at the site of the baptism, the river was hardly wide at all; even I could toss a baseball across.

This was the same spot that the Jews crossed to enter the promised land, and in the Old Testament where the prophet Elijah entered heaven on his chariot.

I expected the river to be clear and crisp. In fact, it was muddy and not very enticing. But people still flock to the

site to be baptized to Christ.

The spot Christians and Jews agree the baptism took place is north of the Dead Sea in the Jordan Valley. It is a remote location, off the beaten path. It occurred to me folks had to want to get there; it was destination with a purpose. A paragraph attributed to Blessed Columba Marmon and reprinted in the Magnificat this month summarized my take-away from the Jordan River experience:

"Baptism, with faith in Jesus Christ, has become for us the sacrament of a divine adoption and Christian initiation. It is the name of the Holy Trinity that is conferred upon us, the Trinity that was revealed to us upon the banks of the Jordan."

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

## Saint's parents help develop Vatican app

By Victoria Cardiel  
Catholic News Agency

The parents of St. Carlo Acutis contributed to the development of a new official news application connected to the institutional website of the Vatican City State, [www.vaticanstate.va](http://www.vaticanstate.va), an initiative presented as part of an ongoing digital renewal and as a tribute to the young saint, often held up as a model for evangelizing through new technologies.

After downloading the

app, users can read a message of thanks from the Governorate of Vatican City State to Andrea and Antonia Acutis, Carlo's parents.

"The Governorate of Vatican City State thanks Andrea and Antonia Acutis who, on the occasion of the canonization of their son Carlo, generously contributed to the creation and development of the News App of the official website [www.vaticanstate.va](http://www.vaticanstate.va)," the message reads.

The new application,

officially launched over the weekend, is dedicated to the Italian saint, who died of leukemia in 2006 at age 15 and is frequently remembered for his computer prowess.

The platform is designed to provide fast, intuitive access to news, notices, and official communications from the Vatican Governorate, aiming to improve navigation and accessibility to institutional information.

The app includes several sections, including

"saint of the day," news, interviews, videos, and direct links to other institutions of the Governorate, such as the Gendarmerie Corps, the Vatican Museums, the Vatican Pharmacy, Poste Vaticane, the Pontifical Villas, and the Vatican Observatory.

According to the report, additional features will be implemented progressively.

The app's launch comes after the institutional website of the Holy See received a graphic

overhaul following the May 8 election of Pope Leo XIV. That portal now features a more modern design, including a sky-blue background and an image of the pope greeting the faithful, updating a site that has been online since December 1995.

The Vatican City State app is available as a free download for iOS and Android devices.

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

**MONASTERY CARD SHOP**  
Cards for All Occasions  
*Mass Enrollments for your living & deceased loved ones.*

**Precious Blood Monastery**  
OPEN: 9 AM - 5 PM  
SATURDAY 9 AM - 12 PM  
400 PRATT ST., WATERTOWN  
315-788-1669  
[www.sisterspreciousblood.org](http://www.sisterspreciousblood.org)

**BARSTOW**

AN AMERICAN REVOLUTION BUICK PONTIAC GMC SUBARU  
WE ARE PROFESSIONAL GRADE

*"Family owned dealership serving the North Country for over 56 years!"*

For more information, visit our Website at: [www.barstowmotors.com](http://www.barstowmotors.com)

**MARKET ST., POTSDAM, NY • (315) 265-8800**







## 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  
info@rcdony.org

# Missionary Childhood Day in Malawi

This year in Malawi, more than 100,000 children participated as protagonists in the celebration of Missionary Childhood Day.

Missionary Childhood Day coincides with the Solemnity of the Epiphany. At the local level, churches organize the celebrations in different ways and at different times. In Malawi, this year the day was celebrated on Sunday, January 4, and saw broad and very active participation from dioceses and parishes. Specific celebrations were organized throughout the country, in which numerous bishops took part. The children actively participated as choir members, readers, altar servers and leaders of the assemblies, and they also enlivened the moments of prayer with dances.

The theme of Missionary Childhood Day echoes that chosen for World Mission Day 2026: "One in Christ, united in mission."

In all the celebrations, the celebrants reminded everyone that parents are called to set a good example for their children, accompanying them and helping them to find Jesus in their own lives. In each diocese, the bishops emphasized the day's central message in various ways, often drawing inspiration from the solemnity of the Epiphany.

In the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Archbishop George Tambala affirmed that all those who hold positions of responsibility in society and in the family should be like the "star" that guides children to God. In the Diocese of Karonga, Bishop Mtumbuka invited children to be "stars" for one another, like the star that led the Magi to the birthplace of the Child Jesus. In the Archdiocese of Blantyre, Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa expressed his satisfaction with the way the children led the day's liturgy, demonstrating their conscious participation in the liturgical celebration.

In the Diocese of Zomba, Bishop Alfred Chaima emphasized that prayer education is an essential feature of a rich and grateful Christian life. Finally, the vicar general of the Diocese of Dedza expressed his satisfaction that, during this year's celebration of World Missionary Childhood Day, the parishes of Kanyama made very generous contributions to the Universal Solidarity Fund.

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

*Please remember the Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Ogdensburg when writing or changing your will.*

## OBITUARIES

**AuSable Forks** — Mary Roberta "Bobbie" (Pattno) Snow, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 6, 2026 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Champlain** — Rita Rae (Babie) Laurin, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 12, 2026 at St. Mary's Church.

**Copenhagen** — Carole A. (Fyder-ek) Doyle, 79; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 9, 2026 at St. Mary's Church.

**Hogansburg** — Allen Roy Adams, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 5, 2026 at St. Regis Church.

**Malone** — Gerald Joseph "Jerry" LaHart, 96; Mass of Christian Burial April 11, 2026 at Notre Dame Church.

**Malone** — James P. McGowan, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 10, 2026 at Notre Dame Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

**Morrisonville** — Mary Lou Beau-

harnois, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 6, 2026 at St. Alexander's Church.

**Norwood** — Doreen D. (Oakes) Valade, 95; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 9, 2026 at St. Andrew's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** — Myrna O'Neil, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 2, 2025 at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery, Saranac Lake.

**Peru** — Kirk D. Crouse, 56; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 8, 2026 at St. Augustine's Church.

**Port Henry** — Napoleon A. Marcotte, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 10, 2026 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Saranac Lake** — Sharon E. (McCormick) Barry, 80; Funeral Services Jan. 10, 2026 at Fortune-Keough Funeral Home.

**Ticonderoga** — Michael James Sturtevant, 67; Mass of Christian

Burial Jan. 21, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Valley View Cemetery.

**Tupper Lake** — Leona M. (Godin) Kavanagh, 86; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 8, 2026 at St. Alphonsus Church; burial in St. Alphonsus Cemetery.

**Watertown** — Querino Augusto "Agie" Alteri, 101; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 3, 2026 at St. Anthony's Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

**Watertown** — Mary JoAnn (Walsh) Coursen, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 10, 2026 at Holy Family Church.

**Watertown** — Joseph P. Fayette, 79; Services to be held at a later date.

**West Chazy** — Marie (Chartier) LaForest, 83; Private Services to be held.

# 'Right into our midst'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

released convict Jean Valjean finds shelter from the cold in the house of a Catholic bishop. (You probably are familiar with this award-winning Broadway play. A few years ago now, I watched the play when I was a student at St. Paul's University in Ottawa at the NAC.) In the popular play, the bishop welcomes Valjean into his home and provides a warm meal. During the meal, Valjean notices the expensive silverware and decides to steal it.

As soon as the bishop is asleep, Valjean absconds with the silver. The police collar Valjean, and, although he claims the bishop gave him the silverware, the police see through that

lie and drag him back to the bishop. Valjean is trembling since he knows that this means he'll be sent to jail for the rest of his life.

But, something amazing happens. The police tell the bishop that Valjean claims he gave him the silverware. Valjean's fate hangs by a thread as he breathlessly awaits the bishop's response. Imagine his disbelief when Valjean hears the bishop say, "Yes, I gave him the silverware. I'm glad he's returned, since I also gave him the silver candlesticks, too, but he forgot to take them."

Valjean's life can never be the same after that. The Bishop forgave him and believed in him. So Valjean dedicates the rest of his life to doing

good to others. In our baptism, God forgives. He believes in us. As people baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we continue our celebration of the Lord's abiding presence to us in the sacrament of His very Body and Blood. No silver or gold is promised you and me. But eternal joy and happiness in heaven is promised the one who would follow Jesus.

Given human nature, I suspect each of us has a hole in our creaky rowboats. Thank God the Son of God was born among us to bail us out if we but try to follow Him, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. For that, May God be praised...forever may God be praised!



# 2025: Year in review

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

to designate seven aspirants, Lucien Leroux, Daniel Haycock, Russel Backus, Jason Scull, John Lucia, Michael Salaun, and David Hunt, as candidates to the diaconate.

• June 11 - St. Augustine's Church in Peru announces the formation of the North Country Community Disaster Hub, a regional initiative to provide coordinated response, training and relief services in the event of natural disasters or community emergencies.

• June 22 - Twenty-four individuals from around the diocese were commissioned by Bishop Terry R. LaValley to serve as lay ministers in a commissioning held at St. Mary's Cathedral.

• June 27 - The North Country Catholic receives first honorable mention in the Best Newspaper - Weekly Category of the Catholic Press Awards.

• June 29 - St. James Major Church marks 100 years of prayer and service to the communities of Lake Pleasant, Morehouse, Piseco and Speculator with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

• July 13 - Knights of Columbus from around the diocese travel to St. Anne's Shrine in Isla LaMotte, Vermont, for their annual pilgrimage.

• July 29 - June LaShomb, 91, and her daughter, Jane Bain, 55, visited St. Mary's Cathedral, the last stop in their effort to hit every diocesan Jubilee Year of Hope pilgrimage site.

• July 30 - Bishop Terry R. LaValley celebrates a Jubilee Mass honoring Sisters of St. Joseph who hit milestone years of service in religious life. Honored were Sister Jean Marie Chiovitti, 85 years; Sister Mary William Argy, 75 years; Sister Judith

Baumert, 70 years; Sister Norma Bryant and Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, 65 years.

• Aug. 9 - Six new deacons, Deacon Francis Sczerzenie of Piseco, Deacon James Law of Saranac Lake, Deacon Nicolas Tsibulsky of Massena, Deacon Gordon Burdo of Peru, Deacon James "JB" Kavanaugh of Clayton, and Deacon Garry Stevens of Carthage, are ordained at St. Mary's Cathedral by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

• Aug. 24 - Musicians from around the diocese gather at St. Bernard's Parish in Saranac Lake to perform as part of "The Look, Feel & Sound of Hope," a Jubilee Year of Hope event that also included visual art made by artists from around the diocese.

• Aug. 24 - St. Bernard's Church in Lyon Mountain celebrates its 150th anniversary with a

Mass celebrated by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

• Sept. 3 - Father Alfred H. Fish, pastor of St. Ann's in St. Regis Falls and Holy Cross in Hopkinton, retires. Consistent with pastoral planning efforts, the two communities are now grouped with St. Mary's in Brushton and St. Augustine's in North Bangor under Father Kris C. Lauzon, pastor.

• Sept. 7 - Married couples from around the diocese gather at St. Mary's Cathedral for the Celebration of Love and Marriage, a Mass celebrated by Bishop Terry R. LaValley.

• Sept. 13-14 - The annual Bishop's Fund Appeal, "United We Bring Hope" kicks off around the diocese.

• Sept. 19-21 - Youth from around the diocese gather at Camp Guggenheim for the annual Leadership Weekend.

• Sept. 28 - Bishop Terry R. LaValley celebrates the diocesan Blue Mass, a Mass honoring law enforcement, emergency responders and emergency dispatchers, at St. Bernard's Church in Saranac Lake.

• Nov. 20 - Deacon Tyler Fitzgerald, a seminarian for the diocese, was honored with the Diakonia Award by St. Vincent's Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

• Nov. 29 - "Dying with Christ, Living with Hope," an event focused on end-of-life issues and the New York Physician Assisted Suicide Bill, is held in Saranac Lake. Additional sessions are being planned in 2026.

• Dec. 18 - Pope Leo XIV accepts the retirement of Timothy Cardinal Dolan and appoints Archbishop-elect Ronald Hicks, currently of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, as his successor.

**Support the *Respect Life Collection* of the *Diocese of Ogdensburg* in our parishes the weekend of *January 24 & 25***



**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)**