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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 80 Number 41

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

## Make Lent 'a dessert like no other'

Bishop Terry R. La-Valley offers his homily from Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18.

Sometimes, because of our sinfulness, it is difficult for us to believe that God still calls us by name, that God is still interested in us, hasn't given up on us and is eager to walk with us despite everything. The prophet Joel begins this Lent 2026, as he begins Lent every year, pleading with us "even now, return to the Lord with your whole heart."

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

## BACK ON THE HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

"The Eucharist is my Highway to Heaven"  
— St. Carlo Acutis

### Highway to Heaven to Heaven 2026

Sacred Heart Church  
212 Main St. Massena, NY  
Saturday, May 16

Featuring the Shroud of Turin exhibit, musician Sarah Kroger, and Fr. Jonathan Meyer, National Preacher of the Eucharistic Revival!

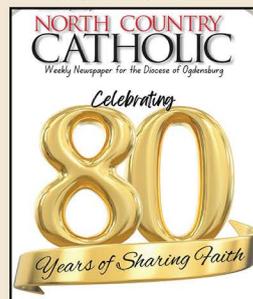
**Space is limited. Register today!**  
[rcdony.org/h2h](http://rcdony.org/h2h)



Building off the success of last year's Highway to Heaven, a second event of the same name will be held May 16 at Sacred Heart Church in Massena. While the event will include some features of the original, including the Eucharistic Miracles exhibit created by Saint Carlo Acutis, Mass, adoration and (weather permitting) a procession, this year's Highway to Heaven will also include a traveling replica of the Shroud of Turin and related exhibit, YouTube creator and national Eucharistic Revival speaker Father Jonathan Meyer and popular Catholic musician Sarah Kroger.

Full story on Page 6

## CELEBRATING 80 YEARS



This year, the North Country Catholic celebrates its 80th anniversary. The newspaper's first edition was printed March 3, 1946, with Bishop Bryan J. McEntegart at the helm. For 80 years, the newspaper has been sharing the good news of the Gospel and how we're living it out here in the North Country.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

## Pope: Liturgy is an experience of God's unity

By Victoria Cardiel  
EWTN News

Pope Leo XIV emphasized Feb. 18 that the Church experiences a part of God's plan for unity by being together at liturgical celebrations.

The pope stated that God's plan for the Church has a clear purpose: "to unify all creatures thanks to the reconciliatory action of Jesus Christ," accomplished through his death on the cross.

"This is experienced first of all in the assembly gathered for the liturgical celebration: There, differences are relativized, and what counts is being together because we are drawn by the

love of Christ, who broke down the wall of separation between people and social groups," he said.

Leo continued his weekly catecheses dedicated to the Second Vatican Council, focusing on the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, approved in 1964.

According to Leo, *Lumen Gentium* "enables us to understand the relationship between the unifying action of the pasch of Jesus, which is the mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection, and the identity of the Church."

The pontiff said the text also invites gratitude for belonging to the Church, "the body of the risen Christ, and the one pil-

grim people of God journeying throughout history, which lives as a sanctifying presence in the midst of a still fragmented humanity, as an effective sign of unity and reconciliation among peoples."

In explaining the use of the term "mystery" in *Lumen Gentium*, Leo XIV recalled that it comes from the letters of St. Paul and does not refer to something dark or incomprehensible.

On the contrary, the Holy Father explained that "when St. Paul uses the word, especially in the Letter to the Ephesians, he wishes to indicate a reality that was previously hidden and is now revealed."

The pope said humanity lives

in a condition of fragmentation "that human beings are unable to repair, even though the tendency towards unity dwells in their hearts. The action of Jesus Christ enters into this condition through the power of the Holy Spirit and overcomes the powers of division and the divider himself." He highlighted the meaning of the word "ekklesia" (Church), understood as the assembly of those called together by God.

"The Church is the mystery made perceptible," he affirmed, recalling that the council defined the Church as a "sacrament, or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race."

NORTH  
COUNTRY  
CATHOLICPO Box 326  
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President

**Rev. Joseph A. Morgan**

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**James D. Crowley**

Secretary-Treasurer

Darcy L. Fargo

Editor &amp;

Communications Director



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# We're making history

"It's a shame you weren't able to find a career that uses your degree."

I've heard versions of that phrase at least a few times in my life.

My degree is in History & Government with a major in English. While I understand why others may not see the connection, I couldn't disagree more with that statement.

When I was attending Daemen College, now Daemen University, more than 20 years ago, History & Government majors were required to take a course called "Historical Methods." The course was focused on conducting research using

primary sources, especially archived documents.

Of all the research we did in the class, only two types of documents were interesting enough for me to remember all these years later - census records and newspapers.



**Darcy L. Fargo**

Making a newspaper is making a historical record. We're making history here!

But we're also making more than that.

Our *North Country Catholic* is *Celebrating 80 Years of Sharing Faith* this year.

In addition to 80 years of records about how Catholics were and are living their faith here in our di-

ocese, that's 80 years of sharing Christ. It's 80 years of connecting to one another through stories. It's 80 years of hearing from our bishops, our spiritual fathers. It's 80 years of information about the global Church and her leaders.

That seems worth celebrating!

I'd also like to take this opportunity to celebrate Christine Ward, the newspaper's longtime editorial assistant. While her name and photo aren't on the same page every week, her work is on nearly every page. Christine offers support with advertising, photo editing, obituaries, the weekly calendar... She also ensures the paper gets to your homes each week by managing subscriptions.

While she has an abundance of talent and skills, her kindness, dedication and love of Christ are even bigger.

Thank you, also, to all the writers and photographers who contribute to these pages. While the group includes some very different personalities, they're united by their love of Jesus and His Church, and they're gifts to this newspaper.

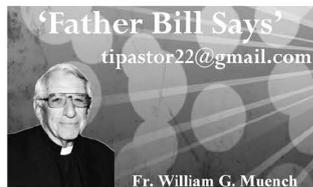
Thank you for joining us in this celebration. Thank you for journeying with us as we all try to follow Christ to life eternal with him. Thank you for inviting this newspaper into your churches, homes and lives.

I don't need a degree to know how special it is to celebrate 80 years of the NCC!

## Lent with the prophets

It is Lent. This year for Lent, I have decided to read and pray with the Old Testament prophets. This gives me a good opportunity to praise God with the words of the prophets and to meditate on their messages. Actually, this will be rather new for me. It has been some time since I have studied the prophets. Recently, I read a book by Father Richard Rohr. That book led me this study.

Today, I plan to begin by sharing with you some thoughts I have about the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 40. Scripture scholars teach that the Book of Isaiah was written by three different people. Chapter 40 begins the second part of the Book of Isaiah. I have discovered this chapter to be a perfect help for my Lenten retreat. The writer of this chapter begins by telling us that God always speaks to his people with consolation. He tells us God speaks to his people, his Jerusalem, tenderly. Even today, we believe that God speaks to us not as a judge but with



Fr. William G. Muench

consolation. The prophet teaches us that there has been atonement for sin. The words of the prophet: "Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her service has ended, that her guilt is expiated. She has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins."

Now, during this Lent, the prophet leads us to our loving God. This becomes a time for repentance and reconciliation with our God. The prayers and mortification of Lent give us a unique opportunity to renew our relationship with God. The prophet teaches us to realize that God comes to us with comfort and compassion. Our Lenten prayer brings the joy and peace of the Lord; we

experience God's forgiveness with gratitude. There is hope - a hope filled with happiness, a new and stronger hope as we journey through Lent.

The prophet gave his people hope for their time - the time is coming for the Messiah. He writes to words that are quoted in the New Testament - there will be someone coming to this world to make the world ready for the Messiah. In Chapter 40, these are the words of the prophet, "A voice proclaims in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord: make straight in the wasteland a highway for God. Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill made low."

We can recognize that this will be John the Baptist. He will be the one who will come to prepare the world for the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Today, in our Lenten prayer, we should allow John the Baptist to again lead us closer, more alive, in our relationship with our Lord. The prophet gives us hope

that we can and must accept Jesus into our lives as our Savior.

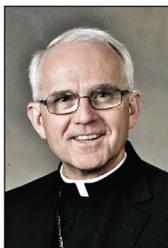
The prophet then goes on to pray and celebrate the greatness of God. We should realize that God comes as the herald of good news. This prophet has charged his people and now us to discover the message of Lent - a message of trust and hope in the God who cares for us with compassion. Our God comes to us with power and yet tends His flock like a shepherd. God continues to carry us like lambs in his arms. During Lent we must allow our Lord to guide and lead us like our shepherd.

Lent is our time to spend some time with our Savior, Jesus, who comes to us as a good shepherd. The prophet presents the image of the Good Shepherd centuries before Jesus, and today, this is an important image for us - our Lord is a loving, forgiving Savior for us all. May the Good Shepherd show us the way as we celebrate Lent now.

# NCC: Celebrating 80 years of sharing faith

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

“The universal kinship of God, the priceless worth of a man’s soul, and his eternal destiny – these are truths, vital to the peace and happiness of men and nations. Their importance is paramount in the affairs of government, education, commerce, industry, social welfare and family life.



Bishop Terry R. LaValley

It is the high duty of our Catholic Press to keep these fundamental truths alive and active in the public mind.”

Those words were written by one of my predecessors, Bishop Bryan J. McEntegart, for the first edition of the North Country Catholic, published on March 3, 1946 – 80 years ago. While we’d likely use different words to express that sentiment today, the words still ring true all these years later.

Celebrating *80 Years of Sharing Faith*, our North

Country Catholic continues to share stories that help us view current issues through a truly and faithfully Catholic lens.

Our newspaper shares the stories of the people in our diocese living their faith and sharing their relationships with the Lord with their North-Country neighbors, helping connect us to one another.

As the North Country Catholic begins its annual subscription campaign, I would echo Bishop McEntegart’s words from that first edition: “A careful reading of our diocesan paper week after week in every Catholic home will not only strengthen the faith of our people but also help them to meet the problems and trials of everyday life. In addition, the faithful throughout this wide-spread Diocese will be bound together more closely in their common love for God and for neighbor.”

If you are a current subscriber, thank you for renewing your subscription in this week’s campaign. Why not consider obtaining a subscription as a gift for a family member? I invite those who do not currently subscribe to consider how import-

ant it is today to be an informed Catholic Christian and to get to know the other members of the Body of Christ throughout this expansive diocese as we celebrate 80 Years of Sharing Faith.

Thank you for your prayerful support.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend  
Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg



The North Country Catholic will celebrate 80 years of sharing the Good News in the North Country on March 3. While the paper’s appearance has changed over the years, its mission has remained the same – sharing the Gospel and stories of how its being lived in the Diocese of Ogdensburg and the global Church.

The Diocese of Ogdensburg

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Weekly Newspaper for the Diocese of Ogdensburg

*Celebrating*

# 80

*Years of Sharing Faith*

- Personal stories of faith
- Parish and Diocesan News
- Scripture Reflections
- Important messages from Bishop Terry R. LaValley
- Catholic news from around the nation and world

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*Subscribe to or Renew the North Country Catholic Today!*

# Make Lent 'a dessert like no other'

*Editor's note: The following is Bishop Terry R. LaValley's homily from Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18.*

Sometimes, because of our sinfulness, it is difficult for us to believe that God still calls us by name, that God is still interested in us, hasn't given up on us and is eager to walk with us despite everything. The prophet Joel begins this Lent 2026, as he begins Lent every year, pleading with us "even now, return to the Lord with your whole heart."

I have here a \$20 bill. Raise your hand, if you'd like me to give it to you. (I Crumple it) "OK, now who still wants it?" Your response teaches us a valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it didn't decrease in value. It was

still worth \$20.

Often in our lives, we feel that we have been crumbled and handled roughly by our own decisions or those of other people. We feel as though we are worth little. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, we will never lose value: dirty, clean, crumpled or finely creased. We are still priceless to the One who knows us through and through,

and values us so much that He wants to live in friendship with us forever. If you still find it hard to believe, look closely at the crucifix. That is the real message of Lent. Christ wants us with Him forever in heaven, so much that He was willing to be

torn and crumpled and stomped on and humiliated to show each of us how much He values and loves us.

I recently read a true story about a woman who took her children out to a restaurant. Her six-year-old son, Timmy, asked to say grace. They bowed their heads and he said, "God is good, God is great. Thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen."

Along with laughter from some nearby customers, the mom heard a woman remark: "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream - that's ridiculous!"

Hearing this, Timmy burst into tears and asked his mom, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?" As she held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at the boy and said, "I happen to

know that God thought that was a great prayer." "Really?" the boy asked. "Cross my heart," the man replied. Then, he added with a rather loud whisper, referring to the woman who made the little boy cry, "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. You know, a little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, mom bought her kids ice cream at the end of the meal. Timmy stared at the dessert for a moment. Then he picked up his sundae and, without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes, and my soul is good already."

When Catholic Christians leave Mass today we will be wearing ashes on our foreheads, and we will have Christ Himself, received in Holy Communion, in our hearts. And we will go into the world.

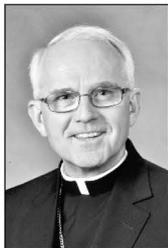
We will be in shopping centers and at gas stations. We will be in offices, living rooms, kitchens and restaurants. And people will see the ashes. And whether they say anything or not, they will be touched. They will be reminded that in this pleasure-centered world, there are some people who believe in eternal life. They will be reminded that in this self-centered world, there are some people who have experienced an unconditional love - the love of Christ. They will be reminded that there is more to some people's lives than mon-

ey, things, power, sex and popularity. God will be reminding them of all these things, simply because we have decided to renew our faith in Him today. It's a small, yet tangible way for you and me to share our ice cream with others.

Tomorrow the ashes will be gone from our heads, but Christ will still be in our hearts. During the rest of Lent, let's make it our commitment and our joy to continuing wearing the ashes every day, not on our foreheads, but in our actions, by living like Christ - by speaking words of truth and encouragement, not of criticism and gossip; by reaching out to help others without looking for anything in return; by forgiving those who offend us; and, most of all, by sharing the Good News Christ has given to us with those around us who need to hear it, again by sharing the ice cream.

This year let's not let Ash Wednesday stop after Ash Wednesday - life is too wonderful, and death is too near. Even now, return to the Lord with your whole heart. That little boy might have initially felt like that crumbled up \$20 bill. But, with his mother and a neighbor's encouragement, he knew God loved him. With our Blessed Mother's help and the encouragement of others, let's make Lent 2026 a dessert like no other.

And, oh, that \$20 bill, I'll save it until after Lent and maybe you can join me for a nice big strawberry sundae. May God be praised...Forever may God be praised!



Bishop Terry R. LaValley

## THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

### PRAYER SUGGESTION

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

(With ecclesiastical approval)

Mass  
Rosary  
Fasting  
Day Offering  
Eucharistic Adoration  
Offering of Sufferings  
Divine Mercy Chaplet  
Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him

March



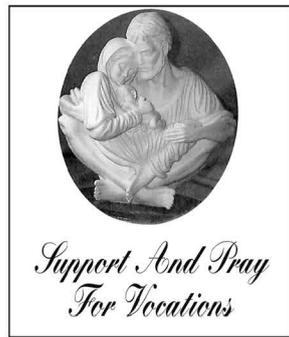
St. Joseph

## MARCH

DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG, NY

2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY 1	REV. RAYMOND J. MOREAU 2	REV. JOSEPH A. MORGAN VG 3	REV. WILLIAM G. MUENCH 4	MSGR. JOHN R. MURPHY 5	REV. STEVEN M. MURRAY 6	REV. FRANK NATALE, MSC 7
OUR PASTOR 8	REV. JUDE C. NNADIBIAGHA 9	REV. KEVIN J. O'BRIEN 10	REV. JOHN K. OJOUK 11	REV. AMRUTA K. PASALA 12	REV. JEROME PASTORES 13	REV. TERRENCE R. PATTERSON 14
POPE LEO XIV 15	REV. CARTER G. PIERCE 16	MSGR. LEONARD J. POISSANT 17	REV. SONY G. PULICKAL 18	REV. PATRICK A. RATIGAN 19	REV. WILLIAM G. REAMER 20	REV. MARK R. REILLY, VF 21
DECEASED PRIESTS 22	REV. NICHOLAS J. REVILLA 23	REV. CLEMENT RIMONDS, HGN 24	REV. DONALD A. ROBINSON VF 25	REV. STEPHEN ROCKER 26	REV. DOUGLAS A. SCHIRMER 27	REV. JAMES W. SEYMOUR 28
REV. SCOTT R. SEYMOUR 29	REV. ALAN D. SHNOB 30	REV. F. JAMES SHURTLEFF 31				



A donation to help support THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS will be appreciated. The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests is graciously underwritten by: Diocese of Ogdensburg, PO Box 369, Ogdensburg, NY 13669. Vocations Society, www.vocation.net

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

# St. Peter's Church: Gone but not forgotten

By Deacon Kevin Mastellon  
Contributing Writer

St. Peter's Church in New Bremen is surrounded by graves. The parish church started burying former parishioners on the grounds soon after the Church was built in 1852. The parish was incorporated in 1869 to serve Catholics between Croghan and Lowville in Lewis County. The Church was located on Tilman Road. The nearest community is called New Bremen. It was originally known as Dayansville.

Construction of St. Peter's was finished in 1892 with the addition of a steeple. By the time Monsignor Joseph Conroy became the third Bishop of Ogdensburg, St. Peter's was listed as a mission of the parish in Croghan.

The Church is an oratory now. There was an occasional funeral Mass celebrated there. Annually in June the parishioners of St. Peter's would join the pastor and parishioners of St. Stephen's in Croghan to celebrate a patronal Mass at the Church dedicated to St. Peter.

Until February 9, 2026.

"It was two or three o'clock in the morning when someone drove by and noticed the flames coming out of the Church," according to Father Donald Manfred, the pastor of St. Stephen's in Croghan, the parish that includes St. Peter's in New Bremen.

The Church building was destroyed by that fire.

St. Peter's was one of the earliest constructed in what would become the Diocese of Ogdensburg,

A statue of St. Peter that stood at the front of the Church was salvaged. So were a holy water font and the Church bell.

"The firemen were very good about saving whatever they could," Father Manfred said. Since the church was an oratory, the Tabernacle was empty. Hand-carved wooden statues of Mary and Joseph were lost.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEACON PETER WOOLSCHLAGER & WWNY TV7

**(Above) St. Peter's Church in New Bremen was destroyed by fire on Feb. 9. (Top right) A historic photo of St. Peter's, which had been an oratory in recent years. (Bottom right) The sanctuary of St. Peter's Church in New Bremen when the building was in regular use.**

No cause of the fire has been determined. "We have had a number of agencies investigating from Lewis and Jefferson Counties. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has been on site too," Father Manfred said. "But they do not have a cause yet."

"There was an oil tank in the basement of the building, and it had leaked. Just how much leaked out is still to be determined," according to the pastor. "The tank has been removed, and the grounds will have to be dealt with before any additional work at the site."

The North Country Catholic asked if the fire might have been set intentionally. Father Manfred told us, "I don't think there is anything right now to even guess what might have happened."

Reconstruction of the Church is not even a consideration according to Father

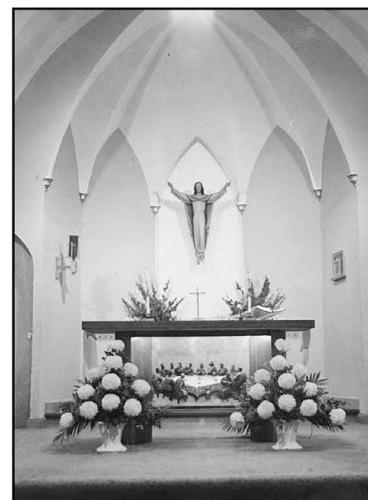
Manfred. Consideration will be given to a memorial on the site, and an annual service to recall all the people who, over the years, called St. Peter's home.

Deacon Peter Wooschlager grew up about a quarter mile down the road from the church. He celebrated his sacraments of initiation in St. Peter's. The deacon is now a well-known musician and music teacher.

"I started there as an altar server but then, as I tell people, I was benched, the organ bench," he said. "I played the organ at Mass and other liturgies until I was asked to move to St. Stephen's when I was in high school."

Deacon Wooschlager was ordained in 2021. He is now assigned to St. Stephen's in Croghan and St. Francis Solanus in Harrisville.

One of the pictures that circulated after the fire was of the statue of St. Peter that sur-



vived the fire. The statue is in the foreground of the picture with the charred remains of the church in the rest of the scene.

St. Peter is holding the keys to the kingdom in his hand, reminding us, Deacon Peter said, "of what is most important."

Father Manfred said it best, "It has been a devastating experience for people in the area. There are so many that remember family occasions, baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals and so many people that remember their place of worship. It is not so much a loss of a building as a loss of a place that reminds people of their faith, the beginnings of their faith. That is the sad part of this whole thing."

# Back on the Highway to Heaven

By Darcy Fargo  
Editor

Building on the success of last year's event, a Highway to Heaven event, one that will include a reproduction of the Shroud of Turin, a nationally known speaker and a popular Catholic musician, is planned for May 16.

"We received an overwhelmingly positive response from last year's Highway to Heaven event and people expressed interest in a similar event," said Mary Beth Bracy, one of the Highway to Heaven organizers. "They were grateful for the opportunities to worship the Real Presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist at Mass and adoration, where Bishop (Terry R.) LaValley led us in a diocesan wide consecration to the Holy Eucharist and a powerful procession. People were also in awe at seeing Saint Carlos Acutis's Eucharistic Miracles of the World Exhibit."

Like last year's event, this year's Highway to Heaven is an opportunity to focus on Christ in the Eucharist and will include the Miracles of the World Exhibit, Mass and adoration

Father Bryan Stitt, one of the event's organizers, said Highway to Heaven should appeal to individuals, "either because they know the Eucharist is the anchor of their life and want to grow in their relationship to our Eucharistic Lord or because they are searching and haven't yet found a suitable pathway for their life, a suitable Highway to Heaven."

Bracy added that the event is an opportunity "for faithful to grow in their personal relationship with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, re-



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH KROGER

**Popular Catholic singer Sarah Kroger will perform as part of the Highway to Heaven event to be held May 16 in Massena.**

**Register today!**

Visit [www.rcdony.org/h2h](http://www.rcdony.org/h2h) to register, for more information, videos and answers to frequently asked questions.

Space is limited, and early registration is encouraged.

discover the blessings of spending time with Him in the Blessed Sacrament, be inspired to help begin or expand Eucharistic Adoration in their parish, and/or say yes to spending a weekly Holy Hour with Him. By extension, the benefits of Eucharistic Adoration include increased Mass attendance, double or triple the number of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, various healings of individuals and relationships, increased service, safer communities, and peaceful hearts which make a

more peaceful world."

While there are similarities to last year's event, this year's Highway to Heaven will feature new offerings.

"It features a full-length replica of the Shroud of Turin, which many scientists and faithful believe is the burial cloth of Jesus, and a large crucifix showing the wounds of Christ corresponding to the Gospels and the wounds shown on the shroud," said Bracy. "The keynote speaker is Father Jonathan Meyer, a national preacher of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE AT MARYTOWN

**A replica of the Shroud of Turin, along with an exhibit about the shroud, will be part of this year's Highway to Heaven event on May 16.**

## 'Behold the man': Event to include Shroud replica

By Mary Beth Bracy  
Contributing Writer

A replica of the original Shroud of Turin is coming to the Highway to Heaven 2026 event on May 16 at Sacred Heart Church in Massena.

Dave and Cathy Witkowski and Leslie Marvel, all of Plattsburgh, will drive to the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe in Marytown to pick up the life-size canvas replica and exhibit. It will be transported in a 14-foot-by-11-foot 3-inch trailer weighing 2,360 lbs.

"We are honored to be asked to assist in ensuring the safe transfer of the replica of the Shroud of Turin from Chicago to the Sacred Heart in Massena for the Highway to Heaven event," noted Dave Witkowski, a member of Monsignor Morris L. Dwyer Knights of Columbus Council #255, and Cathy Witkowski, chair of the Board of the Eastern Region Commissioned Lay Ministers. "What an awesome way to help with evangelization in our diocese by playing a small role in ensuring the display of the beautiful exhibit."

Marvel, Holy Cross Parish office manager, agreed. "What an honor to pick up the replica of the Shroud of Turin and bring it to Massena for so many Catholics to experience," she said. "The thought of seeing the replica, the burial cloth of Jesus' Passion is mind boggling. It touches my soul so deeply."

Amy Schirmer, a founding member of the Highway to Heaven organizing committee from Ogdensburg, reflected on the significance of this exhibit.

"Something that is difficult with Eucharistic Events is finding an ecumenical, even evangelistic component," she said. "How do we draw people to an interest in the Eucharist, when partaking may not be a possibility for them? Certainly, this would be an issue for our Protestant brothers and sisters.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

# Deacon Gerald Defayette died on February 17

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Feb. 21 at St. Alexander's Church in Morrisonville for Deacon Deacon Gerald R. Defayette. Bishop Terry R. LaValley was the celebrant.

A spring burial will be in St. Joseph's Cemetery, West Chazy.

Deacon Defayette, a long-time resident of West Chazy and more recently of Victory Place in Plattsburgh, passed away peacefully on February 17, 2026, at CVPH Medical Center, with his loving family by his side. He was 84.

He was born on April 6, 1941, in Plattsburgh, one of two cherished sons of the late Abbie (Corron) and Victor Defayette and was raised in West Chazy, a community that helped shape the faith, kindness, and strong values he carried throughout his life.

Deacon Defayette graduated from Beekmantown Central School and continued his spiritual journey at Graymoor, where he became a Friar. It was during this time that he met the love of his life, Frances, whom he later married. Together, they built a life grounded in faith, devotion and family. Gerald continued his calling at Wadhams Hall, where he was ordained as a deacon, dedicating his life to serving others and strengthening his community through ministry and compassion.

Alongside his religious vocation, Deacon Defayette worked faithfully at Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories until his retirement in 1994. He was known for his strong work ethic, humility and the genuine care he showed to everyone he met.

Deacon Defayette was a pillar of his parish com-



Deacon Gerald Defayette

munity at St. Joseph's, where he served faithfully for many years. His presence brought comfort, guidance, and encouragement to countless individuals and families. His deep faith was evident not only in his ministry but also in the way he lived each day, with patience, generosity, and quiet strength.

In the last two years of his life, Deacon Defayette resided at Victory Place in Plattsburgh, where he formed meaningful friendships that he treasured deeply. He shared many joyful moments filled with heartfelt conversations, lively games of Uno and other pastimes, and Saturday mornings made special by shared laughter and delicious blueberry pancakes.

Deacon Defayette found his greatest happiness in spending time with his beloved family. He loved family game nights, tending to his garden, dining at favorite local restaurants, and reminiscing about the many experiences and memories that shaped his life. Above all, he was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather whose love and guidance will remain a lasting gift

to those who knew him.

He is survived by his loving children, Kathy (Glenn) Rudolph, David Defayette, Michael (Crystal) Defayette, and Jeffrey Defayette, as well as several grandchildren whom he adored with all his heart.

In addition to his parents, Gerald was predeceased by his beloved wife, Frances, who passed away on June 17, 2022; his child, Andrew Defayette; his brother, Lyman; and sister-in-law, Mary.

Deacon Defayette's life was defined by faith, service, and love; a legacy that will continue to live on through his family, his parish, and the many lives he touched. He will be remembered for his gentle spirit, warm smile, and unwavering dedication to helping others.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Alexander's Church and Victory Place. Arrangements are in the care of the Hamilton Funeral Home.

## To Report Abuse

**If you have a complaint** of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terriane Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; [terrianeyanulavich@yahoo.com](mailto:terrianeyanulavich@yahoo.com); Phone: 518-569-0612; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; [ccarrara@rcdony.org](mailto:ccarrara@rcdony.org) Phone: 315-393-2920 ext. 1340.

**If you have a complaint** of suspected sexual abuse or related misconduct by the bishops, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at 800-276-1562 or [www.ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://www.ReportBishopAbuse.org)

## Bishop's Public Schedule

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

**Feb. 27** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

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

**March 1** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

## Protecting God's Children

**The Diocese of Ogdensburg** has scheduled Protecting God's Children training sessions. This required training addresses child abuse, the methods and means by which abusers commit abuse, and steps to prevent abuse and stop it from continuing. Pre-registration is encouraged at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). Upcoming sessions:

**Feb. 26** – 4 p.m. – St. James School, Gouverneur

**Feb. 27** – 1 p.m. – St. Peter's Parish, Massena

## Rest in Peace

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

**Feb. 25** – Rev. William Howard, 1888; Rev. P.J. O'Connell, O.S.A., 1895; Rev. James J. Duffy, 1912; Msgr. L. Kevin Connors, 1971

**Feb. 26** – Rev. Francis X. LaChance, 1916; John F. Wiley, 1984

**Feb. 27** – Rev. Ferdinand Grenier, O.M.I., 1872

**Feb. 28** – Rev. J. H. Tabaret, O.M.I., 1886; Rev. Emile Peuffier, 1910

**March 1** – Rev. Louis B. Demers, 1888; Msgr. Alexander P. Landry, 1955; Most Rev. Stanislaus J. Brzana, 1997

**March 2** – Rev. Edward A. Dailley, O.S.A., 1901; Msgr. John J. Bent, 1949; Rev. Joseph E. Tessier, O.M.I., 1952; Rev. Raymond J. Wertman, 2021

**March 3** – Rev. Francis McCranor, O.S.A., 1914; Rev. John G. Fitzgerald, 1925; Rev. Cyril Stevens, 1963; Deacon David N. Hennigan, 2009

## Environmental Stewardship

### The price of living well

Last week, the president stated he did not believe in climate change. As a result, he instructed the Environmental Protection Agency not to enforce any rules and regulations designed to reduce carbon emissions and other potentially harmful substances that might impact the planet. While this viewpoint may not be helpful to the health of the atmosphere and the well being of nature, we must realize that the Creator blessed us with "free will" to make decisions as we see fit. Because of our uniqueness, we each tend to see the same issue from different frames of reference.

As followers of Jesus, there are simple truths we all know. For example, we know we should feed the hungry, shelter the homeless and care for the sick. The problem arises in how much time, effort and financial resources we place in addressing these situations. In a similar manner, we know having a vibrant environment along with clean air and water are great, but at what cost to us.

Adopting a simpler lifestyle is quite helpful in drawing oneself closer to God. This Lenten season, we should consider ways to reduce the negative impact we have on our surroundings. Trying to lower the amount of fuel used to heat your home and workplace is one step in the direction of caring for creation. Reducing the amount of food you purchase and consume is another action that can lower your carbon footprint.

Civil authorities are often interested in certain aspects of society, such as improving the financial health of the area at the expense of upsetting the way of life for some citizens and facets of nature. Because everything is interconnected, neglecting one group of people and countless other organisms will be felt in unexpected ways. Everyone has their own ideas on how to live, yet we have always been free to spend as much time, effort and energy to serving the needs of others, both human and non-human alike throughout our daily life.

The North Country Catholic is grateful for the financial support it receives from its extraordinary patrons, sustaining patrons, special patrons and patrons. We would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge those people who supported the mission of the Catholic Press in 2025 with a gift of \$250, \$100, \$50 or \$35. Thank you for the continued generosity.

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Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Beneshan  
Brian and Karen Delaney  
Mrs. Margaret Doran  
Mr. Edward Finerty

**St. James Major Church, Lake Pleasant**  
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Romanych

**Ss. Philip and James Church, Lisbon**  
Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Hollis  
Mr. and Mrs. Neil LaBrake

**St. Henry's Church, Long Lake**  
George Britton  
Mrs. Barbara Hutchins  
Robert and Helen Kentile  
Mrs. Rita Joyce Rayome  
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Stryzowka

**CC of St Peter and St. Mary and St. Hedwig, Lowville**  
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Bishop  
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Domagala  
Thomas Hanno  
Mary Rhoades  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Van Emmerik  
Ms. Kathleen Wallace

**St. André Bessette RC Parish, Malone**  
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Bashaw  
Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Hart  
Ms. Cheryl Learned  
Mrs. Patricia Sauther  
Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Walbridge

**St. Peter's Parish, Massena**  
Ms. Mary Ellen Gardner  
Mrs. Cynthia Girard  
Mrs. Kathleen Hart  
Miss Kathleen Kirschner  
Betty Larche  
Patricia O'Brien  
Deacon and Mrs. Thomas Proulx

Ms. Beverly Robinson  
Mr. Philip St. Amand  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas St. Pier  
Mrs. Carl Scruggs, Sr.  
James Shaw  
Rosalie Smith  
Tom and Melissa Szarka

**St. Ann's Church, Mooers Forks**  
Mr. and Mrs. Roger LaValley

**The RCC of St. Alexander's and St. Joseph's, Morrisonville**  
Bryce Bissonette  
Deacon Gerald Defayette  
Nancy Frenyea  
Tom and Michelle Hamilton  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Krupka  
David and Jill Marcoux  
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick McGill  
Mr. and Mrs. Bob Mertz  
Moesch Family  
Willard Todd  
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Votraw

**Our Lady of Grace Parish, Morrystown**  
Fred and Denise Barse  
Melanie Kring  
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Martin  
Mrs. Ann Norman  
Mrs. Marcia Thompson

**Parish of the Visitation and St. Raymond, Norfolk**  
Mary Jane LaShomb

**The CC of St. Augustine, North Bangor**  
Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Poupore

**St. Andrew's, Norwood**  
Mr. and Mrs. James Besaw  
John and Melody Levison  
Rita Michalovic

**St. Mary's Cathedral, Ogdensburg**  
Janie Basta  
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Cosmo  
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Dupree  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lightfoot  
Mrs. Clara MacDougall  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McCaffrey  
Angela Morley  
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Perretta  
David and Tami Richer  
Ms. Anne Shurtleff  
Mary Sovie  
Mrs. Eleanor Stevenson  
Mrs. Mary Lou White

**St. Joseph's Church, Olmstedville**  
Mrs. Diane McNally  
Ms. Barbara Repp  
Mr. and Mrs. John West

**St. Augustine's Church, Peru**  
Robert and Linda Manchester  
Mr. and Mrs. Kevin McGovern  
Monica Remillard

**Holy Cross Parish, Plattsburgh**  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Boulrice  
Starr Burke  
Loretta and Andy Cappiello  
Mr. Arlen Favero  
Marguerite Forett  
Mrs. Josephine Garratt  
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hay  
Mr. and Mrs. Eldred Hutchins  
Ceil Johnson  
John and Vicki Masella  
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Nephew  
Terry and Janice Norcross  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Polhemus  
Sisters of Charity of St. Louis  
Deacon Randal and Karen Smith  
Mr. and Mrs. Keith Stark

**The CC of Moriah, Port Henry**  
Rev. Joseph Giroux  
Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Lemza  
Alton Supernault  
Nicole Whitman

**St. Martin's Church, Port Leyden**  
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Beltowski  
Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Mangan

**St. Mary's Church, Potsdam**  
Amanda Ames  
Felicitas Baxter  
Dick Bradshaw  
Mr. and Mrs. James Corbett  
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Healey  
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lahendro

**Church of the Assumption, Redford**  
Linda Coryer

**St. Patrick's Church, Rouses Point**  
Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Barcomb  
Gary Brunell  
Mr. and Mrs. Arsene Letourneau  
Mary Racicot  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Vacca

**St. Ann's Church, St. Regis Falls**  
David Montroy

**St. Andrew's Church, Sackets Harbor**  
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Barone  
Mr. and Mrs. Grover Brenon  
Maureen Burns-Gorman  
Anne Thomas  
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Townsend

**St. Bernard's, Saranac Lake**  
Ms. Mary LaGasse  
Mr. and Mrs. William O'Reilly  
Mr. Kenneth Wiley

**Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Schroon Lake**  
Michel Michelsen Lee

**St. Mary's Church, Ticonderoga**  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Jebb  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Liddell

**St. Alphonsus-Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Tupper Lake**  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Arsenault  
Mrs. Jeannette Keniston  
Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Robillard

**St. Mary's Church, Waddington**  
Mrs. Joan Andress  
Mrs. Mary Fobare  
Mr. and Mrs. Scott Loomis  
Mrs. Anne Young

**Church of the Holy Family, Watertown**  
Miss Donna Hajdasz  
Mrs. Susan Johnson  
Helen Keohane  
Mr. and Mrs. John Lewis  
Zoeann Mangan  
Deacon Edward Miller  
Mr. Charles Nevin

**Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church, Watertown**  
Roseanne Laverty  
Mr. Ronald Perciaccante  
Miss Suzanne Williams

**St. Anthony's Church, Watertown**  
Jacqueline Lee  
Mr. Letember McDowell  
Mr. and Mrs. Dominic Spano

**St. Patrick's Church, Watertown**  
Sandra Haight

**St. Joseph's Church, West Chazy**  
Mrs. Marsha Breaun  
Mr. and Mrs. John Denny

**The CC of St. Philip of Jesus and St. Joseph, Willsboro**  
Matthew Bosley

**Other**  
John and Angela Bashaw,  
Fort Covington  
William Conway, Willsboro  
Nancy Dugan, Wilson, NC  
Emily Ford, LaFargeville  
Deacon James Gillen,  
Jonesboro, ME  
Mark Jones, Easton, PA  
William Irwin, Jr., Rouses Point  
Ms. Mary Krenceski, Troy  
Jason Lewis, Liverpool  
Jack Mellon, Andover, MA  
Henry Pedicone, Niskayuna  
Paul Seymour, Merrill  
Dcn. Thomas Sharrow,  
Schenectady  
Jerry Shaw, Norfolk  
Bernard Siskavich, Wanakena  
Sisters of the Precious Blood,  
Watertown  
Deacon and Mrs. John Trombly

Thank You!

This listing reflects extraordinary, sustaining, special and patrons from Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025. Although every effort has been made to include the names of every patron, some mistakes are inevitable. If, however, an omission or error has occurred, we do apologize. Please notify us at 315-608-7556 so that we may correct our records.

\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE: Parishes are listed with their legal parish name, not each individual worship site is listed as some worship sites are combined under one parish name.\*\*\*

# SSJ Foundation offers grant opportunities

By Catherine Russell

For the North Country Catholic

In 1880, the first Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Watertown, eight years after the founding of the diocese of Ogdensburg. The community has been ministering in the diocese for almost 150 years. The Sisters established Catholic schools and engaged in social outreach. They gave music lessons and established an orphanage. Gradually other ministries evolved. The charism, or particular way in which the community lives the Gospel, is one of unifying love and living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy for the "dear neighbor."

As the number of sisters available for active ministry has dwindled, the sisters looked for a way to keep their vision and ministries alive.

The result was the establishment of the Sisters of St. Joseph Foundation. The Foundation annually awards grants up to \$4,000 to sponsoring organizations that support leadership training in the diocese or assists with sustain-



(Left) Catechists participate in a certification workshop sponsored by the diocesan Faith Formation Office and funded by a generous grant from the Sisters of St. Joseph Foundation. (Right) Members of the Deacon Formation program participate in a class at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg. The formation of deacons has also been aided with funds from the Sisters of St. Joseph Foundation. The foundation's grant cycle is currently open, and applications are due by May 8.



ing existing programs geared toward developing leadership, particularly to the marginalized.

Recent grant awards have gone to parishes to help with the cost of diaconate formation and Formation For Ministry costs.

Deacon Neil Fuller, parish life coordinator at St. Mary's in Clayton and St. Cyril's in Alexandria Bay, shared how the grant has assisted his ministry: "The SSJ Foundation's generous support in funding both the deacon and FFM formation programs, as well as assisting in my education, have made it

possible for me to serve our communities as a Parish Life Coordinator, allowing Father LaBaff and Father Comstock to continue their priestly ministry well into their retirement years. The active Commissioned Lay Ministers are invaluable to the parishes in maintaining and creating new ministries that help our parishes continue to thrive."

Catholic school principals have used the grant to further their leadership skills through programs at Notre Dame and Boston College. Grants have supported training for those involved in par-

ish outreach programs. A grant to the diocesan Faith Formation office allowed the department to hold summer certification workshops and covered attendee expenses. Another parish used the grant to train a parishioner in justice and immigration. Father John Yonkovic, pastor of St. Agnes parish in Lake Placid shared this impact statement:

"My vocation to the priesthood was greatly nourished by the dedication and witness of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Sisters are still powerfully at work encouraging Church

ministries through their grants from the SSJ Foundation. The SSJ Foundation is equipping our Church with future leaders and for this I am most grateful."

If you or someone you know has an idea or is currently active in a leadership role in a diocesan, parish or established program or is in training for such leadership, requests for applications for grant requests up to \$4,000 can be emailed to: SSJFoundation-Chairperson@gmail.com. The application process is now open and closes May 8.

## Divine Mercy to be celebrated in Watertown

Divine Mercy Sunday will be celebrated April 12 at 3 p.m. at Saint Patrick's Church, 123 S. Massey Street Watertown.

**BARSTOW**  
AN AMERICAN REVOLUTION GMC SUBARU  
For More Information, Visit Our Web Page at: [www.barstowmotors.com](http://www.barstowmotors.com)  
MARKET ST., POTSDAM, NY ☎ (315) 265-8800  
Your NNY Regional GM & Subaru SuperCenter

Jesus appeared to Faustina Kowalska to prepare the world for His final coming. Saint Pope John Paul II canonized her in 2000 and declared that Divine Mercy Sunday will be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter throughout the Church.

The Extraordinary Grace attached to the

celebration on that day is complete forgiveness of all sins and purgatory due to them, even the sins of your past since baptism. To receive the extraordinary grace, we must go to confession during Lent with trust and receive the Eucharist without mortal sin on Divine Mercy Sunday (or its anticipated Mass)

and celebrate the feast in the church. This is not a plenary indulgence; it is like that of a new baptism!

For more info visit [www.thedivinemercy.org](http://www.thedivinemercy.org) or call 315-783-7349. **NOVENA STARTS APRIL 3**

Be sure to start the novena to the Divine Mercy on Good Friday, April 3,

at home as there will not be a church service to begin the novena. Continue to say the novena every day until the feast of Divine Mercy Sunday.

For more information on the Extraordinary Grace of Divine Mercy Sunday, visit <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/celebrate/great-grace/graces>.

# SSPX plans to consecrate bishops without mandate

By Victoria Cardiel  
EWTN News

The Priestly Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) says it will proceed with plans to consecrate new bishops on July 1 without a pontifical mandate, despite a Vatican warning that the move would represent a “decisive rupture” of communion and bring “grave consequences” for the group.

In a letter dated Feb. 18 – Ash Wednesday – Father Davide Pagliarani, the SSPX superior general, told Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, that the group could not accept either the Vatican’s proposed framework for renewed dialogue or a delay of the announced consecration date.

The SSPX, which exclusively celebrates the Traditional Latin Mass, maintains doctrinal differences with certain teachings and reforms of the Second Vatican Council, particularly with regard to the Church’s approach to other faiths.

“I cannot accept the perspective and objectives in the name of which the dicastery offers to resume dialogue in the present situation, nor indeed the postponement of the date of 1 July,” Pagliarani wrote.

The Vatican’s doctrinal office recently proposed what it described as a “specifically theological” path of dialogue aimed at identifying the minimum conditions for full communion with the Catholic Church but made the opening of that process contingent on suspending the planned July 1 consecrations. The Holy See warned that “the ordination of bishops without a mandate from the Holy Father” would “imply a decisive rupture of ecclesial communion (schism)” with “grave consequences” for the fraternity as a whole.

Under canon law, a bishop who consecrates another bishop without a papal mandate and the person who receives that consecration incur automatic excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See, a penalty publicly declared in the SSPX’s 1988 rupture with Rome.

## SSPX ARGUES CONSECRATIONS WOULD NOT BE ‘SCHISMATIC’

Alongside Pagliarani’s letter, the SSPX circulated a doctrinal statement disputing the Vatican’s characterization of unauthorized consecrations as necessarily schismatic.

“The society defends itself against any accusation of schism and, relying on all

traditional theology and the Church’s constant teaching, maintains that an episcopal consecration not authorized by the Holy See does not constitute a rupture of communion – provided it is not accompanied by schismatic intent or the conferral of jurisdiction,” the SSPX statement said.

In that statement, the society argued that schism consists in assuming jurisdiction independently of the pope’s will and insisted that bishops consecrated as SSPX auxiliaries would “assume no jurisdiction against the will of the pope and will in no way be schismatic.”

## ‘A GENUINE CASE OF CONSCIENCE’

In his letter, Pagliarani said the current context – marked by public warnings about sanctions – undermines the serenity he believes is required for meaningful dialogue.

He wrote that the SSPX and the Holy See “both know in advance” they cannot reach doctrinal agreement “particularly regarding the fundamental orientations adopted since the Second Vatican Council,” describing the disagreement as “a genuine case of conscience” rooted, in the SSPX’s view, in a “rupture with the tradition of the Church.”

Pagliarani also questioned the feasibility of a process intended to determine together “the minimum requirements for full communion,” arguing that such criteria are the Church’s to define and not something to be established jointly in dialogue.

The letter, published by the society, was signed by members of its general council, including bishops Alfonso de Galarreta and Bernard Fellay.

## CONFLICT GOES BACK TO 1988

The Vatican warning revives memories of the 1988 crisis, when Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without a pontifical mandate in defiance of Pope John Paul II. The Holy See declared the bishops excommunicated at the time; Pope Benedict XVI lifted the excommunications of the surviving bishops in 2009 as a gesture toward reconciliation.

In subsequent years, Pope Francis granted SSPX priests faculties to hear confessions validly and to witness marriages under certain conditions, while the society’s canonical status has remained irregular.

The SSPX announced Feb. 2 that it intended to consecrate new bishops on July 1, a date that coincides with the anniversary of the 1988 decree declaring Lefebvre’s excommunication.

# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Bishops: Trump administration mixed on religious liberty

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued its annual report on religious liberty this week and concluded that President Donald Trump’s administration has enhanced religious freedom in some ways and weakened it in others. The Feb. 17 “State of Religious Liberty in the United States” report by the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty listed the administration’s “steps to combat gender ideology” as one of the positive changes. The report expressed concerns about the administration’s mass deportation policies. The USCCB’s 2026 report also warned of threats to religious liberty, citing alarming incidents of violence targeting Catholic institutions — such as a shooter opening fire on a school Mass in Minneapolis and a man armed with explosives outside the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. “All of these developments are taking place as Americans prepare to celebrate 250 years as [an] independent nation,” Archbishop Alexander Sample, the committee chair, wrote in the foreword for the report. “It is a fitting time to reflect on the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and how those ideals have shaped the unique culture that has grown over the past two-and-a-half centuries,” he continued. “For Catholics, it is an opportunity to reflect on how the Church has enriched American life.”

## Diocese of Camden announces \$180M abuse settlement

The Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, will fund a \$180 million settlement for abuse victims, Bishop Joseph Williams said this week, more than doubling a settlement amount proposed two years ago. Williams said on Feb. 17 that the plan “establishes a trust of \$180 million, funded by the diocese, its parishes, and the various insurers that insured the diocese in the past.” The proposal is still subject to approval by U.S. bankruptcy court. The bishop noted that the bankruptcy court had approved an \$87.5 million plan in 2024. A Feb. 17 press release from the New York-based law firm Lowenstein Sandler — whose attorneys have represented abuse victims in the dispute — said the agreement “supplements [the] earlier settlement” and comes in at “more than six times the amount” first proposed by the diocese in 2021. Williams in his statement said the settlement is “long overdue” and “represents a milestone” in the journey of abuse victims toward “restored justice” and “healing.” “To each one of those survivors, I would like to say: Thank you for your courage in coming forward. Without your bravery and persistence, this new day would not have dawned,” the prelate said. John Collins, the chairman of the survivors’ committee, said in the law firm’s press release that the settlement “represents meaningful progress toward accountability and equitable compensation” and “achieves a fair and just outcome.” The committee consists of more than 300 victims of abuse.

## ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN

## TECH WORKSHOP

Lake Placid - Mercy Care for the Adirondacks will host a Technology Assistance Workshop open to all older adult community members.

**Date:** Feb. 26

**Time:** 9 a.m. to Noon

**Place:** BOCES Adirondack Educational Center

**Features:** Mercy Care is scaling up its programs to empower Elder Friends to have access to a digital device and provide instruction on how to use it through its iPad permanent loan program. Roberta Bryson of NBT Bank will offer a presentation about online banking management, navigating the online portal, and fraud protection. There will be an opportunity for one-on-one assistance with cell phones and tablets. Mercy Care's Technology Workshop and iPad Permanent Loan Programs are offered free of charge, on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Contact:** Registration is required. To request more information or to register, please contact Lexi Bevilacqua, Director of Programs and Mission Integration at [abevilacqua@adkmercy.org](mailto:abevilacqua@adkmercy.org) or at 518-523-5446.

## MERCY CARE VOLUNTEERS

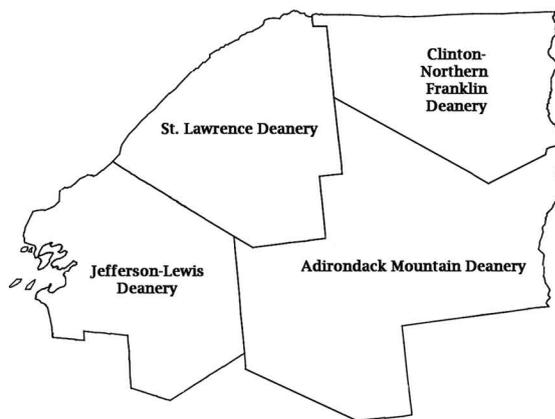
Lake Placid - Mercy Care for the Adirondacks, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, is recruiting new volunteers for their Health Care Companion Volunteer Group.

**Date:** March 4

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Place:** Heaven Hill Farm

**Features:** A Mercy Care Health Care Companion Volunteer is a listening presence, a compassionate friend, and is often thought of in terms of what a friend or family might do if they were available to help their loved one access, comply with, and more fully understand their health care. The Health Care Companion Volunteer does not provide hands-on health care or medical advice but assists their Elder Friend to access and manage their healthcare needs



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.

either in-person, virtually, or by telephone.

**Contact:** There is no cost for the training, but registration is required. Lunch will be served. To register for the training, please visit Mercy Care's website at [www.adkmercy.org](http://www.adkmercy.org) or contact Lexi Bevilacqua, at [abevilacqua@adkmercy.org](mailto:abevilacqua@adkmercy.org) or call Lexi for more information at 518-523-5446.

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

## FISH FRIES

AuSable Forks - The Au Sable Knights will be holding three fish fries every other Friday night.

**Date:** March 6 and 20

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

**Place:** Holy Name School/Parish Center

**Cost:** Adults, \$15; Children under 12, \$10; Take-outs available.

## CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER

Malone—Knights of Columbus Council 308 will hold their Chicken and Biscuit Dinners.

**Dates:** Feb. 25, March 11 and 25

**Time:** Beginning at 4 p.m.

**Place:** K of C Home, 41 Elm St.

**Cost:** \$13 for drive-thru, take-out, or dine in

**Features:** Proceeds benefit our charitable donations.

## SOAKING PRAYERS SESSIONS

Plattsburgh - Come enjoy a re-

laxing prayer opportunity the first Monday of the month.

**Date:** March 2, April 6, May 4

**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](mailto:evemcgill16@charter.net)

## FIRST FRIDAY

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

**Date:** March 6

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

## BREAKFAST

Peru - St. Augustine's Knights of Columbus will be serving a Pancake Breakfast.

**Date:** March 8

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. to noon

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

**Cost:** Adults, \$10; Children 5 to 11, \$5; under 5, Free; Take-outs, \$10

**Menu:** Pancakes, Waffles, Strawberry Sauce, Scrambled

Eggs, Bacon, Home Fries, Real Maple Syrup, and much more.

## LENTEN SOUP

Morrisonville - The Morrisonville Catholic Daughters invite everyone to a special Lenten Soup for the Soul evening.

**Date:** March 10

**Time:** 5:30 p.m.

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

**Features:** A simple soup dinner will be served followed by a special presentation by Shannon Looby and her daughters, Helen, Vivian, and Bernadette, who will share about their experience serving as Catholic missionaries in an orphanage in Honduras. This evening is free and open to all. Donations will be accepted to support the ministry of the Catholic Daughters.

## JEFFERSON-LEWIS

## 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:** March 1, May 3 (will NOT be observed on April 5)

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

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

**Contact:** 315-348-6260

## 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:** March 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

## SPAGHETTI &amp; MEATBALL DINNER

Evans Mills - The Indian River Council 7471 Knights of Columbus

will be having a spaghetti & meatball dinner.

**Date:** March 14

**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

## CORNEBEEF DINNER

Constableville - St. Mary's Youth Group will be hosting a corned beef and cabbage dinner.

**Date:** March 15

**Time:** 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Place:** Parish hall, Dine in or take out

**Cost:** Adults, \$15; Children under 10, \$7.50.

**Contact:** For questions or to make a donation call the parish office at 315-348-6104

## LENTEN RETREAT

Watertown - All are welcome to attend the annual Sisters of St. Joseph Lenten Retreat.

**Date:** March 15

**Time:** 2 p.m. to 4

**Place:** Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Dostie Hall

**Features:** Join us for an afternoon of prayer as we reflect on Christ's call to move from our blind sights to a deeper insight into His life, death and resurrection presented to us by Father Leagon Carlin who is studying at St. Paul's University, Ottawa. His theme is: "Lead Kindly Light." There will be an opportunity for prayer and for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Contact:** Register with Sister Mary Eamon ([smelyngssj@yahoo.com](mailto:smelyngssj@yahoo.com)) or with Sister Bethany Fitzgerald ([srbethssj@gmail.com](mailto:srbethssj@gmail.com)) by March 10.

## ST. LAWRENCE

## FISH FRY

Gouverneur - St. James School to have a fish fry every Friday during Lent.

**Date:** Feb. 27, March 6, 13, 20 & 27

**Time:** 4:30 p.m. until gone

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

# Filipino bishops laud 'digital media fasting'

By Madalaine Elhabbal  
EWTN News

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has issued guidance for Catholics to go beyond fasting from food this Lent by committing to a fast from social media.

"In our present time, fasting must also address the new realities shaping human life. One of the greatest influences today is digital media," said the Feb. 13 pastoral message from Archbishop Gilbert A. Garcera of Lipa, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. "Thus, we invite the faithful to undertake a digital media fasting as a contem-

porary expression of conversion and renewal."

The pastoral message delivered on behalf of the conference came before Ash Wednesday on Feb. 18, which will mark the start of Lent.

The message noted fasting has historically meant abstinence from food, "an act of repentance and spiritual focus." However, the bishops pointed out that engagement with social media, and other forms of online entertainment, serves as a significant source of distraction in today's context that "weakens our interior life."

"True fasting, as Jesus teaches, is not an external performance but an interior conver-

sion," the bishops said. "Digital media fasting, therefore, invites a rediscovery of silence, prayer, contemplation, and authentic relationships. It is not meant to punish the body but to free the heart."

The bishops offered practical ways to carry out a social media fast this Lent, such as avoiding phone use before waking up and going to sleep, limiting screen time, observing 24-hour and weekend fasts, and replacing screen time with prayer, service, reading, or conversation.

"Digital media fasting is not anti-technology," the letter said. "Rather, it asks: How can Christ guide our use of media?"

The bishops stressed the need to approach Lent joyfully, and "not with gloomy faces," noting the fruit of fasting from screen time is a closer relationship with God, greater mental clarity and focus, and renewed appreciation for creation at large.

"In stepping back from digital excess, we reclaim interior silence, deepen relationships, and rediscover God's presence in daily life," the letter concluded. "Entrusting this pastoral invitation to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, we encourage all dioceses, parishes, families, and communities to promote media fasting during Lent and beyond."

## Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

**Cost:** \$15

**Menu:** Dinner includes fried fish, choice of macaroni and cheese or french fries, cole slaw, dinner roll, beverage and your choice of dessert. Dine in or Take Out.

**Contact:** Local deliveries available 315-287-0130

### ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

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

**Date:** March 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:** March 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:** March 7

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

**Place:** Sacred Heart Church

### MONTHLY BRUNCH

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

**Date:** March 8 (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 March 24

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

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

**Features:** Join us for a free meal and great conversations as we explore life and faith.

**Contact:** For more information contact the Parish office 315-769-

2469 or [www.massencatholics.com](http://www.massencatholics.com)

### DIOCESAN EVENTS

#### IHC MYSTERY PLAYERS

The IHC Mystery Players will present the Way of the Cross around the Diocese and beyond.

#### Lent 2026 Prayer Schedule:

Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Seton, Baldwinsville; March 8, 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian, Watertown; March 12, 7:30 p.m. at Corpus Christi, Round Lake; March 13, 7:30 p.m. at St. Michael's, South Glens Falls; March 14, 7:30 p.m. at St. Bernard's, Saranac Lake; March 20, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Family, Little Falls; March 22, 7:30 p.m. at St. Cecilia's, Adams; March 27, 7:30 p.m. at Pope John XXIII, Liverpool; March 29, 7:30 p.m. at St. James, Carthage; April 2, 8 p.m. at IHC, Watertown; April 3, 7:30 p.m. at St. Patrick's, Watertown

**Contact:** For mor information go to <https://www.ihcschool.org/mystery-players>

#### 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 12 video presentations covering topics such as grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage. This program is for the newly separated and divorced and those still struggling with issues many years later.

**Contact:** To register, go to <https://www.rcdony.org/survivingdivorce>. For more information, contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920.

#### GUGGENHEIM REGISTRATION

Camp Guggenheim registration and new staff application season is now open.

**Dates:** July 5 - July 10 for 11-13 year olds; July 12 - July 17 for 12-15 year olds; July 19 - July 24 for 12-15 year olds; July 26 - July 31 for 16-18 year olds

**Cost:** \$450 per week, but if you register by March 1 with a deposit or scholarship application it will be \$425.

**Contact:** Register for camp at <https://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp/registration> Register for a staff position at <https://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp/new-staff-application> by Feb. 25

#### 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)

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## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

## Are you amazed?

When was the last time that you were amazed – something you did not expect, something out of the ordinary, something almost unbelievable? Well, less things surprise us as we get older because, so to speak, we've seen it all before. That is why videos of babies getting so excited over the simplest of things can amuse and bemuse us.

A moment of excitement can be so good, but so unexpected, like the videos we used to see of people winning the Publishers Clearing House contest. On other occasions, amazement can bring sadness because the unexpected has caused havoc. Think of our amazement in 2020 when we were on the threshold of the Corona-

virus.

Amazement means that we are not in control. Whether the source of our amazement is something good or something evil, we are not in control, the cause of our amazement is totally beyond us.

In the Gospel passage for this Sunday, we have the story of the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John are utterly amazed at what happens to Jesus and ultimately at what happens to them. Matthew tells us that Jesus' face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light, and he was surrounded by Moses and Elijah. Ultimately the voice of God is heard saying: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

This amazing event al-



Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin

March 1

## Second Sunday of Lent

## READINGS

Genesis 12:1-4a  
2 Timothy 1:8b-10  
Matthew 17:1-9

lows the disciples to see, meaning to understand, Jesus differently than they ever had before. True amazement always changes one's life or at least it should. The winners of the Publisher's Clearing House and the victims of the coronavirus all had their lives changed. Peter, James and John were, I am sure, different after the Transfiguration than they were before the event. They saw and fully realized that Jesus is truly God.

All of us, on one occasion or another, have an experience that we just cannot explain, an experience that goes beyond

words such as the experience of Peter, James and John. Psychologists call these moments peak experiences. We call them divine moments when these experiences give us a glimpse into who God is and the nature of our relationship with him.

Perhaps, we can be an amazement to others that we encounter. Peter, James and John saw the value, the depth, the greatness of Jesus in this moment of Transfiguration. Perhaps, we, too, could help others see the depth and the greatness of Jesus in the words that we say and don't say and in the lives that we lead.

Soon, we will begin the second week of Lent. Are you amazed at your progress this Lent? Amazed at how well you have done? Or, perhaps, amazed at how little you have done? If you have done well, you are probably surprised

that you could really make some progress and that your life is different. If you have not done well, it is not too late. It's better to start Lent late than not to start at all.

Lent is a time for asking ourselves how well we are living out our calling, how well we are letting our light shine before others so that they may see and praise our God. If we are doing well, continue doing so. If we are not doing well, then begin again to live out our calling. While we live, it is never too late.

When we receive Communion, we are touched by the Real Presence of Jesus just as powerfully as the three disciples were on that mountaintop. As Lent continues, don't "give up." Instead, "give in" to the Holy Spirit. What a beautiful way to celebrate this Lenten season!

## CALLED TO SERVE

## What did you give up for Lent?

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has proposed "Digital Media Fasting as a contemporary expression of conversion and renewal."

The bishops propose avoiding phone use just before you retire for the night and after you first wake up, limiting social media and streaming time, observing device-free meals and gatherings, attempting occasional 24-hour or weekend digital fasts, removing distracting apps from your devices, and replacing screen time with prayer, service, reading or conversation.

Those bishops said,

"Technology is a blessing when used responsibly, yet excessive media use often leads to distraction, fatigue, loss of focus, weakened relationships and diminished spiritual awareness. Constant connectivity leaves little room for silence and reflection. Many struggle to be present to God and others because screens constantly demand attention. Digital media fasting helps restore balance and reminds us that technology must serve human life – not dominate it."

I can hardly disagree with that argument. I do not think I would be willing to divorce myself

from the digital world completely, but CBCP may be onto something.

A couple of days later, a friend of mine posted (I think it was on Facebook) that she had turned off her TV and moved it to a closet and would temporarily end her social media use as a Lenten observance.

Good for her.

Lent is about fasting. It is also about prayer and acts of charity.

From the time I was a kid, I never bought into the fasting part of Lent beyond what the church required. I would skip

meat on Fridays and fast from food when I was supposed to.

It wasn't the self-denial part that irked me. It was announcing it to the world that did.



Deacon Kevin Mastellon

I used to hate the question "What did you give up for Lent?" I wanted to say, "That's none of your business!" But I usually responded with "chocolate" or "ice cream" or something.

Lent is, for me, more about prayer and doing good deeds. And it isn't about getting an "atta boy" for the effort. But that's

just me.

Bishop LaValley urged us to open our eyes and hearts to the good news stories that happen around us. Bishop adds in his Lenten letter, "I encourage you to create or give witness to moments of service and offer them to the Lord in reparation for sin and brokenness in your life and in the lives surrounding you."

And keep those actions between you and God.

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



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

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

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

# Lent & Ramadan

"This year, the holy month of Ramadan and the Lenten season (with Ash Wednesday) began together on February 18. This shared beginning is a grace. It invites us to slow down, to return to God, and to walk together in faith," says Bishop Colin C. Bagaforo, Bishop of Kidapawan and president of the Philippine Bishops' Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, in a message addressed to believers of both communities, Christian and Muslim. Both communities are present in the Philippines, a country of 100 million inhabitants, with a predominantly Catholic population (90%), where there is also a Muslim community of almost seven million people, concentrated mainly on the island of Mindanao, in the southern part of the archipelago.

The bishop explained to Fides, illustrating his message: "It can be said that there is a spirit of tolerance between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines. And when episodes of conflict occur, sometimes marked by violence, they tend to be more political in nature or related to land disputes."

The bishop did not underestimate the challenges, however: "Due to some cultural differences, there is still a narrow mentality that hinders coexistence in certain communities. Sometimes, Christians do not feel comfortable living alongside Muslims and vice versa. But in the last 20 years, much progress has been made, and both sides have tried to build a harmonious relationship between the two communities." In his message, the bishop emphasized that during Ramadan and Lent, "Muslims and Christians enter a time of prayer, fasting, repentance, and generosity." This encourages them to "learn to see each other as brothers and sisters." "Our sacred texts call us to peace: 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Mt 5:9) and 'God invites everyone to the House of Peace' (Quran 10:25). In a world marked by violence and division, this moment calls us not only to pray for peace but to live it and commit ourselves to it. Ramadan and Lent remind us that faith must transform our hearts and shape our actions. Fasting opens our eyes to suffering and increases our compassion. God's love is manifested in love of neighbor, especially the poor and the forgotten."

Peace, the bishop reminds us, "is more than the absence of war; it is a just relationship: with God, with others, and with creation." "We were created to live together, not against one another. This vision of fraternity resonates deeply in both Ramadan and Lent. Peace flourishes where mutual respect is practiced, where dialogue replaces suspicion, and where solidarity becomes a way of life."

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

## OBITUARIES

**Adams** – Nathan I. Parish, 43; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 20, 2026 at St. Cecilia's Church; burial in St. Cecilia's Cemetery.

**AuSable Forks** – Michael Stephen Pattno, 86; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 26, 2026 at Holy Name Church; burial in Holy Name Cemetery.

**Canton** – Gerald J. teRiele, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 20, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Lowville** – Daniel Paul Teal, 63; Funeral Services Feb. 20, 2026 at Sundquist Funeral Home; burial in Wildwood Cemetery.

**Malone** – Richard R. Feimann III, 54; Funeral Services Feb. 20, 2026 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in

Notre Dame Cemetery.

**Moir** – Hervie Louis LaPage, 79; Funeral Services Feb. 16, 2026 at Flint Funeral Home.

**Mooers Forks** – Sandra Lee (Lamberton) Sample, 81; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 14, 2026 at St. Ann's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Norwood** – Wayne J. Green, 72; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 16, 2026 at St. Andrew's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – Robert A. Breen, 89; Memorial Services Feb. 26, 2026 at Notre Dame Church.

**Ogdensburg** – Michael R. Denoncourt, 60; Funeral Services to be held at a later date.

**Plattsburgh** – Eunice J. (Defayette) LeClair, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 21, 2026 at St. Peter's Church.

**Plattsburgh** – Joan Mary (Gonyea) Merrill, 75; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 20, 2026 at St. John's Church.

**St. Regis Falls** – Agatha M. (Goodrow) Parker, 87; Funeral Services Feb. 28, 2026 at the Hammill Funeral Home; burial in Sand Hill Cemetery.

**Watertown** – Ann J. (Edick) Hazard, 95; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 21, 2026 at Holy Family Church; burial in Brookside Cemetery.

# Around the diocese

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## CHRISM MASS

Ogdensburg - All the faithful of the Diocese of Ogdensburg are invited to join Bishop LaValley in the annual Renewal of Priestly Commitment, the Blessing of the Holy Oils, and the consecration of the Sacred Chrism for use in all the churches of our Diocese.

**Date:** March 26

**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.

## HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Massena - New location and save the date! Highway to Heaven

**Date:** May 16

**Place:** Sacred Heart Church

**Features:** Featuring the Shroud of Turin replica exhibit, Father Jonathan Meyer, National Preacher of the Eucharistic Revival, Award-winning musician Sarah

Kroger. The event will include Holy Mass, Confessions, Eucharistic Adoration, a Eucharistic Procession with Bishop LaValley, the Eucharistic Miracles exhibit, films, vendors and more. There will be time for fellowship and service. It will be an awesome day for the whole family!

**Contact:** Space is limited and registration is required. To view the schedule and register, please visit: <https://www.rcdony.org/h2h> For more information contact, Mary Beth Bracy at [marybethbracy@gmail.com](mailto:marybethbracy@gmail.com)

## DYING WITH CHRIST, LIVING WITH HOPE

Plattsburgh - When we make a commitment to die with Christ, we can truly live with hope. Learn about NYS Assisted Suicide Legislation and Canada's MAID.

**Date:** May 30

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

**Place:** St. John Newman Center  
**Cost:** \$10 donation, includes lunch

**Features:** Discussions feature theologians and healthcare

professionals giving perspectives on suffering, grief, dying and our Christian duty to care.

**Contact:** Registration online at: <https://www.rcdony.org/livingwithhope>

## NEIGHBORING DIOCESES

### CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE

Syracuse - The Diocese of Syracuse's 18th IGNITE Catholic Men's Conference to be held.

**Date:** March 28

**Time:** Registration at 8 a.m., event 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**Place:** Bishop Ludden-Grimes Jr./Sr. High School

**Cost:** \$65 by March 9, \$70 after, \$75 at the door

**Features:** The theme will be "Trust in His Strength". A great lineup of speakers, Father Larry Richards and Brandan Powell. Bishop Lucia will start the day with Holy Mass.

**Contact:** For more information go to [www.ignitecatholicmen.org](http://www.ignitecatholicmen.org) or Ed Kirk: Email: [lekirk3@gmail.com](mailto:lekirk3@gmail.com) Phone Number: 315-560-9170

# Event to include shroud replica

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

They love Our Lord dearly, but do not believe Him to be present in the most Blessed Sacrament. The Shroud of Turin is a wonderful answer. Recent interviews and YouTube videos have made the Shroud a point of interest or curiosity to anyone with a computer! Having a life-sized replica along with professional signage and 'explainers' will be a draw for even those with no faith background."

However, this is much more than an opportunity to see an exhibit, added Schirmer.

"As people are viewing the replica and reading the story of Christ's Passion, Catholics will be praying before the Blessed Sacrament, as well as hearing teaching from a gifted and holy priest (Father Jonathan Meyer)," she said. "The impulse of curiosity being upheld with the power of prayer and deepening faith ... this is like dynamite. So powerful we cannot begin to imagine the far-reaching nature

of this 'explosion.'"

Indeed, the power of the Shroud's mystery continues to touch the hearts of the faithful and those in the scientific world. Dr. Gilbert Lavoie, who conducted his own experiments and research, authored the book "The Shroud of Jesus." He wrote of its impact, "God is at work, visually communicating to us through his Son's shroud and his Son's image - his Son's hour of glory: the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of his Son moving upward toward his Father. Yes, what you see is what you get. Set before us, in a captured moment in time, is the occurrence of the final dynamic event of the whole story of salvation, our salvation."

Deacon Tom Gaida, who coordinates visitations of the Shroud replica, shared, "The exhibit was originally created by the Center of the Passion of Christ of the Holy Shroud many years ago, before I came to Mar- town. We updated it in 2021.

The exhibit presents the latest, most up-to-date scientific information available concerning the origin of the shroud and its age. Also, the life size corpus of Jesus on the cross is a very detailed, powerful, and accurate depiction of the wounds Christ suffered according to the information revealed by the Shroud."

Deacon Gaida said science has confirmed the original shroud is not of human origin.

"The information contained in the shroud from strictly a scientific point of view basically rules out that the image on the Shroud was produced by human effort," he said. "Ultimately this is a journey of faith. There will always be skeptics. But the exhibit presents a very convincing argument for the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin and Christ's Resurrection."

This isn't just about looking back at history; it points us to the Real Presence of Jesus: The Eucharistic Face of our Savior with us now.

"Along with the Shroud Exhibit, there will be an encore presentation of the Eucharistic Miracles that St. Carlo Acutis catalogued before his death," Schirmer said. "How often do 'BEFORE' and 'AFTER' pictures draw the same expressions of amazement and awe?"

"One other thing: If we do have the general public coming out of curiosity, then faithful Catholics need to be ready with joyful answers as to the faith we hold so dearly," emphasized Schirmer. "It's never too early to be ready to give an accounting!"

It's all about a personal relationship with our Lord, said Schirmer.

"The Shroud tells us how much He loved us," she said. "The Miracles tell us how much He continues to love us. The Eucharist is truly our Highway to Heaven. Let us bring as many as we possibly can on this journey!"

For more information, visit <https://www.rcdony.org/h2h>

# Back on the Highway to Heaven

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

the Eucharistic Revival. And it features music by internationally famous Catholic musician Sarah Kroger."

Bracy said the organizing committee tried to develop a lineup that would have broad appeal and help bring people grow in their love of the Eucharist.

"I suggested the shroud exhibit because it is similar to the one at the National Eucharistic Congress, which faithful of all ages waited in line for hours to see," she said. "When I saw it there myself, I was so moved that I felt like I could have remained there all day. Many North Country faithful have become acquainted with the YouTube videos of Father Jonathan Meyer, a spiritual dynamo, and The Stations of the Eucharist which he developed.

We really wanted him to come last year but he wasn't able to come due to his busy schedule. Sarah Kroger also performed at the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. Many locals are especially familiar with her song 'Belovedness,' which is sometimes used at praise and worship adoration. Her music really touches the heart with Christ's love and inspires hearts to love him in return."

While the committee considered a variety of locations for the event, Massena was chosen for several reasons.

"It is relatively centrally located, has a big, beautiful Church that will help us focus on our Eucharistic Lord, and right next door is a large facility with ample space for the exhibits that we want to show," said Father Stitt. "It is

also handicapped accessible, has great parking and has a park in which we can have a Eucharistic procession, weather providing."

Father Stitt noted that a dedicated group of organizers has been instrumental in making such decisions and moving the event forward.

"I firmly believe that God brings good people together and with them does great things," he said. "I've seen that in the first committee for the first Highway to Heaven event and I'm seeing it happen all the more this time."

Registration for the Highway to Heaven is

now open, and early registration is encouraged.

"Visit [www.rcdony.org/h2h](http://www.rcdony.org/h2h) to register, for more information, videos, and answers to frequently asked questions," Bracy said. "Space is limited and registration is required, so please register today to guarantee your spot."

The Diocese of Ogdensburg

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