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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 80 Number 3

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

APRIL 15, 2026

Follow me: Chapter 11 reorganization update

Bishop Terry R. LaValley gives an update on the ongoing Chapter 11 reorganization in a letter he released on April 10.

As I previously reported to you, we have been attempting to negotiate settlements with the creditors' committee and our insurers. The bankruptcy judge has ordered that all contested matters, including the Childs Victims Act (CYA) cases, be resolved through mediation.

Some progress has been made with some of our insurers.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

JOINING JESUS IN THE STATIONS



In March, the youngest students (kindergarten through grade 4) in the religious education program at St. Alphonsus Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Tupper Lake led church members through the Stations of The Cross, a Lenten tradition in the parish. Each child carried in a wooden cross that was almost as big as some of them. They placed that cross in a log holder, put flowers in front of the cross, and then knelt and told the story of what happened to Jesus at that particular portion of His walk to His crucifixion. Adults and classroom teachers leading the reenactment were Jill Bujold, Amy Arsenault, Lisa Jones, and Kathleen and Jeremiah Fletcher. Participants included (back row, from left) Jovie Zaidan, Millie Stuart, Alex Schaffer, Emery Stuart, John Fletcher, Calvin Hanson, (front row) Mia Bujold, Luke Fletcher, Peyton Lalonde and Everett Hansen.

FIRE IT UP RETREAT



On May 8-9, a "FIRE IT UP RETREAT" will be offered at St. André Bessette Parish in Malone. This retreat is specifically designed to provide an opportunity for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. All are invited.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

Pope Leo XIV welcomes ceasefire in Iran

By Victoria Cardiel & Hannah Brockhaus
EWTN News

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV on April 8 welcomed the announcement of a two-week ceasefire in the Iran war and urged negotiation and prayer to end the war in the Middle East.

"Following these recent hours of great tension for the Middle East and for the whole world, I welcome with satisfaction and as a sign of living hope the announcement of an immediate two-week truce,"

the pope said at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square on April 8.

Commenting in the wake of a ceasefire deal between the United States, Israel, and Iran, Leo said: "Only through a return to negotiation can the war come to an end."

"I urge that this time of delicate diplomatic work be accompanied by prayer, in the hope that readiness for dialogue may become the means to resolve other situations of conflict in the world. I renew for all the invitation to join me in the prayer vigil for peace

that we will celebrate here in St. Peter's Basilica on Saturday, April 11," he said.

In comments to the press on the evening of April 7, the pope renewed his forceful appeal for an end to war and urged an embrace of dialogue, distinguishing himself as a singular global voice calling for restraint and moral accountability amid bellicose statements from U.S. leadership.

The first U.S.-born pope called on U.S. citizens to plead with elected officials to work for peace in remarks to the press as he left his residence

in Castel Gandolfo, 18 miles south of Rome, and called threats to destroy Iran's civilization unacceptable.

Leo said "attacks on civilian infrastructure [are] against international law [and] also a sign of the hatred, the division, the destruction that the human being is capable of ... We all want to work for peace. People want peace. I would invite citizens of all the countries involved to contact the authorities, political leaders, congressmen, to ask them, tell them to work for peace and to reject war."

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The message is unclear

"I have questions." I sent that text along with a photo to my twin sister last week. The photo, taken at a fairly major intersection in one of the villages I drive through regularly, was of a sign - a sign I had never seen in that location before.

It was a large, wooden A-frame sign. It was painted white, and it had a small green symbol I didn't recognize at the top. Below the symbol, the word "TREES" was spelled out in large, green block letters, and there

was an arrow - also green - pointing to the right.

I assume the sign was for some sort of tree sale or something similar, but I found it rather comical that the sign was also sitting directly in front of a woodlot - lots of trees - and the arrow was pointing down a road lined with - you guessed it - trees.

After my sister made a couple jokes about the sign, I was thinking about the fact that the sign was sort of clear, but it was also not at all clear.



Darcy L. Fargo

Understanding that sign is an awful lot like my experience of trying to follow God's urgings and callings in my life - sort of clear but also not at all clear.

My conversations with others make me think I'm not the only one who has had the experience of feeling strongly that God is calling me to a particular action having no idea how I'm supposed to accomplish that action or when I'm supposed to accomplish that action or what that action is supposed to look like. Or maybe I don't even know for sure that it is God's calling me to that action

and not me inflating my own desires and assigning them to God. It's sort of clear, but it's also not at all clear.

I'll be honest: that lack of clarity is often frustrating to me. I don't like uncertainty.

But when I'm wrapped up in the frustration of not knowing the right path, it's good for me to remember that following God isn't like following an unclear sign.

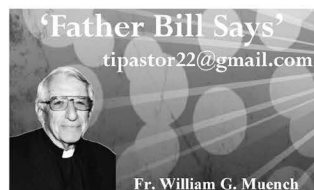
While an unclear sign may lead us down an incorrect path, God will always bring us to where we need to be.

There's no question about that.

Bringing peace and hope

The Easter Season -from Easter to Pentecost - includes several weeks for us to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection. This is the holiest time of the Church year. Each Sunday during the Easter Season, we will celebrate and remember the Gospel stories of the Lord's Resurrection. The first reading each day is the stories from the Acts of the Apostles - stories about the formation of our Church. As we look back to the beginnings of our Catholic Church, the real miracle is that today, in our time, we continue to gather each Sunday as Church, praying together, living and working together as the People of God.

Pope Leo XIV spoke on Easter Sunday reminding Catholics everywhere what is important for us all as the Catholic Church. He called upon us to pray and work as Church for peace in our world. The pope spoke of our world as a world ravaged by wars. He calls upon us at this time to meet the chal-



lenge to make peace - a call for each one of us. We have celebrated and meditated upon our Lord Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. We have celebrated new life in the Resurrection of the Lord. Now we must again work as the People of God to bring the Lord's love to our world, to help bring the Lord's peace to all as disciples of our Lord.

As people of peace, the Lord calls upon us to find our way of bringing Jesus to our world through our lives. We must demonstrate our dedication to our God by bringing the Lord's love and forgiveness to all those we meet - that we may live in the happiness of Our Savior. And it is often the little things, isn't it? When we do those little things ex-

traordinarily well, we will certainly make ourselves better people, and we will lead others to the precious message of Jesus. We all must be a part of the plan of the Lord, the plan of bringing peace to our world. Those little, yet, important things - let me mention a few - like refusing gossip; reaching out first after disagreement; listening before judging; choosing words that heal rather than wound. Small, quiet actions yet actions that are deeply Gospel shaped.

Pope Leo XIV also speaks often about the importance of Hope; we are to be people of Hope now and for the future, ready to trust our God in all things. A little about Hope: Hope is a theological virtue infused by God by which a person desires and expects eternal life and the grace to attain it, placing trust in the Lord's promises rather than our own strength. Hope makes us, believers, active in daily life. This is

not a passive virtue. With hope, we constantly believe in the fidelity of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Hope is a supremely active virtue that leads us Christians to work towards God's Kingdom and trust in His plans, even in difficult times. Catholic hope is rooted in trusting God even when circumstances are dire or when outcomes are not what was desired. Hope keeps us from despair, encouraging us to endure suffering with confidence in God's ultimate victory. St. Therese wrote often on the importance of trusting in God's love in all our small daily actions.

So, we are called to be Easter people, united with our Resurrected Lord and ready to make our world alive in the Lord who loves us, who died for us, who rose again to show us the way and who now comes to the Church to bring us all new life and a new spirit as we live in peace and with hope. We are an Easter people.

FOLLOW ME

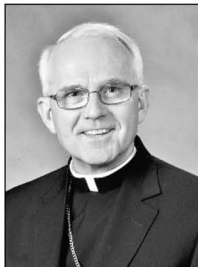
Chapter 11 reorganization progress update

Dear Friends,

I offer you my prayers and best wishes in this Easter Season. It is encouraging to emerge from our long winter to the new life of spring! It strengthens our faith in the Resurrection to see the promised life of spring with all its beauty.

I am writing to update you on our Chapter 11 reorganization case. As you know, all State court lawsuits against the diocese, parishes, schools and other Catholic entities are stayed as a result of the Diocese's chapter 11 case. As I previously reported to you, we have been attempting to negotiate settlements with the creditors' committee and our insurers. The bankrupt-

cy judge has ordered that all contested matters, including the Childs Victims Act (CYA) cases, be resolved through mediation.



**Bishop Terry
R. LaValley**

Some progress has been made with some of our insurers. We have settlements in principle with some of our insurers and continue to work to arrive at settlements with our remaining insurers. Since my last update, Judge Radel has appointed a second mediator, retired Judge Melanie L. Cyganowski, to help us in the mediation process. Retired Judge Christopher Sonchi continues to serve as mediator in our case.

Since our last update, we have had four sessions with the mediator and the creditors' committee. We continue to clarify information for

the creditors' committee and their attorneys. Some slight progress is being made, but it is a slow and tedious process. We have more mediation sessions coming up in early May.

As I mentioned above, the mediators and our attorneys have negotiated with our insurers, and some progress has been made. The diocese and our attorneys have done our best to keep the talks about settlement moving. We have disclosed tens of thousands of documents to the insurers and creditors' committee to facilitate the mediation process. The parishes have been represented at the mediation conferences by Jeffery Dove, Esq. and Father Mickey Demo, the head of the parishes' steering committee. Due to the confidential nature of the mediation process, I cannot give you particulars about the discussions, but I do want

to assure you that we are constantly working towards a settlement and hoping for a just outcome for all.

I again ask your prayers as we seek to resolve the CVA cases. We are committed to compensating victims of sexual abuse. We need to keep them in our thoughts and prayers. We are also committed to continuing our mission as a diocese and meeting the needs of our people throughout the North Country.

Thank you for your prayerful support. May God bless you, I am

Faithfully yours in Christ,

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

Through the lens of Gospel justice

**Dear Sisters and
Brothers in Christ:**

During this Easter Season, we hear a familiar story from Luke's Gospel, the story of the disciples' encounter with Jesus along the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday, the day of His Resurrection. In that story, Jesus walks with those disciples, and He talks with those disciples, but the disciples don't recognize the risen Christ.

While Jesus walked that road with his disciples thousands of years ago, we're still walking our own roads to Emmaus today. How often do we fail to recognize Christ as He speaks to us, calling us to love our neighbors, even our difficult neighbors and the neighbors who live, look, behave or believe differently than us? How often do we fail to recognize Christ in others and fail to treat the Christ in others with the dignity He deserves?

Starting soon, we'll have an opportunity to discuss ways we can better serve Christ in others in "Putting on the Lens of Gospel Justice," a seven-week series focused on Catholic Social Justice teaching offered by the Sisters of St. Joseph and our diocesan Faith and Ecology groups. Those who participate will learn from knowledgeable and faithful instructors about the seven themes of Catholic Social Justice - the life and dignity of the human person; the call to family, community and participation; our rights and responsibilities; the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God's creation.

The series begins April 15 and will run Wednesdays through May 27. Each session will run from 7 to 8 p.m. To register, contact Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, a Sister of St. Joseph, at srbethssj@gmail.com

Join the conversation

WHAT: Seven-week series on Gospel Justice as a lens to view our current reality and to consider ways act in light of them in our daily lives.

WHEN: Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m. on ZOOM beginning April 15 and concluding May 27, Week of Pentecost.

SPONSOR: Sisters of St. Joseph Justice Promoters/Faith and Ecology Committee

TOPICS:

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- Solidarity
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of the Workers
- Care for God's Creation

REGISTER: To register, contact Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, Sister of St. Joseph, at srbethssj@gmail.com or by calling 315-212-6592.

or by calling 315-212-6592.

Even if you can't make every session, I encourage you to join the conversation and learn more about how to view the world and your neighbors through the lens of those Catholic Social Justice themes and to act with the love of Christ.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

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

Fire It Up Retreat: An invitation

By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Staff Writer

We speak his name each time we make the Sign of the Cross. We proclaim our belief in the Holy Spirit every Sunday at Mass when we pray the Creed; his name concludes the doxology every time Mass is celebrated. He is present in the sacraments. We know that the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost, inflaming them with grace and power to carry out Christ's command to spread the Gospel throughout the earth.

This mission of the Church began at Pentecost, but it did not end there.

The power, the graces, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are always available in the lives of the faithful, and for the mission of the Church.

On May 8-9, a FIRE IT UP RETREAT will be offered at St. André Bessette Parish in Malone. This retreat is specifically designed to provide an opportunity for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

All are invited to experience the love of God in a wide-ranging format that includes fellowship, music, multimedia presentations, inspirational talks, personal testimony - and the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist.

The retreat will be led by Dan and Caroline Dirkes of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Between them, the couple has more than four decades of experience in various forms of ministry.

Their work in par-

Fire It Up Retreat

A Life in the Spirit Seminar

All are Welcome

For a personal encounter with
Jesus Christ In the Holy Spirit

Lead By:

Dan and Caroline Dirkes
Ann Arbor, Michigan

When: Friday, May 8

Meet and Greet 5:30pm - Program 6:30pm

Saturday, May 9

8am Continental Breakfast

Program 8:30am - 4pm Mass & Dinner

Where: St. André Bessette Parish
11 Church Place, Malone

To Register Call Lucy: 518-578-1453



ish retreats and mis-

sions has taken them throughout the U.S. and Canada. They describe this work as "joyful, dynamic, and Eucharis-

tic-centered."

Co-founders of 2TIM4 Ministries, Dan and Caroline each bring specific skillsets to this work. With an extensive back-

ground in Youth Ministry and Music Ministry, Dan is a gifted speaker, church musician and worship leader. Currently Music Minis-

ter at Christ the King Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, Dan has been involved across the years with the Word of God Covenant Community, Renewal Ministries, and LIFE TEEN - as well as leading worship at many regional and national gatherings. Dan is a Board Member of Pentecost Today USA.

Active in youth ministry and evangelization for almost 30 years, "Caroline Gambale-Dirkes is known as a dynamic and passionate speaker whose motto is: 'You need to do the ridiculous to see the miraculous.' Sharing incredible stories such as how she evangelized two NY Giants football players, she keeps her audience engaged and wanting more," the ministry's website states. Caroline has served as a regional director for Life Teen, and as a diocesan director of youth ministry. She continues to serve as a council member for Pentecost Today USA. Caroline is a pioneer of multi-generational ministry through 2TIM4 Ministries, which she co-founded with her husband Dan.

All are welcome to this unique retreat. For details and/or registration, please contact Lucy at 518-578-1453.

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APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Recognizing child maltreatment

By The VIRTUS® Programs

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe environment, free from abuse or other harm. As safe adults, it is up to us to help create the safest environment possible for children and youth. One way we can achieve this is to be mindful of the various types of child abuse and maltreatment, and what we can do if we become aware a child is experiencing (or has experienced) this.

Child maltreatment is the term used to refer to all types of abuse and neglect of anyone under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or other person with the responsibility for safeguarding the child. The four most common forms of child maltreatment include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. It's also possible that your specific state may include more types of child abuse than the four typical types that are mentioned here.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is "the use of intentional, physical force that can result in physical injury. Examples include hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, or other shows of force against a child." The physical abuse of children can result in permanent physical harm and even death. Signs of physical abuse include unusual or frequent bruising, burns, cuts, muscle sprains, unexplained broken bones or other physical marks.

Indicators of physical abuse can include when children:

- have frequent bruising, cuts, welts or other marks,
- are constantly absent from activities,
- shy away from physical contact,
- act distrustful toward others,
- are fearful of going home,
- frequently have unexplained injuries, and
- wear inappropriate clothing for the weather, such as long pants or long-sleeved shirts in warmer temperatures.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse can include both physical and non-physical actions. Touching a child anywhere on their body in a sexual manner, or forcing a child to touch the private parts of an adult, is child sexual abuse. Non-touching behaviors include voyeurism—such as trying to look at a youth's naked body, or, exhibitionism—meaning exposing one's genitalia to children or, showing pornographic images to children.

A child may be experiencing sexual abuse or exploitation by an adult or another child if:

- there is a sudden change in behavior relating to likes or dislikes, health problems or eating habits,
- they appear increasingly moody or aggressive, withdrawn or depressed,
- they lose interest in school or there is a sudden shift in grades or school activities,
- they become secretive or defensive, including with technology or online activities,
- they become fearful, anxious or uncom-



fortable around certain people,

- they bathe excessively, or stop taking care of personal hygiene, or
- they have regressive behavior such as bed-wetting, or thumb sucking.

Although these behavioral red flags don't necessarily mean that a child is being, or has been abused, they are indicators that something may be a problem and they shouldn't be ignored.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Also referred to as verbal or psychological abuse, emotional abuse is any pattern of behavior that harms a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. It includes name calling, shaming, rejection, threats, withholding love, isolation, humiliation and belittling a child. Emotional abuse is often hidden from view where there may not actually be physical signs, but there are other indicators of possible emotional abuse.

Indicators of emotion-

al abuse can include when children:

- exhibit fear, intense dislike or detachment toward someone in their lives,
- suffer from sleep or eating disorders,
- exhibit learning impediments or developmental delays,
- demonstrate destructive or anti-social behavior,
- have low self-esteem,
- experience anxiety,
- are defensive or show age-inappropriate behavior, and
- are extremely withdrawn or anxious about making a mistake and doing something wrong.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the type of abuse that occurs most frequently among children, with up to one in seven children experiencing neglect. Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic needs, including housing, food, clothing, education and access to health care. Signs of neglect in infants and younger

children include when they fail to develop and grow appropriately, or appear malnourished. In older children, other signs of neglect may include:

- improper clothing for the weather or ill-fitting clothing,
- a lack of cleanliness or increased body odor,
- being consistently unsupervised,
- inadequate medical or dental care, and
- coming to school or activities hungry, without food or money to purchase food.

Older children may have poor eating habits due to unhealthy caloric intake and/or little supervision, and may appear to be underweight or even overweight. Coping with stress at a young age may result in anorexia, bulimia or obesity. Children experiencing neglect may also attempt to steal food, or money to buy food, and may attempt to hoard food.

COMMUNICATING CONCERNS

If you have a suspicion of any type of child abuse or maltreatment, contact the appropriate civil authorities, or a child protection hotline. For reporting information by state, please visit the VIRTUS website: https://www.virtuson-line.org/virtus/Abuse_Reporting.cfm. Even if you are not sure abuse is happening or has happened, but you have a suspicion or concern (meaning the thought that abuse could be occurring), it is always better to act on the side of protecting the child and communicate your concerns.

Environmental Stewardship**The dignity of human life**

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred and has inherent value that is well beyond our ability to measure, compute or comprehend. This divinely instilled dignity is the reason why we should treat others with great respect, as we are all loved into being by our God.

In Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, he emphasizes the dignity of human life, regardless of whether it has just been conceived, was born prematurely, is sick or deformed, or is nearing its end. Recognizing the importance of each member of our human family is essential for developing a similar view for all those living entities that surround us in the environment. "We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family."

We must come to understand that all human life is precious regardless of the age, gender, race, abilities or lifestyle of the individuals before we campaign to protect nature. The encyclical states "we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

During this Easter season let us try to recognize the inherent good that lies deep within everyone you encounter. And while this may seem easy toward that person who just did you a favor, it can be a real challenge when you encounter a driver that cuts you off in traffic when coming home.

We must take the time to pray for everyone, especially those who act irresponsibly. Forgiveness and compassion are to be practiced regularly just like picking up pieces of litter and recycling plastics. Caring for God's creation is a noble undertaking, but so too is seeing that the young, elderly and infirmed get a similar or greater level of care. Sending love to everyone and everything around you is a powerful practice for promoting peace and harmony.

Rest in Peace

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

April 15 – Msgr. Peter O. LaRose, 1918; Rev. Alfred J. Chevalier, 1996

April 16 – Deacon Vernon J. Chamberlain, 1993

April 17 – Rev. Peter J. Devlin, 1915; Rev. Vernon L. Doe, 1975; Rev. C. Albert Richardson, 1988; Msgr. Joseph G. Bailey, 2000

April 19 – Rev. William S. Kelly, 1908; Rev. Edward C. Laramee, 1932; Rev. William P. Fraser, 1961

April 20 – Rev. James Igo, 2007

April 21 – Msgr. Michael E. Fogarty, 1936

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, Terrianne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terrianneyanulavich@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

Sister Mary Ann Casey to celebrate 60 years

Sister Mary Ann Casey, a Dominican who served in Malone for four years, will celebrate her 60th jubilee Oct. 24, 2026, along with 10 other Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa.

The daughter of the late John and Bridget (Conoboy) Casey, her religious name was Sister Marie Miguel, and her home parish is Visitation, Chicago.

Sister Mary Ann received a bachelor's degree in education from Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin, and a master's degree in religious education from the University of San Francisco, California.

Sister Mary Ann's ministry has been dedicated to teaching and religious education.

In Wisconsin, she taught at St. Patrick School, Green Bay, 1967-1969; and St. Patrick School, Madison, 1971-1975, and then served as director of religious education from 1975-1977.

She served the Sinsinawa Dominican



Sister Mary Ann Casey, OP

congregation in initial membership ministry from 1994 to 2001.

In Illinois, Sister Mary Ann taught at Visitation School, Kewanee from 1977-1982 and at St. Richard School, Chicago, from 1969 to 1971. She also served

the Sinsinawa Dominican congregation as co-vocation director in Chicago from 1982 to 1986.

Sister Mary Ann was area director of religious education for the Rockford Diocese. She ministered as director of religious education at St. Francis Xavier, Wilmette.

In New York, she served as director of religious education at Notre Dame Parish and St. John Bosco Parish (now St. Andre Bessette Parish), Malone, 1986-1990.

To honor Sister Mary Ann with a memorial donation to the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, visit <https://www.sinsinawa.org/donate/>

Bishop's Public Schedule

April 15 – Seminar visit at Saint Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania

April 16 – 11 a.m. – Priest Personnel Board Meeting at Bishop's Residence followed by Lunch

April 17 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

April 18 – 10:30 a.m. – Mass Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the Archdiocese of Kingston at St. Mary's Cathedral in Kingston

April 19 – 8:30 a.m. – Confirmation at St. Patrick's Church in Brasher Falls along with the Parish of the Visitation and St. Raymond in Norfolk

April 20 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

April 21 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

April 22 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dioceses report elevated numbers of baptisms, confirmations at Easter

By Tessa Gervasini
EWTN News

This Easter dioceses and archdioceses across the nation welcomed thousands of people into the Church with some noting elevated numbers of conversions compared with recent years.

The growth of people joining the Catholic Church is widespread, spanning across dioceses of all sizes and regions. Dioceses welcomed both catechumens (unbaptized people preparing for full initiation into the Church) and candidates (those already baptized who are entering into full communion through confirmation). The numbers are beginning to align more with pre-pandemic numbers after a decrease in conversions around the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on a survey completed before Easter by the National Catholic Register, the sister partner of EWTN News, most dioceses and archdioceses expected to see increases in those entering the Church in 2026 compared with last year. Of the 71 U.S. dioceses in the survey, only five expected drops this year.

On average, American dioceses had 38% more people joining the Church in 2026 compared with 2025, according to an analysis of data by Hallow.

The four largest dioceses in the United States that witnessed significant increases were the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (139% increase), the Diocese of Phoenix (23%), the Archdiocese of New York (36%), and the Archdiocese of Chicago (52%).

Smaller dioceses also noted significant increases including the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota (145%); the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Florida (85%); the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota (96%); the Diocese of Honolulu (37%); and the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska (40%).

This year in the Archdiocese of Detroit there were 583 catechumens and 845 candidates received into the Church on Easter. A spokesperson for the archdiocese told EWTN News that 2026 was its largest class since 2005, when it received 584 catechumens and 905 candidates.

At the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament on April 4, Archbishop Edward Weisenburger of Detroit welcomed the newest members. Along with the dozens of individuals who entered the Church at the cathedral's Easter Vigil

at least 1,428 people were received into the Church across the archdiocese.

The archdiocese has been witnessing increases the past few years, with 793 people in 2024 and 977 in 2025.

The Diocese of Boise, Idaho, is still compiling numbers to determine exactly how many people the city welcomed into the Church on Easter this year but said it could confirm that there was "a meaningful increase in the number of both catechumens and candidates who have been fully initiated into the Church," a spokesperson for the diocese told EWTN News.

The demographics of people differ across dioceses, but in Boise the growth was "especially evident among young people, many of whom are drawn to the transcendent beauty, clarity, and orthodoxy of the Catholic faith," the spokesperson said.

The "broader reality is already clear: The Holy Spirit is at work, and the Church in the Diocese of Boise is experiencing a renewed vitality through those responding to the call to discipleship," the spokesperson said.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles reported that it welcomed more than 8,500 people into the Church this Easter, with a 139% increase from last year.

In 2023, the city welcomed a combined 3,462 catechumens and candidates, including both children and adults. The following year, there was a slight growth to 3,596 people, and then the number jumped to 5,587 in 2025.

In 2026, the archdiocese had a large surge with 2,452 catechumens and 6,146 candidates for a total of 8,598 people.

While there is no clear answer to the large increase in the city or other areas, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles reported individuals in the archdiocese said it was God himself who brought them to their conversions.

While many areas saw increases, some did report slight decreases. The Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey, and the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, were among the dioceses that experienced decreases this year, according to the Register's survey.

The fastest-growing diocese was found to be the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, which grew 145%, with 186 combined catechumens and candidates in 2026, compared with just 76 last year.

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Guidance on church political endorsements to come

Following a federal judge's dismissal of a lawsuit challenging the Johnson Amendment, the U.S. Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have announced that they plan to issue additional guidance on the law's application to religious organizations. The case, National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent, was filed in August 2024 by the National Religious Broadcasters, two Texas churches, and Intercessors for America. Plaintiffs argued the 1954 Johnson Amendment, which bars 501(c)(3) nonprofits from endorsing political candidates, violated the First Amendment and other protections. On March 31, U.S. District Judge J. Campbell Barker dismissed the case for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction, citing the Tax Anti-Injunction Act and the Declaratory Judgment Act. The forthcoming guidance "will provide clear, administrable standards for houses of worship, including how the law applies to certain communications made within the context of religious services," according to an April 3 press release from the Treasury Department.


Pope: Threat against entire people of Iran 'not acceptable'

Pope Leo XIV renewed his forceful appeal for an end to war and urged an embrace of dialogue, distinguishing himself as a singular global voice calling for restraint and moral accountability amid bellicose statements from U.S. leadership. The first U.S.-born pope called on U.S. citizens to plead with elected officials to work for peace in remarks to the press April 7 and called threats to destroy Iran's civilization unacceptable. Earlier in the day, President Donald Trump promised on social media the annihilation of the "whole civilization" of Iran if the country fails to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Reiterating the substance of his Easter Sunday *urbi et orbi* message, Pope Leo said he was "asking people of good will to search always for peace and not violence, to reject war, especially a war which many people have said is an unjust war, which is continuing to escalate and is not resolving anything," the pope said. "We have a worldwide economic crisis, energy crisis, situation in the Middle East of great instability, which is only provoking more hatred throughout the world." He also said, speaking in Italian: "Today, as we all know, there was also this threat against the entire people of Iran, and this truly is not acceptable. Let us begin with dialogue. We should resolve problems without reaching this point, yet here we are. We must pray a great deal."

Visit our website

www.northcountrycatholic.org

- Read local stories and commentaries
- Search archived papers
- View diocesan events and much more

 Find us on Facebook!



VIRTUAL EVENTS

GOSPEL JUSTICE

The Sisters of St. Joseph Justice Promoter/Faith and Ecology Committees are sponsoring an online series, "Putting on the Lens of Gospel Justice".

Date: Wed. beginning April 15 until May 27

Time: 7 p.m. to 8

Place: online via Zoom

Features: Seven-week series on Gospel Justice as a lens to view our current reality and to consider ways to act in light of them in our daily lives, based on the Beatitudes, Matthew 25:31-46 and the Catholic Social Teachings concluding with Laudato Si.

Contact: Series is FREE; just need to register. To register contact srbethssj@gmail.com or call 315-212-6592. ZOOM link will be provided prior to first session.

CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

DINNER

Altona – Holy Anges and St. Ann's Parishes to have a dinner in honor of America turning 250 years old.

Date: April 17

Time: 4 p.m. to 7

Place: Holy Angels Hall

Cost: Adults, \$18 or 2 for \$35; Children 6-12, \$9; under 5, Free

Menu: Stuffed Chicken Breast or Roast Pork with stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, green beans, rolls, brownie Sunday, coffee, tea, punch, water.

Features: Proceeds will benefit Holy Angels Hall building improvement.

EASTER RETREAT

Ellenburg Center - Adirondacks House of Prayer will be having an Easter Retreat sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph Lay Associates.

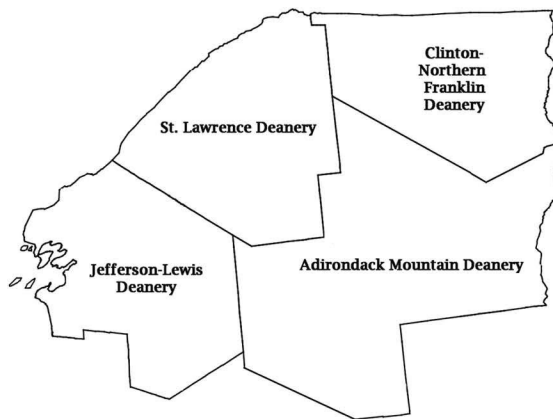
Date: April 19

Time: 2 p.m. to 4

Place: Our Lady of the Adirondacks House of Prayer

Features: Prayer, Reflections "Hope Filled" by Father Douglas Schirmer, Quiet Prayer Time followed by refreshments. All are welcome. No cost.

Contact: Register by April 15, as space is limited. **Contact:** 315-



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.

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

212-6592 or srbethssj@gmail.com

FIRST FRIDAY

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

Date: May 1

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

SOAKING PRAYERS SESSIONS

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

Date: May 4 and June 1, July 6

Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30

Place: Newman Center

Features: Soaking prayer is surrendering yourself to the Holy Spirit in a relaxed, spiritual atmosphere; being immersed in receiving an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A short introduction is given, followed by a 30 minute music worship segment to invoke the Holy Spirit. Remainder of the time is spent, listening to the direction of the Holy Spirit via scripture, readings and being open to receive healing at any level: emotional, mental, psychological, physical, spiritual, or generational. This unique form of prayer allows you to call a "time out" or yourself to come into a spiritual environment, to receive an infilling of God's love, mercy, healing, forgive-

ness, compassion and peace. Facilitated by Eve McGill, Living Waters Healing Ministry. All are welcome!

Contact: evemcgill16@charter.net

FIRE IT UP RETREAT

Malone – St. Andre Bessette Parish to host a retreat, "A Life in the Spirit Seminar", a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Schedule: May 8, Meet and greet at 5:30 p.m., program at 6:30 p.m.; May 9, 8 a.m. Continental Breakfast, program 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. followed by Mass.

Features: Retreat will be led by Dane and Caroline Dirkes from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Contact: To register call 518-578-1453

HOUSE SITTERS NEEDED

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 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 volunteering, please call Sarah Anderson at 518-534-9976.

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: May 3 (Please note this will NOT be observed on April 5)

Time: Following 11 a.m. Mass

Place: St. Hedwig's Church

Contact: 315-348-6260

SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALL DINNER

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

Date: May 16

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

HEALING WORKSHOP

Cape Vincent – Save the date for a breakthrough healing workshop.

Date: Aug. 6-8

Place: St. Vincent of Paul

Features: Join Patrick and Joy Campbell, Benedictine Oblates, from the Cross of St. Benedict Society and Joyful Hope. The Breakthrough Healing Workshop is a powerful time of testimony, teaching, and prayer ministry to help you overcome spiritual obstacles. Heals past wounds and encounter God's restoring love. Feel free to invite a friend and seek healing and hope.

Contact: For more information contact Halladay3@twcy.rr.com 315 221-0135

ST. LAWRENCE

ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

Ogdensburg – The Legion of Mary will pray the rosary with devotions

for First Saturday.

Date: May 2

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: May 2

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: May 2

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 its Knights of Columbus Brunch.

Date: May 10 (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.

DIOCESAN EVENTS

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 12-15 year olds; Aug 2 - Aug 7 for 16-18 year olds

Cost: \$450 per week

Contact: Register for camp at <https://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp/registration>

'The Chosen' season 6 release date set

By Francesca Pollio Fenton
EWTN News

Prime Video and 5&2 Studios announced April 3 that the sixth season of "The Chosen" will be released in the U.S. and internationally exclusively on Prime Video on Nov. 15.

Season 6 of "The Chosen" will include six episodes, the first three of which will debut on Nov. 15, followed by the release of a weekly episode through Dec. 6.

The season finale will be a stand-alone theatrical release in spring 2027.

The highly anticipated sixth season will portray the 24 hours of Good Friday — culminating in Christ's crucifixion.

"Everyone knows the basics

of this part of the story, but not everyone knows the 'why' of the crucifixion and the extraordinary events of these 24 hours," Dallas Jenkins, creator, writer, and director of "The Chosen," said in a press release. "We realized this not only deserved a season of television but a stand-alone full-length theatrical event as well. We wrote and filmed all of it with this in mind."

The show's star, actor Jonathan Roumie, has spoken about his experience portraying Jesus' passion and crucifixion.

"For the first few months afterwards going to Mass — and even thinking about it now — I just get weepy. I get emotional. It's hard. It's left an indelible impression on me — mentally

and emotionally sharing even just a percentage, a micron of a percentage, of the Lord's passion; playing it and reenacting it has left me absolutely humbled and moved," he told EWTN News at ChosenCon on Feb. 20.

The show's cast spent three weeks filming the crucifixion in Matera, Italy, in June 2025. In a press conference held at the Vatican at the end of that time, Jenkins called the three weeks "the most challenging and difficult we had in filming," requiring him to surrender everything to Christ.

Abe Bueno-Jallad, the actor who portrays Big James, or James the Great, told EWTN News that during filming, he had "never seen the cast so fo-

cused."

He added that the actors were "all there for each other ... Everybody is carrying such a heavy burden this season as an actor."

"There's just been incredible stuff happening on set. I've come back to set on days that I don't work just to watch and I've seen stuff that gives me goosebumps," he shared.

In 2025, Amazon MGM Studios and 5&2 Studios signed a deal that made Prime Video the exclusive U.S. streaming partner for "The Chosen." The deal also provides streaming rights to 5&2 Studios' future projects including "The Chosen in the Wild with Bear Grylls," "The Chosen Adventures," and "Joseph of Egypt."

Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

PUBLISHERS DAY

Plattsburgh/Brownville — All Catechetical Leaders and Catechists are invited to Publishers' Day. Attend in person or virtually.

Date: April 25

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

Contact: For more information Asoltero@rcdony.org for details. To register go to www.rcdony.org/publisherday

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.

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

ORDINATION TO PRIESTHOOD

Ogdensburg — Through the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley, Bishop of Ogdensburg, will Ordain to the Order of Priesthood Deacon Michelet Boncoeur, Deacon Tyler Martin Fitzgerald and Deacon Dennis Mamwacha Ombongi. You are cordially invited to join in the Ordination Liturgy.

Date: May 30

Place: St. Mary's Cathedral

Time: 11 a.m.

Features: A Reception will immediately follow the Liturgy downstairs in the Brzana Hall. The Ordination Mass may be viewed at www.rcdony.org/ordination.

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.living-withhope>

ORDINATION TO DIACONATE

Watertown — Through the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley, Bishop of Ogdensburg, will Ordain to the Order of Deacon Mr. Kevin Patrick McCullough. You are cordially invited to join in the Ordination Liturgy.

Date: June 6

Time: 11 a.m.

Place: Church of the Holy Family

Features: An outdoor reception will immediately follow the Liturgy behind the Greystone Building. If there is inclement weather, the reception will be held inside the Greystone Building. The Ordination Mass may be viewed at www.rcdony.org/ordination.

MEN'S RETREAT

Saranac Lake — The Diocesan Catholic Men's Retreat to be held.

Date: June 12 to 14

Place: Guggenheim Dorm

Cost: \$125 and includes meals and lodging

Features: This year Fr. Leagon Carlin will speak about G. K. Chesterton. The retreat is open to men 18 years of age or older. Outdoor activities will include canoeing and hiking.

Contact: To register go to <https://www.rcdony.org/family-life.html> and then the bottom of the page. For more information, contact Stephen Tartaglia at startaglia@rcdony.org

LIFE GIVING WOUNDS RETREAT

Utica - The Life-Giving Wounds retreat, for adults whose parents separated or divorced to be held.

Date: June 26-28

Place: Good News Center

Cost: \$80-150 for commuter, shared room or single room. Price includes overnight lodging, meals, and all retreat materials.

Contact: Register now at <https://solgw26.eventbrite.com/> If you have any questions, contact Steve Tartaglia at startaglia@rcdony.org or 315-393-2920.



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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

Dejected and disappointed

When was the last time that you were despondent or depressed? Perhaps you cannot remember or perhaps sadness is a way of life. Remember COVID? In those days, despondency was rampant.

Today's Gospel portrays two of Jesus' disciples filled with sadness and perhaps even despair. These two disciples had hoped in Jesus, but now for two days,

they have been reflecting on and probing what has happened. The one in whom they hoped is gone. The crucifixion has robbed them of their hopes and dreams.

We can experience similar moments in our lives. A loved one suffers or dies; an illness

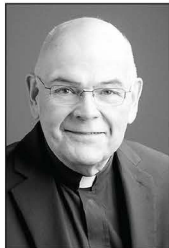
strikes without warning; a relationship ends.

But, look beyond ourselves, beyond our issues, beyond our pain.

If we look at our world we see much chaos: natural disasters beyond our wildest imagination, secure jobs that have become very insecure, public systems that promised the moon and deliver a mere token, educational systems that are

teetering, retirees who find that the golden years may end up being cheap imitation plastic. Are you sufficiently depressed yet?

What one word summarizes all of this? Perhaps the key word is disappointment. We expected something,



Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin

April 19

Third Sunday of Easter

READINGS

Acts 2:14,22-33

1 Peter 1:17-21

Luke 24:13-35

but the unexpected resulted. So, we are disappointed. We feel dejection, and do not know where to turn.

Return to the two men in today's Gospel. Dejected and disappointed, but in a flash, their eyes were opened, and they finally understood.

They had envisioned the mission of Jesus only in terms of themselves, almost something like "what's in it for me." In the breaking of the bread and in hearing Jesus interpret scripture, they finally understood Jesus' mes-

sage of hope.

Like the disciples of Emmaus, we desperately need restored hope. Do we believe that economic policy or political leaders can make all things well? We cannot put our entire trust into human systems. Human systems fail only to be replaced by another human system.

Divine systems continue. That is why the Church has endured. Even though humans are in charge, the Church is rooted in Jesus Christ, the same Jesus Christ who opened the eyes of the disciples of Emmaus. Only God can promise and deliver on his promises to achieve what our hearts are searching.

Does that mean that we should just kind of mope around until we go, hopefully, to heaven? Of course not.

People without faith in someone beyond themselves live only for themselves and their own pleasure. People of faith thrive beyond themselves looking out for the welfare of others and especially looking for the most important other, our Savior Jesus Christ. It boils down to this. With faith in God, we can see beyond the right now. Without faith, we are condemned to the present moment.

So, today, as on all Sundays, we come to worship, and we bring with us our hopes and fears, our joys and disappointments.

Our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist can resemble what happened to the disciples of Emmaus. May our hearts be opened as we recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

CALLED TO SERVE

It is in the Bible

The Road to Emmaus is well known to us. It is the path we will read about this weekend. St. Luke tells us about the encounter. Mark refers to our Lord visiting two guys on a road to the country, but Luke gives us the details, as slim as they are, of the scene.

Emmaus does not exist on current maps of Israel. Scholars, at least some of them, think it was on the site of the current village of Abu Gosh, about seven and a half miles west of Jerusalem.

There was a time when I would get the Road to Emmaus confused with the Road to Damascus. It was enroute to Damascus that Saul fell or was knocked off his horse by God and was converted.

Emmaus is a different story by the same author. Luke tells us about Paul's conversion in Acts of the Apostles. Damascus is Northwest of Jerusalem. That's not even going in the same direction as Emmaus.

Geography was never my strong suit. When I drove on the Long Island Expressway years ago, someone had to tell me to head for the Midtown Tunnel (West) or Riverhead (East on the tip of Long Island) to point me in the right direction. I'm much better now at figuring out where I am and how to get to point X.

Back to Emmaus.

The story has always fascinated me. Not because of the debate about the gender or re-

lationship of the travelers. There are some who believe the two disciples were in fact a man and a woman, and they might have been married.

At the risk of getting someone angry, I don't really care. We will call them "guys" for this discussion.

These two guys are plodding along on their way home when a third guy, who they think they do not know, joins them. The interloper gives the impression he does not have a clue about what went on in Jerusalem recently. They proceed to summarize the arrest, kangaroo court and crucifixion of

the prophet from Nazareth, Jesus, at the hands of the chief priests and rulers. And then, they tell this guy, Jesus' body disappeared.

Jesus, I imagine, listened to them intently and then, when they were finished, responded with one of my favorite lines in the Bible.

"Oh, how foolish you are."

Jesus was addressing the men about the scripture they thought they knew. He was telling them how the various Old Testament accounts really pointed them, and us, to the Christ. How his friend would take part



Deacon Kevin Mastellon

in the plot and that Jesus would eventually rise from death to save our souls.

The men do not recognize the companion until Jesus shares himself with them, just as he did at the Passover meal.

How foolish they must have felt. How foolish we can all feel if we do not take time to read and study the Word of God in scripture.

King David said, "You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence." He is the Word.

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



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

Hope in violent times

“Faith and hope in times of turbulence.” The title of the Easter message, signed by Msgr. Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of Sokoto in Nigeria, already foreshadowed what happened during the Easter holidays. More than 30 people were killed on Easter Sunday in coordinated attacks by armed groups in parts of Benue State and southern Kaduna State.

According to eyewitnesses, the attacks were coordinated by at least dozens of heavily armed men who simultaneously targeted churches and residential areas. In Kaduna State, the army announced it had freed 31 hostages after an attack on the village of Ariko during the Easter celebrations. At least five people were found dead, while residents report that at least seven were killed and others abducted.

Worshippers who gathered for Easter services at the local First Ecwa Church and the Catholic Church of St. Augustine were particularly targeted. The violence also affected other states, such as Zamfara, where on Holy Saturday, April 4, armed men invaded the villages of Kurfa Danya and Kurfan Magaji abducting more than 150 people, mostly women and children. In his Easter message, Bishop Kukah emphasized that the insecurity affecting Nigeria has turned into a humanitarian crisis, with thousands dead, millions of displaced people and communities torn apart.

“After over 20 years and well over 20,000 corpses... the grim harvester still roams freely across the country,” he declared. The Easter message from the bishops of Nigeria, signed by the president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Archbishop Matthew Man-Oso Ndagoso of Kaduna, also focuses on the difficult situation facing Nigerians. “Do not give up now, hold fast to hope!” is the appeal from the Nigerian bishops.

“The suffering of Nigerians today finds meaning in the Cross of Christ,” the message states, emphasizing that Christ’s death and resurrection offer consolation and hope. In their message, the CBCN emphasizes that the difficulties Nigerians face are the direct consequence of years of government marked by selfishness and greed, nepotism and tribalism, and a total lack of commitment to the common good. Despite the ongoing violence, the bishops recall that the power of the Resurrection ensures that “weeping may last a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

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

Brushton – Pauline Mary (Gardner) Parmeter, 85; Mass of Christian Burial April 11, 2026 at St. Mary’s Church.

Brushton – Sharon Mary (Trumble) St. Hilaire, 73; Mass of Christian Burial April 9, 2026 at St. Mary’s Church.

Cape Vincent – Delano Merrill Heath, 78; Mass of Christian Burial April 11, 2026 at St. Vincent of Paul Church.

Chateaugay – Patricia Martin Jones, 92; Mass of Christian Burial April 11, 2026 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in St. Patrick’s Cemetery.

Chaumont – Lawrence Edus, 90; Mass of Christian Burial April 10, 2026 at All Saints Church; burial in New Cedar Grove Cemetery.

Constable – Tina Lynn (Sumpter) Ashline, 65; Mass of Christian Burial April 9, 2026 at St. Francis of Assisi Church; burial in Brainardsville Cemetery.

Hogansburg – Alice A. Hopps Jacobs, 89; Mass of Christian Burial April 8, 2026 at St. Regis Church.

Keeseville – John Patrick Roach, 65; Private services to be held.

Keeseville – Elaine (Rush) Smith, 94; Mass of Christian Burial April 14, 2026 at St. John’s Church; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery, Yonkers.

Lowville – Joan E. (St. Louis) Davis, 86; Mass of Christian Burial April 13, 2026 at St. Peter’s Church; burial in Lowville Rural Cemetery.

Malone – Deborah M. Foote, 66; Private services to be held.

Massena – Edward J. Henderson, 97; Mass of Christian Burial April 9, 2026 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Morristown – Sally Anne (Kinch) Moore, 90; Mass of Christian Burial April 25, 2026 at St. John the Evangelist Church.

Ogdensburg – Bonnie Ellen Burns, 83; Private services to be held.

Ogdensburg – Karen M. Lockwood, 64; Mass of Christian Burial April 11, 2026 at St. Mary’s Cathedral; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Jeanette C. I. (Lalonde) Clark, 83; Mass of Christian Burial April 8, 2026 at Our Lady of Victory Church; burial in Mount Carmel Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Heather J. Andrews Foster, 56; Mass of Christian Burial April 7, 2026 at Our Lady of Victory Church; burial in St. Peter’s Cemetery.

Plattsburgh – Julie A. (Dupee) Frennier, 63; Mass of Christian Burial April 10, 2026 at St. Peter’s Church.

Plattsburgh – Dr. Thomas Su-beck Nicoll, 81; Mass of Christian Burial April 9, 2026 at St. John’s Church.

St. Regis Falls – Lester Jenkins, 55; Mass of Christian Burial April 18, 2026 at St. Ann’s Church.

Watertown – Virginia Ruth (Spencer) Greenwood, 85; Mass of Christian Burial April 11, 2026 at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Watertown – John R. Sugrue, 90; Mass of Christian Burial April 9, 2026 at St. Patrick’s Church.

Watertown – Margaret M. White, 101; Mass of Christian Burial April 8, 2026 at Holy Family Church; burial in St. Peter and Paul Cemetery, New Boston.

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Sisters challenge NY gender identity law

By Matt McDonald
EWTN News

A group of Catholic religious sisters has taken care of terminal cancer patients free of charge in New York for almost 125 years without a problem.

Now, state officials are warning the sisters and other nursing home administrators about restricting rooms and bathrooms to one sex and failing to use preferred personal pronouns for patients who identify as transgender. The state is also requiring public postings of an antidiscrimination notice.

The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, who operate Rosary Hill Home, a 42-bed facility, have received three letters from the state's public health agency, including one warning about "refusing to assign a room to a resident other than in accordance with the resident's gender identity," "prohibiting a resident from using a restroom available to other persons of the same gender identity," and "willfully and repeatedly failing to use a resident's preferred name or pronouns after being clearly informed of the preferred name or pronouns."

The letters took the sisters off guard; a state agency's website shows zero complaints against Rosary Hill Home, located in Hawthorne, a hamlet in the Westchester County town of Mount Pleasant, about 30 miles northeast of Manhattan.

But complying with the state's rules is not an option for them, since the directives contradict their Catholic faith, the sisters told the National Catholic Register, the sister part-

ner of EWTN News.

The Catholic Church teaches that sex can't be changed or separated from gender, although it also says people identifying as transgender must be treated with respect and compassion.

"I think the most important thing is that we are adamant in keeping our Catholic identity. Without that, there's no purpose for us to do what we're doing," Mother Marie Edward, OP, the superior of the religious congregation, told the Register.

The sisters filed a lawsuit against the state on April 6, claiming the state is violating their rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in White Plains, names as defendants New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and four state administrators in the New York State Department of Health. All are sued in their official capacity.

The complaint claims that the state is violating the sisters' freedom of speech by requiring them to state a point of view they don't agree with and their free exercise of religion by requiring them to make statements against their Catholic faith.

The complaint also notes that the state statute appears to exempt institutions run by the Church of Christ, Scientist — it doesn't apply to those "whose teachings include reliance on spiritual means through prayer alone for healing" — which the complaint says violates the Catholic sisters' religious freedom by favoring one religion over another.

A spokesman for the

governor did not respond to a request for comment by publication of this story.

Cadence Acquaviva, senior public information officer for the New York State Department of Health, also contacted by the Register, emailed the Register the following statement: "While the department does not comment on pending or ongoing litigation, the department is committed to following state law, which provides nursing home residents certain rights protecting against discrimination including, but not limited to, gender identity or expression."

NEW YORK LAW

The letters to the sisters from the state's public health agency stem from a statute that the New York Legislature passed in 2023 with little fanfare and almost no opposition, known as "The Long-Term Care Facility Residents' Bill of Rights for LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers and People Living with HIV."

The state Legislature's website shows no public hearing for the bill that created the law. When it was introduced on the floor of the lower chamber, the New York State Assembly, in June 2023, the bill drew questions from three Republicans over the course of about 10 minutes, mostly informational and none hostile. Religious liberty did not come up.

The Assembly passed the bill 144-2. The New York Senate passed the bill 55-7. Hochul signed the bill into law on Nov. 30, 2023, the eve of World AIDS Day.

"New York's seniors should be able to live their lives with the dignity and respect they deserve, free

from discrimination of every kind," Hochul said, according to a press release issued by her office at the time. "LGBTQIA + and HIV-positive seniors are among our most vulnerable populations, and today we are taking steps to ensure that all New Yorkers — regardless of who they are, who they love, or their HIV status — find safety and support in places where they need it the most. Hate will never have a place in New York."

The sisters told the Register they had never heard of the bill until the letters from the state started arriving about two years ago. State officials have not taken steps against the sisters, but the sisters say they're worried that they will.

"Over 125 years, as far as they know, they've never once had a patient who was wanting to make the gender journey, to transition. And that's significant, because why are we going through this?" said L. Martin Nussbaum, the sisters' lawyer and a partner with First & Fourteenth, a law firm with an office in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in an interview. "This law imposed on the Dominican Hawthorne Sisters is a form of gender ideology virtue signaling, to require these sisters to be trained in an ideology entirely contrary to Catholic belief."

"Why are we doing this? We don't even have such patients," Nussbaum said. "It's the state requiring these holy nuns to bend the knee to an ideology contrary to their faith."

One letter from the state warned the sisters that their nursing home can't "restrict a resi-

dent's right to associate with other residents or with visitors, including the right to consensual expression of intimacy or sexual relations, unless the restriction is uniformly applied to all residents in a nondiscriminatory manner."

Rosary Hill Home belongs to the Catholic Benefits Association, which advocates for free exercise of religion rights of members in providing employee benefits. Nussbaum, who represents the association, said the state's gender-identity requirements are creating a problem where there was none.

"The sisters do not want to litigate. They want this resolved, and they want to focus on their ministry," Nussbaum said.

THE CONGREGATION

The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne was founded by Mother Mary Alphonsa, who was known as Rose Hawthorne Lathrop (1851-1926) before she entered religious life. She was one of three children of the 19th-century novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of "The House of the Seven Gables" and "The Scarlet Letter."

Raised Unitarian, Rose converted to Catholicism during the 1890s. In 1896, she opened an apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan for patients with incurable cancer.

She founded a religious congregation in 1900, which opened a nursing home in Hawthorne, New York, in June 1901.

The congregation currently has 44 sisters, split between New York and another nursing facility in Atlanta called Our Lady of Perpetual Help Home.