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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 81 Number 2

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

APRIL 8, 2026

Sharing our “Belovedness” at local event

Award-winning Catholic musician Sarah Kroger will share her praise music with the Diocese of Ogdensburg at the Highway to Heaven event planned for May 16 at Sacred Heart Church in Massena.

Best known for her song “Belovedness,” Kroger says God helped her overcome shyness and bullying and enabled her to share the gifts He gave her with the world.

Highway to Heaven will also feature a Shroud of Turin replica, Father Jonathan Meyer, national preacher of the Eucharistic Revival, Mass, confessions, adoration, a Eucharistic procession and more.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3



SCENES FROM THE CHRISM MASS

PHOTO BY JESSE SOVIE/
NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Led by the Knights of Columbus, deacons and priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg recess out of nearly-full St. Mary's Cathedral at the conclusion of the annual Chrism Mass. Additional photos of the Mass, which includes the renewal of priestly commitments, the blessing of holy oils and the consecration of Chrism for use around the diocese, can be found on Page 16.

VOCATIONS DAY



Hazel Gates, a third-grade student at St. James School in Gouverneur, poses behind a cutout to see what she would look like as a religious sister during the school's Vocation Day celebration on March 18. The event also included a panel discussion on vocations.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

Pope washes priests feet on Holy Thursday

By Marco Mancini
EWTN News

Pope Leo XIV on Holy Thursday returned the Mass of the Lord's Supper to the Basilica of St. John Lateran, reviving a papal practice last observed in 2012.

Departing from Pope Francis' custom of celebrating the liturgy in prisons or migrant centers, Leo celebrated the rite in the cathedral of Rome and washed the feet of 12 priests of the Diocese of Rome.

In his homily, the pope framed the liturgy as the solemn entrance into the Easter Triduum

and said Christ's love, shown in both the Eucharist and the washing of the feet, reveals the justice of God in a world wounded by evil.

"This evening's solemn liturgy marks our entry into the holy Triduum of the Lord's passion, death, and resurrection," Leo said. "We cross this threshold not as mere spectators, nor out of habit, but as those personally invited by Jesus himself as guests at the Supper in which bread and wine become for us the sacrament of salvation."

"His love becomes both gesture and nourishment for all,

revealing the justice of God," the pope said. "In this world, and particularly in those places where evil abounds, Jesus loves definitively — forever, and with his whole being."

Reflecting on the washing of feet, Leo said the gesture is not simply a moral lesson but a revelation of God's way of loving.

"What the Lord shows us — taking the water, the basin, and the towel — is far more than a moral example," he said. "He entrusts to us his very way of life. The washing of the feet is a gesture that encapsulates the revelation of God."

The pope also cited Benedict XVI, recalling that Christians must repeatedly learn that God's greatness is unlike worldly greatness. "We too must learn repeatedly that God's greatness is different from our idea of greatness... because we systematically desire a God of success and not of the Passion," Leo said.

He warned that human beings are tempted to seek a God who grants success, victory, or usefulness like wealth and power rather than recognizing the divine power revealed in humble service.

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Publish
45 issues
per year:
Weekly except
skipping every
other week be-
ginning July through August
and skipping one week in
December by the
Diocese of Ogdensburg.
622 Washington Street,
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.**Editorial Office:**622 Washington Street,
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.**Telephone:**

(315) 608-7556

E-mail:news@northcountry
catholic.org**Entered at the
Post Office:**Ogdensburg, NY
13669 and additional mailing
offices as
Periodical Postage.**Subscription:****For one year:**In-Diocese Rate: \$27
Outside of Diocese Rate: \$30Matters for publication
should be addressed to
PO Box 326Ogdensburg, NY 13669
and should be received by
Wednesday prior to
publication. Paper is
printed each Friday;
dateline is Wednesday.
Member, Catholic
Press Association.**POSTMASTER:**Send address changes to
North Country Catholic,
PO Box 326
Ogdensburg, NY
13669-0326

Like macaroni art

My brain was everywhere but at adoration.

During Lent, many of the parishes in my area offer additional opportunities for people to spend time with Jesus in Eucharistic adoration. I appreciate the opportunities to escape the world for a bit to be present to the Lord.

I recently had some unexpected free time while I was near a parish that was offering all-day adoration, so I dropped in to chat with Jesus.

As soon as I made the Sign of the Cross, my brain was off to the races. In-

stead of talking and listening to Jesus, I was thinking about that project I'm working on and struggling with, that dumb thing I said earlier in the day that had me feeling a bit embarrassed, that person I love who is struggling with some heavy burdens right now, that funny story a friend told me...

**Darcy L. Fargo**

Of the 60-plus minutes I spent there, maybe 10 minutes was spent focused on Jesus.

Driving home, I felt bad that I had wasted an opportunity.

As I was ruminating on that a bit, my train of

thought was derailed when I very clearly heard in my head the phrase, "it's like macaroni art." And I somehow knew exactly what that meant.

Almost anyone who has children or who works with small children regularly has seen or received the craft projects - jewelry, artwork, something - made of macaroni or some type of noodle. Let's be honest: these aren't generally masterpieces, and they generally include at least a few characteristics that would conventionally be considered flaws. There may be a few broken noodles. There may be too much glue. The whole project may be a bit sloppily executed.

Despite the deficiencies,

such projects often become treasured items. We love them because they show part of the child's development and because they were made with great intentions and love.

I guess my adoration distraction is like macaroni art to God. I can't even call it an imperfect offering; it's a deeply flawed and broken offering, sloppily executed. But I showed up, and I at least raced through the things that were distracting me with Jesus near me.

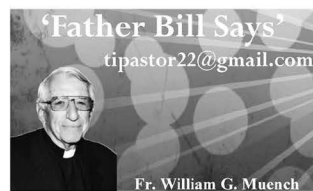
God treasures such offerings. He knows this is part of my journey, and my attempts were made with great intentions and love.

He loves me regardless of where my brain goes.

'Each day should be your Emmaus day'

The Easter Season - the weeks from Easter to the Pentecost. During the Easter Season, at every Mass, the first Scripture reading is always from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts is a book of the New Testament. It tells the story of those first disciples of Jesus who formed and created our Church. These are the stories of the early Christian communities. They brought Jesus and his message to their world. Acts also tells us of the missionary efforts of St. Paul.

During this Easter Season, the Gospel readings are the familiar stories of the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus. These Gospels tell us how the Lord's Resurrection transformed this world of ours. The world was filled with the joy and happiness of our God as the Lord rose to new life. The voice of our early Church was St. Augustine. He proclaimed that Christ truly rose in



body. Death was conquered. His message for us and the people of all time are also called to rise with Jesus spiritually. The voice of the Church in our time is Thomas Merton. Merton teaches us that Jesus rose not only from the tomb but in the depth of our own soul, allowing Jesus to transform us all.

So, as we read Scripture and pray, we must find ourselves in each of the Resurrection stories. These stories are about us now. We will come to realize how the Resurrection of Jesus transforms us each and every day. Jesus reaches out to us now as he did on the day of his Resurrection. We have a place in the story of the first Easter.

Let me consider with you my favorite Easter story - the Emmaus story. That story tells us that on the day of the Lord's Resurrection, two of Jesus' disciples were traveling home, walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. They were upset. They had experienced the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus - the risen Jesus - comes up and walks with them. We are told that they do not recognize him. As they walk together Jesus gently teaches them from the Scriptures that the Messiah will suffer for all. It is only later that they recognize that this is Jesus, now risen, who is spending time with them. This risen Jesus stops with them at their home, and as they break bread at their table, they realize that this is truly Jesus.

This is our story. I believe that Jesus truly approaches us - you and

I - each day. Jesus walks with us. Jesus comes to support us, to guide us. Like those two on the road to Emmaus, we may not recognize the presence of Jesus, that it is Jesus who is reaching out to us. I believe that the Lord touches our lives in many magnificent inspirations as the Lord did on that resurrection day staying with those two on the road. So, I urge you, may you all open your hearts and welcome the risen Jesus who longs to be with you to transform you in every way.

So, each day should be your Emmaus day. Jesus longs to walk with us all. Each time we pray, he will be with us. Each time we participate at Mass, he will be with us, right next to us. Each time to receive Holy Communion, it is the Lord who truly comes to be with us. Each day Jesus finds us on our road to Emmaus. Thank you, Jesus.

Musician to share 'Belovedness' at event

Sarah Kroger to perform at Highway to Heaven in Massena on May 16

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

After bullying led her to hide her gift of song from others in her childhood, Sarah Kroger, a GMA Dove Award-nominated Catholic musician who will be performing at Highway to Heaven on May 16 in Massena, said she now loves sharing her love of Christ through music, especially at events centered around the Eucharist.

"I've always been around music," Kroger said. "My parents were both music ministers. Growing up, I was always voluntold to be in the children's choir. Music was always infused into our lives."

While she loved music and singing as a child, Kroger said she experienced bullying, and that experience led her to confine her musical expression behind closed doors.

"I didn't want that part of me torn down," she said. "So, I did it only in private."

That changed after a profound experience at a youth conference that included praise and worship music, Kroger said.

"It opened my eyes to a language I could use to communicate with God in a way I never had before, but in a way that felt very familiar," she said.

Later in the youth conference, one of the speakers said something that spoke to

Kroger's heart.

"He was speaking to a whole room, but it felt like he was speaking directly to me," Kroger said. "He said, 'If you have a gift from God and you're not using it, you're denying the glory of God within you.' I knew the love I have for music was a gift he had given me, a gift that was meant to serve him. I started cantoring at church. I was terrified people would judge me or bully me, but it was exactly the opposite. I was affirmed. That was a foundational time. I started leading praise and worship for our youth group. Then the youth group down the street asked me to lead praise and worship for them."

Kroger said she then had an opportunity to meet another Catholic praise and worship leader, the same one who ministered at the youth conference that changed her life, and her music ministry "snowballed from there."

"I just keep trying to say yes and put everything in the Lord's hands," she said.

The Nashville native now leads worship around the country, and she said she loves opportunities to lead worship at events centered on Christ in the Eucharist, as she will when she participates in Highway to Heaven here in May.

"The Eucharist is everything to me," she



Catholic musician Sarah Kroger

Experience the music of Sarah Kroger

Sarah Kroger will lead praise and worship at Highway to Heaven on May 16 at Sacred Heart Church in Massena. The event will also feature a replica of the Shroud of Turin, National Eucharistic Revival preacher and YouTube content creator Father Jonathan Meyer, a Eucharistic Miracles exhibit, Mass with Bishop LaValley and more.

Register to attend the event at rcdony.org/h2h. Space is limited!

If you'd like to get a feel for Kroger's music, she recommends starting with the songs "Belovedness," "The Gardener" and/or "Glory Be."

said. "In so many ways, it's been the tether to my faith and to the Lord. On a personal note, I've had many encounters with Jesus, with God through the Eucharist that I can't explain, that I can't put into words. Those are tethering points I'm able to look back on when I experience doubt or when I'm feel-

ing dry. It's one of those things that's unshakable. It's such an honor to be able to lead people in worship in front of the Eucharist and to allow God to work with me and through me to create those moments for others. That's a special thing, and I don't take it for granted."

In addition to the Eucharist keeping her

grounded in Christ, when she's on the road or hard at work collaborating with God and with a team of his people to write songs, Kroger said she makes it a priority to escape all the noise and just listen to the urgings of the Lord.

"I think it's the way it is with all of us - we're all busy all the time, and we're all surrounded by noise," Kroger said. "We have almost no time just sitting in silence unless we actively pursue it. There's always noise. The biggest thing has been finding time for silence. The Lord has been redeeming silence for me. For a few years, I felt like silence was a bad thing; it was scary, and I felt like the Lord was almost ignoring me. That's the interesting thing with relationships - there are ebbs and flows. It shifts over time. I'm learning to embrace silence and enjoy silence. There's something to be found in silence that I need. Someone once said 'silence is the language of God.' To be able to enter into that without an agenda or having to get something out of it, just allowing myself to be and be with the God who says 'I am who am' has been really good for me and really grounding through all the craziness."

To learn more about Kroger, and to experience her music, visit sarahkroger.com. Her music can also be found for purchase on Amazon and for streaming on popular streaming platforms.



A panel discussion on vocations was part of the Vocations Day festivities at St. James School in Gouverneur on March 18. Panelists included, from left, Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, a Sister of St. Joseph, Father Jude Nnadiuba, Father Jay Seymour, Pat and Shannon Looby, and Ben and Karley Wake.

St. James students celebrate Vocations Day

St. James Parochial School in Gouverneur hosted a joyful and engaging Vocations Day on March 18, offering students a firsthand look at the many ways God calls His people to serve the Church. The day featured classroom presentations, interactive activities, and a lively vocation panel that quickly became the highlight of the event.

Students heard from Sister Mary Eamon, Father Jude Nnadiuba, Father Jay Seymour, Pat and Shannon Looby, and Ben and Karley Wake, each of whom shared their personal stories of faith, discernment and service. Their witness offered a rich tapestry of vocations, religious life, priesthood, diaconal family life, and lay ministry, showing students that God's call is both diverse and deeply personal.

Sister Mary Eamon spoke about the joy of consecrated life and the gift of serving God's people with a heart fully devoted to Christ. Fathers Jude and Jay



PHOTOS PROVIDED

(Above) Students at St. James School in Gouverneur ask questions during a panel discussion on vocations during the school's Vocations Day celebration on March 18. (Right) St. James School fourth-grade student Kyle Blair poses with a cutout so he can see how he'd look as a priest.

shared reflections on their journeys to the priesthood, emphasizing the importance of prayer, courage, and trust in God's plan. The Loobys and the Wakes offered a warm and relatable perspective on living one's vocation within marriage and family life, reminding

students that holiness begins at home.

Throughout the panel, students asked thoughtful questions and engaged eagerly with each speaker. Their curiosity and enthusiasm underscored the importance of introducing young people to the beauty of vocations



early in life.

Vocations Day at St. James not only celebrated the many ways God calls His people to serve but also encouraged students to listen for the quiet stirrings of

God's voice in their own hearts. The school community expressed gratitude to all who participated and helped make the day a meaningful moment of faith and inspiration.

A KNIGHT'S REFLECTION

Trust and surrender in a broken world

As Catholics, the practice of trusting and surrendering to Jesus, in accordance with his teachings and examples, is fundamental to aligning with God's will. Implementing these principles can be difficult in this broken modern world. Reflecting on the experiences of biblical figures can provide meaningful guidance and insight.

For instance, Moses in the Old Testament struggled with insecurity and disobedience, questioning his ability to lead. He even killed an Egyptian in anger. Through his mistakes, he learned to rely on God rather than on his own strength, ultimately leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

Job endured intense physical and emotional suffering, losing both his children and his wealth. Although he struggled with his circumstances and questioned God's silence, he remained faithful, ultimately choosing to trust in God's wisdom rather than demanding answers.

David, known for his great faith, also faced severe lapses, such as his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, her husband. He found victory by sincerely repenting, turning back to God and restoring his holy relationship with Him.

The New Testament highlights individuals who, despite their human frailty, demonstrated resilience by remaining steadfast in their faith in the message of Jesus - the Good News. Simon Peter, despite his bold

declarations, struggled with fear and famously denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion. However, after being restored by Jesus, he became a courageous leader of the early Church, overcoming his impulsive nature through faith.

Personally, I relate to Thomas, known for doubting Jesus' resurrection until he saw the wounds. This struggle to believe without physical evidence is a common human experience. His confession, "My Lord and my God," marked a triumphant return to faith upon witnessing Jesus.

Paul, whose writings profoundly shaped the New Testament, was once a violent persecutor of the early church, representing complete opposition to God. However, after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, he underwent a dramatic transformation, redirecting his zeal toward spreading the Gospel and becoming one of the most influential Christians in history.

Theologians and scholars can debate which figures from the Old and New Testaments are historical or symbolic. Regardless, the key message is that individuals encountering challenges may find hope and redemption by consistently seeking God.

Today, we are facing the same challenges since our world is as fractured as it was

when Jesus came to rescue humanity from its own failings. In his work, On the Incarnation of the Word, Saint Athanasius offered an explanation why Jesus came into the world when he did.

"The human race was in the process of destruction," he wrote. "Man, who was created in God's image and in his

possession of reason reflected the very Word Himself, was disappearing, and the work of God was being undone. The law of death, which followed the transgression, prevailed upon us, and from it, there was no escape."

How does this statement differ from our current reality? We live in a world where humans are isolated from one another, fostering division and separation, which aligns with Satan's ultimate goal as the accuser and divider.

Take a moment to observe your surroundings. Do you see Christians who radiate a deep sense of inner peace, remaining calm even in the midst of chaos? These individuals understand that Jesus's message over two thousand years ago remains relevant to our modern lives. As it is written in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." They know that living the Christian life involves embracing it ev-

ery moment, day after day, for the rest of their lives. This means participating in the Holy sacraments as often as possible to nourish and renew the spirit. It means regularly taking in God's word through the weekly Mass readings and supplementing them with personal study whenever possible. It involves cultivating self-discipline and practicing self-denial, supported by a consistent and meaningful prayer life.

By doing so, we are better prepared to face each day's challenges, knowing that the Holy Trinity, the Holy Family, the saints, and countless angels are supporting us along the way. Once we undergo

personal transformation, we share this experience with others because, as Catholics, we believe every person has inherent dignity as a child of God, created in His image.

God does not demand perfection from us; instead, He desires that we remain willing to turn back to Him. Even when trust and surrender prove difficult, His grace compensates for our shortcomings. By persevering, we may inspire others to seek the source of our strength and work toward a better world. Ultimately, it starts with shifting our focus away from distractions and placing our trust and surrender in Jesus, the one who can truly help.



Mike Langlois

Can you be a friend of Highway to Heaven?

Be part of the Eucharistic Revival in the Diocese of Ogdensburg. Help the North Country meet Jesus through a powerful encounter in the Eucharist and grow in desire to faithfully serve God, His Church, and the world.

- Donation
 Donation in honor of
 Donation in memory of

Given by: _____

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Individual Giving Levels

Well-Wishers \$5-\$25

Friends \$26-\$50

Advocates \$51-\$99

Benefactors \$100+



Donors will be listed in the event program.

Record and donate online at
redony.org/h2hdonation

Or mail this form with your check to:
 Diocese of Ogdensburg
 PO Box 106, Canajoharie, NY 13317

Environmental Stewardship**How will you answer?**

Have you ever struggled to hold at the same time the realities of pain and suffering of our sisters and brothers and the earth itself all around us with the joy and peace offered by the Risen Lord? Have you ever wondered how to hold the tears of sadness and turn these tears into joy that Mary experienced at the tomb when Jesus called her name? The celebration of the Paschal Mystery during Holy Week and Easter plunges us into this Mystery.

While taking an early morning walk along a nature trail, I pondered this mystery. As I stood still along a stream I had often traveled past during the winter amidst ice and snow, I noticed signs of new life emerging before my eyes. The water that had been frozen solid only days before was gently flowing again. The birds had returned and were filling the air with their songs. The sun shone through the bare branches of trees calling forth new growth to burst forth on their branches. The tracks of rabbits and squirrels reminded me that I was not alone in the joy of new life around us.

I remembered that Jesus often used nature to teach us lessons about how to live; like the grain of wheat that must die in order to bring forth new life came to mind. This Paschal Mystery of passion, death and new life is not only inherent in us humans but is embedded in the DNA of all life on the planet. While instinct guides the natural world, we humans choose how we will live this Mystery. We can resist it, deny it or we can strive to embrace it as Jesus did. While immersed in the realities of pain and suffering, Jesus trusted in the Father's sustaining presence.

The lesson I might learn from the grain of wheat and Jesus's life is to trust the process and never allow the everyday challenges to steal the joy of knowing He is present with me always. Be still, let the natural world speak, as Jesus often did.

Bishop's Public Schedule

April 8 – 5 p.m. – Dinner with the Diocesan Review Board followed by a Meeting at Bishop's Residence

April 9 – 9:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Episcopal Council Meeting at Bishop's Residence

April 10 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

April 11 – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

April 12 – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

April 13-15 – Seminar visit at Saint Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Rest in Peace

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

April 8 – Rev. Benjamin Grom, M.S.C., 1893; Rev. Patrick Carr, O.S.A., 1901; Deacon John R. Murray, 2024

April 9 – Msgr. Lawrence M. Deno, 2023

April 10 – Rev. Maurice Morin, M.S.C., 1976

April 11 – Rev. John P. Whalen, O.S.A., 1947; Rev. Daniel T. Keefe, 2024

April 13 – Rev. Callistus Scheid, O.F.M.Conv., 1854; Rev. Emil Krancewicz, O.F.M.Conv., 1974; Deacon Richard Warner Sr., 2018

April 14 – Msgr. Richard F. Pierce, 1935; Rev. Alfred Valiquette, O.S.A., 1949

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

CALLED TO SERVE**Are you a statistic?**

News item: "Conversions to the Roman Catholic religion have overtaken Evangelical Protestantism in the USA, with Gen Z being behind the new spirit of religious feeling, according to a survey.

Data collected by the Cooperative Election Study (CES) shows that in 2023, 21 percent of Gen Z adults identified as Catholic compared to 19 percent who described themselves as Protestant. According to the Catholic news site Zenit, this is the first time in American history that any generation of Catholics has surpassed the numbers of Protestants, including Baby Boomers, Gen X or Millennials."

For the record, I am a Baby Boomer, born between 1946 and 1964. Gen Z folks were born between 1997 and 2010. Gen Z people have the distinction of growing up with the internet and social media. Congratu-

lations. I think.

Gen X people were born between 1965 and 1980, If you were born between 1981 and 1996, you are in the Millennial generation.

Of the roughly 1.4 billion people on the planet who call themselves Catholic, 53 million, give or take, are here in the U.S.

Bottom line, the Catholic check box was accessed by more individuals in the US in the last published survey than before.

Of the 53 million professed Catholics, I wonder how many actually practice the faith.

The Pew Research Center says half of us pray daily, but only about 29% of us go to Mass each week. That suggests we have work to do.

At the Easter Vigil last week, parishes around the world welcomed adults who spent the past year preparing for that night. These catechumens received instruction in the basic doctrines of Catholic Christianity before they were initiated to become one with Christ and his Church.

They were joined by candidates who have already been baptized in the Catholic Church or another Christian

denomination but lack Confirmation and, in some cases, Eucharist.

Catechumens and candidates received full reception in the Catholic Church.



Deacon Kevin Mastellon

The work for those who have been received through the Order of Christian Initiation (OCIA), indeed for all of us, does not end with the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

The U.S. Bishops tell us we are all "challenged to realize that (we) have become different because of this new life in the community."

We are expected to grow in our faith. That does not mean "thank you very much, I am a Catholic" following our baptism. It means we continue to learn about and practice our faith.

A bunch of individuals can push the Pew Research statistics even higher. All of us, not just the women and men who were received into the Church at Easter Vigil, can pray regularly, and can be Christ-like in our dealings with each other.

Pope Leo XIV said in his remarks to the diplomatic corps in January, "peace is humility and courage. Humility requires truthfulness and the courage to forgive."

Catholic Christians, all of us, can aspire to achieve that peace.

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

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



*Support And Pray
For Vocations*

APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Modeling healthy behaviors

By The VIRTUS® Programs

Our work as safe adults to protect children and youth is ongoing and never ending. We are called to this mission - to protect God's most precious gifts - children, youth and the vulnerable. It is the message of the Gospels and the clear and certain teaching of our Lord (Luke 18:16): "Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

For adults, living out the message of Christianity is a way of life. It is more than just words - more importantly, it is our actions. We feed others through nourishing them with our good words, actions and deeds.

It is a good way to look at how we live - do your actions mirror those of the saints (even in small ways)?? Do we feed the people we encounter? Even when we have a difficult duty or obligation to perform, we can always do so with kindness. With just a little reflection and thought, we can change the way we affect others.

Being a witness for our Faith in many ways makes us first responders to the situations we encounter along the way. By modeling appropriate behavior and healthy interactions, we are also teaching children and youth what type of behavior to expect from adults. Protecting children and the vulnerable is one of those ways in which we all take part. While we may not always think of the ways in which this happens, the small things that we do make a big difference.

Consider the following times you may be protecting children each and every day:

Following rules, without trying to break them or go around them in places where children and minors gather. This sets a good example and goes a long way in offering kids safe environments.

Watching and being alert to the behaviors of other adults when there are gatherings of children.

Listening to the children in your life, attending to the details, being interested in their stories - this form of paying attention gives them confidence in the way they communicate with you.

Talking to kids about safety rules, modeling good behaviors: putting your seat belt on, respecting the environment, being safe when crossing streets - all lead to good practices for kids to follow.

Helping children who appear lost and getting them to a safe person in charge, and waiting with them until their parents come forward (lost children in stores, etc.).

Having another adult present with you when you are in a position of trust with kids.

Being the other safe adult for someone who is ministering to children.

Making sure you don't curse or act inappropriately in the presence of children and within their earshot.

Speaking positively about the efforts and programs the Church and other groups are undertaking to protect children.

Supporting child protection efforts by participating and volunteering.



Sharing what you learned in the Protecting God's Children or other safe environment training with others. This can include with your family, friends, neighbors and work colleagues.

Educating children, teaching them and being positive in the way you help them.

Offering to help parents when they have their arms full of their children, baby strollers and other things.

Smiling, nodding with understanding and a kind look when a parent is in a tough situation

with their kids and trying to manage.

Communicating any concerns you have about inappropriate behavior to the program supervisor.

Communicating any suspicions or concerns of abuse to the appropriate civil authorities.

Participating in continuing safe environment training.

Being present, not ignoring others in need.

Coaching kids' sports in a respectful and kind manner.

Donating money to agencies that support

children and families.

Praying for the safety of all children and vulnerable persons.

Being involved in family activities where you can show your leadership.

Acting on the adage, "if you see something, say something."

Being trained in safe environment programs, first aid classes, emergency drill protocols, etc.

Proclaiming the Gospels isn't left only to those ordained to the priesthood and diaconate. Each person who hears God's word and takes it into their heart and acts on it, does this effectively and boldly - no matter how small the gesture may seem. We contribute to the good of the world and the safety of those entrusted to us by being fully alive and present to God working within us. You don't have to be certified in anything to do this.

Why not lend a little support by being aware of how we, as individuals and collectively, can make their world happier, safer and brighter?

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The Diocese of Ogdensburg

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PROMISE TO PROTECT

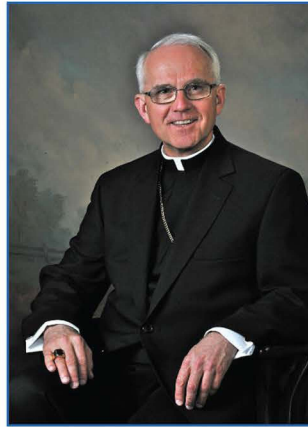


PLEDGE TO HEAL

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Since the first Presidential Proclamation in 1983, April has been designated as *National Child Abuse Prevention Month*. All citizens were called to “renew our Nation’s commitment to meet the serious challenge that child abuse and child neglect pose to the welfare of our children and families.” For the Church, it is a time for us to acknowledge with humility and sorrow the wounds caused by clergy abuse and reaffirm our commitment to protect the most vulnerable. To every victim/survivor, I once again offer my sincere and heartfelt apology.

I encourage anyone harmed by Church leaders to contact our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terrianne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, at (518) 569-0612. Dr. Yanulavich provides compassionate pastoral care to aid in the healing process and will report any received allegations to local authorities to ensure justice is served.



The Diocese remains steadfast in our promise to protect and pledge to heal. This is being achieved by adhering to our comprehensive child protection policy administered by our Safe Environment Office. Under the leadership of Mrs. Christine Cobb, the Safe Environment Office works in coordination with our parishes, Catholic schools and other diocesan related entities to ensure the full implementation and compliance with national and diocesan policies. By working together, we are creating a culture of compassion, accountability and restored trust.

We continue to mandate training for all clergy, staff and volunteers to recognize the warning signs of abuse before it happens. However, we understand the prevention of abuse goes beyond adult awareness. For this reason, we provide age-appropriate training programs for youth through schools and parishes, equipping them with basic safety rules to help us keep them safe and protect themselves and others. This partnership and overall awareness approach will strengthen our efforts to prevent abuse and have a positive impact within our communities.

I am deeply grateful to all our employees and volunteers whose dedication makes our Safe Environment initiatives effective. Your vigilance and cooperation are evident as we continue to be found in compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth* during independent on-site audits.

I invite you to join me in praying for all victim/survivors—may God grant them healing, peace, and renewed hope. And may each of us continue to come together in fostering safe, healthy and faith-filled communities.

With a Shepherd’s care and concern,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg

We are Called

The church is the Body of Christ. All members of the Church are linked to one another. We all have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children in our parishes, schools, families and local communities. Here are five ways you can help keep children safe:

- 1
Develop appropriate and loving relationships with your children.
- 2
Teach your children safety and healthy boundaries.
- 3
Know who has access to your children.
- 4
Learn the warning signs of abuse.
- 5
Report abuse to appropriate authorities.

Here's what we know about survivors as we honor child abuse awareness month:

- Survivors are to be believed, not discounted.
- Survivors are to be listened to, heard and affirmed.
- Survivors did nothing that caused them to be a victim.
- Survivors are never at fault.



With particular focus this month, let us remember children who were not protected from abuse and reflect on ways that we can be better protectors. We are called to journey with victim-survivors as they work toward healing. Even small gestures can make a difference.

**TOGETHER,
WE CAN DO THIS!**

5 STEPS SAFE ADULTS CAN TAKE TO PROTECT YOUTH ONLINE



1. Maintain open and ongoing communication about social media and online interactions
2. Monitor technology use (trust but verify)
3. Set and enforce boundaries for utilization of social media and tech
4. Educate yourself on the latest trends and potential risks
5. Inform children and youth they can always tell you if someone makes them feel scared, uncomfortable or unsafe online



www.virtus.org

DIOCESAN STATISTICS

2024 to 2025



Roman Catholic Diocese of Ogdensburg

- 2,721 Students received Safe Environment Training in Catholic Schools and Faith Formation programs.
- 447 Background checks completed on clergy, employees and volunteers.
- 434 New clergy, employees and volunteers completed initial VIRTUS (Safe Environment) training in 46 live sessions.
- 117 Existing employees and volunteers completed VIRTUS (Safe Environment) recertification training.
- 406 Active clergy, employees and volunteers completed the VIRTUS (Safe Environment) monthly training bulletins and/or recertification modules.
- 0 Reported new allegations of sexual misconduct against clergy.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

What will your church do?

Blue Sunday
Day of Prayer for Abused Children is always on the last Sunday of April.
April 26, 2026

IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD HAS BEEN HARMED OR IS AT RISK:

Mandated Reporters
1-800-635-1522

Non-Mandated Reporters
1-800-342-3720

IF YOU BELIEVE A CHILD IS IN IMMINENT DANGER OF ABUSE, PLEASE CALL 911

**EMERGENCY
DIAL 911**

How to pray for abused children on Blue Sunday

1. Pray they will be rescued.
2. Pray they are placed with caring people.
3. Pray their minds and bodies can heal.
4. Pray they find hope.
5. Pray for those who rescue them.

Human Trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, harboring or receipt of persons by means of force, fraud, or coercion...for the purpose of exploitation.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/human-trafficking.cfm>

NATIONAL TRAFFICING RESOURCE HOTLINE:
1-888-373-7888

REPORT ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS
Local: 518-402-6513

NYS Only
(Adult Protection Services):
844-697-3505

This centerspread is provided by:

**Diocese of Ogdensburg
Safe Environment Office**

315-393-2920

www.rcdony.org/safe-environment

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. Presenters include: Msgr. Robert Aucoin, Father John Yonkovic, Deacon JB Kavanagh, Sister Debbie Blow, Deacon Gary & Gayle Frank, John Ferry and Sister Bethany Fitzgerald.

Contact: Series is FREE; just need to register. To register **contact:** srbethssj@gmail.com or call 315-212-6592.

CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

BREAKFAST

Peru – the St. Augustine's Knights of Columbus will have a Pancake Breakfast.

Date: April 12

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, homefries, maple syrup, and much more.

EASTER RETREAT

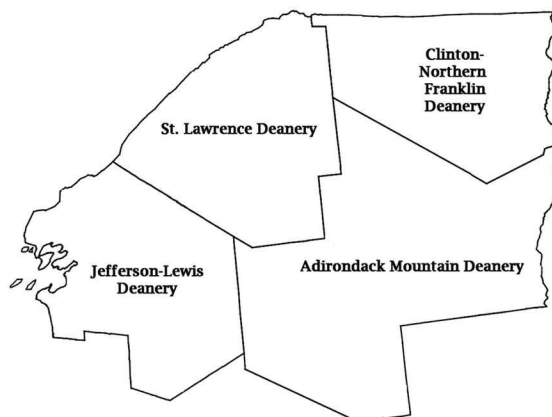
Ellenburg Center – Adirondacks House of Prayer will be having an Easter Retreat sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph Lay Associates.

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.



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.

Contact: Register by April 15, as space is limited. To register, call 315-212-6592 or email 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. 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, forgiveness, compassion and peace. Facilitated by Eve McGill, Living Waters Healing Ministry. All are welcome!

Contact: evemcgill16@charter.net

HOT DINNERS

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

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 4 p.m. to 5

Place: St. André Outreach Center

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

JEFFERSON-LEWIS

SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER

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

Date: April 11

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

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: April 12

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

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

Watertown – Divine Mercy Sunday to be held.

Date: April 12

Time: 3 p.m.

Place: St. Patrick's Church

Features: Continue to say the novena every day until the feast of Divine Mercy Sunday. Join us for the celebration April 12.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

Houseville – The Feast of the Divine Mercy will be celebrated.

Date: April 12

Place: St. Hedwig's

Schedule: Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament will begin at 2 p.m. followed by the Sacrament of Reconciliation until 3 p.m. The program continues with a Reflection on the message of Divine Mercy, the Divine Mercy Chaplet (sung), Benediction, The Blessing of Holy Cards and Petitions, and the Veneration of the Divine Mercy Image.

Features: Celebrants Father Sony G. Pulickal and Father John Ojuok. A reception will follow in the church hall. Everyone is welcome to come and receive special graces on this day when the "Floodgates of Mercy" are opened to all.

Contact: 315-348-6260 for any questions.

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

HEALING WORKSHOP

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

Date: Aug. 6-8

Place: St. Vincent of Paul

Features: Are you longing for deeper healing, freedom, and peace in your life? 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.

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

ST. LAWRENCE

MONTHLY BRUNCH

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

Date: April 12 (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.

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 Devotions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Catholic leaders call for peace in Iran

By Tyler Arnold
EWTN News

President Donald Trump vowed stronger military action against Iran in an address to the nation on Wednesday night amid continued calls for peace and dialogue from Pope Leo XIV and other members of the Catholic hierarchy.

"We're going to bring them back to the stone ages where they belong," Trump said in remarks from the White House on April 1, adding that "in the meantime, discussions are ongoing."

Trump said the military is "on track to complete all of America's military objectives shortly, very shortly" but said he also intends to "hit them extremely hard over the next two to three weeks."

"If, during this period of time, no deal is made, we have our eyes on key targets," the presi-

dent said and threatened to escalate to attacking Iranian infrastructure.

"If there is no deal, we are going to hit each and every one of their electric generating plants very hard and probably simultaneously," he said. "We have not hit their oil, even though that's the easiest target of all, because it would not give them even a small chance of survival or rebuilding."

Trump said the military's "core strategic objectives" are nearly complete and noted that Iran's military has significantly deteriorated. Now, more than one month into the conflict, Trump said: "We're getting very close."

As Iran continues to threaten ships that must pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Trump said: "Countries of the world that do receive oil through the Hormuz Strait must take care of that passage" and told them to "grab it" while promising "we

will be helpful."

Trump's address was his first speech to the nation since the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran began on Feb. 28. Trump has made remarks to reporters, given interviews, and posted statements but had not delivered a formal, televised address to the nation.

Pope, bishops pray for peace

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, published a statement earlier in the day welcoming indications the war may soon end and calling for a ceasefire.

"The longer the conflict with Iran continues, including the risk of deploying ground troops to the region, the greater the risk of a dramatic escalation risking an ever-greater regional conflict," Coakley said.

Citing Pope Leo XIV's Palm Sunday homily of March 29, in which the pope proclaimed Christ the "King of Peace" who

rejects war, Coakley encouraged Christians, renewed by Easter, to live out their vocation as peacemakers.

"Pope Leo XIV made clear: 'Brothers and sisters, this is our God: Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war,'" Coakley said.

The pope separately addressed the conflict on March 31, telling reporters outside the papal villa of Castel Gandolfo: "Easter should be the holiest, most sacred time of the year."

"I'm told that President Trump recently stated that he would like to end the war," the pope told reporters March 31. "Hopefully he's looking for an 'off ramp.' Hopefully he's looking for a way to decrease the amount of violence, of bombing, which would be a significant contribution to removing the hatred that's being created and that's increasing constantly in the Middle East and elsewhere."

Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

tion.

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

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 (week 5 is full but a waitlist is being generated)

Cost: \$450 per week

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

CLM WORKSHOP

Peru – Marika Donders will present a free hospitality workshop.

Date: April 11

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Place: St. Augustine's Parish Center

Theme: Hospitality: More than Coffee and Donuts

Features: A workshop for anyone and everyone who wants to create a more hospitable and inviting environment where ALL can encounter the love of Christ.

Contact: Register at www.rcdony.org/clm-event

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

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>

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: Father 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. Retreat 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.

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Court: Churches still barred from political endorsements

A federal judge in Texas has dismissed a lawsuit that would have allowed churches to endorse political candidates without losing their tax-exempt status. The case, which challenged the Johnson Amendment, a 1954 law that prohibits 501(c)(3) nonprofits from endorsing political candidates, was filed in August 2024 by the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), two Texas churches, and Intercessors for America. The plaintiffs argued that the Johnson Amendment violates the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment rights to free speech and free exercise of religion, is unconstitutionally vague under the Fifth Amendment, and infringes on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The U.S. Department of Justice attempted to dismiss the case in the last weeks of the Biden administration. After President Trump took office in January 2025, however, his administration revived the case. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Department of Justice shifted their positions and sided with the plaintiffs, arguing that the Johnson Amendment should be read narrowly when applied to churches.

Judge gives clergy access to immigration facility for Holy Week

A federal judge has granted a preliminary injunction allowing clergy to minister to people held at an Illinois immigration facility during Holy Week, citing Pope Leo XIV in his ruling. U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman ordered the Trump administration to allow clergy to enter the Broadview immigration facility from April 2–5 to offer religious services for those who wish to attend. "The court takes 'at face value the claimant's stated belief' that ministering to detainees specifically at Broadview, who hail from local parishes and share a religious community with plaintiffs, is core to their religious practice," Gettleman's March 31 order said, citing November 2025 comments from Pope Leo XIV calling for detained migrants to have access to spiritual care. Gettleman wrote: "With reasonable notice and communication, addressing legitimate security and safety concerns, allowing plaintiffs to provide pastoral care to migrants and detainees does not pose any undue hardship on the government." The order, which also allows people to pray outside the facility, followed a March 31 hearing.

Trump continues Title X grants to Planned Parenthood

The Trump administration, citing legal challenges, said it will continue to give Title X grants to Planned Parenthood for another year – a move pro-life leaders see as a "betrayal." The administration first restored Biden-era Title X funds to Planned Parenthood in January, to the outcry of pro-lifers. News broke March 31 that the administration would extend the grants for another year. Thanks to the grants, Planned Parenthood and other clinics will be able to submit reimbursement receipts to the federal government for low-income patients who received birth control and other non-abortion services. While grants won't directly cover abortion – the Hyde Amendment prevents the federal government from doing so – grants will subsidize an organization that performs hundreds of thousands of abortions yearly.

Canadian woman offered euthanasia for back pain

By Tessa Gervasini
EWTN News

Miriam Lancaster's story sparked "outrage" after she shared that she was offered medical assistance in dying (MAID) after arriving at a Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, hospital with back pain.

In 2025, 84-year-old Lancaster was taken to Vancouver General Hospital via ambulance after waking up with intense back pain. She was taken out of the ambulance and placed into the emergency room.

"The first person that I remember coming to speak to me was a young lady doctor. And this is where the story begins," Lancaster recalled in an interview with "EWTN News Nightly." "The very first thing she said to me was, 'I would like to offer you MAID.'"

MAID is the euthanasia and assisted suicide law in Canada that allows a physician or nurse practitioner to administer or provide a drug that causes death to the patient.

After the doctor offered MAID, "I said: 'No, thank you,'" Lancaster said. "I was certainly taken aback, and there were so many other things on my mind."

Lancaster said she was thinking: "Yesterday I was feeling fine. I got out of bed this morning, and suddenly I am not feeling fine. I am in horrendous pain. So I need to know what's causing the pain. Let's not talk about end of life please."

"My husband, three years previously, had also been offered MAID. He turned it down," Lancaster said. As "practicing Catholics, there is no way that we are going to take measures to end our life. That is in the hands of the Lord. So he turned down MAID when he was in hospital, and a few years later, there I am in the same hospital, and I gave the same response."

Later, Lancaster was moved to the UBC Hospital. "By this time they knew that I had a tiny crack in my sacrum. That's a little bone at the base of the spine," she said. "There's no surgery possible, so I was in bed, with some exercises of course, for three weeks."

"When I got home, I thought, 'Oh, I've been given a second chance here. I am going to make the most of whatever time is left,'" she said.

Lancaster said she and her daugh-

ter decided to travel to Cuba in the fall and to Mexico and Guatemala in the spring. While on her trip, Lancaster even went horseback riding on a volcano.

Amanda Achtman, who works to humanize the conversation around suffering and death through the Dying to Meet You Project, told "EWTN News Nightly" she hopes Lancaster's story "emboldens other seniors to speak out too" who have had similar experiences.

"Your story has gone totally viral in media all around the world because people are rightly outraged at the suggestion that you could have been offered death when you have so much life to live," Achtman said to Lancaster.

People who are opting for MAID "are being killed by having a lethal injection administered by a doctor or nurse directly," Achtman said. "And now in Canada, 1 in 20 deaths is the result of this premature hastening of an end of life."

MAID "is the suggestion that is being made more and more often to Canadian seniors," she said.

Achtman also works with Canadian Physicians for Life on ethics education and she teaches a bioethics course for St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry. She was recently invited by the bishop of the Diocese of Victoria, Canada, to Vancouver Island, which she said is "literally the euthanasia capital of the world."

"And while there, I met Miriam, but also others who shared with me experiences about unsolicited offers of euthanasia within the health care system," she said.

One woman shared her story with Achtman about "having had euthanasia brought up by her family doctor, by a cancer specialist, and even by the funeral home."

"Now, bringing up euthanasia is not prohibited in Canada, according to the Canadian Association of MAID Providers and Assessors – the government-funded group that is promoting this," Achtman said. "There's no prohibition, and they stress that."

"However, what I would stress is that simply having euthanasia offered already kills a person, because it deflates and defeats a person's sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and of value," she said.

Vatican Observatory lauds Artemis II

By Hannah Brockhaus
& Zoe Romanowsky
EWTN News

NASA's Artemis II test flight launched into space on Wednesday evening for an expected 10-day lunar flyby mission.

The flight — which is the first crewed lunar mission in more than half a century — is a test for future missions hoping to return humans to the lunar surface in 2028.

Jesuit Father Richard A. D'Souza, director of the Vatican Observatory since September 2025, told EWTN News the Artemis II program is "a great development" that will hopefully lead to answers about the origin of the moon.

The astronomer said the Catholic Church has always supported space exploration but, noting the increased commercialization of spaceflight, warned that it should be for "the benefit of all."

D'Souza shared with EWTN News the significance of this launch and how the Church continues to view space exploration:

From the Vatican Observatory's perspective, what is the significance of Artemis II returning humans to the moon's vicinity after more than 50 years?

D'Souza: The Artemis program is a great development from the perspective of human spaceflight. Since the Apollo missions, our understanding of the moon and our scientific techniques to answer many of the unanswered questions have improved. A possible landing on the moon will allow us to answer several unanswered questions about the origin of the moon.

Furthermore, there is a growing awareness that the moon could host several scientific experiments which could not be possible from the earth due to the abundance of electromagnetic pollution. The far side of the moon remains shielded from various forms of electromagnetic pollutions from the Earth and is ideal to listen to faint signals from the cosmos.

How does the Catholic Church view human spaceflight today — has that perspective evolved since the Apollo era?

The Apollo program — lead by NASA — focused on human endeavor and making the impossible possible. Today, there are many more actors in space with the inclusion of many private companies focused solely on commercial benefit. The Catholic Church, while encouraging all forms of human prog-

ress, is particularly concerned that the benefits of such technologies should lead to the benefit of all and not to further inequality and injustice.

Furthermore, the Vatican is especially concerned about the pollution of pristine environments in space (e.g. the moon or other planets) and the great risk of increasing space debris.

Artemis II is a test mission rather than a landing — what does the emphasis on preparation and patience say about how we should approach exploration?

Artemis II is part of a long-term program to return humankind to the moon. While 50 years have passed since we were last on the surface of the moon, we now have a much better understanding of the risks involved. At the same time, much of the technology that will be used in the Artemis program has never been tested for this kind of enterprise. In any form of space mission which involves human persons, the highest forms of accountability and security are needed. Hence, the great caution on the part of NASA in doing all the preparation necessary before landing again on the moon.

Some critics argue that space exploration distracts us from addressing suffering

and injustice on Earth. How does the Church respond to that concern?

The Catholic Church has long supported space exploration right from the initial days of the Apollo missions. It understands the symbolic value of space exploration and its effect on other dimensions of human life. Yet at the same time, it is very concerned that exploration of space should not lead to an increase in injustice here on Earth. For this reason, it has been particularly vociferous about international treaties and regulations of space use and travel that need to be put in place — to ensure peace, justice, and that its benefits reach all.

Looking ahead, what questions do you hope future space missions will help humanity explore?

Human space travel to Mars will require us to understand the long-term effect of space travel on the human person. The longest a person has been in space has been 437 days. Before we can undertake longer space missions, we need to understand how to deal with medical emergencies in space. The recent return of the astronauts from the space station due to a health emergency shows how difficult this can be.

Pope Leo's prayer intention for April

Pope Leo XIV's prayer intention for the month of April is for priests in crisis.

In a video released on X, the Holy Father posed a question for the faithful: "Have you ever been in a crisis?"

"In moments of fragility, it's so important that we are there for one another," he said. "This April, I invite you to join me in prayer for priests going through moments of crisis in their vocation, that they may find accompaniment and that commu-

nities may support them with understanding and prayer."

In the full video shared on the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network website, Pope Leo recites an original prayer written specifically for this month's prayer intention.

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd and companion on the journey,

today we place in your hands all priests, especially those going through moments of crisis, when loneliness weighs heavily, when

doubt clouds their hearts, and when exhaustion seems stronger than hope.

You who know their struggles and wounds, renew in them the certainty of your unconditional love.

Let them feel they are not mere functionaries or lonely heroes, but beloved sons, humble and cherished disciples, and pastors sustained by the prayer of their people.

Good Father, teach us as a community to care for our priests: to listen without judging,

to give thanks without demanding perfection, to share with them the baptismal mission of proclaiming the kingdom in word and deed, and to accompany them with closeness and sincere prayer.

May we support those who so often support us.

Holy Spirit, rekindle in our priests the joy of the Gospel.

Grant them healthy friendships, networks of fraternal support, a sense of humor when things don't go as ex-

pected, and the grace to always rediscover the beauty of their vocation.

May they never lose trust in you, nor the joy of serving your Church with a humble and generous heart.

Amen.



SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

'How strong is our faith in Jesus?'

In a world filled with artificial intelligence, avatars and photoshop, we can easily wonder if we really see what we think we see. What or who is real? If Jesus appeared today, would we believe or would we think that we were victims of some kind of computer graphic games?

With that background, our doubting Thomas does not seem that strange at all. "Believe none of what you hear and only half of what you see" is an often quoted saying. Thomas would have none of that. Hearing and seeing are not enough for him. He wants to see the marks left by the nails and touch those wounds and put his hand into the wounded side of Jesus before he will believe. He truly deserves the title "Doubting Thomas."



Msgr. Robert
H. Aucoin

Are we that different from Thomas? In other words, how strong is our faith in Jesus? Are we always looking for signs of God's presence? Even more, do we tell God what signs he needs to give us?

In fact, Jesus is present to us in many ways, ways that only the eyes of faith can recognize. Our first encounter with Jesus came on the day of our baptisms when we or our parents on our behalf accepted God, accepted his mercy, and proclaimed our faith and belief in what he taught.

Our faith grew until we approached the sacrament of reconciliation and accepted God's mercy once again and asked God to forgive our sins. In today's Gospel passage, Jesus gives his disciples that awesome ability to forgive

April 12

Second Sunday of Easter

READINGS

Acts 2:42-47

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

sins.

Our faith pushed us forward to receive Jesus' body and blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist. That same faith brings us here each Sunday and even more frequently to celebrate that Eucharist, that body and blood of Christ that Thomas was able to touch with his hands and see with his eyes, but we see and touch with our lives and eyes of faith. This Eucharist affirms and strengthens our daily participation in life so that we can truly experience this life-presence of God in our ordinary

daily living.

Our faith brought us to the sacrament of confirmation. At baptism, God says "yes" to us, but in confirmation, that will be celebrated in so many of our parishes this spring, our candidates will say "yes" to God because faith has brought them to that point.

Faith allows couples to commit themselves in matrimony so that they can build up the Body of Christ with their children and live in harmony with one another.

Faith motivates some to become ordained priests and deacons in our Church so that they can live their vocation in dedicated service to the members of Christ's body.

Finally, God comes to us in faith when our lives become weak, and we need his spiritual comfort for body and

soul in the anointing of the sick.

Life itself can challenge our faith, the existence of God, the value of Church, the truth of our doctrines. These challenges can gnaw on our belief systems, but through it all we must remain firm and solid.

Our faith is real; our beliefs are real; the objects of our faith are real. Yes, sometimes like Thomas, we want to see, feel and touch. We cannot do that as did Thomas, but we have a great affirmation by Jesus that applies to all of us: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

So, today's scriptures remind us, people of faith, that we are blessed, blessed in our faith, in our beliefs, and in our lives. We pray that, like Thomas, we may be able to proclaim: "My Lord and my God!"

News brief

Volunteer sitters needed at House of Prayer

Our Lady of the Adirondacks House of Prayer in Ellenburg Center is looking for many volunteer "House Sitters." 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. Snack items are on hand along with tea, coffee, soda, and bottled water. Training will be provided on the history of the House of Prayer, its mission, and the various ways to carry out this gentle ministry of hospitality for those seeking time in a home of Mary to listen to our Lord, browse in the library. Flexible schedule and hours are fine. If interested in volunteering for one day a month, or week, or more, please call Sarah Anderson at 518-534-9976.

Visit our website

www.northcountrycatholic.org

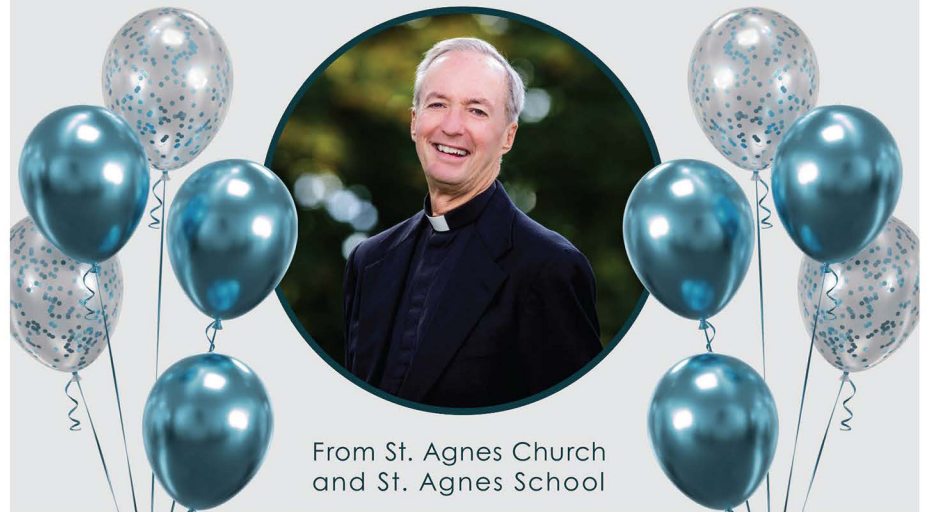
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APRIL 10

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
FATHER JOHN YONKOVIG



From St. Agnes Church
and St. Agnes School



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

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

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Hope in the Lord

“Hope in the Lord does not disappoint” is the motto of the mission organized by the National Direction of the Pontifical Mission Societies (TPMS) in Albania, in the Diocese of Rrëshen.

Rrëshen, home to the cathedral and the bishop’s residence, along with the surrounding areas, mostly rural, with a total population of about 10,000, received visits during the first two weeks of March from missionaries who traveled extensively throughout the territory.

In the Diocese of Rrëshen, located in the mountains of northern Albania, pastoral work is currently entrusted to only six priests and five women’s religious congregations. In this context, the contribution of missionaries from other dioceses and congregations represents a concrete sign of ecclesial solidarity and a source of comfort for the local community.

The diocese safeguards a valuable historical heritage and a strong testimony of faith. The mission’s focus was direct encounters with families. The missionaries, organized in pairs – a priest and a religious sister or a priest and a layperson – visited homes, sharing moments of listening and prayer. Thus, the guiding principles of these visits were encounter, listening, and hope. In most cases, the welcome was warm and marked by profound emotion. However, there were also more delicate situations: some families, affected by personal or family difficulties, struggled to open up and welcome the missionaries. Even in these cases, their discreet and respectful presence became a sign of closeness and a seed of hope.

“A blessing, a word of comfort, a simple gesture are essential tools that have made the mission concrete. In a time dominated by digital communication, human contact has once again proven irreplaceable,” commented Father Agustin Margjoni, a Vincentian missionary and national director of the Albanian Pontifical Mission Societies, who since the beginning of his term has strived to collaborate fruitfully with the bishops and missionaries present in the country.

Among the most significant moments was the meeting of the missionaries with high school students at the Rrëshen Cathedral.

“The mission was also an intense experience of communion among the missionaries themselves. Coming from different dioceses and religious backgrounds, they shared not only pastoral service, but also everyday moments, such as meals and fraternal dialogue, experiencing how important it is, especially in contexts like Albania, to join forces and collaborate,” explained Father Margjoni.

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

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

OBITUARIES

Chateaugay – Margaret “Peg” (Perry) Boyea, 85; Mass of Christian Burial April 7, 2026 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in St. Patrick’s Cemetery.

Croghan – Nora B. Martin, 88; Mass of Christian Burial June 19, 2026 at St. Stephen’s Church; burial in St. Stephen’s Cemetery.

Lowville – Mary A. (Hanno) Lyng, 89; Mass of Christian Burial April 10, 2026 at St. Peter’s Church; burial in Martinsburg

Cemetery.

Newcomb – Douglas Allen Alitz, 85; Mass of Christian Burial April 4, 2026 at St. Therese Church.

Ogdensburg – Gerald T. Rascoe, 88; Funeral Services March 30, 2026 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in Purmort Cemetery, Depeyster.

Ogdensburg – Regina L. Shoen, 55; Mass of Christian Burial April 7, 2026 at St. Mary’s Cathedral; burial in Hillcrest Cemetery.

Waddington – Pauline A. (McNulty) Cantwell, 99; Mass of Christian Burial March 30, 2026 at St. Mary’s Church.

Watertown – Thomas J. Fargo, 84; Mass of Christian Burial April 7, 2026 at Holy Family Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Watertown – Nicola L. Luciani, 92; Mass of Christian Burial April 7, 2026 at Holy Family Church.

Albany Diocese reaches \$148M abuse settlement

By Daniel Payne
 EWTN News

The Diocese of Albany, New York, will pay survivors of sexual abuse a \$148 million settlement in restitution for what Bishop Mark O’Connell called a “shameful chapter” of abuse in the diocese’s history.

The diocese announced the settlement in a press release on March 27. The nine-figure amount was still subject to court approval, but the amount itself had been accepted by the committee of survivors suing the diocese.

In the press release, O’Connell admitted a “clear and un-nuanced statement of guilt on the part of the diocese in its handling of our predator priests and others within the diocese.”

“It is a shameful chapter in our history, and no monetary settlement such as the one reached today will erase the pain caused to survivors,” he said while apologizing.

The bishop vowed to be “exceedingly dil-

igent” in working to “prevent anything like this occurring again.”

Representatives of the survivors’ committee, meanwhile, said the settlement pointed the way to “closure for all survivors.”

The committee said it “looks forward to working further with the diocese to enhance its child protection protocols.”

The diocese in its statement said that diocesan insurers may contribute additional funds to the global settlement; the statement noted that it is “typical” for insurance carriers to provide “a significant portion” of abuse settlements.

The diocese had declared bankruptcy in

2023 while facing hundreds of abuse lawsuits under the state’s Child Victims Act of 2019.

In April 2025 then-Bishop Edward Scharfenberger announced that the Albany Diocese would launch a campaign to “rechannel [diocesan] efforts and resources” amid a major financial crisis.

The plan included the closure or merging of “perhaps one-third” of the diocese’s 126 parishes. The bishop said at the time that, among other things, “clergy health and well-being, quality sacramental ministry, consistent attendance, participation, and volunteerism” were “heading in the wrong direction.”

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CHRISM MASS

Bishop Terry R. LaValley celebrated the Chrism Mass on March 26 in St. Mary's Cathedral, Ogdensburg. The Mass includes the renewal of priestly commitments, the blessing of holy oils and the consecration of Chrism.

Photos by Matthew Dwyer, Darcy Fargo & Jesse Sovie



(Top Left) Priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg renew their priestly commitments. (Middle row left) Mary Beth Bracy, consecrated virgin, and Lorraine Carney served as lectors for the Chrism Mass. (Bottom row left) Father Stephen Rocker and Father Douglas Decker exchange a Sign of Peace during the Chrism Mass. Deacon Tyler Fitzgerald prepares to proclaim the Gospel. (Top right) Bishop Terry R. LaValley breathes into the vessel of Holy Chrism. This act symbolizes the invocation of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the oil, representing the breath of God at creation and Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. (Bottom right) Deacon James Law carries a vessel of oil to be blessed.