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NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

Christmas Blessings!

DEC. 21, 2011



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Count your blessings!

Our unusually warm December has left us with the all-important question for the week:

Will our Christmas this year be *white*?

Not taking any chances, I embraced a bit of White Christmas inside, spending a couple of hours with the classic movie, always a must on my personal holiday to-do list!

While nothing beats Bing Crosby crooning the title song, another tune caught my ear in a particular way this year. *When I'm worried and I can't sleep, I count my blessings instead of sheep and I fall asleep counting my blessings...*

Living with the voices of Bing and Rosemary Clooney stuck in one's head is never a bad thing, especially since the simple message is such a powerful one.

Despite the challenges we complain about, we all know we have many blessings to count.

I'll be thanking God, for example, that I am part of the best family in the world.

And I'll thank Him, too, that I am a member of a pretty wonderful family of faith.

A quick look through this week's NCC will show what I mean.

How blest are we to have priests like Father Muench (p. 4) and Father McGuinness? (p. 8) and Msgr. Whitmore (p.12)?

How blest are we to have young Catholics like Samantha and Kelly (p. 16)?

And, how blest are we to have such a wonderful bishop?

Thank you, thank you, thank you God!

And merry, merry Christmas to one and all.

Mary Lou
Kilian

NO PAPER NEXT WEEK

The next issue of the *North Country Catholic* will be dated Jan. 4.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the staff of the NCC

Come In From
The Cold

Warm up with a subscription to the *North Country Catholic* and find out what is happening with the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

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CHURCH: A FAMILY OF FAITH

The Nativity of the Lord
The Savior is Born—Dec. 24-25

By Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ

Director of Evangelization

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will! We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, . . ." For the first time, we sing this new hymn to God, praising His glory, for all the promises of the covenant have been fulfilled! This world is hardly at peace right now but on this Christmas Day, there is that moment and experience of peace towards all God's people.

Our hearts are aglow with excitement as we *praise, bless, adore, and glorify* God in thanksgiving for His many blessings upon us as a family of faith. These active verbs resound in our hearts as we sing of God's great love for us. We come to adore the Christ Child because we seek His face. We kneel at the Crèche and look upon Him in awe. We glorify this Son of God, that is, we rejoice in the radiance of His beauty. In giving God thanks for His great glory, we can rejoice with our God because He made us to rejoice with Him. *O Come let us adore Him!*

Christmas is about love, God's love for us in giving us His only Son for us. He is the only begotten Son of God, that is, the Son of God is in the same relationship with His Father. The love we share with each other is a shadow of the great love that God has for His Son. The love we bring to others, whether in large or small ways, brings us closer to understanding the love that God shares with us.

Our celebration of Christmas calls us to evangelize, to serve as heralds for the Lord, to proclaim the message of God's good will that the angels sang on the first Christmas. The world cries out for people of good will to bring justice, love, and peace to those who are seeking a better life and world to live in. We need to be willing to share the Lord's love and care for His people, to let other people hear and know the glad tidings that give sense and direction and joy to our lives. We, too, like to receive good news. Jesus comes among us to offer salvation, a relationship of love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion to share with us. This Christmas Love, in the person of Jesus Christ, cries out for a deeper relationship with us. As a family of faith, we need to express our praise and gratitude for all the wonderful things God has done for us and still has in store for us. We need ongoing evangelization.

In the celebration of the Liturgy on Christmas Eve or on Christmas Day, we are renewed again in strength, hope, and love to listen more attentively to what God has to say to us: "*Do you hear what I hear?*" "*He will bring us goodness and light*" if our hearts are open to His way of love. As Father holds up the Body and Blood of Christ, we look upon His Face, and we proclaim the mystery of faith: *Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.* As the Mass comes to a close, we learn what we are to announce and what we are to receive and assimilate. *We go and announce the Gospel of the Lord:* God is King, the Word has been made flesh, and Our Lord dwells in our midst.

How can we, as a family of faith, a family who loves, bring peace to the world in some small or large way?

A blessed and holy Christmas and peace to all people of good will into the New Year of 2012!

Photo on Page 1

The Nativity" by French painter Noel Coypel features Mary, Joseph and angels in adoration of the Christ Child. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil commemorating the birth of Christ and ends with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord Jan. 9. (CNS/courtesy of Art Resource)

FOLLOW ME

Christmas blessings from Bishop LaValley

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.

These lyrics from the Christmas hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," capture well the paradox of our times. Technological advances in the fields of medicine and communication open up whole vistas of hope-filled possibilities. Yet, the fears about what tomorrow holds are real and unnerving.

The economic distress that our families continue to endure, the unending violence suffered by the innocent, and the moral decline unraveling the very fabric of our families are sobering realities that make it difficult to be hopeful about what tomorrow may bring.

In the midst of our fragile human condition, the Word became flesh. God has sent His last

Word, His most profound Word, His most beautiful Word into the world. And that Word means: I love you. God has come and illuminated the cruel night of our fears with the light of His undying love.

So, light the candles! They have more right to be here than darkness. Christ brought a Kingdom which is not of this world, yet a Kingdom which is capable of changing this world, for it has the power to change hearts, to enlighten minds and to strengthen wills. By taking on our flesh, with all its weaknesses, and transfiguring it by the power of His Spirit, Christian hope is not a mere pipedream, but a Promise enfleshed in the Child lying in a manger.

Therefore, let us, as the psalmist bids us, "sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the

earth." (Ps. 96:1) It is the festival of God's infinite love and mercy, the festival of tomorrow's possibilities, the festival of our salvation.

May the Lord give you and your family the hope and joy which the shepherds experienced when the light of God's glory shone around them on that first Christmas night. *And may you hear His gentle words echoing in your heart: "Anyone who follows me, will never walk in darkness, but will always have the light of life." (Jn. 8:12) After all, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (Jn. 1:4-5)*

May the Christ Child come to you and your loved ones this Christmas with the Gift of Love, the Blessing of Hope, and the Promise of Peace. A blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year!

Christmas collection supports retired priests

By Michael J. Tooley
Diocesan Fiscal Officer

The 32 retired priests of the diocese who currently receive pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes in the Christmas collection.

Also, 13 priests age 70 and older who remain active in their ministry in the Diocese of Ogdensburg are receiving partial retirement benefits.

A gift to the Christmas collection supports not only priests currently receiving support from the Priests' Retirement Fund but also benefits to be paid to future retirees.

Beginning this year the Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese will receive 100% of the Christmas Collection proceeds given to each parish.

Actuarial studies are performed annually to assure the diocese is preparing for its future obligations to retired priests.

The firm of Frank J. Walters and Associates has determined that adequate provisions are being made in

2011-12 to fully fund the Plan.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese currently pays monthly pensions to 32 retired priests and 13 active priests eligible for a partial retirement benefit. Estimated pension payments in this fiscal year amount to \$735,000.

Effective July 1, 2011, retired priests in the diocese received an increase of \$40 per month in their pension benefit.

It is the diocese's intention to provide a pension increase in every year in which the diocese is able. Ninety percent of the cost of health insurance for retired priests is also funded through the PRF.

Retired priests of the diocese receive pensions from the Social Security system. Because priests' income is typically modest, their Social Security pensions are not large and most rely heavily on pensions from the diocese for a good portion of their financial support.

The value of the investments of the Priests' Retirement Fund increased over a one-year period from \$8,441,225 to \$9,817,014 on June 30, 2011. Since June

30, the value of investments has declined as there has been much volatility in the financial markets.

The diocese's Investment Advisory Committee, diocesan administration, and the investment portfolio's investment managers are closely monitoring and assessing the current situation.

The diocese is confident that the markets will eventually stabilize and that the Plan's investment portfolio will again yield positive returns.

The Priests' Retirement Fund of the diocese is also assisted through extraordinary gifts. Information about gift opportunities to benefit the Priests' Retirement Fund is available from the Development Director of the Diocese, Janice Shoen.

She can be reached in Ogdensburg at (315) 393-2920 or through e-mail to jshoen@diogdensburg.org.

Your personal generosity to the Christmas collection in your parish will support all retired priests of the diocese and benefit longer term the diocesan and religious priests serving you today. Your priests, retired and active, will appreciate your support tremendously!

St. Raymond's Church & Church of the Visitation

express appreciation to the caring priests in our parishes:



Monsignor John R. Murphy
Father Andrew G. Amyot &
Father Jack L. Downo

Thank you for your spiritual guidance and compassionate support to all the parishioners

Artwork Copyright © Darrel Tink

Merry
Christmas!

From the
Diocesan Fiscal
Office Staff

FATHER MUENCH SAYS...

'I've retired as a pastor but not as a priest'

By Fr. William Muench
Contributing Writer

The interesting thing about my life now is that I am still doing what I have always enjoyed as a priest – that is celebrating Mass and preaching. I have retired as a pastor but not as a priest and so I am given many opportunities to celebrate Mass and to preach.

There is something special about joining together in prayer with a group of people at Mass and to share with them in a homily.

I have also continued those opportunities by continuing my weekly e-mail ministry – another opportunity to put my ideas into print. It is a very special opportunity for me.

I would certainly choose the vocation of a priest again – it truly defined who I am.

I have also discovered that this is where God wanted me to be – gifting me with the gifts and talents to be a good celebrant at Mass – and a good preacher.

I am certain that I would find these retirement years impossible if I could not continue to celebrate Mass

and give homilies.

Over the past couple of months, I have discovered that the Mass and offering Mass has become a more deeply spiritual experience for me. As a pastor there were so many things to think about or worry about or even, at times, financial concerns. Now, I can put myself more completely into the prayer and experience of the Eucharist and I believe that it may even be more meaningful to the congregation at the Mass.

Plans for the future

When I am asked about plans for my retirement, I truly have no idea. I am taking it one day at a time.

I have been able to reconnect with my own family in a good way as I live much closer to them and am able to visit and also be available to them in times of difficulty.

I hope to continue to travel – and discover new places in the world. And I hope to return to places in Italy that I loved and discovered when I was in the sabatinal program in Rome.

I have also discovered that I can be of help to some



In what would be Father William Muench's final assignment before retirement, he served as pastor in Ticonderoga and Crown Point for 15 years. Here, he is pictured outside St. Mary's Church in Ticonderoga. After his retirement in June he moved to Watertown to be closer to his family.

of the priests of the diocese, either by giving them coverage when they need to get away or to support the pastor in this parish (St. Anthony's in Watertown), who is alone and can use help in covering his schedule.

Finally, I know that there is one (or more) truly meaningful and exciting *something* in my future – and I am constantly open and looking to find what that may be. I am still healthy and strong – and excited to find that new opportunity.

At this point all of my days are "ideal," even the days that I sit around writing to one of my favorite people (the editor of the *North Country Catholic*). I enjoy so many activities: offering Mass, visiting my brother or my sister, going out to lunch with a friend, studying (right now I am investigating Cosmology – in books and in courses on DVDs) and oh, yes, taking time for exercise – a long walk or a session on the treadmill, occasionally, taking some time to cook a special supper, finally, ac-

cepting an invitation. I am always open and ready to follow up on an invitation – even, when I am asked out in five minutes – I am off and ready – or, even if the invitation is several miles away – I am ready to go.

Advice for young people

If I were asked to give advice to a young person considering a vocation, the first thing I'd say is that it is never an easy decision – but on the other hand never be afraid, the opportunities are magnificent, the possibilities are huge.

The questions are many, of course, there are fears in making decisions about the future. The challenges are not impossible; they are simply thrilling.

How do you know?

Of course, there is no bright light or such – but it is important that all of us recognize that we are all called to accomplish something important by the Lord – and the Lord gives us all talents and abilities to accomplish so much.

Our call is basically to use

Editor's Note

Father William G. Muench retired this past June after 52 years of active ministry in the Diocese of Ogdensburg. A native of Syracuse, he was ordained May 16, 1959 by Bishop James J. Navagh. Through the years, Father Muench has experienced nearly every kind of ministry offered in the diocese: pastor, teacher, high school principal, college chaplain, missionary in Peru and seminary teacher. He was also a very popular columnist in the *North Country Catholic*. "Father Muench Says" was a regular feature in the diocesan newspaper for many years. In this new installment, Father Muench reflects on the first sixth months as a retired priest.

those abilities as well as we can – whether we have one or many – in that search of who we are. For many of you – you will find your future best as a religious.

I have said enough but let me add that it is a love affair when we understand just how much our God loves us, when we understand that we are loved people – and for many of us the best way to live our lives as a loved person is as a religious.

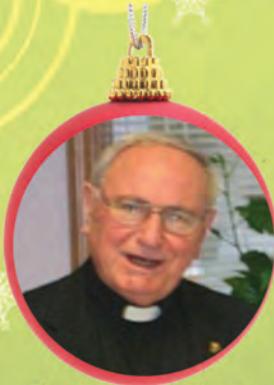
I have been given the gift of being a part of so many wonderful families, part of the life of so many wonderfully talented people.

I am simply thrilled that the Lord allowed me to be a priest.

As a retired person in my travels I run into former students and parishioners. To see how well they have done – and also that they remember me – that makes that day an ideal, happy day.

Oh, one more thing – I don't have a dog. Several people have suggested that the solution to a good retirement is a dog but I haven't got there. I like dogs but I am on the road too much. You can't believe the number of miles I have put on my car in the past few months!





Fr. Andrew J. Amyot



Fr. William G. Muench



Fr. Stephen H. Gratto



Fr. Andrew R. Mulvaney

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*A gift to the
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our retired priests.*



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Our family is looking to fill the shoes of our nanny we have had for over four years. She is pregnant and will be leaving with the birth of her baby. We have four children ranging in ages from ten to four. Our nanny helps with schooling, as we homeschool, runs errands, grocery shops, makes breakfasts, lunches and snacks, helps with cleaning and basically with whatever needs to be done in an average day. The person we are looking for would be assisting me, the mother, throughout the day. A college degree would be helpful, however the following are essential: experience with references, patience, kindness, energy, a loving positive attitude, faith, punctuality, cleanliness, dedication and a willingness to work. Our Catholic faith is the most important part of our lives and we live it out. The days and hours we would need someone are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9am-6pm with the exception being Thursday nights until 8pm. Salary is \$400 a week. Our home phone number is: (315) 786-8358.



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Bishop LaValley's Schedule

Dec. 24 - 4 p.m., Christmas Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

Dec. 25 - 12 a.m., Christmas Vigil Midnight Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg; 8:00 a.m., Christmas Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

Dec. 27 - 10:50 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg.

Dec. 28 - 12:00 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

Dec. 29 - 12:00 p.m., Mass with the Seminarians of the Diocese of Ogdensburg at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

Dec. 30 - 10:50 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg.

Dec. 31 - 4:00 p.m., Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Diocesan Central Offices will be closed in observance of Christmas beginning 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 22nd and will re-open for business on Tuesday, December 27th at 8:15 a.m.

Rest in Peace

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

- Dec. 21** - Rev. Charles A. Grady, O.S.A., 1981
Dec. 22 - Rev. Edgard Thivierge, O.M.I., 1975
Dec. 25 - Rev. Patrick Lyons, 1911; Rev. Oswald L. Bentley, 1940
Dec. 26 - Rev. Aloysius Hyacinth McMahon, 1936
Dec. 27 - Rev. Hollis David Burns, 1936; Rev. Henry Gilbeau, O.F.M. Conv., 1978
Dec. 28 - Rev. Nicolaus Burtin, O.M.I., 1902; Msgr. John M. Waterhouse, 1995; Rev. Eugene J. Beaudet, 2004; Rev. Howard P. McCasland, 2010
Dec. 29 - Rev. John A. Mullen, 1887
Dec. 30 - Rev. Jean Baptiste Lemerrier, 1863; Rev. Sam D'Angelo, O.S.A., 1961; Deacon Victor Demers, 2003
Dec. 31 - Rev. Joseph Butler, 1894; Rev. Benedict Granottier, 1930; Msgr. Clarence A. Kitts, 1949
Jan. 1 - Rev. Earl Leo Taylor, 1974
Jan. 2 - Rev. Henry William McFadden, 1978; Deacon Robert J. LeClair, 2009
Jan. 3 - Rev. A. J. M. Viau, 1966; Rev. Hilary Neal, O.P., 1986



*May you hold the love of Jesus in your heart,
today and always.
Blessings at Christmas and throughout the New Year.*

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Christmas Blessings



to all in our family of faith

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"Jesus is the reason for the season".

St. Mary's Church in Champlain would like to wish everyone in the Diocese of Ogdensburg a blessed Christmas!

Rejoice in the Wonder of God's Love and Peace!

Come Celebrate Christmas with our family of faith.

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Christmas Eve

4:00PM at St. John the Baptist – (18 Broad Street)
Children's Mass with Handbell Choir

6:00PM at St. John the Baptist – (18 Broad Street)
Christmas Music with Parish Choir

9:00PM at Newman Center – (90 Broad Street)
Christmas Music with Jay LeSage

Christmas Day

10:00AM at St. John the Baptist (18 Broad Street)

O Come let us adore the Prince of Peace!
Merry Christmas

Father Timothy G. Canaan, Pastor

God Bless You This Christmas Season



St. Andrew's Church, Norwood



Cardinal John Foley, who died Dec. 12, is shown with seminarians and discerners from the Diocese of Ogdensburg at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in 2008. Father J. Roger McGuinness, pastor in West Chazy, brought two young men to the seminary to reflect on their future service to the church and to spend time with the two men studying at St. Charles at the time. From left are Deacon Thomas Higman, who will be ordained a priest for the diocese this May; Jeremy Fessette from St. Joseph's Parish in West Chazy, part of the discernment group, the late Cardinal Foley, the late Deacon Adam Crowe, Father McGuinness and Ryan La Valley from the discernment group.

A brief but memorable visit With Card. Foley

In April of 2008, Father J. Roger McGuinness, pastor of St. Joseph's Church in West Chazy, took two students on a visit to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. These young men were part of a larger discernment group that meet regularly with Father McGuinness to discuss their future service in the Church.

While on this visit they were able to share some time with Cardinal John Patrick Foley who at that time was head of the Pontifical Commission for Communications for the Vatican. Cardinal Foley was a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and when home always stayed at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary.

Cardinal Foley died Dec. 12 at the age of 76.

Father McGuinness describes the memorable encounter at the seminary:

"Cardinal Foley just happened to be passing by the room where I was staying and was sharing a conversation with the students about priestly life and ministry. The Cardinal heard this conversation and asked if we would mind him joining us. He spent 45 minutes with us and spoke affectionately about his over 40 years as a priest, his service to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and his over 25 years of service at the Vatican, often broadcasting for the English speaking countries the various celebrations of the Pope especially the Midnight Mass at Christmas.

He stressed to the students and the seminarians his great love of the priesthood and what it meant to be a priest in these times. Although busy with his assignment in the Vatican, Cardinal Foley never left his home Diocese which he loved greatly. The students and seminarians present for this impromptu talk were greatly impressed. He encouraged their visit and their prayer for discernment and was more than happy to allow pictures.

The visit ended with a prayer and blessing from Cardinal Foley.



*May the blessings of that first Christmas
be yours this season and always.*



From the Staff of the Development Office

Janice Shoen, Valerie Mathews, Renee' Grizzuto



Seton 'Secret Santas' donate pet supplies

PLATTSBURGH - Seton Catholic Central students donated nearly 1,000 pounds of pet supplies to the Adirondack Humane Society Dec. 12.

The students' excitement for community service during this holiday season created a winning situation for the Adirondack Humane Society.

In a surprise visit, members of the Student Council of Seton Catholic Central School acted as Secret Santas to over a dozen dogs and a hundred cats that are looking for new homes this holiday season.

The no-kill, volunteer-operated shelter received the supplies with great gratitude.

The supplies were collected last week in the classrooms at Seton Catholic. Individual homerooms competed to see who could collect the greatest amount of supplies by weight. The ninth grade won the competition.

Mr. Shawn Turner, head of the Student Council stated: "The pet supply drive was a complete success. The stu-

dents' excitement for community service during this holiday season created a winning situation for the Adirondack Humane Society.

"Giving is what Christmas is all about," he said.

And the giving continues at Seton.

From now until Christmas break, the Seton chapter of the National Junior Honor Society will be collecting food for area food banks. Hit hard by the current economic times, students hope to offer much needed relief to emptied banks.

Seton Catholic Principal Cathy Russell said, "The Earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.' This is our school theme this year and we take it very seriously. It is for this reason that we give what we can to all life, especially during this time of year."

"Seton Catholic Central provides the highest quality academic education available in the North Country," the principal said. "We develop both the hearts and minds of our students, instilling in them the knowledge of their place in the world through God's love for them.

"Seton inspires students to

be life-long learners with a commitment to personal excellence through community

responsibility," Russell said. "Come journey with us by calling Seton Catholic at 561-

4031. Seton: a strong foundation, your path to success."



The Seton Catholic Student Council poses for a picture in front of the Adirondack Humane Society Dec. 12 after presenting the school's donation of 1000 pounds of pet supplies. From left, Bowen Christopher, Adam Tedford, Steven Murray, Mitchel Ryan, Keegan Briggs, Mr. Shawn Turner, Elijah Beaudin, Shannon Olsen (Treasurer), Lyndale Nephew (Secretary), Carson Hynes (Vice President), Mallory Favreau, and Joe Bridgeman (President)

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New missal translation introduced in 2011 also an evangelization tool

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) - Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl doesn't have a problem with the fact that there will be some missteps and some wrong words spoken during the first weeks of using the new English translation of the Roman Missal at Mass.

"We are going to have to live with the fact that not every celebration is going to be perfect," the archbishop of Washington said during a Dec. 6 teleconference. "But that can be inviting to some people who are afraid they are going to do the wrong thing. They might say, 'That's the same struggle I'm having.'"

Cardinal Wuerl, who co-wrote "The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition" with Mike Aquilina, joined in a panel discussion about the impact of the new translation, which went into use in the United States on the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 27.

As 2011 drew to a close, American Catholics were greeting the new missal translation with a mostly positive response and finding some unexpected spiritual benefits in the need to pay closer attention to the words spoken at Mass -- at least for a while.

Father Dan Barron, an Oblate of the Virgin Mary who is director of spiritual formation at John Paul the Great Catholic University in San Diego and editor of *Magnifikid!*, a weekly worship aid for children, said he has been "amazed to see that 18-, 19-year-old students are talking about the liturgy."

"What brilliant youth minister could have been able to get young people talking about the missal?" he asked.

"I give thanks to God for this great moment that I can be a part of."

Father Barron said children, who are "the least resistant to change," will pick up the new wording quickly.

As we are re-educating and re-evangelizing, there is a tremendous opportunity to be building bridges

Liturgical musician Matt Maher

But introduction of the new translation throughout the English-speaking world can serve as an "occasion to teach them the traditions that are so much larger than them and their parish" and that they are "united with parishes around the world, from the rising of the sun to its setting."

Edward Sri, provost and professor of theology and Scripture at the Augustine Institute in Denver and author of "A Biblical Walk Through the Mass," compared the process of implementing the new missal to the preparations some of his students make for the annual trip to Rome that he leads.

They might have read about and seen pictures of the Vatican before taking the trip, he said, "but there is nothing like walking into St. Peter's Basilica for the first time" and experiencing it in person.

"That's the experience that many lay Catholics will be having in the next weeks and months" related to the new missal translation, Sri said. "They have heard about it, but now they are saying it, hearing it. It's a wonderful opportunity to bring people deeper into the mystery of the Mass."

Liturgical musician Matt Maher said the introduction of the new translation marks

a moment when "the innovation of the culture meets the slow, deliberate movement of the church." Although the media and the blogosphere might want to report immediate results, Maher said he was more excited about "the re-evangelization of the faithful" that might occur generations down the road.

"We live in a very, very tumultuous time of change" in today's society, he added. "But the church always has the wisdom to reaffirm what is true and beautiful and important."

As a musician who works with Christians of other denominations, Maher said he also found an "unintended consequence" of the new translation has been "a rise in interest in re-embracing liturgical spirituality."

"As we are re-educating and re-evangelizing, there is a tremendous opportunity to be building bridges," he said.

During a question-and-answer period, Cardinal Wuerl acknowledged that in the first days of using the new translation, he would sometimes find himself "drifting back" to the words of the former translation "if I didn't keep concentrating."

"Isn't that the way for all of us?" he asked. "I have to be aware that I can't take my eyes off the page. It made me much more conscious of the words and much more aware that I say those words in a way that was inviting the congregation into the mystery" of the Mass.

Father Barron said he found himself celebrating the Mass "in a way that I have not done since I was a deacon." Although he said the first weeks of the new translation might be "messy," he said Catholics should be experiencing that fact that "God has come to be with us in our mess. That's part of the life of the Mass."

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Cardinal Foley dies; was Vatican communications chief

DARBY, Pa. (CNS) -- U.S. Cardinal John P. Foley, who spent more than two decades leading the church's social communications council and later worked for the church in the Middle East, died Dec. 11 after a battle with leukemia. The cardinal, who had been residing at Villa St. Joseph, the home for retired Philadelphia archdiocesan priests, was 76. Cardinal Foley's media-friendly style and quick sense of humor shone in person and throughout the numerous speeches and homilies he delivered around the world. He often spoke of the joys of working for the church, telling his audiences that while the pay often is not great "the benefits are out of this world. Last February he retired from his post as grand master of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, a chivalric organization dedicated to supporting the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and to responding to the needs of Catholics in the Holy Land. Addressing the 2010 Synod of Bishops on the Middle East, he said he was convinced that "the continued tension between the Israelis and the Palestinians has contributed greatly to the turmoil in all of the Middle East and also to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism." The cardinal said: "While many, including the Holy See, have suggested a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the more time passes, the more difficult such a solution becomes, as the building of Israeli settlements and Israeli-controlled infrastructure in East Jerusalem and in other parts of the West Bank make increasingly difficult the development of a viable and integral Palestinian state."

Evidence of miracle credited to Archbishop Sheen heads to Rome

PEORIA, Ill. (CNS) -- Boxes wrapped in ribbon and a happy little boy are Christmas images, but the combination had another joyful meaning Dec. 11 during ceremonies closing the Diocese of Peoria's inquiry into an alleged miraculous healing through the intercession of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. "May God, who has begun this great work, bring it to fulfillment," said Peoria Bishop Daniel R. Jenky after affixing a wax seal on a box containing evidence gathered in the past three months by an investigative tribunal. That evidence is now on its way to Rome for consideration by the Congregation for Saints' Causes. The congregation is studying the sainthood cause of Archbishop Sheen, a central Illinois native and priest of the Peoria Diocese who became an internationally known evangelist, radio/TV personality, writer and missionary. In a pew just outside the cathedral sanctuary, the focus of the testimonies contained in the box -- 15-month-old James Fulton Engstrom -- sat contentedly with his parents and two older siblings, squirming occasionally as all healthy little boys will do. "For a lot of us it felt like a full-circle moment," said James' mother, Bonnie Engstrom, of the official ceremonies that took place at the start of Mass. Bonnie Engstrom recalled sitting in the same cathedral -- where Archbishop Sheen had been ordained in 1919 -- a few days after James' birth and "begging for a miracle" during a holy hour attended by family and friends. Considered stillborn on Sept. 16, 2010, after a routine pregnancy, James was without a pulse for the first 61 minutes of his life. It was only when doctors at OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria were ready to call the time of death that his heart started beating. The doctors had warned the parents he might not be able to function normally, but they were proved wrong. "It's an amazing story," said Msgr. Jason Gray, who served as episcopal delegate to the investigative tribunal and was responsible for guiding the process. An oath of secrecy sworn by tribunal members kept Msgr. Gray from commenting further about the findings of the tribunal or expectations regarding its review in Rome.

RESPECT LIFE

My Christmas Moment

By Kathleen M. Gallagher
Director of Pro-Life Activities,
New York State Catholic Conference

In previous columns, I have shared with readers what I call my "Christmas Moment." I have one each and every year, without fail. Preoccupied with the busyness of daily life, I forget all about it until it happens.

This year my Christmas Moment came in mid-November. I had spent a day with some old friends, friends I rarely see but with whom I was close about 30 years ago. It's always a fun time when we do get together, reminiscing about our carefree, single "20-something" lives. But on this particular reunion, I was overwhelmed at the realization of how unlike we really are. My friends come from a place of affluence and privilege; their lives have taken them in a very different direction than mine. Listening to their stories of tropical vacations and home renovations was enough to paint me green with envy.

On the drive home, I made a mental list of all the things I don't have:

- I don't have double sinks in my bathroom or a granite-topped island in my kitchen.
- I don't have leather seats in my car, an automatic car-starter or even an automatic garage door opener.
- I don't have a massage, facial, and manicure at the spa each week. Or each month. Or each year. OK, I've never had a facial in my life.

- I don't have a Coach purse, an Ann Taylor suit or any Gucci jewelry.
- I don't have a Smart Phone, an I-Pad or a Kindle.
- I don't have a condo in Florida or a time share in the Bahamas.

The list went on and on. I arrived home in a frenzy of

self-induced jealousy which had percolated to the boiling point. Thank God no one was in the house when I arrived. I sat on the couch and stared out the window. Two sparrows and a blue jay were eating seed in the feeder outside. I watched them for a good long time until, unexpectedly, Matthew 6:25 popped into my head:

"Look at the birds in the air; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet the heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more important than they?"

And that's when I had my Christmas Moment. An endless inventory of all the things I do have began rolling before my eyes like the credits at the close of a movie. Here's a partial listing:

- I have a bird feeder attached to the window that delights my mother to such an extent that her eyes sparkle with joy each time she visits.
- I have a husband of almost 25 years who still says "I love you" and "you look pretty" every single day. Really.

- In a troubled economy, I have a job. What's more, I have a job I believe in.
- I have ultrasound photos of each of my sons before they were born, the same infants who have grown into (somewhat) responsible young adults.
- I have a killer recipe for burgers and a grill in my backyard that I continue to

use, even when there is snow on the ground.

- I have good friends from my Catholic elementary school who are still my good friends.

- I have a Christmas tree that shimmers and glistens and sets the living room aglow when we turn off all the lights.

- I have the unconditional and everlasting love of God the Father.

And I saw it all clearly, for a moment. My Christmas Moment, when the essence of Christmas came rushing into my body, penetrated the center of my being and swelled my heart with sudden understanding and gratitude.

I have no need to worry about my clothes, vacations, or possessions. They are not the "treasures" that matter.

The Christmas story tells us that when Mary gave birth to Jesus, she did so in a dirty, smelly uncomfortable stable, with no heat and no help. Jesus, at his birth, had nothing. He was, and is, the embodiment of pure selflessness and love, the Word made Flesh.

All of the "don't haves" simply distract from the real prize: I am loved and redeemed by God, who calls me by name and loves me so much He gave me the gift of His one and only Son! I am richly blessed.

This Christmas, I am counting my blessings. And resolving to live the Christmas Moment every day of my life.



Christmas is a gift of love wrapped in human flesh and tied securely with the strong promises of God.

May God fill your life with love, joy, and peace this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

Have a blessed Christmas Season!

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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Take time to focus on the Infant Jesus himself

So often in our current society, the day of Christmas finds us completely exhausted. This year, we must not let the hectic pace of Christmas shopping, decorations, and parties spoil the great Feast itself. At a particular time and place this week, we need to stop everything, and take time to prepare our hearts spiritually.

We need to focus on the Infant Jesus Himself. A good time might be at one of the Penance services when, before leaving the Church, we open a missalette in the pew where we're kneeling.

Or take your Bible at home and look up some of the references at the beginning of this meditation.

Then, slowly look over the readings for the Mass at Midnight, the Mass at Dawn, and the Mass during the day. They all speak of light coming into darkness.

Just as the eighth century, B.C., was a time of great turmoil and darkness, so too does war and fiscal uncertainty cast a long shadow over our hearts and hopes.

Isaiah's words to God's people of his day and to us from the first reading of the Mass for Midnight tell us: "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom, a light has shone."

And then the great news: "For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his

shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace." That's God's Word!

Flipping to the Mass at Dawn we find words of great beauty in the Responsorial psalm "A light will shine on us this day: the Lord is born for us."

The Gospel for the Mass during the Day is one of the most beautiful pieces of poetry and theology in all of the Bible. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

It also speaks of the struggle God had to find a place of welcome in our darkness, a place He could call home. As Jesus looked around his manger bed, he must have known a little fear—it was all so different from the heaven He had just left.

Everyone wants to be



Monsignor
Paul E.
Whitmore

DEC. 25

Christmas Day

READINGS

At the Vigil Mass

Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

Matthew 1:1-25

Mass at Midnight

Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke

2:1-14

Mass at Dawn

Isaiah 62:11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke

2:15-20

Mass during the Day

Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John

1:1-18

The same is true for many older people whose spouses have died, and whose children now have families of their own.

What can they do? They can make Christmas in their hearts.

Home is where the heart is! Like Mary, we ourselves must spiritually give birth to the Son of God.

Loneliness can give place to a spirit of joy when we let His presence light up our hearts.

As Mary was the bridge between heaven and earth, the divine and the human, so we can share her experience.

The Christmas readings are the key. Pray them slowly. Take time to plant them in your heart.

As the Gospel of John tells us, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us".

home for Christmas. For many of us, we know that we can't go home again.

Our hearts go out to our servicemen and women in foreign lands this Christmas.

OUR READERS WRITE

Christians must not forget what Christmas is about

How many times have you heard "Merry Christmas" and really pondered the meaning of the jovial greeting?

Have you observed cars with bumper stickers or magnets that say, "Jesus is the reason for the season," or "Keep Christ in Christmas?"

With society becoming increasingly secular, culturally aware, and even politically correct Christmas seems to get lost.

The race to the mall, newest electronic gadget, big screen televisions, and holiday celebrations not Christmas parties have become the norm.

Our founding fathers assured the right of freedom of religion, however the lines seem to be blurring at this juncture in our history.

Therefore a Christian must not forget, get caught up in consumerism, or even like Peter deny we know Christ in fear of being ridiculed or judged.

We must light the way for others through our words and actions this blessed season.

Put a nativity set in your yard or a picture of one in your window, send Christmas cards that emanate the true reason for the season, visit a shut-in, and when a clerk hands you your purchases make sure to say Merry Christmas.

Over the last decade it seems that "God" is slowly being omitted from Christians' important celebration ~ the birth of our savior.

If we sit back and let nativities and Merry Christmas signs disappear from public venues who are we to blame; society or the ever changing times?

Take a moment to reflect and remember that God loves one and all.

Have a very Merry Christmas.

MICHELLE B. BEAGLE
TURIN



"A scene so peaceful in the night, the starry sky is soft and bright...
As God's Own Son has come to Earth, may we behold His wondrous birth!"



On behalf of missionaries and the people they serve in the mission lands, we wish you a joyous Christmas!

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith



Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director
Molly McKee Ryan, Secretary

AT THE MOVIES

SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

"Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows" (Warner Bros.), director Guy Ritchie's second take on the classic detective fiction of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, follows the pattern of its predecessor as it downplays old-fashioned sleuthing in favor of a constant flow of confrontations, escapades and escapes.

While the fast-paced proceedings ought to be off-limits for youngsters, adults with a high degree of tolerance for stylized violence will likely find them diverting enough.

This time out, it's 1891, and Robert Downey Jr.'s he-man Holmes is on the trail of his ultimate adversary, evil genius par excellence Professor James Moriarty (Jared Harris). For reasons that only gradually become apparent, Moriarty is conspiring to destabilize European politics and bring on a general war.

That's bad news for Holmes' recently wed sidekick Dr. Watson (Jude Law), the chronicler of the great man's exploits, and for his bride Mary (Kelly Reilly), since their honeymoon trip is violently interrupted by Moriarty's machinations.

The tension between the two long-standing collaborators over Watson's marriage plans was a major theme of

Ritchie's previous film. Here, Holmes' unspoken jealousy over his friend's prospects for domestic bliss continues to smolder, as too does his fear of abandonment.

As portrayed by husband-and-wife screenwriters Michele and Kieran Mulroney, these emotions entail -- or are at least accompanied by -- some vaguely homoerotic humor. At one point, for instance, Watson tussles with a drag-disguised Holmes, and the two end up in a position that could easily be mistaken for a clinch of a different kind.

Watson's nuptials, and Holmes' ongoing interest in femme fatale Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams) suggest, though, that these incidents are not to be taken as anything more than comic fluff.

As their struggle with Moriarty leads them from London to Paris to Germany and eventually on to Switzerland, the iconic pair is aided by a Gypsy fortuneteller named Sim (Noomi Rapace) and by Holmes' bon vivant older brother Mycroft (Stephen Fry).

Mycroft's eccentricities become the occasion for another scene of adult humor when he is shown to be quite uninhibited about wandering around in his birthday suit, much to the blushing confusion of other characters. Only as much of his physique is shared with the audience, however, as

might be seen on a loose-belted plumber.

The fist fighting and gun-play that take up so much of the film's running time reach a climactic crescendo when the inventory of a munitions factory is employed both by and against our heroes.

This is in keeping with another of the movie's themes -- namely, that Moriarty's efforts to ignite a worldwide conflict foreshadow the doom-laden real-life events of 1914.

But it's also the clearest signal yet that, despite its venerable source material, this is not a family-oriented offering.

The film contains constant action violence, partial full nudity; fleeting sexual humor; and a few crass terms.

The Catholic News Service classification is A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



CNS PHOTO/WARNER BROS.

Jude Law and Kelly Reilly star in a scene from the movie "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows."



May the Spirit of Christmas be with you
throughout the year!

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CLINTON

EMPTY MANGER CAROLING

Plattsburgh - During an "Empty Manger" Christmas Caroling Day, pro-lifers will be gathering around an empty manger to sing Christmas Carols in front of Planned Parenthood.

Dates: Dec. 22 at 4 p.m. and Dec. 24 at 9 a.m.

Features: Organizers say "Children have been saved from abortion when their mothers heard the carols and reconsidered their choice for abortion in light of the Christmas story. The empty manger is a dual symbol. Like the empty manger lovingly placed in every Christmas crèche in anticipation of celebrating the Nativity of Jesus Christ, it represents the joy that ought to accompany the birth of every child." Caroling books provided

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Treadwell Mills - RCC St. Alexander & St. Joseph's will hold a Pancake Breakfast (all you can eat).

Date: Jan. 8

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Place: St. Joseph's Church Hall

Cost: Adults, \$6; Children 6-12, \$3; under 5, Free

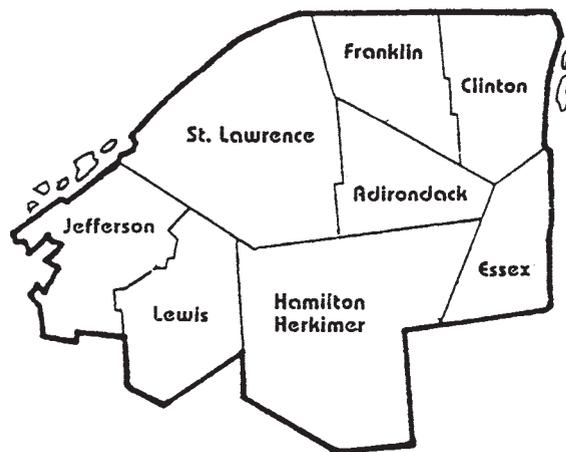
'EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Plattsburgh - Eucharistic Adoration is held throughout the year every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Place: St. John's Adoration Chapel,

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

Theme: "Each child is created in the spe-



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; fax, 315-394-0670;
 e-mail news@northcountrycatholic.org.

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

cial image and likeness of God for greater things—to love and to be loved. Where will you get the joy of loving?—in the Eucharist.... Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life." (Bl. Mother Teresa of Calcutta) O Come let us Adore Him—A Birthday gift for Jesus!
Contact: call 518-561-5083 or email us at Sjohnsadoration@aol.com

LAKE CHAMPLAIN BUS FOR LIFE

Plattsburgh - The "Lake Champlain 2012 Bus for Life" will offer concerned citizens an opportunity to attend the march in Washington D.C.

Date: A chartered bus will leave the parking lot of St. Peter's Church in Plattsburgh Jan. 22 at 7:30 p.m. for the Jan. 23 National March For Life and return to Plattsburgh early Jan. 24.

Cost: The cost of the bus is \$25 per seat.
Contact: Betty Buffett (518) 536-6640 or Karen Smith (518) 566-6229.

Donations: If you cannot attend but would like to donate funds for someone who can attend, please send your check or money order to St. Peter's Church 114 Cornelia Street Plattsburgh, New York 12901. Make a notation on the memo line "Bus For Life Donation."

BLESSED SACRAMENT ADORATION

Keeseville - The Keeseville Altar Rosary Society to sponsor Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Date: Every Sunday

Time: 1 p.m. to 4

JEFFERSON

PARKINSON GROUP

Chaumont - The Parkinson Group meets

every Tuesday.

Time: 11 a.m.

Place: All Saints Church

Features: Sharing new information and developments to provide hope; strengthening excises; and lunch

Contact: Sr. Anne Hogan, 315-649-2717

LIFERIGHT MEETING

Watertown - Liferight of Watertown will hold its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the Month.

Time: 4 p.m.

Place: 312 Sherman St.

Features: Liferight is a pro-life educational organization. The office has videos, books and educational materials which may be borrowed. Topics covered: infanticide, assisted suicide, euthanasia and chastity.

Contact: Phone 315-788-8480; website: www.liferight.org.

ST. LAWRENCE

K OF C BRUNCH

Norfolk - The Knights of Columbus will be sponsoring a brunch.

Date: Jan. 8

Time: 8:30 a.m. to Noon

Place: Visitation Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$6; Children under 12, \$4; Under 5, Free; Family, \$16
 Take-outs available

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Massena - St. Mary's & St. Joseph's has Adoration every Friday.

Time: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Place: St. Mary's Church.

Features: First Friday of each month is preceded by Benediction.

NOVENA FOR MILITARY

Ogdensburg - Notre Dame Church is holding a weekly novena for the safety of U.S. military personnel

Date: Tuesday evenings

Time: 6:30 p.m.

HOLY HOUR FOR VOCATIONS

Ogdensburg - St. Mary's is holding a

monthly Holy Hour for Vocations.

Date: Thursday before the First Friday

Time: 8 p.m. to 9

Place: Deacon Winter Chapel

Features: Nocturnal Adoration continues through the night

DIOCESAN EVENTS

JOY OF CHRISTMAS

The Diocese of Ogdensburg is sponsoring an hour of North Country Christmas performances on WIRY Radio Station in Plattsburgh, featuring a message from Bishop LaValley

Schedule: Dec. 25 from 10 a.m. to 11 Christmas morning on the "Joy of Christmas" program. On the Internet, go to WIRY.com and click on "listen"

'CATHOLICISM' on WPBS-TV

Watertown - WPBS-TV will air the documentary "Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith" on the four Sundays of January.

Schedule: Jan. 8, 15, 22 and 29 at 4 p.m.

Features: Father Robert Barron a priest of the Diocese of Chicago and theologian, traveled to 15 different countries around the world for more than 3 years filming this dynamic series depicting the Catholic Faith. This series covers topics such as, why as Catholics we believe God truly exists. It addresses creation, the 'big bang' theory and evolution. It covers marriage and the family as 'first Church', the Sacraments, and difficult topics such as the clergy sex abuse scandal.

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

Clifton Park, NY - World renowned Catholic Lay Healers and Evangelists to offer healing and Renewal Days on two weekends in 2012.

Dates: April 20-21, 2012 featuring Maria Vadia of Glory God Ministries and Oct. 12-13, 2012 featuring Bob Canton.

Place: St. Edward the Confessor, 563 Clifton Park Center Rd, Clifton Park, NY

Information: 518-237-7391 or 518-371-7911 or dcn.jmgrigaitis@aol.com



"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

Christmas Blessings from the
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mbrett@dioogdensburg.org

What is Christmas?

From Director's Desk,
Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ,
Diocesan Mission Director

"What is Christmas?"

It isn't just a starry night
Or Snowflakes on the ground.
It isn't just a merry hearth
With good friends gathered 'round.

It isn't just a Christmas tree,
Or gifts that play the part;
But Love and Peace
The Season brings
To touch the seeking heart.

By Roxie Lusk Smith

There is love and peace in the developing countries because of missionaries. Yes, missionaries like yourselves let the love of Christ shine in the lives of people in the missions as they receive your generous donations. On behalf of missionaries and the people they serve who benefit from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Holy Childhood Association, the Society of St. Peter Apostle, and the Missionaries Projects of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, I thank you for your support. Your support touches the seeking hearts of the suffering poor in the mission lands.

My co-worker in the mission office, Mrs. Molly Ryan and I offer prayers of gratitude for you. God bless you and your loved ones.

Please remember "The Society for the Propagation of the Faith"
when writing or changing your Will.
www.dioogdensburg.org/missionoffice



OBITUARIES

Black River — Daniel Martin Sr., 76; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2011 at St. Paul's Church; burial in Felt Mills Cemetery.

Cadyville — Dianne M. (Sears) Goddeau, 73; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at St. James Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Carthage — Joseph L. Brosk III, 31; Funeral Services Dec. 20, 2011 at St. James Church.

Carthage — Virginia H. Todd, 93; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2011 at St. James Church.

Carthage — Ronald C. Zehr, 90; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at St. James Church; burial in St. Stephen's Cemetery, Croghan.

Champlain — Leonard John Patnode, 83; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Champlain — Leonard H. "Joe" Snide, 78; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2011 at St. Mary's Church.

Clayton — Mary E. Bishop, 75; Funeral Services Dec. 16, 2011 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Dapauville Cemetery.

Hogansburg — Melinda M. Johnson, 63; Funeral Services Dec. 14, 2011 at St. Regis Church.

Hogansburg — Louis W. "Boo" LaFrance,

82; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at St. Regis Church; burial in St. Lawrence Cemetery, St. Regis Quebec.

Malone — Joyce Marie Snyder-Riley, 75; Funeral Services Dec. 16, 2011 at Notre Dame Church.

Massena — Joseph P. Kish, 91; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2011 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Massena — Donald W. Revier, 88; Funeral Services Dec. 16, 2011 at Philips Memorial Home; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Norwood — Shirley A. Russell, 77; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at St. Andrew's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Ogdensburg — Richard D. Heaton, 52; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2011 at Frary Funeral Home.

Ogdensburg — Hope (Hart) Martin, 57; Funeral Services Dec. 20, 2011 at Notre Dame Church

Ogdensburg — Janice Ann (Paige) Mehaffy, 73; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2011 at Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg.

Plattsburgh — Maureen S. "Moe" King, 46; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2011 at St. Peter's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Plattsburgh — Francis F. "Frank" Lucia, 84;

Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at the Brown Funeral Home; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Plattsburgh — Lillian M. Desaw Grube Silse, 90; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2011 at St. Peter's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Saranac Lake — Nancy (Rogers) Morgan, 84; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2011 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery.

Saranac Lake — Robert O. Sawyer, 80; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at the Fortune-Keough Funeral Home; burial in Pine Ridge Cemetery.

Saranac Lake — Valerie (Burl) Wales, 51; Funeral Services Dec. 16 at the Fortune-Keough Funeral Home.

Tupper Lake — Susanne Hull Frenette, 81; Funeral Services Dec. 13, 2011 at Holy Name Church; burial in Lakeview Cemetery.

Watertown — Paul A. Fish, 80; Funeral Services Dec. 17, 2011 at Holy Family Church.

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YOUNG CATHOLIC VOICES

The true meaning of Christmas

By Samantha Bashaw

8th grader, Seton Catholic Central, Plattsburgh

What comes to mind when you think of Christmas? Usually people will say, gifts, lights, Christmas trees, Santa, reindeer, and so on.

Chances are most of those people you ask will not say Jesus birthday, the nativity, angels, wise men, or anything along the lines of the true meaning of Christmas.

If you think about it, we would not even be singing those catchy Christmas songs if our savior, Jesus Christ, was not born. No presents would lie under our sky-high Christmas tree, left by the so-called mysterious and jolly Santa Claus.

Christmas is so much

more than a holiday filled with presents around every corner, it's a time to bring ourselves back into the faith.

Lately these days have been too busy and media centered. We don't eat dinner as a family, Sunday mass has been missed for so called more important things, and our definition of family time is sitting around our flat screen watching the latest movie.

We have to learn to be hard on ourselves sometimes, especially in the jolly season of Christmas. I can be honest in saying that now and then I beg for a new Ipod, when in third world countries children are starving and not listening to music is the least of their worries.



Samantha Bashaw

Many children on Christmas will wonder whether or not they will be getting another meal, or worrying if their mother will come home tonight alive. It's hard

for us to comprehend the tragedies children go through every day, when we have everything we ever wanted within arms reach.

Christmas is a time to reach out to those less fortunate than us. It is a time to wait in prayer for the second coming of Christ. It is a time to look at everything around us and to thank God for what he has blessed us with.

Two thousand years ago a baby was born in a little stable in Bethlehem. This child would grow to send a message everywhere that there is something greater out there than this life on Earth. Some people got the message, others discarded it and focused on the material things of the world.

I read an article once

about what we, as human beings, have done with our lives. It says, "...for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?"

So what can we do this Christmas season? How about instead of asking for one more useless present, we could donate our time and services to an organization that helps the needy.

Think about those people you could help this Christmas and you will be taking one more step to making the world a better place.

'In this room: everything I loved about Christmas'

By Kelly Donnelly

Contributing writer

Advent is here and with it, my love for the entire Advent and Christmas seasons. I absolutely love Christmas. I didn't think my love for Christmas was anything out of the ordinary, but as many people have commented that I love Christmas more than anyone they know, perhaps it is.

I love the music, the lights, the baked goodies, and the willingness for strangers and neighbors alike to go out of their ways to help one another.

I love the joy, the wonder and awe, and the genuine sentiments of peace and goodwill that are readily expressed. But I think more than anything, I love the profound realization of Christ's humility and love for us.

God's love for us is reflected in His willingness to become man, a humble man, humble from His birth in a manger to His death on

a cross. This is a realization that strikes me each year, and each year, it is just as poignant as the last.

Sometimes something is just so meaningful, so perfect, that you know it means more than just that moment. Posadas was like that for me

When I was a yearlong fulltime volunteer through Franciscan Volunteer Ministry in Wilmington, Delaware my first year out of college ('09-'10), I explicitly saw this humility reflected.

One of the ministries I was involved with as a volunteer was working with migrant workers, horse groomers at a racetrack, who were Hispanic, predominately Mexican. Their living and working conditions were unlike anything most of us can imagine. They work difficult, manual labor jobs for incredibly

long hours for low wages, living in very basic housing.

Oftentimes they were separated from loved ones for long periods of time, and had witnessed many tragedies.

My volunteer work with the migrant workers was primarily a ministry of *presence*. Weekly, I would go to Mass with them, and after Mass, provide or help serve some snacks, and we would converse with the migrant workers.

Despite the language barriers, I came to know and love them, continually amazed by their joy and faith amidst hardships I couldn't imagine.

December brought a change in our normal routine as I was exposed to Las Posadas.

A Mexican tradition which is traditionally celebrated during the nine days preceding Christmas, Posadas involves going to a different person's house each night. It begins with half of the people going inside the house and half staying out-

side the house, singing a special song back and forth to each other, those on the inside representing the Innkeeper and those on the outside, Mary and Joseph.

Eventually everyone ends up inside, a figure of the Christ child is placed in a Nativity, and the celebration continues with singing, praying, and enjoying one another's company.

The person hosting the evening's Posadas provides food and goodies, such as tamales, tostadas, and atole (a hot drink).

The first Posadas that I attended was in a little house that was filled with more people than I dreamt was possible to fit. Despite having very little, the hosts went out of their way to provide food and drink for all. People jumped in with their individual talents, singing or playing the guitar. Young and old alike, people who had just come to the US and some who had been here for quite some time, everyone was joyfully gathered in this moment.

As I looked around the living room at that first Posadas that I attended, I realized that in this room was everything I truly love about Christmas. People were gathered to remember and rejoice in the gift of Christ. People who, similar to Christ, were willing to humbly give all that they have. People who were not consumed with the next big deal or accomplishing everything on a long list of to-dos, but instead focused on God's love for us and reflecting that love to those they were surrounded with.

In that room, I saw what Christmas is really about expressed beautifully.

Looking over my journal entry shortly after that night I wrote, "Sometimes something is just so meaningful, so perfect, that you know it means more than just that moment. Posadas was like that for me."

Indeed, it was more than that moment. It was, and will continue to be, a reminder of what I love about Christmas.