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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 78 Number 33

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 27, 2023

## 2023 Year in Review



### Diocese files for Chapter 11 reorganization

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Peace and grace be with you today. I write to share some important news and to seek your prayers and support. After extensive consultation with diocesan staff, the Council of Priests, College of Consultors, Diocesan Finance Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, the priests, deacons, pastoral leaders of the diocese, and outside legal and financial advisors, I have authorized the filing of a Chapter 11 reorganization for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ogdensburg. This difficult and painful yet necessary decision was made in response to the lawsuits filed against the

mined. In the past three years we have been able to resolve 14 claims by settlement or dismissal, and we have come to realize that reorganization is the best context for resolving the remaining claims while continuing our mission as a diocese. Without filing for reorganization, the Diocese would face these civil actions in a slow, unpredictable, and costly process that would require years of court involvement. Such lengthy lawsuits would delay justice for survivors and prolong their suffering. Reorganization ensures that each survivor receives just compensation. It eliminates a race to the courthouse in which the earliest cases settled or

**A PRAYER FOR HEALING**  
Gentle Jesus, Shepherd of Peace,  
lead to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt  
in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust  
placed in them.  
Hear the cries of our sisters and  
brothers who have been grievously  
harmmed, and the cries of those who  
love them.  
Soothe their restless hearts  
with hope and steady their shaken  
spirits with faith.  
Grant them justice enlightened  
by your truth.  
Holy Spirit, heal your  
people's wounds.  
Grant us the courage and  
wisdom to act with justice.  
Breathe wisdom into our

parishes will be asked to contribute funds to settle these claims so they can be free of litigation in state courts and released from all liability for existing claims. As I stated above, a goal of the reorganization is to help us continue our mission. We will continue to serve God's people and spread the Gospel in the North Country. In order to do so we need your prayers and continued support. Funds from our recent capital campaign were designated for specific parish and diocesan projects, and it is our intention to use those gifts for their intended purpose. The Bishop's Fund Appeal supports essential ministries in our diocese, including the education of seminarians, Camp Guggenheim, The Good Samaritan Fund, and

Bishop Terry

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC FILE PHOTOS

In this, the last edition of the *North Country Catholic* in 2023, we look back on the major stories of the year, including (left) the ordination of Father Lukas Gruber, (top right) the Sisters of St. Joseph's Jubilee celebration and the diocese filing for Chapter 11 reorganization. Join us for this reflection on the year starting on Page 3.

### COMMENTS ON FIDUCIA SUPPLICANS

Bishop Terry R. LaValley offers comments and clarification on the Declaration from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Fiducia supplicans*, *On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings*.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

### No NCC next week

To give our staff, writers and columnists time to celebrate Christmas and the New Year, there will be no North Country Catholic on January 3.

We will resume our normal publication schedule on January 10.

## Pope: Nativity is example of 'joy,' 'amazement'

By Matthew Santucci  
Catholic News Agency

(CNA) - Pope Francis on Wednesday spoke during his last general audience before Christmas on the importance of approaching the coming of Christ with "joy" and "amazement," noting that the first Nativity scene established by St. Francis of Assisi provides an important example for Catholics today.

The pope opened by noting that this year marks the 800th anniversary of the first living Nativity established by St. Francis

in the central Italian town of Greccio.

"[St.] Francis doesn't desire to create a beautiful work of art," the pope said, "but through the Nativity scene to provoke amazement at the extreme humility of the Lord, at the hardships he suffered, for love of us, in the poor grotto of Bethlehem."

The pope emphasized that the very essence of the Christmas season cannot be reduced to a mere historical moment or viewed as "a beautiful thing," adding: "We need this religious

attitude of amazement."

"If I, in the face of the mysteries, do not come to this amazement, my faith is simply superficial," the pope said.

The Holy Father also reflected that the Nativity scene of St. Francis was conceived by a spirit of "sobriety" and that in this way it can be seen as a repudiation of the rampant consumerism that has come to define the Christmas season for many families.

"The risk of losing sight of what counts in life is great and paradoxically increases precisely

ly at Christmas - the mentality of Christmas is changed - immersed in a consumerism that corrodes its meaning. The consumerism of Christmas," Francis said.

The pope noted that it is "fine" to give presents but admonished against the "frenzy to go shopping that draws attention elsewhere ... there is not that sobriety of Christmas."

"Let us look at the crib: that awe before the crib. Sometimes there is no inner space for astonishment, but only to organize the parties, to have the parties."

NORTH  
COUNTRY  
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# 'More and more graces and beauty'

"How Catholic is that?" I was chatting with a friend about a trend I've noticed in the last handful of months. I explained to my friend that I'm pretty accustomed to people approaching me as I'm at various events around the diocese, usually with a camera around my neck, and asking "are you Darcy?" The new trend, though, is for that to be followed by some version of "is your son and I smirked as I said to my friend, "how Catholic is that?"

"Jake loves this pseudo-celebrity status in Catholic land," I explained

to my friend. "And we both love that people we've never met wish him well and pray for him. He also saves every column in which he's mentioned.

**Darcy L.  
Fargo**

"You know I have a love-hate relationship with writing columns. I still find it ridiculously hard, but I also still regularly see more and more graces and beauty in it."

That's when it occurred to me, and I smirked as I said to my friend, "how Catholic is that?"

Let's be honest: Being Catholic is hard, ridicu-

lously hard. But there are also many, many graces and so much beauty in the difficulties and challenges. While I love the sacrament, going to confession is hard, really hard. It also comes with so many graces and so much beauty. Going to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation - even when we don't feel like it - is really hard. Still more graces and beauty. Following God's call in our lives is hard, super duper hard sometimes. Yet again, though, grace and beauty. I could probably come up with examples all day.

Some of the reasons I find it hard to be Catholic are related to the reason

I find it hard to write this column: It's hard to offer myself - my will, my sins, my words - to others and to God. It can be vulnerable. It can be sacrificial. It can be risky.

But as I didn't anticipate some of the graces and beauty God would give me through this column, I can't anticipate the graces and beauty that will come from following the Lord and doing the hard things.

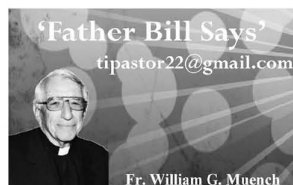
From the staff, reporters, photographers and columnists of the North Country Catholic, we wish you a Happy New Year. We pray we all grow closer to the Lord and each other in the year to come.

How Catholic is that?

## Then comes the joy

This Christmas was simply wonderful. Actually, every Christmas is great. I love Christmas. Personally, I think of the Christmas celebration beginning on the Advent afternoon and evening when the parish where I currently live (Diocese of Syracuse) celebrates the sacrament of reconciliation with personal confessions. In recent years, a day is designated by the bishop on which every parish in the diocese is to schedule a time for personal confessions. It has become known as "the light is on." We even put out a television commercial to reach people.

The day is a good experience for me as a confessor. We can all take our time. The people have no reason to hurry - the priests will be available all day. This should be a calm and peaceful day for a sacramental confession. I hope the people realize they have plenty of time to prepare and celebrate the sacrament. No hurry-



ing is necessary. I found it was a blessing to be able to take my time as we celebrated the sacrament.

I like to think most of the people were pleasantly surprised at how beneficial it was to take our time. I think they would realize they had the time to recognize the changes they could and should make in their lives. This is why this sacrament is a good opportunity on the road to becoming a saint.

The next great Christmas event is the decorating of the Church. Advent for us is meant to be a time of waiting - following the spirit of the Old Testament, waiting and preparing for the coming of the Messiah. So, we wait - no decorations, no Christmas carols - as we celebrate Advent. We all, especially

the children, are totally surprised when we enter the Church for the Christmas Mass. The Church has been rather barren during Advent - just purple and such. Then comes the joy of all the decorations - the trees and flowers. There is still a thrill to the Christmas hymns; they never seem old. The manger scene holds our attention, reminding us of the Christmas story. You cannot fail to smile.

I know I continue to experience the enthusiasm and joy of celebrating Christmas Mass. We all know the story, so it is easy for us to find our place in it. We join in the journey of Mary and Joseph; we are there at the birth of the Lord Jesus. We are with the shepherds and the Magi.

I am certain you know how much I love to tell my Christmas story. I enjoy so much telling everyone about the day Susan and Paul invited me to the birth of their second child, Will. It was truly the most

exciting day in my life. Each time I tell the story, I am taken back to that day.

People still ask me what prayers I said while I was there that day. I must admit that I really don't remember saying any prayers at all. However, I now realize that the whole experience was a prayer. It certainly brought me to a closer relationship with the Lord Jesus. I found love - the love of my God - and that truly transformed me in that moment.

Each and every Christmas event was about love, about God's love for us all. The sacrament of reconciliation unites us all to the Lord's loving forgiveness of sin. Christmas Mass unites us with the Lord Jesus in a powerful and loving way. The Lord loves us - all of us - especially through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Our response must be one of gratitude. Our response must be "thank you, Lord. We need you always, especially as you come to us at Christmas time."

## FOLLOW ME

# Comments on *Fiducia Supplicans*

Since Monday, December 18, the date of its distribution, there have been wide-ranging reports on the Declaration from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Fiducia supplicans, On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings*. Unfortunately, many of the reports originating from non-Church sources have overlooked crucial statements within the document.

I raise three questions that, I hope, will provide clarity and minimize confusion that may have surfaced.

## 1) What does the Declaration say about the Church's teaching on marriage?

This Declaration states clearly the Catholic Church's perennial teaching that a true marriage is "...the exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the generation of children." (#4) The Declaration, in an effort to emphasize this fundamental truth, goes on to state

that the Catholic Church, whether Local or Universal, "...avoids all kinds of rites or sacraments which could contradict this conviction and imply that it is recognizing as a marriage something that is not." (#5) Therefore, while exercising charity, and respecting the dignity of every person, it is the duty of ordained clergy, pastoral ministers and lay faithful to courageously hand on the Catholic Church's teaching about marriage and human sexuality.

## 2) What is this blessing which the Declaration permits ordained clergy to give to couples in irregular unions or to same-sex couples?

The major portion of this Declaration addresses the Catholic Church's understanding of and teaching about the "blessing." This document proposes to "...

broaden and enrich" our appreciation for the action of grace which we call a blessing.

"(T)he blessing possesses a special power, which accompanies those who receive it ...and disposes [a person's] heart to be changed by God." This Declaration makes a presumption that, "...when one asks for a blessing, one is expressing a petition for God's assistance, a plea to live better, and confidence in a Father who can help us live better." Consequently, the giving of a blessing to a couple in an irregular union or to a same-sex couple is not a stamp of approval or an endorsement of their current circumstances. Rather, the spontaneous request of a couple for a blessing is understood by the Catholic Church to be, on the part of the couple requesting, a

"...sincere openness to transcendence, the confidence of their hearts that they do not trust in their own strength alone, [and] their need for God..." (#21)

## 3) What are the requirements for this blessing to be given to a couple?

This Declaration identifies several requirements for the imparting of a blessing to a couple in an irregular union or to a same-sex couple:

- This blessing may be imparted during a meeting with the couple's parish priest, or during a visit to a shrine, or while on a pilgrimage, etc.

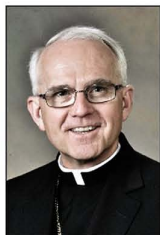
- The spontaneous request for a blessing must come from the couple, not from a relative or a friend of the couple. Neither clergy nor pastoral ministers are to encourage a couple to request this blessing. The desire for this blessing must originate within the hearts and minds of the couple.

- There is to be no styl-

ized form to the blessing; it is not to be imparted within any ritual. "[T]his blessing should never be imparted in concurrence with the ceremonies of a civil union, and not even in connection with them." (#39)

- No clothing, gestures or words proper to a wedding are to accompany the imparting of the blessing. (#39)

This Declaration is an expression of the Church's continuing pastoral concern for all Catholics, especially those who have either experienced, or felt, excluded from the Church. The Holy Father, along with the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, collaborated in this effort. This outreach combines the essential statement of the Truths of our Faith, with the inclusive provisions for healing and welcome. I believe Pope Francis hopes this Declaration will be understood as an effort to bind up wounds. Such is our prayer.



Bishop Terry R. LaValley

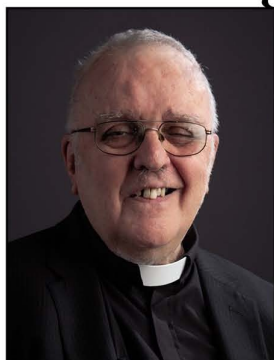
## Year in review: Looking back at 2023

As 2023 comes to a close, we take this opportunity to reflect on the year. The following are highlights from 2023 editions of the *North Country Catholic*.

- **December 31, 2022** – The Vatican announces the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. He was 95.

- **January 10** – Sister Gail Anne Jarvis, a Sister of Mercy of the Americas and Plattsburgh native, dies at age 66.

- **January 12** – Four students from St. Bernard's School in Saranac Lake carry the torch in the torch relay for the



In 2023, the diocese of Ogdensburg lost (from left) Msgr. Lawrence M. Deno, Father Joseph W. Elliot and Msgr. Paul E. Whitmore, who passed on to the next part of their eternal lives.

International University Sports Federation World University Games. The students were aided by

school Principal Andrea Kilbourne-Hill, a former Olympian, and teacher Allison Miller.

- **January 18** – Sister Kathleen Mary DeBoalt, a Sister of St. Joseph, dies at age 72 after sev-

eral decades serving youth and families at various Catholic Schools in the diocese.

- **January 25** – Father Nicolas J. Revilla, a priest of the Archdiocese of Caceres in the Philippines, arrives in the diocese.

- **February 2** – The Diocese of Ogdensburg celebrates and prays for consecrated religious as part of World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life.

- **February 26** – Bishop Terry R. LaValley celebrates the Rite of Election and Call to Con-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# Year in review: 2023

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

version at St. Mary's Cathedral, documenting and praying for those preparing to enter the Church at the Easter Vigil.

- **March 1** - A new deanery configuration becomes effective, reducing the number of deaneries in the diocese from six to four - Clinton-Northern Franklin, St. Lawrence, Adirondack Mountain and Jefferson-Lewis.

- **March 15** - Bishop Terry R. LaValley announces that the 2022-23 Bishop's Fund Appeal had reached its goal. Thanks to the generosity of 6,680 households, \$1.3 million was raised to support vital ministries and aid North Country neighbors.

- **March 15** - Sister M. Carolyn Madden, a Sister of Mercy and native of Saranac Lake, dies at age 94. She served



NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC FILE PHOTO BY JESSE SOVIE

**Two seminarians were ordained to the diaconate and one was ordained as a priest in 2023. Pictured after the ordination are, from left, Bishop Douglas J. Lucia, bishop of Syracuse, Deacon Douglas Schirmer, Bishop Terry R. LaValley, Father Lukas Gruber and Deacon Carter Pierce. The three men were ordained on May 27 at St. Mary's Cathedral.**

for decades in schools around the North Country and in other parts of New York.

- **March 22** - Piercefield native Sister Mau-

rice Black, a Sister of St. Joseph, died at age 93. She served the diocese in education, and she founded and directed the Special Religious Education program in Watertown.

- **March 29** - Due to declining enrollment, it is announced that St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga would be closing after 64 years educating and forming youth in the Catholic tradition.

- **March 30** - Priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg gather with Bishop LaValley at St. Mary's Cathedral for the celebration of the Chrism Mass.

- **March 31** - A Women's Healing Retreat featuring Sister Mary Michael Fox, a Dominican Sister of St. Cecilia, is held at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse in Watertown. The event was sponsored by the Department of Faith Formation.

- **April 9** - Msgr. Lawrence M. Deno died at age 90. He served as a priest in the diocese for 63 years.

- **April 15** - Bishop La-

Valley bestows the Edgar P. Wadhams Award for Distinguished Service to Dr. Celine Paquette at St. Mary's Church in Champlain for her dedication to the Church, diocese parish and community.

- **April 16** - Mary Beth Bracy of Plattsburgh is consecrated to the Life of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World in a Mass celebrated by Bishop Terry R. LaValley at St. Peter's Church in Plattsburgh.

- **April 22** - Youth from around the diocese gather at High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid for the annual diocesan Youth Rally themed "We are Jesus in the World."

- **May 8-10** - Deacons from around the diocese gather at Edgewood Resort in Alexandria Bay for the annual Deacon Assembly.

- **May 21** - Bishop LaValley celebrates the Jubilee Mass during the annual Presbyteral Assembly, honoring Father Patrick Ratigan (40 years), Father Robert

Decemberer (40 years), Msgr. John McAvoy (60

years), Father Sony Puckalick (40 years), Father Richard Demers (40 years), Msgr. John Murphy (50 years), and Father J. Michael Gaffney (50 years).

- **May 27** - Father Lukas Gruber, Deacon Carter Pierce and Deacon Douglas Schirmer are ordained by Bishop LaValley at St. Mary's Cathedral.

- **June 9** - The Catholic Media Association awarded the *North Country Catholic* a second place award in the "best Regular Column - Spiritual Life" category for three of Editor Darcy Fargo's columns.

- **June 10** - Augustinian Academy in Carthage is joined by Bishop LaValley honoring Mary Ann Margrey, school principal, who retired after 45 years of service in Catholic Education.

- **June 19** - Quebec's Minister Responsible for First Nations and Inuit Relations announces a \$115,000 grant to help St. Regis Mission Church repair stone walls, façade and a steeple.

- **June 23** - Father Fernando Solomon, currently serving at St. André Bessette Parish in Malone, takes his Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America, becoming a U.S. citizen.

- **June 25** - Bishop LaValley commissions 14 new lay ministers to serve in various ministries around the diocese.

- **July 2** - Father Jaya "Jai" Kumar, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart (MSC), arrives in Watertown to assist at the parishes there and other parishes and ministries served by the MSC community.

- **July 6** - Danielle Fitzgerald of St. Ber-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

## QUEST FOR PRIESTS

THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

— PRAYER SUGGESTION —

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

(With ecclesiastical approval)

Mass  
Rosary  
Fasting  
Day Offering  
Eucharistic Adoration  
Offering of Sufferings  
Divine Mercy Chaplet

Or whatever the Lord  
inspires you to offer Him

January


Jesus

Holy Name  
Of Jesus

**JANUARY**

DIOCESE OF  
OGDENSBURG, NY  
2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY	2 REV. LUKAS H. GRUBER	3 REV. ALBERT J. HAUSER	4 REV. PETER G. HELFRICH	5 REV. MICHAEL J. JABLONSKI	6 REV. JOSEPH KANTIMEA MSC.
7 REV. DANIEL T. KEEFE	8 OUR PASTOR	9 REV. PAUL J. KELLY	10 REV. JOHN P. KENNEHAN	11 REV. THOMAS E. KORNMEYER	12 REV. STEVE KOVACEVICH	13 REV. DONALD E. KRAMBERG
14 REV. ARTHUR J. LABAFF VF	15 POPE FRANCIS	16 REV. ALAN J. LAMICA	17 REV. KRIS C. LAUZON	18 REV. JOSEPH P. LEA	19 REV. CLYDE A. LEWIS	20 REV. CHRISTOPHER J. LOOBY
21 REV. JOHN J. LOOBY	22 DECEASED PRIESTS	23 REV. SHANE M. LYNCH	24 REV. DONALD J. MANFRED	25 REV. LAWRENCE E. MARULLO	26 MSGR. MICHAEL H. C. JOHN MCAVOY	27 MSGR. MICHAEL H. C. JOHN MCAVOY
28 REV. KEVIN D. MCEWAN	29 REV. GILBERT B. MENARD	30 REV. RAYMOND J. MOREAU	31 REV. JOSEPH A. MORGAN VG	For more copies contact: Diocese of Ogdensburg PO Box 369 Ogdensburg, NY 13669		

A donation to help support THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS will be appreciated. The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests is graciously underwritten by:  Diocese of Ogdensburg Vacations Society [www.mynvocation.net](http://www.mynvocation.net)

DECEMBER 27, 2023

# Year in review: 2023

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nard's School in Saranac Lake and Karlene Gonyeau of St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga were honored as 2022-23 Distinguished Teachers.

- **July 15** - Bishop LaValley celebrates a Jubilee Mass with the Sisters of St. Joseph. Celebrating jubilees were Sister Mary Louise Fiedler, 65 years; Sister Noel Chabanel Hentz, 60 years; Sister Bernadette Marie Collins, 60 years; Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin, 60 years; and Sister Jennifer Votraw, 55 years.

- **July 16** - Knights of Columbus from around the diocese gathered at St. Anne's Shrine in Isla LaMotte, Vermont, for the group's annual pilgrimage.

- **July 17** - The Diocese of Ogdensburg files for Chapter 11 reorganization. Reorganization is intended to ensure survivors of abuse are justly compensated and the diocese can continue its vital ministries.

- **July 30** - Six men were admitted as candidates to the Permanent Diaconate by Bishop LaValley at St. Mary's Cathedral.

- **August 6** - A gazebo at Camp Guggenheim is dedicated to the memory of William Ward, who was born with Myotubular Myopathy, a rare disease that affects all skeletal muscles and died at age 20 in 2021. The gazebo provides a covered gathering space near the camp's beachfront.

- **September 7** - Bishop LaValley awards the Bishop Edgar P. Wadhams Award for Distinguished Service to Ralph Bennett, who served as director-caretaker of Camp Guggenheim for over 40 years.

- **September 8** - Deacon Lee Trudeau is appointed associate direc-



NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC FILE PHOTO BY JESSE SOVIE

Roger and Polly Michael of Heuvelton were among the couples honored at the Marriage Jubilee Mass celebrated by Bishop Terry R. LaValley on Sept. 10 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg.

tor of Deacon Formation by Bishop LaValley to assist Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin, program director, in educating and forming men discerning and pursuing the diaconate.

- **September 10** - Bishop LaValley celebrates the Marriage Jubilee Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral, honoring and praying for married couples from around the diocese.

- **September 15** - Deacon William S. Raven of Black River dies at age 91. He was ordained in 1988.

- **September 16-17** - The annual Bishop's Fund Appeal, themed "We Share the Burden," launched around the diocese. The appeal supports vital ministries and

- **September 24** - Representatives of law enforcement, corrections, emergency services and emergency communications gathered at St. Alexander's Church in Morrisonville for Bishop LaValley's celebration of the annual diocesan Blue Mass.

- **September 29** - Survivors of residential

schools spoke about the abuse they endured at Every Child Matters Day in Akwesasne, an event aimed at reconciliation and healing.

- **October 1** - Mission of Hope celebrates its 25th anniversary and honors Sister Debbie Blow, a Dominican Sister and the organization's founder and longtime executive director, by dedicating and blessing the Sister Debbie Blow OP Operations Center and Warehouse in Peru.

- **October 4** - Sister Eileen Murray, an Ogdensburg native and Sister of the Grey Nuns, celebrated her 100th birthday.

- **October 16** - Father Joseph W. Elliot dies late in the evening at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdens-



*Support And Pray  
For Vocations*

Congress. Bishop LaValley is the principal celebrant for the Congress' main Mass on October 21.

- **October 22** - Trinity Catholic School in Massena celebrates its 40th anniversary.

- **November 12** - Deacon Gary Brunell of Constable dies at age 88. He served as a deacon for 33 years.

- **December 7** - Msgr. Paul E. Whitmore dies at age 94 after a brief illness. He served as a priest in the diocese of 69 years, including service as a columnist for the North Country Catholic.

- **December 11** - Sister Catherine Mary Cummings, a Sister of Mercy, dies at Elderwood of Uihlein in Lake Placid. She was the founding director of Mercy Care for the Adirondacks' Parish Nurse and Mission Integration programs.

## UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

*In re The Roman Catholic Diocese of Ogdensburg, New York*  
Case No. 23-60507

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT,** On July 17, 2023, The Roman Catholic Diocese of Ogdensburg, New York, ("Diocese") filed for protection under chapter 11 of title 11 of the United States Code (the "Bankruptcy Code").

**The Bankruptcy Court has established January 18, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. (prevailing Eastern time) as the deadline all claimants (including governmental units) to file proofs of claim against the Diocese (the "Bar Date").**

**If you have a claim against the Diocese, including, without limitation, a claim related to abuse committed by any person connected with the Diocese, you must file a claim on or before the applicable Bar Date.**

Please visit <https://case.stretto.com/diocesefogdensburg> or call (844) 634-0003 for more information on how to file your proof of claim.

**IF YOU DO NOT TIMELY FILE A PROOF OF CLAIM, YOU MAY FORFEIT YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE ON ANY PLAN OF REORGANIZATION AND TO SHARE IN ANY DISTRIBUTIONS TO CREDITORS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DIOCESE'S CHAPTER 11 CASE.**

## Environmental Stewardship

## From buds into blossoms

In the Advent Scriptures preparing us for the Christmas Season we read "On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." (Isaiah 11:1) As we continue our celebration of these Twelve Days of Christmas, we might ask ourselves "How is this 'bud' of Christ's birth mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy regarding Jesus bringing new life in us? What are the 'buds' of new life waiting to blossom more fully in this coming new year of God's grace?"

In reaction to these questions, we might find ourselves more in the mood of the man whose t-shirt read "I CAN'T DO IT." When asked about this statement, he responded, "With all that is going on around us today – all the war, violence, suffering, politics, hunger, food waste, poverty, environmental crisis," he just threw up his hands and said, "I just can't do it all. There just doesn't seem to be anything that I can do that will make a difference."

The season of Christmastime reminds us of the abiding presence of God in the unfolding of the universe including every moment of human history, in our own personal lives, and in all of creation. In his poem the Jesuit poet Gerald Manley Hopkins expressed his experience; "The world is charged with the grandeur of God."

When we take the time to stop and open our eyes, ears and hearts to this "grandeur of God," we cannot but be filled with wonder and gratitude. Filled with this gratitude we may be more able to say I CAN do something. Even one small act of kindness today can bring that "bud" of Christ's love into fuller "blossom" in our wounded world.

**By Tom Kalinowski**  
St. Bernard's Church,  
Saranac Lake

# Donation boosts Christmas efforts

Laborers' Local 1822, along with NYS Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust (LECET), recently presented a \$2,500 donation to St. Peter's Outreach Christmas Program.

This program offers a variety of food plus a Christmas dinner kit, Christmas gifts for each child in the families served, along with winter clothing, coats (if needed), hats and mittens/ gloves, pajamas, a book and wrapping paper.

This is all made possible by donations for the Christmas Program specifically.

The co-chairs of this Committee work diligently all year to ensure a Merry Christmas



**St. Peter's Outreach Christmas Program Co-Chair Committee Members (from left) Marylou Francia, vice president, Beverly Robinson, secretary, Elaine LaPage, pantry manager, Carole Toomey, thrift store manager, Kitty Samuel, Christmas program manager, accept a \$2,500 donation from Scott Hilyard, business manager of Laborers Local 1822.**

for those in need of assistance this holiday season. This year, the Christmas Program will help more than 350 families and 441 chil-

dren in Massena.

St. Peter's Outreach also offers a Food Pantry that provides a five-day supply of food every 30 days to those in

need within our community as well as a monthly food distribution that is open to St. Lawrence County residents.

## Rest in Peace

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

**Dec. 27** – Rev. Hollis David Burns, 1936; Rev. Henry Gilbeau, O.F.M. Conv., 1978; Rev. Wilfred L. DeRoche, 2013

**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 Lemercier, 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; Rev. Patrick J. O'Reilly, 2022

**Jan. 3** – Rev. A. J. M. Viau, 1966; Rev. Hilary Neal, O.P., 1986

**Jan. 4** – Rev. James Edwin O'Haire, 1877; Rev. Michael Walsh, M.S.C., 1977; Rev. Charles E. Chase, 2011

**Jan. 5** – Rev. Louis Lebreton, O.M.I., 1903; Msgr. Dennis E. Lynch, 1979; Rev. Raoul J. Poirier, M.Afr., 1997; Rev. Adrian Gallagher, 2022

**Jan. 6** – Rev. James Dennis Phalon, 1974; Deacon George W. Carroll, 1994; Rev. Benoit Dostie, M.S.C., 2007; Msgr. Robert J. McCarthy, 2018

**Jan. 7** – Rev. Leonidas Geoffrion, 1954; Rev. Vincente F. Jazmines, 2021

**Jan. 8** – Rev. Michael Moris, 1893; Rev. Frederick C. Hatch, 1961; Msgr. Robert John Arquette, 1969; Rev. Leo McCarthy, O.S.A., 1975; Rev. Roland Gaulin, O.M.I., 1984; Rev. Anthony F. Pease, 1997; Msgr. Morris L. Dwyer, 2004

**Jan. 9** – Rev. James P. Santoni, O.M.I., 1890; Rev. Joseph Ferdinand Durin, M.S.C., 1897; Rev. Fred Commins, O.S.A., 1924; Rev. Joseph Edward Doyle, 1958; Rev. Jeremiah Albert O'Brien, 1974

## Bishop's Public Schedule

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

5 p.m. – Evening Prayer and Christmas Dinner with Our Seminarians and their Parents at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

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

**Dec. 31** – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 2** – 6 p.m. – Annual Jefferson-Lewis Deanery Clergy Dinner at Pete's Trattoria Restaurant in Watertown

**Jan. 5** – 9 a.m. – New York State Catholic Conference Board of Bishops Executive Committee Conference Call

7 p.m. – Deacon Candidates Class on Canon Law at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg

## Protecting God's Children

**The Diocese of Ogdensburg** has scheduled sessions for Protecting God's Children for Adults. Pre-registration is required. Preregister at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). Upcoming sessions:

**Jan. 30** – 10 a.m. – St. Peter's Parish, Massena

## To Report Abuse

**If you have a complaint** of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victims Assistance Coordinator, Terrianne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; [terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com](mailto:terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com) Phone: 518-358-3145, Ext. 7179 days; 518-569-0612 evenings; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; [ccarrara@rcdony.org](mailto:ccarrara@rcdony.org) Phone: 315-393-2920 ext. 1340.

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

# Bishops around the world divided over same-sex blessing declaration

By Tyler Arnold  
Catholic News Agency

Catholic bishops around the world are deeply divided on a Vatican declaration that permits nonliturgical blessings of homosexual couples: some bishops are welcoming the news, some are approaching it with caution, while others are outright refusing to implement it.

In some countries, including Austria, Germany, and France, many Church leaders have warmly embraced the new guidelines on blessings. The heads of the bishops' conferences in both Germany and Austria have suggested that priests cannot refuse to perform blessings for homosexual couples.

Church leaders in other countries, namely the United States, the Philippines, Ukraine, Ghana, and Kenya, have mostly accepted the declaration but are also urging caution in its implementation. This, they say, is to avoid any confusion that would lead people to incorrectly believe the Church permits homosexual activity.

Alternatively, Church leaders in at least three countries are refusing to implement the declaration entirely: Kazakhstan, Malawi, and Zambia. Two Kazakh bishops have been more critical than others, going as far as admonishing Pope Francis for approving the declaration.

The declaration, titled *Fiducia Supplicans*, allows "spontaneous" pastoral blessings for "same-sex couples" and other couples in "irregular situations." It does not allow liturgical blessings for homosexual couples and states the pastoral blessings "should never be imparted in concurrence with the ceremonies of a civil union and not even in connection with them" and cannot "be performed with any clothing, gestures, or words that are proper to a wedding."

Some of the most enthusiastic support for the Vatican declaration came from high-ranking Church officials in Austria, Germany, and France.

Archbishop Franz Lackner, who heads the Austrian Bishops' Conference, expressed "joy" over the Vatican declaration, according to an interview with Österreichischer Rundfunk, an Austrian public media company.

The archbishop said a relationship between a man and a woman is "ideal," but "a relationship between two of the same sex is not entirely without truth: love, loyalty, and even hardship are shared with one another."

Lackner said it is difficult to speak of a "must" in terms of religious life but that "basically, [a priest] can no longer say no" to blessing a homosexual couple.

Bishop Georg Bätzing, who heads the German Bishops' Conference, said he is "grateful for the pastoral perspective [the declaration] takes," which he claims "points to the pastoral importance of a blessing that cannot be refused upon personal request."

The bishop explained that blessings for homosexual couples are different from a marriage. He said that "a simple blessing need not and cannot require the same moral conditions that are required for receiving the sacraments."

Numerous bishops around the world have accepted the declaration from the Vatican but have cautioned against misrepresenting the guidelines in a way that would suggest that the Church condones homosexual behavior.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement that highlighted the "distinction between liturgical (sacramental) blessings and pastoral blessings" and said: "The Church's teaching on marriage has not changed, and this declaration affirms that, while also making an effort to accompany people through the imparting of pastoral blessings because each of us needs God's healing love and mercy in our lives."

Diocesan approaches have varied. Some bishops, like Bishop Andrew Cozzens of the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota, are emphasizing the Church's continued prohibition on homosexual activities: "It is impossible for us to bless a same-sex union ... [but] we may bless individuals who are not yet living in full accord with the Gospel," the bishop said.

Bishops in three countries refuse to implement declaration

In at least three countries — Kazakhstan, Malawi, and Zambia — Church leaders are refusing to implement the Vatican declaration in any way.

# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Biden-Harris prioritize abortion for re-election campaign

Vice President Kamala Harris announced she will embark on a tour across the nation promoting abortion rights, beginning on the anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* next month. In focusing on abortion, the vice president's tour is set to advance what Biden-Harris reelection campaign communications director Michael Tyler told CNN will be the "central pillar of the campaign moving forward." Harris' "Fight for Reproductive Freedoms" tour, announced Tuesday, will include events focusing on the alleged "harm" of abortion bans. The tour is scheduled to begin in the battleground state of Wisconsin on Jan. 22, 51 years after *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion nationwide in 1973. Biden and Harris have vowed to "bring back" the now-overturned *Roe v. Wade* as the law of the land. The campaign recently launched a pro-abortion campaign ad in several swing states pledging to expand abortion access for women.

## Pope celebrates birthday with children at Vatican clinic

Pope Francis celebrated his 87th birthday on Sunday morning ahead of his weekly Angelus by meeting with children and families who are assisted by the Vatican's Santa Marta Pediatric Dispensary. Addressing the families present — who presented the Holy Father with a cake and a bouquet of sunflowers and sang "Happy Birthday" — the pope used the opportunity to speak on the importance of preparing for Christmas. "We think and remember when Jesus came; he came to be with us," the pope said to the nearly 200 families gathered in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. Reminding the children that this is a season to "prepare our hearts for Christmas, to receive Jesus," the pope challenged the children: "In silence, eyes closed, and you think: What will I ask Jesus? Have you thought about it yet? All right. And I wish you a merry Christmas, a merry Christmas to all of you!"

## White House raises concerns with Israel about killings at church

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters on Monday that though the administration "raised specific concerns" about the reported killing of two Christian civilian women at Gaza's only Catholic church, the White House is confident the Israelis "are not making the slaughter, torture, and rape of civilians in Gaza a war aim." The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said on Saturday that on Dec. 16, a sniper of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) "murdered two Christian women inside the Holy Family Parish in Gaza, where the majority of Christian families has taken refuge since the start of the war." Kirby said the White House "raised that specific incident" with Israeli authorities and urged them to "be as careful, deliberate, surgical, and cautious as possible when it comes to minimizing civilian casualties." "The right number of civilian casualties is zero. We don't want to see a single innocent person hurt or killed as a result of this conflict," Kirby said, while adding that it is "happening that people are being killed, people are being wounded. We recognize that. But it's a far cry from saying it's a part of the war aims as it was for Putin, as it was for Hamas."

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

## ZOOM PRIESTHOOD DISCERNMENT

Are you a single Catholic man who is hearing the Lord's call to the Priesthood? Consider joining others virtually who are listening and seeking to respond.

**Dates:** Jan. 28, Feb. 11, Feb. 25,

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

**Place:** Zoom

**Features:** High school age men and older are invited to join fellow discerners and Father Howard Venette to discuss this vocation.

**Contact:** You must register in order to attend, please go to [www.rcdony.org/priesthooddiscernment](http://www.rcdony.org/priesthooddiscernment)

## ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN

## FRIENDSHIP VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Tupper Lake - Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is recruiting new volunteers and has scheduled a Friendship Volunteer Training Program.

**Date:** Jan. 18

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

**Features:** New Volunteers will join Mercy Care's more than 100 Friendship Volunteers from Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake and surrounding areas who are helping their elder neighbors stay connected to their communities and helping to make their lives a little easier and happier. Volunteers of all faiths are encouraged and invited to participate. Complementary lunch will be provided.

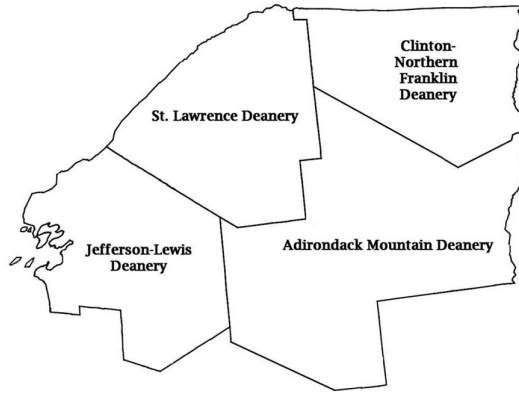
**Contact:** There is no cost for the training but registration is required. To register for the training, please visit Mercy Care's website at [www.adkmercy.org](http://www.adkmercy.org) or contact Lexi Bevilacqua, Mercy Care's Program Director, at [abevilacqua@adkmercy.org](mailto:abevilacqua@adkmercy.org)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

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

## ADORATION

Plattsburgh - Adoration to be held weekly.

**Date:** Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays



The North Country Catholic welcomes contributions to "Around the Diocese."

Parishioners are invited to send information about activities to:

North Country Catholic, PO Box 326,  
Ogdensburg, NY 13669

e-mail [news@northcountrycatholic.org](mailto:news@northcountrycatholic.org).

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

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

**Place:** St. John's in the Holy Family Basement

**Features:** Come to an out of the way place and rest awhile in Jesus' Presence. Experience His healing power, grace, love and mercy for yourselves and loved ones.

**Contact:** For more information, to become a substitute or to sign up for an hour, please contact 518-563-3773.

## DEVOTION AND HOLY HOUR

St. Regis Falls - All are invited to the monthly first Saturday Devotion and Holy Hour for Vocations.

**Date:** First Saturday of the Month

**Time:** Following the 4:30 anticipated Mass

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

**Features:** Prayer after Mass, Night Prayer, Prayer for All Souls and the Holy Souls, Novena in Honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, The Reparation Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary with private meditation on the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament reposed in the Tabernacle, and Prayers for the Holy Father and his intentions.

## HOUSE SITTERS

Ellenburg Center - Our Lady of

the Adirondacks House of Prayer is looking for many Volunteer "House Sitters."

**Time:** The responsibility is to arrive by 10 a.m. on your chosen day(s) and remain on premises until 4 p.m. to welcome visitors.

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

**Contact:** If interested in volunteering for one day a month, or week, or more, please call Sarah Anderson at 518-534-9976.

## JEFFERSON-LEWIS

## HOLY HOUR AND DIVINE MERCY

Houseville - A Holy Hour of Adoration with the Divine Mercy Chaplet will be observed the first Sunday of the month.

**Date:** Jan. 7

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

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

**Contact:** 315-348-6260

## SPAGHETTI &amp; MEATBALL DINNER

Evans Mills - The Indian River

Council 7471 Knights of Columbus will be having a spaghetti & meatball dinner.

**Date:** Jan. 13

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

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

**Cost:** Adults, \$9; Seniors, \$8; Children 12 and under, \$5; under 5, Free

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

## ST. LAWRENCE

## ADORATION

Ogdensburg - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to be held every Wednesday.

**Date:** Starting Jan. 3

**Time:** 3 p.m. to 6

**Place:** The Deacon Winter Chapel at St. Mary's Cathedral, enter through the glass doors on the Green Street side.

**Features:** A sign up book will be at the podiums at the front entrances of St. Mary's Cathedral and Notre Dame Church, however you may attend without signing up. Everyone is welcome.

## WOMENS RETREAT

Potsdam - Women's retreat to be held on Discipleship.

**Date:** Jan. 6

**Time:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Place:** St. Mary's downstairs community room

**Features:** Presenter Marika Donders discusses discipleship in three stories from Mark's gospel, and a reflection on the woman at the well. Retreat includes a Holy Hour and a simple lunch. The retreat is free.

**Contact:** Kathy Burns [burnsdesignstudio@earthlink.net](mailto:burnsdesignstudio@earthlink.net)

## ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

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

**Date:** Jan. 6

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Place:** Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg

**Features:** Rosary with devotions

## FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

Massena - Sacred Heart Church

to have first Saturday Rosary Devotion.

**Date:** Jan. 6

**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.

## MEN'S PRAYER GROUP

Massena - First Saturday of the month, men's prayer group to meet for Mass and Adoration.

**Date:** Jan. 6

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Place:** Sacred Heart Church

## MONTHLY BRUNCH

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

**Date:** Jan. 14

**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.

## CATHOLIC PARENTING

Potsdam - A series of workshops from the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute to be held on Catholic Parenting.

**Date:** First Sunday of the month from through April

**Place:** St. Mary's Rectory, second floor

**Features:** Attend all or only those that interest you. Child care can be provided. Event is free.

**Contact:** For more information contact Mike Neaton at 315-335-6302 or Liz Tarbox at [formationstp@gmail.com](mailto:formationstp@gmail.com)

## HOLY HOUR

Canton - Holy Hour for Vocations to be held.

**Date:** Every Tuesday

**Time:** 4:10 p.m.

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

**Features:** Holy hour followed by Mass at 5:15 p.m. and confes-



# Band features 'original beauty' of seasonal songs

By Peter Pinedo  
Catholic News Agency

Scythian, an Irish folk band headlined by two Catholic brothers, wants to help you "rediscover the original beauty" of Christmas music through their new album, "Christmas Out at Sea."

Full of energetic carols that reach moments of striking beauty and depth, Scythian's Christmas album brings a fresh take on a beloved music genre that for many has begun to suffer from the fatigue of commercialization and overuse.

Dan Fedoryka, one of Scythian's leaders, told CNA that the band "felt called to release this album."

"Commercialism is at an all-time high, and even the ancient carols are being stripped of their depth and beauty through modernization," he said. "We wanted to help people rediscover the original beauty of these ancient carols and by so doing remember the true meaning of Christmas."

While featuring some of the genre's most beloved classics with new maritime twists, "Christmas Out at Sea" also boasts some unconventional songs that Fedoryka explained highlight humanity's greatest unifying factor: the need for salvation.

"In an age of polished crooners which focus on the 'feel-good' of Christmas, we hope this album brings renewed appreciation for a season which points to our need for a savior and the gratitude

which comes from being saved while lost at sea."

Why sailors?

"Similar to the shepherds of Jesus' time, sailors were often seen as the unwanted of society," Fedoryka explained, "and this 'out-cast' character shines a light on the true state of affairs."

Listen to a sampler of Scythian's "Christmas Out at Sea" album here:

Rather than just a set of unrelated holiday music, the album tells a story of sailors at sea, separated from their families and loved ones as the Christmas season approaches. Through the voices of the sailors, at times jubilant and at other times weary, Fedoryka said the story connects with the human experience common to all.

"This album really moves me because it is such an analogy of life. It begins peppy and full of zeal and then reaches a solemn weightiness during 'Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent,'" he said.

"You can feel the weight of life bearing down on the sailors as they sing in the doldrums of life -awaiting a savior," he said. "Harkening back to ancient carols, sung with manly voices, we're hoping to create a space that lets the true power and theology of the hymns to affect the listener."

In the next song, "In the Bleak Midwinter," which is sung by some of the band members' wives, Fedoryka explained that the sailors' wives waiting on shore are "beckoning their husbands home for

Christmas."

Finally, in the last song - a Christmas medley including "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," and "Joy to the World" - the sailors reunite with their wives and families and break into chorus together in a Christmas celebration.

In addition to its danceable tunes, which blend Irish, Ukrainian, and other folk traditions, Scythian is also known for its high-energy, joyous performances that engage people of all ages, from children to the elderly. Their Christmas album delivers that Scythian brand at its best.

Scythian spent the year performing at venues across the globe, including at the Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention in Orlando, Florida, in the summer.

The album even includes one of the band's performance staples, "The Wellerman," a sea tune made popular by TikTok but with a Christian Christmas addition.

Fedoryka explained that the tune was in-

cluded because it "immediately connects with the younger generation" and "really fits the theme of the album."

"We added a Christmas verse and chorus that gives me chills every time, since people familiar with the tune never would expect it - and so it really drives the theology of Christmas home in a unique way," Fedoryka said.

To Fedoryka, making "Christmas Out at Sea" was about "seeking to keep Christ in Christmas" while appealing not just to the pious but to every person in such a way that calls them back to the true beauty and joy of the season.

In a time where anything old is often seen as evil or backward, Scythian's Christmas album brings new life to the holiday music genre, awakening listeners to the magic of

ancient traditions.

Scythian also hosts and headlines an annual folk music festival in the Appalachian Mountains that is highly attended by Catholic young adults and families.

Christmas is about the "unbridled joy of knowing a Savior is born to us, which spills over into dancing and song with spirits high," Fedoryka said.

"Gathering with loved ones and singing carols is a favorite tradition of ours, and this album is what we hope all our Christmases are about."

Scythian's "Christmas Out at Sea" album is available for purchase on the band's website, <https://www.scythian-music.com/store>, and for streaming on Spotify, Apple Music, or wherever you listen to music.



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## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

## Feast of the Holy Family

*Editor's note: Msgr. Paul E. Whitmore died on Dec. 7, 2023. The North Country Catholic will continue running his Scripture Reflections through the end of the year in his honor and memory. Please pray for his soul and for his loved ones.*



**Monsignor Paul E. Whitmore**

Every year, the Feast of the Holy Family falls on the Sunday following Christmas. This year, the readings show us that, just as the power of God Himself was responsible for the birth of Abraham's son, Isaac, and Mary's son, Jesus, so every father and mother must have faith and trust in God's plan for their family.

The first and second readings today focus on Abraham, the trailblazer of our Judeo-Christian

roots, to whom God made the promise of heaven - to Abraham "and his descendants." As Abraham approached the age of 100, he complained to God that he had no offspring. God brought him out from his tent and made him look up into the sky and try to count the stars! "More numerous than the stars shall be your children," he says to Abraham.

All Abraham had to do was to trust Him. When Isaac is born, Sarah in amazement now laughs in joy.

When parents are childless, God will find a way. It may be through adoption!

In the Gospel reading, Mary and Joseph bring Jesus, the miracle baby, to the Temple where

December 31

Feast of the Holy Family

READINGS

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3  
Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19  
Luke 2:22-40

Simeon and Anna both prophecy to the future career of this child for which God has destined him. Simeon says he will bring about "the rise and fall of many." He also proclaims that a "sword shall pierce' Mary's heart - just one of the seven sorrows Mary would experience in her lifetime.

What would have happened to "salvation history" if Abraham had replied, "Sorry, it's too late," or if Mary had said "No" to the angel Gabriel? We may never know until Judgment Day what great plans of God were frustrated because married couples have failed

to trust enough to bring another child into the world. Of course, God knows when there are exceptions.

Today, we need to pray for all families who sacrifice so much in bringing children into the world, in loving and nurturing them in a hundred different ways every day. Especially, do we pray that fathers and mothers will give their children the experience of eating together at a family meal, of praying together in a way that imitates the peace and leisure that the Holy Family models for them. Granted, it's a very different world in which we live, but only a family that teaches their children how to solve the tensions of living together through patient love and a generous habit of forgiving one another can ever expect that their children will form their

own healthy, faith-filled, happy families later in life. Even members of Jesus' own extended family thought He was crazy! Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus lash back at them in anger!

For those mothers and fathers whose marriages lie in shambles, may they know that God's power can still help them to mend the broken fragments with forgiveness and new hope. God will show the way for separated spouses to protect their children from destructive anger and hurt.

As Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus to His Father, so may all families present themselves for blessing and rededication at our Catholic altars this New Year's Day. May it mark a strengthening of the bonds which will make them also "holy families."

## CALLED TO SERVE

## Nothing to do

This is officially, at least in my head, a week to do nothing.

When I was young, it was a week off from school, the week between Christmas and the beginning of the new year. It was a perfect opportunity to play with all the games and toys under the tree at Christmas and to try out the stuff my friends received too.

In the elementary grades, Sister usually did not assign any homework during that week. If Sister did assign some reading, or a project, or even what we would commonly call "homework," that Sister was not held in high regard.

Notice how polite I was in describing Sister's status. The truth is, my comments, and those of

my classmates, immediately qualified us for the sacrament of confession.

In high school, we looked forward to New Year's Eve. It marked the only time during the year we could stay up till midnight and beyond without getting yelled at.

It was also a great time to watch adults act weird. They would put on little pointed silver hats and blow into noisemakers at the stroke of midnight. Grown men and women would dance around the house. The revelry was infectious. Soon my brother and cousins were caught up in the joy of the moment, so we joined the bunny-hop line.

For those few of you not familiar with the bunny-hop, it is a ritual-

istic dance performed by otherwise sedate people that remotely looks like a conga line with steps included that vaguely mimic a, you guessed it, bunny hopping along. The bunny-hop is usually reserved for really important festivals, like wedding receptions and New Year's Eve.

Everybody got a kiss from everybody else and a wish for a Happy New Year. You might like that tradition, you might not. For us, approve or disapprove, kissing was directly related to how old you were and whether you liked all that smooching and hugging.

Some folks in the neighborhood went outside and fired off firecrackers. No one in my family would do anything like that since it was illegal. Oh, I forgot Uncle Charlie.



**Deacon Kevin Mastellon**

Almost no one in my family would do anything like that since it was illegal.

S o m e w h e r e around 1 a.m. the party started to wind down and people drifted off.

New Year's Day was, and is, a

Holy Day. The first day of January was called the Octave of the Nativity. Back then we were obliged to observe the Holy Day. Since it falls on

a Monday this year it is not a Holy Day of obligation but still a Holy Day, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

This altar boy invariably had an early Mass, seven or eight in the morning, at which to assist. That of course meant Mom had to be up to wake me up. I suspect she was not happy. Neither was I, but Father expected me there, so off I went.

Nothing much to do this week, except maybe catch up on all the stuff I should have done in the weeks going into Christmas.

Happy New Year!  
*Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown. He is the Director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg.*



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

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

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

# Christmas blessings

We at the Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Ogdensburg would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Know we are praying for your health and happiness during this time of the year and always.

Many this time of year do not have the ability to share a meal with loved ones in the comfort of a warm home.

As you sit around the Christmas tree this coming holiday, we hope you will remember those less fortunate than yourselves, both abroad and in our own communities.

Help spread the gift of love and kindness this holiday season by



helping your neighbors in need, whether by providing some food to the hungry, a visit to the lonely, or simply a kind word to those having a bad day.

Together we can spread His light to the world and keep the spirit of giving alive in this Christmas season and the next.

## OBITUARIES

**Altona** — Ralph B. Patnode, 86; Graveside Services in spring at Holy Angels Cemetery.

**Carthage** — Anthony J. Genito, Jr., 68; Funeral Services Dec. 21, 2023 at the Bezanilla-McGraw Funeral Home.

**Chateaugay** — Patricia G. (King) Poirer, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 22, 2023 at St. Patrick's Church; burial in St. George's Cemetery, Burke.

**Hammond** — Elsie I. (Phillips) Tayler, 90; Graveside services Dec. 19, 2023 at Rarick Cemetery.

**Lake Placid** — John "Jack" Joseph Devitt, 91; Mass of Christian Burial in May at St. Agnes Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Lyon Mountain** — Joan Ann (Lawrence) Farrell, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2023 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery.

**Malone** — Joseph Treffle Faubert, Jr., 90; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2023 at Notre Dame Church.

**Malone** — Grace I. (Ezrow) Harrington, 84; Mass of Chris-

tian Burial Dec. 21, 2023 at Notre Dame Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Bombay.

**Malone** — Marlene LaBombard, 49; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 22, 2023 at Notre Dame Church.

**Newcomb** — Mariette (Lapointe) Goulet, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2023 at St. Therese Church.

**North Bangor** — Audrey May (LaClair) Harrigan, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 27, 2023 at St. Augustine's Church.

**Norwood** — Lee W. Farrington, 78; Funeral Services Dec. 18, 2023 at Buck Funeral Home; burial in Riverside Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** — Donald Duncan Cameron, 79; Graveside Services Dec. 21, 2023 at Notre Dame Cemetery.

**Peru** — Romeo C. Barnard, 86; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2023 at St. Augustine's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery, Plattsburgh.

**Plattsburgh** — Bertrand Joseph Abraham, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2023 at St. John's

Church.

**Plattsburgh** — Ruth Ann (Pasho) Begor, 79; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2023 at St. John's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

**Plattsburgh** — Charles F. Neiman, Jr., 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 21, 2023 at Our Lady of Victory Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

**Redford** — Helen M. (Farrell) Burleigh, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 22, 2023 at Church of the Assumption; burial in parish cemetery.

**Tupper Lake** — June M. (Pickering) Murphy, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2023 at St. Alphonsus Church; burial in St. Alphonsus Cemetery.

**Watertown** — Donna (Steele) Parks, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2023 at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart; burial in Evans Mills Cemetery.

**Watertown** — Joseph A. Sylvester, 76; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 21, 2023 at St. Anthony's Church; burial in Brookside Cemetery.

## Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8  
sions at 5:45 p.m.

### ROSARY FOR LIFE

Canton — Rosary for life to be held.

**Date:** Every Sunday

**Time:** 4:25 p.m. preceding the 5 p.m. evening Mass

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

### ADORATION

Norwood — St. Andrew's Church to offer Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every Friday.

**Time:** After 8:30 a.m. Mass

until Noon

**Features:** Sign up is not needed.

### MEAL DELIVERY DRIVERS NEEDED

The St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging is seeking drivers for home delivered meals in Brasher Falls, DeKalb, Canton, Gouverneur, Morristown, Ogdensburg, Potsdam and Star Lake.

**Features:** These drivers deliver hot, nutritious meals to older adults. Many are homebound and receive a lunchtime meal

Monday through Friday. A critical component of this program is the daily wellness check that is provided by this service. Drivers receive a mileage reimbursement. Typical deliveries take place between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Routes can be between one hour and two hours. Volunteer for one day a week or several.

**Contact:** If you are interested please contact Danielle Durant at 315-386-4730.

### DIOCESAN EVENTS

#### HEALING MASS FOR ABUSE SURVIVOR

Potsdam — Bishop LaValley has scheduled a Healing Mass for those who have Suffered Abuse by Church Leadership or others.

**Date:** April 7

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

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

### STATEWIDE EVENT

#### NEW YORK STATE DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Syracuse — Have you felt the

invitation to follow Jesus Christ as a Catholic priest? The Vocation Directors of NY State are sponsoring the New York State Discernment Retreat.

**Date:** Jan. 2-4

**Place:** Christ the King Retreat Center.

**Features:** This is an opportunity to meet other seminarians and hear their stories.

**Contact:** If you are interested, register by Dec. 28 by e-mailing vocations@syrdio.org.

# THANK YOU FOR SHARING IN THE CARING

*The Religious of the Diocese Wish to Thank All of the Generous People Who Contributed to the 2023 Retirement Fund Collection. You Will Be Remembered in Our Prayers.*

## *The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC)*

Rev. Pierre Aubin  
Rev. Corneille Boyeye  
Rev. Raymond Diesbourg  
Rev. David DeLuca  
Rev. Kumar Francis  
Rev. Joseph Kanimea  
Rev. Frank Natale

## *Sisters of St. Joseph (SSJ)*

Sister Judy Adams  
Sister Mary William Argy  
Sister M. Judith Baumert  
Sister Mary Paul Blank  
Sister Mary Ellen Brett  
Sister Shirley Anne Brown  
Sister Norma Bryant  
Sister Jean Marie Chiovitti  
Sister Annunciata Collins  
Sister Bernadette Marie Collins  
Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin  
Sister Mary Anne Croitz  
Sister Sharon Anne Dalton

Sister Mary Louise Fiedler  
Sister M. Bethany Fitzgerald  
Sister Noel Chabanel Hentz  
Sister Mary Helen Hermann  
Sister Anne Hogan  
Sister Suanne Johnson  
Sister James Marie Kelly  
Sister Mary Rita Kempney  
Sister Carol Louise Kraeger  
Sister Mary Eamon Lyng  
Sister Cathleen Moore  
Sister Gregory Munger  
Sister Juliana Raymond  
Sister Maureen Sweeney  
Sister Constance Marie Sylver  
Sister Mary Christine Taylor  
Sister Diane Marie Ulsamer  
Sister Jennifer Votraw

## *Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (FCSCJ)*

Sister Mary Ann Gour

## *Dominican Sisters of Hope (OP)*

Sister Deborah Blow  
Sister Stephanie Frenette  
Sister Barbara Langlois  
Sister Elizabeth Menard

## *Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (RSM)*

Sister Mary Audrey Hallahan  
Sister Brian Marie Latour  
Sister Mary Camillus O'Keefe  
Sister Janet Peters  
Sister Mary Denise Wilke

## *Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM)*

Sister Cindy Sullivan

## *Sisters of Charity of St. Louis (SCSL)*

Sister Bernadette Ducharme  
Sister Claire Michel Fortier  
Sister Louella Pelletier

## *Sisters of the Precious Blood (APB)*

Sister Marilyn McGillan  
Sister Linh Therese Nguyen  
Sister Mary Catherine Pham  
Sister Rose Rossi  
Sister Theresa Tamandl

## *Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod (SCC)*

Sister Deepali Karbhari Banker  
Sister Maria Flavia D'Costa  
Sister Shin Treasa Devis  
Sister Maria Angelica Rebello  
Sister Jaquiline Mary Sellappan  
Sister Sahayarani Selvaraj  
Sister Rosie Soosairaj  
Sister Jessintha Xavier



# Project Compassion

## **Are You or a Loved One Seriously ill?**

There is a wide range of practical videos to support patients who are seriously ill and their families.

## **Resources for Patients and Families**

There is a wide range of videos to support patients who are seriously ill and their families.

## **Resources for Professionals**

To support those who care for the seriously ill patient, the website includes video resources, such as, *A Physician's Perspective on Providing Primary Palliative Care.*

## **Pastoral Care Training**

For Pastoral Care Ministers, Eucharistic ministers and others who visit the sick, the website also provides a 5-video pastoral care training program.

## **End-of-Life Moral Medical Issues**

To assist those making end-of-life moral decisions, the website offers a video that is an overview of Catholic End-of-Life moral teaching.

For more information, visit us online

[www.compassionandcope.org](http://www.compassionandcope.org)



Resources for  
Patients and Families

*Project Compassion was funded by a grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation*