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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 79 Number 33

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 18, 2024

Supporting 36 retired priests

The 36 retired priests of the diocese currently receiving pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes Christmas collection.

Also, 12 priests aged 70 and older who remain active in their ministry in the Diocese of Ogdensburg are receiving partial retirement benefits.

Your gift this year will help support not only priests currently receiving support from the Priests' Retirement Fund but also priests who will retire in the future.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

FROM ART TO ORNAMENT



Winners of Bishop Terry R. LaValley's Christmas card contest gathered for Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral and lunch at bishop's residence on Dec. 10. Pictured with Bishop LaValley are, from left, Emilia Gradis, grade 7, Seton Catholic; Ella Fitzgerald, grade 4, St. Bernard's School; and Mary Curtis, grade 9, Immaculate Heart Central. Each young artist was given an ornament featuring her winning drawing.

'GAMING AND GIVING'



Liam Reardon, 17, of Bombay, teaches Father Amruta Kumar Pasala, pastor of St. Mary's of the Fort in Fort Covington, the Catholic Community of Burke and Chateaugay, and the Catholic Community of Constable, Westville and Trout River, to play Mario Kart 8, a video game on the Nintendo Switch, at St. Mary's of the Fort Youth Group's 'Gaming and Giving' event on Nov. 23. The youth packed gift baskets for homebound parishioners, shared dinner, learned about Blessed Carlo Acutis, competed in video game tournaments and sang praise and worship songs during the three-hour gathering.

FULL STORY, PAGE 4

Pope: Leaders must broker Christmas peace

By AC Wimmer
Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis issued a heartfelt plea for peace during the Sunday Angelus on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, urging international leaders to broker ceasefires in conflict zones by Christmas.

"I appeal to governments and the international community that a ceasefire may be reached on all war fronts by the Christmas celebrations," the pope said on Sunday from the window of the Apostolic Palace, addressing pilgrims and visitors gathered in

St. Peter's Square.

The pontiff specifically called for continued prayers for peace in "tormented Ukraine, in the Middle East — Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and now Syria — in Myanmar, in Sudan, and wherever people suffer from war and violence."

Pope Francis spoke about the Annunciation during his catechetical reflection on this Marian feast day, describing it as "one of the most important and beautiful moments in the history of humanity."

Drawing a parallel to sacred art, he explained: "Just as in the

scene of the creation of Adam painted by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, where the finger of the heavenly Father touches the finger of man, here too, the human and divine encounter each other."

The pope encouraged everyone to "open our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus, born of Mary Immaculate" as the Church prepares for Jubilee 2025, recommending confession as "the sacrament that can really help us open our hearts to the Lord who always, always forgives us."

St. Peter's Square is adorned with its annual Christmas dec-

orations, including a towering, nearly 100-foot spruce tree from Ledro, Italy, and a Nativity scene from the town of Grado that incorporates elements of the Venetian lagoon's traditional fishermen's huts.

These symbols of the season were officially illuminated during a ceremony on Saturday evening.

According to recent Vatican custom, the Christmas tree and a large Nativity scene displayed beside it will remain in St. Peter's Square through Jan. 12, 2025, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

NORTH
COUNTRY
CATHOLICPO Box 326
Ogdensburg, NY 13669
USPS 0039-3400**Bishop Terry
R. LaValley**
President**Rev. Joseph A. Morgan**
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Communications Director

Publish
45 issues
per year:
Weekly except
skipping every
other week be-
ginning July through August
and skipping one week in
December by the
Diocese of Ogdensburg.
622 Washington Street,
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.**Editorial Office:**
622 Washington Street,
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669.**Telephone:**
(315) 608-7556**E-mail:**
news@northcountry
catholic.org**Entered at the
Post Office:**
Ogdensburg, NY
13669 and additional mailing
offices as
Periodical Postage.**Subscription:**
For one year:
In-Diocese Rate: \$27
Outside of Diocese Rate: \$30Matters for publication
should be addressed to
PO Box 326
Ogdensburg, NY 13669
and should be received by
Wednesday prior to
publication. Paper is
printed each Friday;
dateline is Wednesday.
Member, Catholic
Press Association.**POSTMASTER:**
Send address changes to
North Country Catholic,
PO Box 326
Ogdensburg, NY
13669-0326

It is a big deal

"I don't know why it's a big deal," said Jake, my son.

Jake was showing me a string of emails from faculty at his school. The emails were praising Jake for his work shooting photos of the school's cross-country team for the yearbook. In addition to taking the standard, posed team photos, Jake had stayed for a full cross-country meet, and the meet

happened to include senior night, when the team honors its graduating seniors. He took candid photos of the runners, and he took photos of the seniors.

Jake stayed until the last runner crossed the finish

line.

In the string of emails Jake showed me, one of the faculty members noted the cross-country team didn't usually get that kind of attention from the yearbook staff; photographers typically didn't stay through an entire meet.

**Darcy L.
Fargo**

That was when Jake told me he didn't "know why it's a big deal."

"I think we've discussed this before, my guy," I said. "Oftentimes, presence is the biggest present you can give someone. You gave them your time and your full attention. That's giving a lot, especially these days, when there are so many demands on both.

It's the same reason we do experience gifts instead of regular gifts. Time together is more valuable than just about anything."

I thought about that conversation as we prepare to embark on Jake's Christmas experience gift (also his senior year/grad gift) - a trip to Texas to attend a football game and in Houston and tour the stadium in Dallas - stadiums 11 and 12 in Jake's effort to visit all 30 NFL stadiums.

Jake is 17. I can't imagine he'll want to adventure with his mom for many more years. While the trip is his gift, the time with him is such a gift to me. It's something I treasure.

How appropriate that we're thinking about and talking about the present

of presence. It's the time of year when we celebrate the fact that God came to be with us, present with and for humanity and present with and for Jake and for you and for me. His presence was and is a present.

It's easy to forget that as I get wrapped up in completing my to-do lists before our trip and before Christmas.

And Jesus wants our presence.

As we move into the closing portion of Advent, I've started intentionally adding a bit more quiet reflection time - time with Jesus - to my day. It's only a few minutes in the morning, but it's added joy and peace to at least the start of my days.

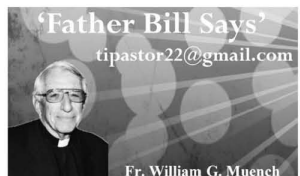
And any time with Jesus is a big deal.

Time with John the Baptist

Each year as I prepare for Advent, the first one I look to is Saint John the Baptist. All four of the Gospel evangelists tell us some of the story of John the Baptist. He was the cousin of Jesus and the very same age as the Lord. He was a powerful street preacher who came to announce to us all that this Jesus was our Savior, came to live among us and came to transform our world.

Today I would like to share with you the story of John the Baptist - the incidents that are described in the Gospel of John, Chapter 1. As John begins his Gospel story of Jesus, he wants us to know how John the Baptist prepared the world for the public ministry of Jesus.

John's Gospel tells us, "A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to testify to the light. The



true light which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

The Gospel tells us that leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to listen to and interrogate John the Baptist. They asked him, "Who are you?" John admits, "I am not the Messiah." They go on, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" Jesus answers, "I am not." They continue, "Are you the prophet?" He says, "No." "Who are you then?" John the Baptist answers, "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert. Make straight the way of the Lord, as Isaiah the prophet said."

We are told that John baptized with water for the forgiveness of sins. As the people came to hear John

and promise conversion of life - readiness to live in a new and better way - John would take them into the River Jordan and baptize them. John says, "I baptize with water but there is one among you whom you do not recognize - the one who is coming after me whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."

We are then told that Jesus was actually there on a day among the crowd near John the Baptist. John recognized him and said, "Behold the lamb of God." This is so profound. The Hebrew Scriptures speak of God as the Savior who came to protect the Hebrew people in the time of Moses by placing the blood of a lamb over the house door. John the Baptist sees Jesus as our lamb who protects and saves us by the shedding of his blood.

The Gospel of John, Chapter 1 tells us that on the very next day, John the Baptist again sees Jesus

among the crowd. He then points him out to two of his disciples saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Immediately, those two disciples begin to follow Jesus. The Lord notices them and asks, "What are you looking for?" They respond, "Rabbi, where are you staying." Jesus answers, "Come and you will see." Then we are told that they stay the rest of that day with Jesus. What a magnificent story. I believe that each time we come to Jesus in prayer, he invites us to spend the rest of time with him.

One of those two disciples was Andrew, who will become one of Jesus' apostles. Andrew is the brother of Simon Peter. In this story, he goes to find his brother, Peter, and tells him, "We have found the Messiah." Andrew takes Peter to meet Jesus, and Peter becomes an apostle of Jesus. We know that John the Baptist is known to say of Jesus, "He must increase, I must decrease."

Supporting 36 retired priests

The 36 retired priests of the diocese currently receiving pensions from the Priests' Retirement Fund will be direct beneficiaries of the generosity of Catholics in the North Country who contribute to their parishes Christmas collection. Also, 12 priests aged 70 and older who remain active in their ministry in the Diocese of Ogdensburg are receiving partial retirement benefits.

Your gift this year will help support not only priests currently receiving support from the Priests' Retirement Fund but also priests who will retire in the future.

This Christmas, parishes will contribute 75% of their Christmas collection to the Priests' Retirement Fund, with the parish keeping the balance.

While your gift helps pay pensions to retired priests, it also helps the diocese make provisions for pensions for other priests as they retire in the future.

Actuarial studies are performed annually to assure the diocese is preparing for its future obligations to retired priests. The firm of Frank J. Walters Associates, Inc. has determined that adequate provisions are being made in 2024-25 to fund the Plan.

It is the diocese's goal to provide an annual pension increase when able to do so. On July 1, 2024, an increase of \$30 in the monthly benefit paid to retired priests of the diocese became effective.

Estimated pension payments in this fiscal year amount to approximately \$1,000,000. In addition, 100% of the cost of health insurance for retired priests is funded through the Plan. The 2024-25 fiscal year estimate for this benefit is \$250,000.

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

The value of investments in the Priests' Retirement Fund decreased over a one-year period from \$8,753,850 on June 30, 2023, to \$8,440,586 on June 30, 2024. The diocese's Investment Advisory Committee, diocesan administration, and the investment portfolio's investment managers closely monitor monies invested in support of the Plan.

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 diocese's Executive Director of the Development Office, Scott Lalone. Scott can be reached in Ogdensburg at (315) 393-2920 or by email at slalone@rcdony.org.

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

Mark T. Mashaw
Diocesan Fiscal Officer

Rita Waldron Devan

January 19, 1926 - December 6, 2024



Rita Waldron Devan, age 98, the last member of the immediate James Waldron family, passed away peacefully at Holbrook Adult Home on Friday, December 6, surrounded by her loving family.

Rita Waldron Devan was born in Saranac Lake, on January 19, 1926, the daughter of James and Elizabeth Buckley Waldron. She grew up in the hamlet of Clayburg, New York, where her parents operated Betty's Hotel and Tea Room. Her early education was at a one-room school house which was located within striking distance of her home. Following her elementary education, she attended Sallaz Academy, graduating high school in 1941. Her business education was at Loretta Business Institute in Plattsburgh.

Rita worked for five years as a private secretary for the Director of Nurse Education department at SUNY Plattsburgh. After her move to Willsboro, she was employed at the Department of Social Services in Essex County; as office manager for the Calgar Corporation Mining Company; and at the Willsboro branch of the Essex County Champlain National Bank as head bookkeeper for eight years.

On June 26, 1948, she married Gerald Devan at the Assumption of Mary Church in Redford. The nuptial Mass was celebrated by Gerry's brothers, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis P. Devan and Msgr. Clarence M. Devan and also by Rev. Joseph Doyle, Rev. Herbert Hannan, Msgr. William Brennan and Rev. Euclid Elie.

Rita's strong faith was a huge part of her life. She was a communicant of St. Philip of Jesus Church in Willsboro, and could be called upon to help out in endless ways, including making liturgical vestments and banners for the church; serving as lector, Eucharistic Minister, parish council member, teacher of religious education, and member of the choir and the Altar Rosary Society.

She joined her local Court St. Joan of Arc of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas in 1949, and continued serving the CD of A in several capacities. In addition to serving in various offices in her local Catholic Daughter court, she served as District Deputy and as a member of the NYS CDA board for twelve years. She was honored to have served for many years on the Bishop's Fund Committee and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. One of her most cherished moments was the honor of meeting Mother Theresa. In recognition of her years of distinguished service to the church, she was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice in 1995, the highest medal that can be awarded to the laity by the Pope.

Having a myriad of interests, Rita was a member of the Willsboro Beautification Committee, the William Gilliland Garden Club, and the Essex County Extension Service. In her later years, her favorite pastimes were reading; playing the organ; completing the New York Times crossword puzzle and playing bridge. She was the director of the Willsboro Bridge Club and the Lake Worth Bridge Club in Florida, where she and Gerry spent 14 winters.

With encouragement from her children, Rita authored a book at the age of 87 about her life growing up, called *Waiting for Jo*. It told the story of her mother losing her husband and raising five children (ages 1-9) alone in the 1930's.

Rita showed her love for her family by preparing delicious meals – no one ever left her house with an empty stomach or without a special treat to take home. She used her expertise on the sewing machine to make both her daughters' wedding gowns, and later, as the grandchildren arrived – a baptismal gown and First Communion dress, which are being passed down through the generations.

Rita was predeceased by her parents, her two brothers and their wives – Donald and Rachel Waldron, George and Alicia Waldron and her sisters and their husbands – Helen and John Coffey and Mary and Leo Bourey, and her beloved husband Gerry of almost 60 years.

She is survived by her three children and their spouses – Cathy and Doug Cushing of Leesburg, FL; Robert and Bonnie Devan of Owego, NY; and Maureen and Terry Barber of Fort Ann, NY. She also leaves several grandchildren and their spouses: Karen and Matt Stark; Kimberly and Greg Seigfred; Kevin and Shelby Cushing; Megan and Doug Perry; Michael and Kim Devan; Matthew and Caitie Devan; Melissa Barber, Colleen and Michael Hursh; Patrick Barber; several great grandchildren and special nieces and nephews.

Rita's family would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the staff at the Holbrook Adult Home where Rita spent the last three years of her life. Their kind and compassionate care was everything we could have hoped for.

There will be no calling hours. A Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated on Thursday, December 12, at 10 a.m. at St. Philip of Jesus Church in Willsboro with the Rev. Alan Shnob, celebrant. Burial will be held in the spring in the parish cemetery.

Donations in Rita's memory may be made to St. Philip of Jesus Church, PO Box 607, Willsboro, NY 12996 or Holbrook Adult Home, 73 North Street, Granville, NY, 12832.

Arrangements are in the care of the Hamilton Funeral Home, 294 Mannix Road, Peru, 518-643-9055. To make a floral purchase, offer an online condolence, share a symbolic gesture, or share a photo in memory of Rita Waldron Devan please visit www.hamiltonfuneralhome.com

'Gaming & Giving' in Fort Covington

By Jacob Fargo
Contributing Writer

Service, singing, a soon-to-be saint, and Super Mario excited the youth at a "Gaming and Giving" event on November 23rd at the St. Mary's of the Fort parish center in Fort Covington.

The event was organized by the St. Mary's of the Fort youth leadership team, which youth faith formation director Jocelyn Kelly and Father Amruta Kumar Pasala, pastor, lead.

The youth began the event by making crafts to include in a gift basket they packed to give to homebound parishioners. Items for the baskets, including jams, Jesus night-lights, Christmas items and other gifts, were donated by youth group members and their families.

Father Pasala attended the event and joined the youth in making crafts for the gift baskets. Youth from the group talk the pastor how to make the ornaments and other crafts. The teens said they enjoyed working with their pastor.

"My experience teaching the priest how to do the crafts was great," said Lily Sence, 15, of Fort Covington. "He is easily taught, and he is very friendly and awesome to talk to. He listened to all we had to say about the crafts and other things, and it was great."

Next in the event, dinner, a mac and cheese bar with toppings including pulled pork, bacon, chicken and vegetables that was prepared by Youth Group Leader Chastity Jock Miller, was served.

Following dinner, youth group member Jacob Fargo gave a presentation Blessed Carlo Acutis.

"Blessed Carlo Acutis is someone that we can identify with as youth," Fargo said. "He played soccer and video games, and he loved Jesus."

Teens said they enjoyed learning about Blessed Carlo.

"Jacob Fargo did a great job with his presentation about



St. Mary's of the Fort Youth Group members Lily Sence, her brother, Alex, and Anna Jock-Miller work on crafts to add to gift baskets for homebound parishioners as part of the group's 'Gaming and Giving' event on Nov. 23.

Blessed Carlos Acutis, the first millennial to become a saint," said Liam Reardon, 17, of Bombay. "He is the patron saint of the internet."

Fargo explained that Blessed Carlo's Playstation 2, a video game system, is a second-class relic. Tying into this, the youth group held video game tournaments. The games included Mario Kart 8, Super Smash Bros Ultimate, and Just Dance on the Nintendo Switch, all chosen because they are simple to play.

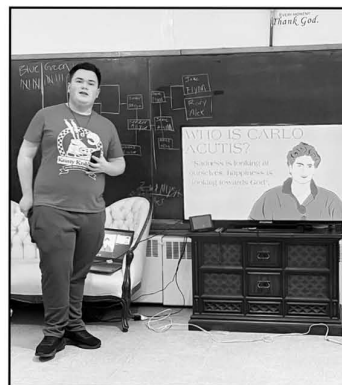
Father Pasala joined the action, playing two of the video games, and the teens said they enjoyed gaming with him.

"I really liked battling Father Pasala when he played video games with me! He jumped right in and was eager to learn," said Reardon. "He laughed a lot, so I think he was having fun. He made sure to play video games with all of us guys."

The youth group ended the event singing praise and worship songs led by Jennifer Reardon.

Both the youth and adults alike said they had a good time at the event.

"I enjoyed the event," said



Jacob Fargo, 17, of Moira, gives a presentation about Blessed Carlo Acutis to St. Mary's of the Fort Youth Group.

Flynn Mitchell, 13, of Fort Covington. "My favorite part of the event was Jake's presentation and learning more about Carlo Acutis, it was interesting, I also liked the food." "We had fun playing video games with Father, we all participated in all the activities. Both the boys and girls did the activities with Father together."

"What I liked most about this particular youth group event was watching the teens interact with Father Pasala," said Jocelyn Kelly, Youth Formation director. "Whether it was

helping him make gifts for the homebound or teaching him how to play Mario Kart, they really enjoyed showing him how to do these things that are familiar to them but are new to Father, it was an opportunity for them to connect in a new way and in a relaxed atmosphere, and it was a lot of fun."

"I loved everything but above all (Fargo's) presentation on St. Carlo," said Father Pasala.

The youth group just recently restarted in the parish.

"The teenagers themselves were the catalyst for reviving our Youth Group," said Kelly. "Every time we had a bonfire or some other youth event, the kids would say how much fun it was and ask if we could do it again soon, realizing that they have a desire to be with each other in this setting, focused on our Catholic faith, serving others, and enjoying themselves, made it easy to see we needed to get things going, with the help of Father Pasala and several parents, we have begun meeting regularly, with a variety of events planned for the months ahead, when we are together, it's easy to see why they enjoy it so much and why it is so important."

"They are the Future of the universal church and the church in Fort Covington," said Father Pasala. "Faith is both a gift and responsibility. A gift needs to be cherished and the responsibility to share it with others. Every event is designed to fulfill this mission."

The youth group's next event is snowshoeing with a bonfire and smores.

"(Youth Group) is a great experience," said Sence. "Any teens or kids who want to join youth group definitely should, because it's such a wonderful way to learn more about Christ, get closer to him, and have fun with people your age at the same time!"

Editor's note: NCC Editor Darcy Fargo contributed to this report.

Ogdensburg trivia night to support seminarians

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

Get a few friends and get ready to test your knowledge, have fun and win prizes, all while supporting vocations.

The Vocations Committee for St. Mary's Cathedral Parish, St. Raphael's in Heuvelton and Saints Philip and James in Lisbon is hosting Trivia Night on Jan. 3 at Martin Fieldhouse, formerly the Knights of Columbus building, in Ogdensburg. Doors open at 6 p.m., and trivia begins at 7 p.m.

Teams of up to six participants are encouraged to sign up to compete in "a contest of general knowledge across a variety of topics."

The event was inspired by a similar event held in the Diocese of Syracuse.

"(Our Lady of Hope Parish) in Syracuse had a young man who had been a seminarian as he pursued his vocation as a priest," said Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, a Sister of St. Joseph who is on the Vocations Committee for the Ogdensburg, Heuvelton and Lisbon communities. "He wanted to thank the parish for all their support and for promoting vocations. He held a Vocations Trivia Night. He did it in January. Some of the seminarians participated. Even though it was a big football day, and even though

they had a snowstorm, they had a good turnout and raised a nice amount - I think it was \$4,000 - to support seminarians and vocations. When I heard about it, I thought it was a great idea!"

That Syracuse parish helped with the Ogdensburg event.

"We've been very fortunate," said Sister Eamon. "Our Lady of Hope Parish sent us their materials - their rules, questions, advertising tips - everything."

Sister Eamon and Deacon James Crowley, also a member of the parish Vocations Committee, have been hard at work creating questions that cover a wide variety of topics.

"We started with the questions from (Our Lady of Hope Parish), and Sister found some websites we could use to get questions," said Deacon Crowley. "We sat down together - Sister, me and (Deacon Crowley's wife) Rita went through it all picking categories we thought would work best and questions we thought would work well. We made sure we had a couple of extra questions in each category in case we had an issue with a question."

Deacon Crowley noted that there will be 10 categories, each including five questions.

"It's not an overtly religious event," he said. "The questions cover general knowledge - a variety of topics."



For teams who want a little competitive advantage, players can buy "mulligans," opportunities to get a response marked correct without answering.

Sister Eamon said seminarians from the Diocese of Ogdensburg have been encouraged to attend and participate in the event.

"Some of them are a fair distance away, but some aren't far away," she said. "And it'll be a time when they're home on break. We're hoping they'll participate."

In addition to the opportunity to win bragging rights and a grand prize, door prizes will be awarded throughout the evening, and pizza, snacks and beverages will be available.

"It's January. It's cold," said Sister Eamon. "The holiday parties will be over. Come out, get together with friends or family and have some fun!"

To see the trivia contest rules or to register, visit saintmaryscathedral.net/trivia or use the QR code included above.

Cost is \$20 per person. Mulligans can be purchased for \$10.

Funeral Mass celebrated for Sr. Judy Adams

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sister Judy Adams (Sister Maria Giovanni), a Sister of St. Joseph, on December 11 at St. Anthony's Church in Watertown. Bishop Terry R. LaValley was celebrant, and Father Joseph Morgan was homilist.

Sister Judy died December 5, 2024 at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg at the age of 82.

Born June 11, 1942 in Ogdensburg, she was the daughter of John Gilbert Adams and Jean Driscoll Adams.

She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 8, 1960, and received the habit on June 24, 1961. Sister Judy made final profession on June 24, 1966.

Sister Judy received her bachelor's degree and master's degree in Education from SUNY Potsdam as well as a master's degree in Professional Diploma in School Administration and Supervision from Manhattan College, Riverdale, New York. She had a Certification in Advanced Studies in Technology-Internet & Computing.

Sister Judy served as a teacher and in administrative ministries at Trinity Catholic School in Massena, St. Peter's School in Lowville, Holy Family, St. Patrick's and Sacred Heart Schools in Watertown, St. Andrew's School in Norwood, St. James School

in Gouverneur and Augustinian Academy in Carthage.

Sister is especially known for her Hands-On Science Program. Her lab lessons were compiled into a book in 2018.

Sister Judy was named Outstanding Teacher of the Year for the Diocese of Ogdensburg in 2008. Sister also served on the Leadership Team for the Sisters of St. Joseph from 2005-2013.

Besides her parents, Sister is predeceased by her brother, James F. Adams of Ogdensburg, and her sisters, Jo-Ann Adams and Jane Sweetney of Liverpool, New York.

She is survived by her sister-in-law, Doreen Adams of Camden, North Carolina, and close personal and family friends Donna Miles and Mary Jean Thomas of Syracuse.

Funeral arrangements are with Cummings Funeral Service, Inc. Memorial contributions may be made to the Sisters of St. Joseph, 866 Arsenal Street, Watertown, NY 13601.

Online condolences to her family may be posted at www.cummingsfuneral.com.

The Miraculous Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus, in the past I have asked for many favors. This time I ask you this very special one. Take it Dear Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in our merciful eyes it will become your favor, not mine. Amen KM

Environmental Stewardship

Feasting on the fruits

Have you ever given or received a basket of fruit for Christmas? At the turn of the last century, good children received their only orange for the year as a Christmas gift. This was a real treat as tropical and fresh fruits were not readily eaten by the average family.

How might this custom of giving fruit as a gift be connected to our celebration of Christmas?

As we read the Scriptures, we often see that celebrating the Lord's presence among them was symbolized by feasting on the delicious fruits of the earth.

For example:

"And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things." - Jeremiah 2:7

"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of wellaged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined." - Isaiah 25:6

"As a Christmas symbol, fruit recalls the twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These Fruits result from the activity of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit are: Charity (love), Joy, Peace, Patience, Benignity (Kindness), Goodness, Longsuffering (Patiently Bearing Suffering over a Long Period of Time), Mildness, Faith, Modesty, Purity, Chastity." - Galatians 5:22

As we enjoy the fruits of the earth that bedeck our tables at Christmas and the many gifts of the Spirit that help us to live as followers of the Lord Jesus, let us call to mind our many blessings.

Let us pray:

We praise You, Lord God, for teaching us that the earth and its fullness belong to you and we thank you for giving us the most urgent of tasks: to protect, heal and honor your gift of Creation and the Gifts of your Spirit to know how to do it. AMEN

Bishop's Public Schedule

Dec. 18 – 5 p.m. – Evening Prayer and Christmas Dinner with seminarians and their parents at Wadhams Hall

Dec. 19 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 20 – Noon – Diocesan Staff Christmas Party at Bishop's Residence

Dec. 21 – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 22 – 8 a.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 23 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

Dec. 24 – 4 p.m. – Christmas Vigil Mass and Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the First Mass Celebrated in St. Patrick's Church in Chateaugay

Dec. 25 – 11 a.m. – Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg

Protecting God's Children

The Diocese of Ogdensburg is able to schedule sessions of the training, Protecting God's Children for Adults. This required training addresses child abuse, the methods and means by which abusers commit abuse, and steps to prevent abuse from occurring and stop it from continuing. To arrange for training, call 315-393-2920 or email jgrizzuto@rcdony.org

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terrienne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terrienneyanulavich@yahoo.com; Phone: 518-569-0612; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; ccarrara@rcdony.org Phone: 315-393-2920 ext. 1340. **If you have a complaint** of suspected sexual abuse or related misconduct by the bishops, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at 800-276-1562 or www.ReportBishopAbuse.org

Homesick for heaven

The Holiday Season is meant to be a warm, relaxing, joyful time, but for many, it is a rather difficult time of year. Many do not have family or friends with whom to celebrate, some are away from home, and others are finding it hard to financially give their family a special Christmas. As a mom, I know the weight of expectations we put on ourselves to make everything magical for our children, juggling so many details, all while usually battling our North Country weather and cold and flu season. Social media has only added more stress in recently years to "keep up with the Joneses." The pressure to have the picture-perfect Christmas card, decorated home, matching pajamas, and a put-together family at Christmas Eve Mass can sometimes be suffocating.

Even without the added holiday stress, I often struggle with anxiety, and on several occasions, I've been reminded to turn to our Mother Mary

Rest in Peace

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

Dec. 18 – Msgr. Narcisse Lorrain, 1915; Rev. Laurent Legoff, O.M.I., 1932; Rev. Louis Kopp, M.S.C., 1946; Msgr. Harold J. Skelly, 1980; Rev. George A. Fortaine, 1990

Dec. 20 – Rev. Luke Harney, 1892; Rev. Jean B. A. Barette, O.M.I., 1955

Dec. 21 – Rev. Camillus Mondorf, O.S.F., 1914; Rev. Charles A. Grady, O.S.A., 1981

Dec. 22 – Rev. Edgard Thivierge, O.M.I., 1975

Dec. 23 – Rev. John B. P. Honorat, O.M.I., 1862

Dec. 24 – Rev. Jean Claude Leonard, O.M.I., 1868

with a simple nudge from the Holy Spirit. I feel in my heart that Mary experienced a kind of anxiety in her life as well. Just look at the passage from Scripture when Mary and Joseph couldn't find the Child Jesus:

"When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.'" - Luke 2:48

Because I am a theological nerd, I became interested in the translation

of that scripture passage from the Greek. What is the exact word used for "anxiety" and what would be a closer explanation of what was meant by it here? The word used for anxiety here in Greek is the verb "odynao" which translated means "to experience mental or spiritual pain and distress. To be in anguish." This is to be expected from a mother and father worried when they cannot find their son. However, "anxiety" in several other place in the New Testament is translated from the Greek "merimnao" and it indicates "being pulled apart, divided into parts, or pulled in opposite directions." I think this is such a deep commentary on our own anxieties during the Holiday Season. We are often pulled away by details of worldly Christmas celebrations, forgetting the humble first Christmas and the much deeper reality of this holy day. Though there is nothing wrong with big Christmas parties and décor, the material things are often the cause of much stress during this time.

Have you ever stressed at Christmas because your spiritual life wasn't where you wanted it to be or because you were worried you hadn't prepared your heart enough for Christ during the Advent Season? It's probably not likely. We are often pulled into the stress of



Amanda Conklin

the world instead of where our concern should be. I am guilty of this very thing.

I cannot fathom how stressful being the Mother of God could have been. She was told a sword would pierce her heart. Yet, she never despaired or rooted

herself in that anxiety. She held firm to God's goodness and faithfulness, and she used that as her anchor and calm. "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." - Luke 2:19

I try to remember the words of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary when truly announcing the coming of Christ: "Be Not Afraid." It is my favorite quote, also attributed to St. John Paul II, who often shared it with young people. How lucky are we to have Mary as an example who also was away from her home under very stressful circumstances that first Christmas. We are all truly "away from our home" in heaven and, at some point, feel that homesickness though we may not recognize it as such. This Christmas, may we take our anxieties and recognize them as homesickness. Let us pray that we can hold God's promises in our own hearts during this Advent and Christmas Season when our plans don't go the way we expected, and let the Christ Child bring peace into our hearts and homes.

Dems threaten defense bill in feud over gender drugs

By Tyler Arnold
Catholic News Agency

Democratic lawmakers on Capitol Hill are threatening to oppose the U.S. government's defense spending bill for the next fiscal year over its inclusion of language that would prevent the Department of Defense (DOD) from providing health care coverage that funds transgender drugs and surgeries for minors.

Although the current draft was the product of negotiations between Republican and Democratic lawmakers, some Democrats have considered abandoning the final version amid its inclusion of banning gender transitions for children.

"The final text includes a provision prohibiting medical treatment for military dependents under the age of 18 who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria," Democratic Rep. Adam Smith, who serves as the ranking member for the House Armed Services Committee, said in a statement.

"Blanketly denying health care to people who clearly need it, just because of a biased notion against transgender people, is wrong," Smith continued. "This provision injected a level of partisanship not traditionally seen in defense bills. Speaker [Mike] Johnson is pandering to the most extreme elements of his party to ensure that he retains his speakership. In doing so, he has upended what had been a bipartisan process."

Republican lawmakers included the language in the must-pass National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2025, which was unveiled this past weekend. The primary function of

the NDAA is to fund the nation's military.

Republican lawmakers sought to include similar language related to gender transitions in last year's NDAA but eventually abandoned the effort when they failed to get enough support in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Under the proposal, taxpayer-funded health care programs provided by the DOD for members of the military and their families would prevent any coverage of transgender drugs and surgeries for anyone under the age of 18. It would not affect these services for adults.

Currently, the DOD offers coverage for transgender drugs for all ages, which includes puberty blockers and hormones through its TRICARE program, which serves about 9.5 million service members, military retirees, and dependents. TRICARE does not currently provide coverage for transgender surgeries.

According to a study published by the American Public Health Association in 2023, at least 25,000 children sought treatment for gender dysphoria through TRICARE in 2017 — and about 900 received transgender drugs such as puberty blockers or hormones. It's unclear whether those numbers have increased in recent years.

A Republican effort to end the DOD's policy to fund travel for military members and their families to obtain abortions was ultimately removed from the NDAA proposal.

In a statement, Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson said lawmakers "remain determined

to confront increasingly hostile threats from communist China, Russia, and Iran, and this legislation provides our military with the tools they need to deter our enemies."

"This legislation includes House-passed provisions to restore our focus on military lethality and to end the radical woke ideology being imposed on our military by permanently banning transgender medical treatment for minors and countering antisemitism," he added.

Smith's objection to the NDAA proposal comes as activist groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) are urging Democrats to vote against the legislation.

"Medical care should stay between families and their doctors but this provision would baselessly and recklessly inject politics into the health care military families receive," Mike Zamore, the ACLU national director of policy and government affairs, said in a statement.

"Nobody should have to choose between serving the country and ensuring their child has the health care they need to live and thrive," he added. "Members of Congress must vote against the defense bill because of the inclusion of this deeply harmful, unconstitutional provision."

The ACLU is currently representing Tennessee families who are challenging a state law that prohibits doctors from providing children with transgender drugs and surgeries. The United States Supreme Court heard the case's arguments on Dec. 4.

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

U.S. Bishops ask Biden to spare men on federal death row

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on Monday launched a campaign urging Catholics to contact outgoing President Joe Biden and ask him to commute the death sentences of the 40 men on federal death row to life in prison. "President Biden has an extraordinary opportunity to advance the cause of human dignity by commuting all federal death sentences to terms of imprisonment and sparing the lives of the 40 men currently on federal death row," the bishops wrote on a webpage that provides a contact form for Biden. The bishops of the United States have, as a body, been calling for an end to the federal death penalty since 1980, just a few years after the U.S. Supreme Court allowed executions to resume in the country. Biden, a Catholic, called for an end to the use of the federal death penalty as a candidate for president, but that marked a departure from his previous political positions and actions. The federal death penalty has been applied relatively sparingly since being reinstated in 1988. Just 16 people have been put to death by the federal government — 13 during the first Trump administration — compared with nearly 1,600 by the states.

Altar consecrated, Mass celebrated in restored Notre Dame

The archbishop of Paris, Laurent Ulrich, on Dec. 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated the first Mass during which the altar of the restored Notre Dame cathedral was consecrated following the fire that ravaged the church in April 2019. At the Eucharist, which was attended by the president of France, Emmanuel Macron, some 170 bishops from the country and from around the world concelebrated with Ulrich as well as one priest from each of the 106 parishes of the Archdiocese of Paris and one priest from each of the seven Eastern-rite Catholic churches. Before proceeding to the consecration of the altar, the relics of five saints — three women and two men — "whose history is linked to the Church of Paris: St. Marie Eugénie Milleret, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, St. Catherine Labouré, St. Charles de Foucauld, and Blessed Vladimir Ghika" were placed in a recess in it.

Alberta considers new 'assistance in dying' regulations

The provincial government of Alberta, Canada, is considering several possible regulations on euthanasia there in the face of growing popularity of the practice throughout the country. The government is actively seeking citizen input on "oversight of medical assistance in dying [MAID]," with Alberta residents invited to offer input through Dec. 20 on a proposed new series of regulations. Among the possible new regulations on which citizens can offer input are "the creation of a new public agency and legislation to provide oversight" of the euthanasia program as well as "limitations on criteria for MAID eligibility and on MAID as an option for patients." Also under consideration is "the creation of a MAID decision dispute mechanism for families and eligible others" that would allow loved ones to argue against a family member's being allowed to participate in the program.

ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN

ADORATION

Wells — Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to be held.

Date: The Third Sunday of the Month.

Time: After Sunday Mass

Place: St. Ann's

Features: A blessed half hour.

ADORATION

Lake Placid — Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is held Tuesday.

Time: 1 p.m. to 5:20 followed by Mass

Place: St. Agnes Church

Features: Come rest in the presence of Jesus.

Contact: To sign up as a sub or for a weekly hour, call 518-523-220. Sign-up is not necessary to attend.

CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

JUBILEE MASS

Chateaugay - St. Patrick's Church in Chateaugay will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the first public Mass celebrated in the new St. Patrick's Church in 1924.

Date: Dec. 24

Time: 4 p.m.

Features: Bishop LaValley will preside over the Jubilee Mass.

HOT DINNERS

Malone — St. Andre Bessette Parish to offer free community hot dinners.

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 4 p.m. to 5

Place: St. Andre Outreach Center

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

SACRED HEART FRATERNITY

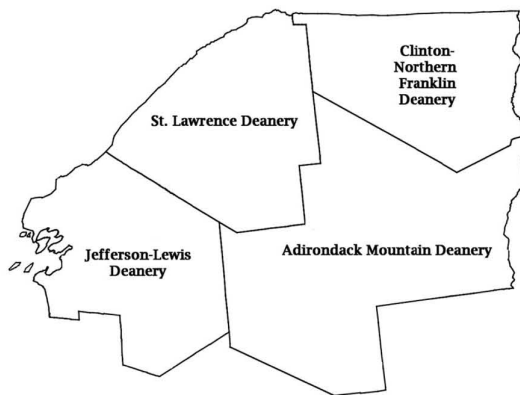
Plattsburgh — Come join our Franciscan Secular order, the Sacred Heart Fraternity.

Date: Second Sunday of the month

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Place: St. John the Baptist basement

Features: All men and women, single or married, who want to live as St. Francis and live "Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel" can



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

Parishioners are invited to send information about activities to:

North Country Catholic, PO Box 326,

Ogdensburg, NY 13669

e-mail news@northcountrycatholic.org.

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

become part of the Secular Franciscan Order. Join us for prayer, fellowship, and formation. In addition, we do a retreat once a year and support in some capacity an organization that helps people like a soup kitchen.

Contact: For more information call David Garrant: 518-578-8377

ADORATION

Plattsburgh — Adoration to be held weekly.

Date: Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

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.

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

JEFFERSON-LEWIS

POLISH CHRISTMAS WAFER

Houseville — The Polish Christmas wafer, Oplatek, is available from St. Hedwig's Church.

Cost: \$3 per package plus postage.

Features: The Christmas wafer or OPLATEK is part of a Polish, Lithuanian and Slovak custom that is observed during the Vigil of Christmas. After the

first star is visible, family and friends gather around the dinner table to share the OPLATEK, which symbolizes the presence of Christ, the Newborn Child. The OPLATEK is sent and shared with family and friends all over the world while wishing God's Blessing on each other.

Contact: 315-348-6260

RAFFLE

West Leyden — Tickets for a raffle at St. Mary's Nativity are on sale.

Cost: \$5 a piece or 5 for \$20. They can be purchased after the 4 p.m. Mass, by calling the Parish office at 315-348-6104, online at <https://catholicparishesofslc.weebly.com/tithely-giving.html> or from any parish council member.

Features: During Lent, West Leyden native and parish council member Jeff Nellenback built a rustic sofa table, a bench, and wooden wall quilt. These will be raffled as a first, second and third prize with the drawing taking place after 4 p.m. Mass on Dec. 21.

HOLY HOUR AND DIVINE MERCY

Houseville - Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Divine Mercy Chaplet will be observed the first Sunday of the month.

Date: Jan. 5

Time: Following 11 a.m. Mass

Place: St. Hedwig's Church

Contact: 315-348-6260

SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER

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

Date: Jan. 11

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

ORGAN RECITAL

Massena — To help celebrate Sacred Heart Church 100 year anniversary, an organ recital will be held.

Date: Dec. 22

Time: 3 p.m.

Place: Sacred Heart Church

Contact: For more information call St. Peter's Parish at 315-769-2469.

TRIVIA NIGHT

Ogdensburg - The Vocations Committee for the Catholic Churches of Ogdensburg, Heuvelton and Lisbon is planning a Trivia Night.

Date: Jan. 3

Time: Doors open at 6 p.m., Trivia starts at 7 p.m.

Place: Martin Field House (Knights of Columbus)

Cost: \$20 per person and receive a free mulligan (answer).

Features: All funds raised will be donated to the Diocese of Ogdensburg to help offset the miscellaneous college costs for the seminarians. Join us for a night of fun and friendly competition in a contest of general knowledge across a variety of topics! Teams of up to 6 will compete for the bragging rights and the Grand Prize. All players are eligible for door prizes!

Contact: More rules and registration at www.saintmary-scathedral.net/

MONTHLY BRUNCH

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

Date: Jan. 12 (Second Sunday of each month)

Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Place: Father Amyot Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$10; under 12, \$5; under 5, Free; Omelets, add \$3; Take-outs available

Contact: For more information contact Grand Knight Gil Gonther 315-212-5166.

ADORATION

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

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 adoration without signing up. Everyone is welcome.

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 confessions 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.

Film on Padre Pio offers look into saint's life

Catholic News Agency

A documentary drama about the beloved 20th-century friar St. Pio of Pietrelcina, affectionately known as Padre Pio, made its television debut on EWTN on Dec. 7 and is now available for streaming.

Co-produced by EWTN and the Saint Pio Foundation, "Saint Pio of Pietrelcina: Man of Hope and Healing" is a compelling docudrama that shares the story of a man whose simple humility and profound faith impacted lives around the world.

The documentary provides an insightful look into the Franciscan friar's life, featuring testimonies from a variety of notable individuals, including actor Gary Sinise; Elia Steluto, Padre Pio's personal photographer; and Renzo Allegri, the journalist who was among the last to interview the saint before his death.

The film also includes never-before-seen photos and letters that provide an intimate view of the saint's life.

Actor Joe Mantegna — known for his roles in "Criminal Minds," "Boys Town," and "The Godfather," narrates the

English version of the film and is one of its executive producers. According to a press release, taking part in this film strengthened the actor's faith and prayer life.

Luciano Lamonarca, founder and CEO of the Saint Pio Foundation, spoke to CNA about his own personal devotion to St. Pio and what he hopes people will take away from the film.

A native of Puglia, Italy, Lamonarca grew up in the same region as the saint. Despite being surrounded by the presence of Padre Pio from a young age, it wasn't until Lamonarca and his wife experienced a terrible loss that his devotion grew.

"Fifteen years ago, I was a different man," Lamonarca said. "Padre Pio did change the way I look at life."

In 2010, Lamonarca and his wife, Valentina, were expecting their first child — a daughter whom they named Alma. Suddenly, their whole life changed when Alma was delivered stillborn and Valentina had to undergo additional surgeries due to complications from the delivery. Due to those surgeries, it was unlikely that Valentina would ever be able to give birth again.

"The moment where doctors told us that a pregnancy was not in our radar, it [would be] very difficult to happen, it was devastating for us as a young couple," he shared.

In their despair, the couple spent their first wedding anniversary in San Giovanni Rotondo, the hometown of Padre Pio. It was here that they were blessed with an opportunity to pray with a first-class relic — a handkerchief with blood stains from Padre Pio. The couple grew closer to the beloved saint and turned to him for his intercession.

Despite suffering multiple more miscarriages, they continued praying and on Dec. 25, 2014, Valentina discovered she was pregnant. Their son Sebastian was born in September 2015.

During their struggles with fertility, feeling inspired to spread the story of Padre Pio to the faithful in the United States and worldwide, Lamonarca founded the Saint Pio Foundation on April 4, 2014.

"The Saint Pio Foundation wishes to educate the public about the life of St. Pio and inspire the faithful about following the teachings and the holy

life of St. Pio," Lamonarca explained.

The foundation recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary and with it launched an initiative called The Real St. Pio. The initiative included the translation of 365 letters written by Padre Pio into five different languages, the release of 10 never-before-seen images of Padre Pio taken by his personal photographer, the release of "The Song of St. Pio," and finally the release of the docudrama.

Additionally, the foundation is working to set up six chapels around the United States that will each permanently host a relic of Padre Pio.

Lamonarca called the release of the docudrama "the cherry on the cake" and the "most important" part of the initiative.

He hopes that those who watch the film will enjoy getting to know Padre Pio better from "those who knew him very well and those whose lives have been changed [by him]."

The film can be found on EWTN's OnDemand platform, <https://ondemand.ewtn.com/Home/Series/ondemand/video/en/saint-pio-of-pietrelcina-man-of-hope-and-healing>.

Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

DIOCESAN EVENTS

PRIESTHOOD DISCERNMENT

Are you a single Catholic man, high school age or older, who is hearing the Lord's call to the Priesthood? You are invited to join fellow discerners and Father Howard Venette.

Place: St. Mary's Church, Canton

Dates: Jan. 25, March 22

Time: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Features: Lunch will be provided at each of the church locations.

Contact: Registration required, please go to www.rcdony.org/priesthooddiscernment. For more information, contact Father Venette — hvenette@rcdony.org

FOSTER GRANDPARENT

FGP is a local program that shows you how you can apply the skills and wisdom you have acquired to make a difference in the lives of others. If you're 55 or older and want to share your experience and compassion, you have what it takes to be a Foster Grandparent. You'll also receive a small bi-weekly, non-taxable stipend that cannot be held against any current benefits you may already

have as well as paid mileage for your travel. Additionally, you receive paid holidays, vacations, sick and personal leave. Oppor-

tunities available in Franklin, Essex, Clinton, St. Lawrence and Jefferson County.

Contact: Melissa Howard,

Volunteer Coordinator at (518) 359-7688 or E-mail: mhoward@cathcharities.org



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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

Watching and waiting

Watching and waiting. Advent is all about watching and waiting. You'd better watch out, you'd better not cry, you'd better not pout I'm telling you why ... you can supply the rest. In Advent, children await, hopefully the celebration of the birth of Christ, but perhaps they, along with a few adults, also await the surprises that can come with Christmas.

"I just can't wait" is a frequently used expression. We often face situations in life

where we have to wait. Unfortunately, some of us, like myself, hate to wait. EZ-Pass, online banking, and Dunkin' Donuts "on the go" were invented with people like me in mind.

We think of waiting as passive and we grow antsy for outcomes. So, can't we wait for payday? Take out a payday loan. Can't we take time to eat a meal? Grab an energy drink, especially one loaded with caffeine. We text our messages so we don't have to talk; we tweet so we

December 22

Fourth Sunday of Advent

READINGS

Micah 5:1-4a

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

don't have to explain too much. Our cars go faster, talk to us, and beep us when we are lost. We shop online to avoid stores or the inconvenience of parking, engaging people, or having a conversation with the stranger in line...waiting. In the words of the Geico Gecko....forget about it! Waiting in this culture

is a disease.

But Advent and ultimately Christmas are all about waiting. The prophet Micah in the first reading, as well as many other prophets, had a vision of the Messiah long before Jesus came onto the scene. The letter to the Hebrews explains that Jesus fulfills the prophecies about long-expected Messiah. When we peer into the Christmas Creche, we gaze with love on the Christ-child who fulfills even now all we could ever hope for. The waiting preached in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the Christ of the New Testament.

Christmas is just around the corner. Use the remaining time before Christmas to focus on Christmas, focus on the hope that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. When you focus on the material gifts, remember that they should reflect your willingness to share with others; focus on the who of Christmas rather than the what of Christmas. Advent is the time for us to dispose ourselves for the coming of Jesus into our lives. Find time during the "busyness" of these days to be attentive to the words: "O come, let us adore Him."



Msgr. Robert
H. Aucoin

OBITUARIES

Crown Point – Harold Joseph Ferguson, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 9, 2024 at Sacred Heart Church; burial in Catholic Community of Moriah Cemetery.

Lowville – Elaine S. (Balash) Hurley, 86; Memorial Mass at St. Peter's Church at a later date; burial in Beaches Bridge Cemetery.

Malone – Beatrice A. "Aunt Bea" (Brooks) Warner, 95; Funeral Services Dec. 9, 2024 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Morrisonville – Cecile Eva (Fecteau) Filion, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 11, 2024 at St. Alexander's Church.

Ogdensburg – James T. Doe, 87; Funeral Services Dec. 12, 2024 at Fox & Murray Funeral Home; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

Peru – Mary E. (Woodward) Roach, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 11, 2024 at St. Augustine's

Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Winthrop – Rebecca M. (Durrant) Russell, 68; Funeral Services

Dec. 12, 2024 at the Hammill Funeral Home; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Brasher Falls.

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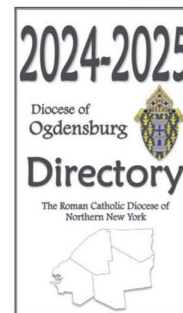
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mbrett@rcdony.org

‘Mutilated Christ’

“There are many disabled people in Cambodia: many are victims of the civil war and of landmines scattered throughout Cambodian territory. During my journey I had an inspiration from the Lord: in a retreat house in Portugal, I saw the image of a mutilated Christ. Since then, this image has become my pectoral cross”, explains to Fides the Jesuit Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzález, Apostolic Prefect of Battambang, who has lived as a missionary in Cambodia for 40 years, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3.

Established by the United Nations in 1981, the day aims to raise awareness and understanding of the concerns of people with disabilities and to promote commitment to ensuring the dignity, rights, opportunities and well-being of people with disabilities.

The Apostolic Prefect explains the meaning of the “mutilated Christ” which “gives motivation, light and joy to the disabled.” “The first meaning: Christ is missing a leg, as is the case with the many disabled people in Cambodia. Jesus, our Lord, identifies with their suffering, he is like them and is with them, he lives their suffering to redeem them. People can say: Jesus is one of us, we are not alone, Jesus suffers with us.

The second meaning: through their suffering, the disabled are linked to the suffering of Christ for



The ‘Mutilated Christ’

the salvation of the world. They see and understand a meaning in their suffering, and this gives them a new light. They are united with Christ who suffers in all the poor and in all the injustices of the world: they are at his side and with him offer their sufferings for the salvation of humanity”.

A third meaning, he continues, “is that the Mystical Body of the Lord is incomplete: in the Mystical Body of Christ we are limbs, hands, arms, legs, but something is missing; a leg is missing because the love of God is not known and not accepted. The Lord is rejected by a large part of humanity.

Our task is to be the part that is missing: this is a task that the mutilated Christ gives us, we are those who complete the Mystical Body of Christ for humanity. It is therefore a missionary Christ, as I always say in the Mass. We are the Body of Christ. We are called to express and be what is missing for the fullness of the Mystical Body, to complete it. This mission also accompanies the life of the disabled and gives them joy.”

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

O Antiphons for Advent

CALLED TO SERVE

Our grade school choir used to sing *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* at Mass to usher in Advent. Today we sing the English version, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

It is a hymn that has been around for centuries. It is, I dare say, the most popular Advent hymn of all time.

Each stanza of the hymn consists of a four-line verse paraphrasing one of the O Antiphons.

The O Antiphons precede the Magnificat in the final days of Advent.

The Magnificat is prayed every day at Evening Prayer (Vespers) in the Liturgy of the Hours. The text of the canticle, the Magnificat, is taken from the Gospel of Luke where it is spoken by Mary when she visits her cousin Elizabeth.

Our Blessed Mother says, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name” etc.

The O Antiphons use Old Testament text to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of “Come!” embodies our longing for the Messiah to be born on Christmas day. The first O

Antiphon is “O Wisdom of our God most high, guiding creation with power and love, come to teach us the path of knowledge!”

That introduction to the Magnificat appears December 17. Here are the other O Antiphons read before Christmas.

December 18, “O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the law to

Moses on Sinai, come to rescue us with your mighty power!”

December 19, “O Root of Jesse’s stem, sign of God’s love for all his people, come to save us without delay!”

December 20, “O Key of David, opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom, come and free the prisoners of darkness!”

December 21, “O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice, come shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

December 22, “O King of all nations and cornerstone of the church, come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!”

December 23, “O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law, come to save us, Lord our God!”

The O Antiphons are rich in biblical theology. They help us understand the true meaning of Christmas. “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel. Shall come to thee, O Israel.”

Merry Christmas!

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



**Deacon
Kevin Mastellon**

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