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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 80 Number 33

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 24, 2025

## AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF CHRIST



PHOTO BY DARCY FARGO/NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

A new nativity is on display at Notre Dame Church in Malone after being purchased with donated funds. [Full story, Page 4.](#)

## No NCC next week

To allow our staff, columnists and reporters an opportunity to celebrate the Christmas holiday, there will be no *North Country Catholic* published next week.

The next edition will be dated January 7, 2026.

*We wish our readers a merry and blessed Christmas and a happy New Year!*

## NEW NY ARCHBISHOP

Pope Leo XIV accepted the retirement of Timothy Cardinal Dolan and named his successor.

[FULL STORY, PAGE 3](#)

# Pope: True treasure is found in the heart

By Victoria Cardiel  
Catholic News Agency

Pope Leo XIV said Wednesday true satisfaction is found not in the accumulation of money or things, or by "too much doing," but by returning to Jesus Christ, the source of hope, love, and joy.

"We are absorbed by many activities that do not always leave us satisfied ... We have to assume responsibility for many commitments, solve problems, face difficulties," the pope said at the general audience in St. Peter's Square on Dec. 17.

"Yet," he added, "we often perceive how too much doing,

instead of giving us fulfillment, becomes a vortex that overwhelms us, takes away our serenity, and prevents us from living to the fullest what is truly important in our lives."

In his catechesis, the pontiff stressed that the true value of life is not measured by "days full of activities" or economic success.

"It is therefore in the heart that true treasure is kept, not in earthly safes, not in large financial investments, which today more than ever before are out of control and unjustly concentrated at the bloody price of millions of human lives and the devastation of God's creation," he said.

Leo warned that this logic of accumulation ends up emptying life of meaning even for those who, from the outside, seem to have achieved success: "It is important to reflect on these aspects, because in the numerous commitments we continually face, there is an increasing risk of dispersion, sometimes of despair, of meaninglessness."

"Human life is characterized by a constant movement that that drives us to do, to act," he acknowledged, adding that Jesus' resurrection can give us insight into this human experience.

"When we participate in [Christ's] victory over death,

will we rest? Faith tells us: Yes, we will rest," the pope said. "We will not be inactive, but we will enter into God's repose, which is peace and joy. So, should we just wait, or can this change us right now?"

Leo noted that many people, despite having so much, feel empty at the end of the day.

The answer, according to the pontiff, is "because we are not machines, we have a 'heart'; indeed, we can say that we are a heart."

He turned to the Gospel of St. Matthew to underscore the centrality of the heart, citing the words of Jesus: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt 6:21).

## NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

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"The priest is hiding Jesus from the people."

That sounds bad, I know. That's why I said it that way.

I said that sentence as part of a discussion about the new nativity scene at Notre Dame Church, part of St. André Bessette Parish in Malone (see the story on Page 4). I was explaining to a friend that

Father Scott Seymour, pastor of that parish, had shown the statue of Jesus, part of that nativity set, to only one oth-

er person at that point.

Father Scott wanted to build anticipation and a sense of longing for Christ, that same anticipation and longing that we lean into throughout Advent.

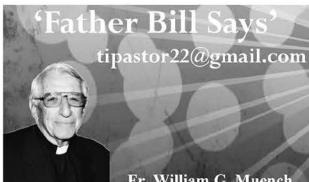
He was literally hiding Jesus from the people, but he was hiding the statue of Jesus as part of bringing Jesus to the people.

So, my sentence was completely true, but it was also meant to sound like something weird was happening.



Darcy L. Fargo

## ‘He sends a child’



Fr. William G. Muench

My favorite Christmas story - which you probably remember - is about an experience of mine. This is the story that I tell repeatedly each Christmas. This is the story about the time that my niece and nephew asked me to join them when they went to the hospital for the birth of their second child, Will. He is now 28 years old, so you see how many years I have been retelling that story. I am certain I have told the story thousands of times. It was an experience that has helped me understand the Nativity of Jesus in a better way. Each Christmas, as I remember the Gospel story of Jesus' birth and my own experience at Will's birth, I realize an important lesson - Christ's call for us all to be people of peace.

The Lord's message of peace has been an important part of all that I do as a priest. Jesus continues to challenge me

and all of disciples of the God to live a life of peace. Yet, I know only too well that this world continues to be scared with wars and violence. So, I again turn to you all to join me praying for peace for all people. I remember well the time that Pope Paul VI came to speak at the United Nations so many years ago. His message was "Give peace a chance." He also said, "If you want peace, work for justice."

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus placed in the Beatitudes - Blessed are the peacemakers. Each Christmas the hymns call for a prayer for peace. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth."

I adore sentences like that!

They bring me great joy when I deliver them to others, and they give me great joy when others deliver them to me.

I'm a word nerd, and I find word play like puns or double meanings to be exceptionally funny!

In this time of year when so much of our focus turns to gifts, I'm again reminded of what a gift it is to regularly find so much joy in my work and so much joy talking with the people of the Lord.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, the great-

est gift of all, I'll also be thanking God for another great gift - you, the readers of the North Country Catholic.

All of us here - reporters, columnists, photographers and staff - are grateful for your support, your words of encouragement, your kind words of correction or criticism on occasion, and, most importantly, your prayers.

You remain in our prayers, as well, and we wish you and your loved ones a very merry and blessed Christmas and a happy New Year!

There's no more hiding Jesus!

was certainly a pope of peace. He wrote an encyclical entitled, "Pacem in Terris." He wrote: "Peace on earth will come to stay when we live Christmas every day. Peace is the presence of Justice."

He calls upon us to make our lives an image of peaceful living. Mother Teresa spoke of peace often. She writes, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." Her Christmas message is, "What can we do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family".

Our gift to God is to make peace with one another. Pope Francis spoke of peace often. Peace is not made at a desk. Peace is made in the heart. Thinking of Christmas, Pope Francis wrote, "The Son of God came into the world as a baby to show us the power of God's love." My gift to you all is to remember you all in my Christmas Masses.

# Pope names new archbishop of New York

By Daniel Payne  
Catholic News Agency

The newly announced leader of the Catholic Church in New York expressed "heartfelt gratitude" on Dec. 18 for having been appointed to the post by Pope Leo XIV.

Archbishop-elect Ronald Hicks, who will head the Archdiocese of New York after leading the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, said at a Thursday press conference that he accepted the Holy Father's appointment "with great humility" and "an open heart."

Hicks addressed media at St. Patrick's Cathedral alongside outgoing Cardinal Archbishop Timothy Dolan, who turned 75 earlier this year, the customary age at which a prelate submits his resignation to the Holy See.

The new archbishop-designate reflected on his formation under past Church leaders in his hometown of Chicago, including Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Cardinal Francis George, and Chicago's current archbishop, Cardinal Blase Cupich. "For all of them, I'm deeply grateful," he said.

At the press conference Hicks jokingly announced what he anticipated would be his "first controversial statement" by admitting his unending devotion to his hometown Chicago Cubs baseball team and his love of the Windy City's iconic deep dish pizza.

"I want you to know that I am going to re-



PHOTO ADAM GRAY/GETTY IMAGES

**New York Archbishop-elect Ronald Hicks and Cardinal Timothy Dolan hold a press conference at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Dec. 18, 2025, in New York City.**

main a loyal Cubs fan," he said. "However, I am going to start rooting for the New York sports teams. And I already love your pizza. I love it a lot."

The prelate admitted he would miss the Joliet Diocese, at which he has served for the last five years. "I have felt happy, grateful, and blessed to be their bishop," he said. "Together, we have worked with some missionary zeal to catechize, to evangelize, and to put our faith into action as disciples who make disciples."

Describing New York City as "rich in energy, languages, cultures, and people," he said he was excited to get to know the city, though he acknowledged that the archdiocese is facing "complex and challenging days" including issues of life, faith, and "healing."

Hicks specifically said he was committed to learning about the archdiocese's efforts to compensate survivors of sexual abuse.

## Bishop Terry R. LaValley offers statement

Bishop Terry R. LaValley offered the following statement on the retirement of Timothy Cardinal Dolan and appointment of Archbishop-designate Ronald Hicks:

"This Advent Season of welcoming, I join the faithful of the Diocese of Ogdensburg in welcoming Archbishop-designate Ronald Hicks as our new Metropolitan Archbishop. As we look ahead with great anticipation and much joy under his leadership, we also acknowledge the tremendous gift we have received in the pastoral leadership and guidance of Timothy Cardinal Dolan. We pray the Lord keep him healthy as he continues to inspire so many of us with his strong faith, keen wit and joy-filled witness to the Gospel. Thank you, Cardinal Dolan, and welcome aboard Archbishop-Designate Hicks!"

settlement for victims that is expected to top \$300 million.

"As a Church, we can never rest in our efforts to prevent abuse, to protect children,

and to care for survivors," he said.

The prelate said he looks forward to "working closely and collaboratively with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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



From the Staff of the Development Office

Scott Lalone, Valerie Mathews & Lorraine Carney

# New nativity in Malone: A scene fit for a king

**By Darcy Fargo**  
Editor

"I think we need to talk about the elephant in the room," said Father Scott R. Seymour, pastor of St. André Bessette Parish in Malone.

Father Seymour meant that expression literally. There's an elephant "in the room" at Notre Dame Church. The elephant is one of 26 pieces of a new nativity set now on display at the church.

"Last year at Christmas, when we were putting out the figurines in the nativity set, it was clear some of the pieces were in tough shape," said Father Seymour. "Jesus was missing his nose. There were other broken pieces. Some of the figures were large, some were small. It had been hodge podged together from different sets. It was clearly time

for a new one."

Father Seymour approached the parish finance council, trustees and parish council regarding the request.

"They thought it was a good idea, so I did some research and came up with a few different sets," he said. "I brought them in, laid it all out on a table and let the parish council, finance council and trustees decide which one we should go with."

The final purchase, a set crafted by German artists, was determined by the votes of those groups. Father Seymour noted, though, that the councils and trustees chose the most expensive of the three options.

"The majority picked the one we have," he said. "They liked this one because of the elephant. It's a conversational piece. Then they saw the



**Notre Dame Church in Malone, part of St. André Bessette Parish, recently purchased a new nativity that was created by German artists.**

price tag."

To ensure the purchase didn't negatively affect the parish's finances, a plan to raise funds was developed.

"I thought, 'Hallmark has Christmas in July! We could as well,'" said Father Seymour. "I took a picture of the nativity set and cut out each character. Each one picture included the piece's price and places to write in a name of the person or family purchasing it and a place to write in who it was purchased in memory of."

The character cutouts were hung on a Christmas tree, and parishioners committed to covering the cost of all the pieces except one.

"Everyone was wanted except the elephant," he said. "We could've skipped the elephant, but I told the parish, 'it would be a shame to deprive your pastor of the opportunity to say to you, I'm glad we're all here to talk about the elephant in the room.' I put a container at the entrance of the church thinking people could throw in whatever they wanted toward the ele-

phant. Jesus was born for us. To me, it's another way of reminding us we're loved. Even an elephant can find a place at the manger with Jesus."

The piece has been conspicuously missing one figure, though. Jesus is missing.

"On Christmas Eve, children will carry him in at the 4 p.m. Mass," said Father Seymour. "So far, no one has seen him except the person who donated the funds to purchase him. Right now, there's just a sign, 'O come, O come, Emmanuel.' There's a sense of emptiness and longing. The Old Testament prophets talked a lot of waiting for God to come and vindicate us and redeem us and love us. I thought we could create that sense of longing."

Also missing from the display is a plaque containing the names of all the donors and memorials. The plaque, once completed, will be displayed with the set annually.

The nativity seen also includes a mystery woman.

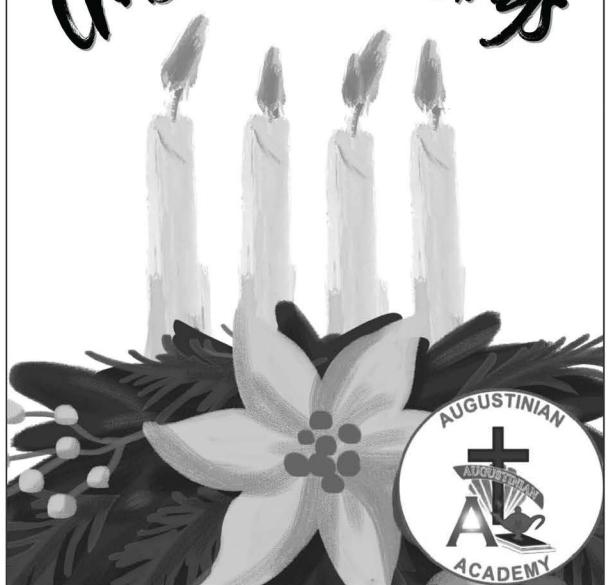
"Maybe it's the woman at the well, maybe a shepherdess," Father Seymour said. "Outside of Mary, we don't know who may have been there."

The woman is carrying a jug and placed near additional vessels.

"The jugs foreshadow Jesus' first miracle - turning water into wine," said Father Seymour. "A lot of thought and detail went into this. I want people to be able to enter into and caught up with the beauty and with the characters that are there and what it would've been like to be standing there when Jesus was born."

*May hope, peace, joy and love of Christ fill your home this Christmas season.*

*Christmas Blessings*



## MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

# Embryo adoption: An open question?

When it comes to the plight of the hundreds of thousands of IVF embryos frozen in the U.S. and elsewhere, it is often claimed that the Catholic Church has never definitively addressed the licitness, or moral allowability, of "embryo transfer" (also known as embryo rescue or embryo adoption).

I recently had the chance to participate in a public debate on this topic in Indianapolis. I argued that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has, in fact, settled this question. If we scrutinize the two major teaching documents of the Church dealing with this issue, the immorality of the practice of embryo transfer becomes clear.

The 2008 document entitled *Dignitas Personae* states: "The proposal that these embryos could be put at the disposal of infertile couples as a treatment for infertility is not ethically acceptable" (19). It identifies a specific situation, namely, attempting to treat a couple's infertility by embryo transfer, as being always immoral.

The document then goes on to point out that these moral objections extend beyond this single case, so that the same set of concerns will apply in other instances where embryo transfer might be proposed or considered:

"It has also been proposed, solely in order to allow human beings to be born who are otherwise condemned to destruction, that there could be a form of 'pre-

natal adoption.' This proposal, praiseworthy with regard to the intention of respecting and defending human life, presents however various problems not dissimilar to those mentioned above."

This passage reveals that even when we face the stark prospect of the outright killing of frozen human embryos ("otherwise condemned to destruction"), this does not allow us to bypass or ignore the substantive moral objections inherent in embryo transfer proposals.

The final section of the passage concludes with a forceful and unambiguous assertion: "All things considered, it needs to be recognized that the thousands of abandoned embryos represent a situation of injustice which in fact cannot be resolved."

Despite the tragedy of the countless embryonic humans "frozen in time" (with thousands more each day being added to the stockpiles), *Dignitas Personae* rejects the practice of embryo adoption.

A second, older Church document released in 1987 and entitled *Donum Vitae* references the "absurd fate" to which human embry-

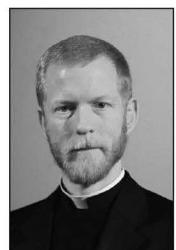
os have been exposed by freezing them, and then notes that there is "no possibility of their being offered safe means of survival which can be licitly pursued" (5).

Hence, it would seem even as far back as the late 80s, a negative judgment had already been made by the teaching authority of the Church regarding the question of embryo adoption.

In addition to there being no morally permissible means of a path to survival for these embryos, *Donum Vitae* declares the basic human right of every person "to be conceived and to be born within marriage and from marriage." For embryos to be "born from marriage" points also to the moral significance of the circumstances of our gestation.

Interestingly, *Donum Vitae* repetitively employs the phrase, "IVF and ET" (in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer). This conjoined phrase appears a remarkable sixteen times throughout the document as it seeks to explain the ethical concerns surrounding assisted reproductive technologies.

The deliberate inclusion of "ET" points to



Father Tad  
Pacholczyk, Ph.D.

the fact that it is not merely the "in vitro" or "extracorporeal conception" aspect that renders the procedure immoral, but also that the ET step itself violates sound ethics.

In other words, it seems that a double moral evil can be identified in each instance of in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer:

(1) The manufacture of human beings in glassware, outside-the-body (and outside-the-marital-act); and

(2) The importation/implantation of an outside-the-body generated embryo into the uterus.

Number two, of course, would constitute an action largely synonymous with "embryo adoption" or "embryo rescue."

Taken together, these documents point to the fact that transferring a stranger's embryo into one's wife violates the inner structure of marital fruitfulness.

Based on these texts, we can also begin to grasp how embryo transfer, even motivated with the best of intentions, nevertheless involves a form of "pirating" the wife's body for designs that are not proper to its intrinsic order with-

in marriage. *Dignitas Personae* also compares embryo adoption to "any form of surrogate motherhood," which the Church teaches to be morally unacceptable.

Couples who have done IVF and ended up with frozen children face an excruciatingly difficult situation as they try to figure out what to do with their "leftover" embryonic offspring. I offered some possible approaches to this situation in a previous article (see <https://tinyurl.com/4eua5j5p>).

So it is clearly problematic to assert that embryo adoption remains an "open question" for Catholics. Close scrutiny of key magisterial texts and reflection upon the explanations provided by those documents indicate that the practice of embryo transfer involves fundamentally unethical actions.

*Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as Senior Ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org) and [www.fathertad.com](http://www.fathertad.com).*

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## Environmental Stewardship

## Advent guide to a blessed Christmas

As the hours in darkness increased until the winter solstice happened on Dec. 21, we now begin to experience a little more light each day. Our world around us, too, seems to be covered with the darkness of war, hunger, homelessness and violence. As a result, we can at times be enveloped in fear and anxiety. How appropriate for us in the Northern Hemisphere to celebrate the return of longer days of the sun, as we celebrate the birth of the Son who is the creator of the whole Universe!

One of our prominent guides during the Advent Season is John the Baptist. We are very familiar with John in the Advent season, but he may also have a role as a guide in our celebration of Christmas, too. His first role is very familiar. It calls us to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Light of the world. We are urged to repent and make "straight the way for the Lord." This blessed Advent season encourages us to be in touch with what resistances and obstacles that may be blocking the road that leads to a closer relationship with the Lord.

John's role is more than calling us to grow in relationship to God. He was a herald of God, light in the darkness in his time. Are we too being called to be a herald of Christ's Light in our own times of darkness? Creation seems to share in this call to shed light upon the earth. Think of the star that led the wise men and the mention of stars in many Christmas songs. As we pray before the crib of the Son who became one with us, let's take time to look up at the stars and pray with the Creator of all the creation that shines upon us. May we respond, like John, and become heralds of God's light and love in our own days.

## 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

Holy Name  
Of Jesus

## JANUARY

2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
REV. DOUGLAS G. COMSTOCK	REV. MATTHEW S. CONGER	REV. THEODORE A. CROSBY	REV. PEDRO E. DE LA ROSA XIV	REV. POPE LEO XIV	REV. DANIEL L. CHAPIN	REV. MARTIN E. CLINE
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
REV. DAVID DELUCA, MSC	REV. GARVIN J. DEMARAIAS	REV. RICHARD D. DEMERAS	REV. JOHN M. DEMO	REV. JOHN M. DECEASED PRIESTS	REV. RAYMOND DIESBOURG, MSC	REV. ROBERT L. DECKER
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
REV. DENNIS J. DUPREY, VF	REV. GUY F. EDWARDS	REV. ALFRED H. FISH	REV. JAYA K. FLYNN	REV. FRANCIS J. FLYNN	REV. JOHN L. DOWNS	REV. GARRY B. GIROUX
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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  
Vocations Society [www.myvocation.net](http://www.myvocation.net)

## Rest in Peace

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

**Dec. 24** – Rev. Jean Claude Leonard, O.M.I., 1868  
**Dec. 25** – Rev. Patrick Lyons, 1911; Rev. Oswald L. Bentley, 1940  
**Dec. 26** – Rev. Aloysius Hyacinth McMahon, 1936; Deacon Andrew Yarchuk, 2019  
**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 Lebrett, 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

## Protecting God's Children

**The Diocese of Ogdensburg** has scheduled Protecting God's Children training sessions. This required training addresses child abuse, the methods and means by which abusers commit abuse, and the five steps to prevent abuse from occurring and stop it from continuing. Pre-registration is encouraged at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). Upcoming sessions:

**Dec. 30** – 5 p.m. – St. Peter's Church, Lowville

## Bishop's Public Schedule

**Dec. 24** – 4 p.m. – Christmas Vigil Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Dec. 25** – 11 a.m. – Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg  
**Dec. 27** – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Dec. 28** – 11 a.m. – Mass Celebrating the Closing of the Holy Year at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Dec. 29** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Dec. 30** – noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Dec. 31** – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 2** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 3** – 4 p.m. – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 4** – 11 a.m. – Mass at St. Joseph's Home in Ogdensburg  
**Jan. 5** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral  
**Jan. 6** – 3:30 p.m. – New York State Catholic Conference Board of Bishops Executive Committee Conference Call  
6 p.m. – Annual Jefferson-Lewis Deanery Clergy Dinner at Pete's Trattoria Restaurant in Watertown  
**Jan. 7** – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

## To Report Abuse

**If you have a complaint** of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terrianne Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; [terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com](mailto:terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com); Phone: 518-569-0612; 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)



# CALLED TO SERVE

# Christmas around the world

WhyChristmas.com. It is a copyright protected website but "schools, teachers, youth groups, churches, students, etc. can use the content of the site with no copyright worries! However, please credit any information on the site you use to: James Cooper or www.whychristmas.com"

Consider that done. I suggest you surf over to the site. After you've read this North Country Catholic edition front page to back of course. But do sample it.

Bet you will spend some time on the pages.

I was intrigued by the work Cooper has put into the site, now in its 25th year.

Among other tabs is a list of 90+ countries and their Christmas traditions.

I chose Bulgaria, Mali and Sri Lanka to give you a taste of what you will find. There was no particular reason for my selections, but it turns out the three I selected all celebrate Christmas on December 25.

Bulgaria is different from its neighboring countries in Europe. The others celebrate on January 7. It has to do with Orthodox Catholics not adopting the Gregorian calendar back in 1582.



**Deacon  
Kevin Mastellon**

Bulgarians are different. Let's leave it at that.

"Following the Christmas Eve meal some people will go to a Midnight Mass service. You might also hear Koledari (carol singers) which are normally young men who go carol singing dressed in traditional clothing. The singing can only start after midnight."

"Vesela Koleda." Merry Christmas in Bulgarian.

Mali is a large, land-locked nation in West Africa. It is a Muslim nation, but Christmas is celebrated as a national holiday.

That makes sense to me. We Catholic school kids in New York City got all the Jewish holidays off too since the public schools were closed. We thought that was a good deal.

"Not many people give and receive presents at Christmas in Mali. It is only normally done by rich families."

Mali was originally settled by the French and that language is still spoken by many in Mali. Joyeux Noël.

Sri Lanka is southeast of India. Most folks in this island nation are Buddhists. The seven percent that are Christian, mostly Catholic, take over at Christmas time.

For Christians in Sri Lanka, the Christmas

season starts on December 1 when people let off firecrackers at dawn! The streets are decorated and the shopping centers have large Christmas Trees in them. Big companies have Christmas parties and large hotels have Christmas dinner dances. The Christians go to Midnight Mass services all over the country. They

also invite friends, both Christian and non-Christian to their homes for parties."

And they do it all again to celebrate the new calendar year.

The spoken language in Sri Lanka is Sinhala. Merry Christmas is Suba Naththalak Wewa.

On this continent we will spend our time wor-

rying about gifts for others, decorating homes, offices, and churches, preparing meals and hopefully, going to Mass.

It is Christmas.

May your heart be lifted in praise this Christmas for the wonderful gift of Jesus and the joy He brings to our lives. Have a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

LUKE 1:32

HE WILL BE GREAT AND WILL BE CALLED

**SON  
OF THE MOST HIGH**



*Merry Christmas and  
a Blessed New Year  
to everyone across the Diocese.*

From Blessed Sacrament Parish,  
who worship at  
St. Patrick's, St. Anthony's  
& Holy Family Churches,  
Watertown

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# Pope names new archbishop

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the priests, the deacons, the religious, the lay leaders of [the] archdiocese" as well as working with the "great variety and diversity of faith leaders and civic leaders" that populate New York City.

Addressing the archdiocese's Spanish-speaking faithful, the archbishop-designate spoke in Spanish of his past ministry in Mexico and Central America, including five years in El Salvador.

Saying he has "an

enormous heart for Latino culture and Hispanic people," he mentioned he has two Colombian nephews, Puerto Rican godparents, many Dominican friends, and that he intends "to walk with all of you, together, as

brothers and sisters."

Responding to speculation in the media and on the internet as to who he is as a bishop, Hicks said: "If you want to know the core of who I am and what I stand for, you should know this: I love Jesus

with my mind, heart, and soul, and I strive to love my neighbor as myself."

"My desire is to be obedient to the Holy Spirit and to do the will of God, serving with a shepherd's heart," he emphasized.



The magic of Christmas is not in the presents, but in His presence.  
Prayers & Blessings to you and yours during this Holy Christmas season & always!  
Merry Christmas from  
Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ  
and Alexis Michael  
in the  
Pontifical Mission Societies of the  
Diocese of Ogdensburg!

May the Hope of Christmas  
shine brightly on you and  
your loved ones.  
And may the wonder,  
love and peace of our savior  
Jesus Christ,  
be with you this season  
and all year through.  
Merry Christmas  
from  
St. Peter's Parish, Massena!



## Christmas Peace to All

At this time of giving, we are reminded of the greatest gift ever— Jesus Christ. •

During this Holy Season, may you experience the priceless  
gift of love that came with the birth of our Savior.

Wishing you and your families a Blessed Christmas !



**Saint Lawrence Society**  
The Permanent Deacons of the Diocese of Ogdensburg



# Berger joins Mercy Care for the Adirondacks

Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is pleased to announce that Krista Berger has joined our Team as Director of Elder Care and Volunteer Services. Krista comes to Mercy Care as the former Program Coordinator for NYS Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) for Essex County. Krista has spent years leading compassionate, community-centered initiatives designed to improve health outcomes, strengthen social support systems, and empower vulnerable populations to thrive.

Krista has experience in matching people with appropriate supports, onboarding and supervising staff and volunteers, and building strong relationships with health, human service, and community organizations.

Donna Beal, Mercy

Care Executive Director remarked, "Krista has mercy in her heart to ensure coordinated care among Mercy Care's more than 100 kind and compassionate Volunteers who carry out "errands of mercy" to more than 200 elders to help them enjoy happier and fuller lives. Krista's experience aligns closely with Mercy Care's mission and programs to empower older adults to navigate complex systems and remain connected to their community and the resources they need to age in place with dignity."

Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is governed by a local board of directors and relies solely on grants and charitable gifts from individuals, businesses, and foundations for its support. Mercy Care's services are provided free of charge to those we as-



Mercy Care for the Adirondacks' team includes, from left, Mike McGurk, Donna Beal, Hannah Pelletieri, Karen Rodriguez, Lexi Bevilacqua, Krista Berger, Stacey LaMountain

sist.

Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is located at

185 Old Military Road, Lake Placid, NY 12946. For more information, please visit Mercy Care's web site at <http://www.adkmercy.org>

*The Catholic Community of  
St. Patrick's Chateaugay  
St. Francis of Assisi Constable  
St. Mary's of the Fort, Fort Covington*

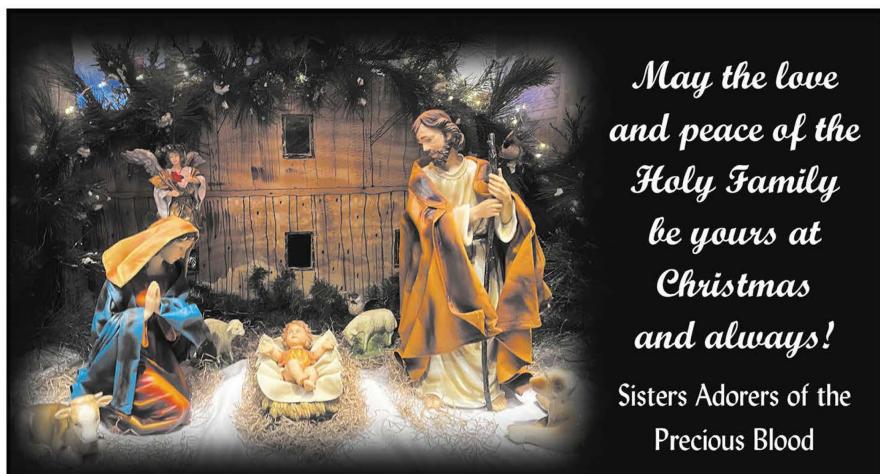
Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
I'm so humbled and blessed, to wish you and all your family members, Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year 2026!

Here's a quote from St. Teresa of Calcutta, "My prayer for you is that when Christ comes to you in Christmas, He may find in you a warm home, warm love like that of a simple shepherd who was the first one chosen to see Christ."

Therefore, "Rejoice in the joy of Christmas, for the birth of our Savior is also our own new birth in Christ. May the divine light of this holy day shine brightly upon you and your family."

Please be assure of my prayers and God's manifold blessings at this Christmas and the year to come.

*Fr. Pasala*



# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Vatican prepares to close Holy Doors, ending jubilee

Just a few weeks remain until the closing of the holy year, which was inaugurated by Pope Francis on Dec. 24, 2024. On Jan. 6, 2026, Pope Leo XIV will be the one to close the enormous bronze door of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, through which nearly 30 million pilgrims have passed during the last 12 months seeking a plenary indulgence. This Holy Door is slated to be reopened in 2033, when the Church celebrates the Extraordinary Holy Year of the Redemption.

## Therapists OK'd to counsel kids claiming to be opposite sex

Counselors and therapists in Michigan will be allowed to treat children who believe themselves to be the opposite sex, striking down a Michigan law that outlawed such counseling by claiming it constitutes "conversion therapy." The Dec. 17 ruling at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit blocked the Michigan law by stating that it "discriminates based on viewpoint" by forbidding therapists from counseling children that they are their own biological sex rather than the opposite sex. The court noted that the law "expressly" allows therapists to help children commit to a so-called "transition" to the opposite sex. The rule is a "near-certain violation" of the First Amendment, the order said. The Michigan law was passed on the grounds that steering children away from a transgender identity constitutes "conversion" similar to counseling that seeks to mitigate same-sex attraction. LGBT advocates claim that such "conversion therapy" has been discredited and constitutes a danger to therapy patients. The lawsuit was first brought to court in July 2024 after the law passed in February of that year. A lower court had earlier ruled against the therapists' claims that their counseling constitutes protected First Amendment speech.

## Miracle of liquefaction of blood repeated in Naples, Italy

The miracle of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, patron saint of the Italian city of Naples, occurred again on Tuesday, Dec. 16. According to the Archdiocese of Naples, the miracle took place after Mass in the Royal Chapel of the Treasure of St. Januarius on the feast of the patronage of St. Januarius. "At 9:13 a.m. local time, the blood already appeared semi-liquid. At 10:05 a.m., the complete liquefaction was announced," the archdiocese reported. "Dec. 16 is the third of three annual celebrations in honor of the martyred saint. This date commemorates the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631, when the Neapolitans requested and obtained the miraculous intervention of St. Januarius to prevent the lava from engulfing the city," he explained. The announcement of the miracle was made by Monsignor Vincenzo De Gregorio, abbot of the Chapel of the Treasure of St. Januarius. The phial, once the miracle had occurred, was carried in procession to the chapel so that all those present could see it. The miracle usually occurs on two other days of the year: every Sept. 19 (the anniversary of St. Januarius' martyrdom) and the Saturday before the first Sunday of May (in remembrance of the transfer of his remains to Naples).

# Pew survey sheds light on characteristics of U.S. Catholic population

By Tessa Gervasini  
Catholic News Agency

About half of American adults who were raised Catholic and stayed in the Church said the faith continues to "fulfill their spiritual needs," according to a Pew Research Center report.

The Dec. 15 report, "Why Do Some Americans Leave Their Religion While Others Stay?", examines the religious switching of U.S. adults. It looks into the reasons why people stay or leave their childhood faith, addressing the social and demographic factors associated with the changes.

The report includes findings from a survey of 8,937 U.S. adults who are part of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP). The survey was conducted May 5-11 and its overall margin of error is 1.4 percentage points. It also uses information from the center's 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS), a survey of 36,908 U.S. adults conducted from July 17, 2023, to March 4, 2024, with an overall margin of error of 0.8 percentage points.

While the report revealed many U.S. adults (35%) have left the religion they grew up in, the majority of Americans (56%) still identify with their childhood religion. Another 9% weren't raised in a religion and still don't have one today.

Of the U.S. adults who still identify with their childhood religion, 64% credited their belief in the religion's teachings as an "extremely important" or "very important" reason as to why they stayed. Another 61% said their religion fulfills their spiritual needs, and 56% said their religion gives life meaning.

Other attributions included a sense of community (44%), familiarity (39%), traditions (39%), and the religion's teachings on social and political issues (32%).

The research found 46% of Americans who have left their childhood religion said the extremely or very important reason behind their decision was that they stopped believing in the religion's teachings; 38% said it wasn't important in their life; and 38% said they gradually drifted away.

Among the Catholics who have kept their religious identities, 54% said a key reason they are Catholic today is because it fulfills their spiritual needs.

About 53% credited belief in the religion's teachings, and 47% said it's because Catholicism gives their life meaning.

The survey found that adults who were raised in "highly religious" households are more likely to have remained in their childhood religion (82%) than those who grew up in households with "medium-high" (77%), "medium-low" (62%), or "low levels" of religiousness (47%).

The majority of lifelong Catholics reported they had a "mostly positive experience" with religion when growing up (73%).

According to Pew's RLS, an estimated 19% of U.S. adults are Catholic including 17% who were raised Catholic and are Catholic today, and 2% who are Catholic today after they were raised another way.

Of the adults surveyed in the RLS who left the Catholic faith, 14% are now Protestant, compared with 1% of Americans raised Protestant who are now Catholic.

The RLS found that 13% of U.S. adults are former Catholics, including 6% who were raised Catholic but now identify in another way and 7% who are religiously unaffiliated. Of the religious "nones," 81% said an extremely or very important reason they left is because they believe they can be moral without religion.

Americans cited other reasons including they question a lot of religion's teachings (67%), they don't need a religion to be spiritual (57%), they don't like religious organizations (53%), and they distrust religious leaders (52%).

Social and demographic reasons for switching

The RLS found that 73% of Republicans and independents who lean Republican still identify with the religion in which they were raised, compared with the 56% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning adults.

Democrats who were raised in a religion are also more likely to be religious "nones" today than Republicans who were raised in a religion.

The RLS also found that age affected patterns. Among adults ages 65 and older who were raised in a religion, 74% still identify with that religion. Of the adults under 30, 55% still identify with their childhood religion.

DECEMBER 24, 2025

## ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN

## ALPHA

Lake Placid – ALPHA to be held, all are invited no matter your background or beliefs.

**Date:** Starting Feb. 22 on Sundays for 11 weeks There are breaks for Spring vacation and Easter

**Time:** 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

**Place:** St. Agnes School

**Features:** Meet new people and unpack the Christian faith together. Alpha is for anyone who's curious. No judgement, no pressure. Each session unpacks a big question of life, faith and purpose and is designed to spark conversation. This is a free event and includes a delicious lunch.

**Contact:** For more information contact Debra Lennon at [lennon-debra26@gmail.com](mailto:lennon-debra26@gmail.com), 518-524-4388

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

## FIRST FRIDAY

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

**Date:** Jan. 2

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

## SOAKING PRAYERS SESSIONS

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

**Date:** Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 2, April 6, May 4 and June 1

**Time:** New time, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30, no more evening sessions.

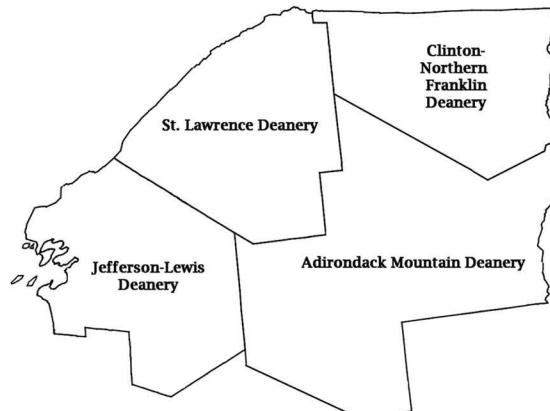
**Place:** Newman Center

**Features:** Session includes a praise and worship segment followed by scripture readings, soaking prayer and healing prayers. Led by Eve McGill, Living Waters Ministry. All are welcome.

**Contact:** [evemcgill16@charter.net](mailto:evemcgill16@charter.net)

## CELEBRATION OF LIFE PLANNING

Ellenburg Center - The Bereavement and Community Support Committee of Saint Bernard's and Saint Edmund's Parishes invites



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.

the public to a "Celebration of Life Planning Expo".

**Date:** Jan. 17 (if inclement weather, it will be Jan. 24)

**Time:** 10 a.m.

**Place:** St. Edmund's Parish Hall

**Features:** This free community event will provide helpful resources for families wishing to prepare for their end-of-life needs—spiritually, practically, and with peace of mind. Participants will include grief counselors, estate planners, legal and financial advisors, funeral directors, clergy, musicians, caterers, florists, monument and memorial specialists, cemetery and mausoleum representatives.

**Contact:** For more information, contact Mary Ellen Tomo at (518) 569-4447

## HOT DINNERS

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

**Date:** Every Wednesday

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

**Place:** St. André Outreach Center

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

## JEFFERSON-Lewis

## 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. 4

**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. 10

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

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

**Cost:** Adults, \$12; Seniors, \$10;



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

Children 12 and under, \$5; under 5, Free; Sauce or meatballs available for \$6 per quart

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

## PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Carthage – Pancake Breakfast to be held in support of Augustinian Academy, sponsored by the Carthage K of C Father John Cosmic #291 and Ave Maria Circle.

**Date:** Jan. 11, Feb. 8

**Time:** 8 a.m. to noon

**Place:** St. James Community Room

**Cost:** Adults, \$10; Seniors, \$8; Children under 10, \$5; Family of 4, \$30

**Menu:** Scrambled Eggs, Pancakes, French Toast, Ham, Sausage, Baked Goods, Juice, and Coffee

**Contact:** For more information call 315-493-3224

## ST. LAWRENCE

## TRIVIA NIGHT

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

**Date:** Jan. 2

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

**Place:** Martin Fieldhouse

**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! Mulligans will be sold at the door.

**Contact:** More rules and registration at [www.ogdensburgcatholics.net/trivia](http://www.ogdensburgcatholics.net/trivia) or email [vocationssenottrivial@rcdony.org](mailto:vocationssenottrivial@rcdony.org)

## ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

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

**Date:** Jan. 3

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Place:** Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg

**Features:** Rosary with devotions

## FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY DEVOTION

Massena - Sacred Heart Church to have first Saturday Rosary Devotion.

**Date:** Jan. 3

**Time:** 3:15 p.m.

**Features:** First Saturday Rosary Devotion to OUR Lady of Fatima. Confessions will be available. Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 p.m.

## MENS GROUP

Massena – Men's group to meet the first Saturday of every month.

**Date:** Jan. 3

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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# Hochul pledges to sign assisted suicide bill

By Kate Quiñones  
Catholic News Agency

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul will sign into law an assisted suicide bill that Catholic leaders have ardently opposed, making New York the 13th state to allow the practice.

Hochul, who called it an "incredibly difficult decision," said she will sign the bill after lawmakers add some "guardrails." The bill allows doctors to give terminally ill patients drugs to end their lives. Hochul's additions to the law include requiring a waiting period, a recorded oral request for death, and a health evaluation. The law will go into effect six months after signing.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York and other New York bishops have been outspoken against the legislation, issuing several statements opposing it. In a brief meeting with Hochul over the summer, Dolan urged her not to sign the measure.

Earlier this month, Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker signed into law similar assisted suicide legislation. Other jurisdictions that permit assisted suicide include: California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont,

Washington, and the District of Columbia.

Hochul, who is a Catholic University of America alumna, said in a Dec. 17 statement that the bill will enable people "to suffer less — to shorten not their lives, but their deaths."

"New York has long been a beacon of freedom, and now it is time we extend that freedom to terminally ill New Yorkers who want the right to die comfortably and on their own terms," Hochul said.

"My mother died of ALS, and I am all too familiar with the pain of seeing someone you love suffer and being powerless to stop it," she continued.

In a joint statement, Dolan and the bishops of New York state said they were "extraordinarily troubled" by Hochul's announcement.

The bishops say the law endangers the vulnerable, calling assisted suicide "a grave moral evil" that "is in direct conflict with Catholic teaching on the sacredness and dignity of all human life."

"This new law signals our government's abandonment of its most vulnerable citizens, telling people who are sick or disabled that suicide in their case is not only acceptable but is encouraged by our elected leaders,"

the Dec. 17 statement said.

The Patients' Rights Action Fund, a nonpartisan group that opposes assisted suicide on the grounds that it is inherently discriminatory, said that "safeguards" in bills like the one Hochul said she would sign "are falling short" where they exist.

"The amendments added that try to address the serious dangers that come with legalizing assisted suicide do nothing to protect people who deserve care and support from the state and their medical teams," Matt Vallière, who heads the group, said in a Dec. 17 statement shared with CNA.

Citing the tragic case of Eileen Mihich, a woman struggling with mental illness who died under the assisted suicide law in Washington state, Vallière said that "it is impossible to prevent abuse of the law in which people not on the verge of dying can utilize assisted suicide."

"There is no true accountability to protect patients from potential harm, abuse, or coercion," Vallière continued.

The New York bishops also raised concerns about mental health, saying the law "will seriously undermine" anti-suicide and mental health care efforts made by Hochul.

"How can any society have credibility to tell young people or people with depression that suicide is never the answer, while at the same time telling elderly and sick people that it is a compassionate choice to be celebrated?" the bishops stated.

The bishops urged the state to instead invest in palliative care, which is medicine focused on relieving suffering and improving quality of life for people with serious illnesses.

"We call on Catholics and all New Yorkers to reject physician-assisted suicide for themselves, their loved ones, and those in their care," the bishops said. "And we pray that our state turns away from its promotion of a culture of death and invest instead in life-affirming, compassionate hospice and palliative care, which is seriously underutilized."

Vallière also called for better access to palliative care.

"Gov. Hochul's statements undermine the importance of hospice and palliative care, which provides the compassionate end-of-life experience for which so many are advocating but is drastically underutilized in New York," Vallière said. "We need more access to this care, not a fast track to death in the absence of it."

## Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

**Time:** 9 a.m. Mass with meeting to follow

**Place:** Sacred Heart Church

### MONTHLY BRUNCH

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

**Date:** Jan. 11 (Second Sunday of each month)

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

**Place:** Father Amyot Parish Center

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

**Contact:** For more information

contact Grand Knight Gil Gonthier 315-212-5166.

### 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. You can volunteer for one day a week or several. Any help is greatly appreciated.

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

### DIOCESAN EVENTS

#### NYS DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Utica - Are you a young man (age 18+) who feels called to the priesthood? The New York State Discernment Retreat, sponsored by the NYS Vocation Directors, is an annual opportunity to gather

with others who are discerning God's call.

**Date:** Jan. 8 - 10

**Place:** The Good News Center

**Features:** Vocation Directors and seminarians will share their stories of faith and offer guidance for discernment. The retreat includes time for personal prayer and social fellowship.

**Contact:** Register by Jan. 1 by emailing [vocations@syrdio.org](mailto:vocations@syrdio.org)

#### RITE OF ELECTION

Ogdensburg - The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion to be held.

**Date:** Feb. 22

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

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

**Contact:** RSVP deadline: Feb 11 to [Asoltero@rcdony.org](mailto:Asoltero@rcdony.org)

#### HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Ogdensburg — Save the Date! Highway to Heaven: The Journey Continues! Featuring Fr. Jonathan Meyer, popular YouTube sensation and National Preacher of the Eucharistic Revival. Join Bishop LaValley for Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, sacred music, and more. Additional details coming soon!

**Date:** May 16

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

**Contact:** Mary Beth Bracy at [marybethbracy@gmail.com](mailto:marybethbracy@gmail.com) for more information.

# Henrie, EWTN to debut 'Seeking Beauty'

By Francesca Pollio Fenton  
Catholic News Agency

EWTN Studios in partnership with Catholic actor and director David Henrie announced earlier this month the upcoming premiere of "Seeking Beauty," a first-of-its-kind adventure documentary series that explores culture, architecture, food, art, and music, and aims to point viewers to the beautiful — and ultimately to the divine.

Set to debut on EWTN+ on Jan. 19, 2026, the series follows Henrie's journey into the heart of Italy to explore what makes Italian culture one of the most beautiful in the world.

It not only looks at the physical beauty of the country but also its spiritual richness.

According to a press release, Henrie, best known for his role as Justin Russo in Disney's "Wizards of Waverly Place," said: "We wanted an experience for viewers, so we flipped the format on its head. We have someone who's not an expert — which is me — inviting the audience to go on a journey. We go all over Italy, and we meet with locals, artists, experts, and I'm sitting down asking questions that maybe you at home would want to ask... I was blown away; hopefully, you'll be blown away, too, because we had some beautiful experiences."

From the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome to quaint restoration workshops where the masterpieces of Caravaggio and Michaelangelo are studied, the se-

ries weaves adventure with spiritual insight.

In an interview with EWTN News President Montse Alvarado conducted earlier this year, Henrie shared that a moment that stood out to him while filming the series was watching an old Caravaggio painting be restored.

He recalled being shown by artists doing the restoration some of the mistakes made in the painting that are only noticeable up close. Henrie called this experience "humanizing."

"When you think of great artists before you, they're almost so high that it's like unreachable ... and to get to see their works up close with a restorer was so cool to go, 'Oh, this person was human. He completely painted over what he did. There was something he tried that didn't work at all,'" he said. "That was really cool to me to learn how human these artists were and that they were struggling with the same things that I struggle with, just in a different medium."

The actor emphasized that the common theme throughout the series is "that beauty has a capital B — that beauty is ultimately the language of the divine and a reflection of God."

The series is pro-

duced by EWTN Studios, in partnership with Digital Continent and an association with Novo Inspire and Sacred Arthouse.

"David Henrie's passion for storytelling that honors the good, the true, and the beautiful aligns perfectly with EWTN's legacy of innovative Catholic media," Peter Gagnon, president of EWTN Studios, said in the press release. "Through 'Seeking Beauty' on EWTN+, we're not just entertaining, we're inspiring transformation, one breathtaking discovery

at a time."

Henrie's production company, Novo Inspire Studios, aims to create entertaining, timeless, and meaningful content that the whole family can enjoy.

The company's work was recently nominated by the Television Critics Association Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Family Programming, which Henrie called a "massive honor."

EWTN Studios was recently launched by EWTN as part of its new organizational restructuring, continuing

the media organization's legacy of creating impactful content in the Catholic sphere in a way that reflects the changing nature of media and evolving technologies.

Season 2 of "Seeking Beauty" recently finished filming in Spain.

Exclusive trailers and behind-the-scenes glimpses are available here.

The series will stream exclusively on EWTN+, EWTN's brand-new dynamic digital platform offering premium faith-inspired content anytime, anywhere.

*Wishing you a Blessed Christmas  
and Peaceful New Year*

The pastoral staff of the Catholic Community of

St. Peter's and St. Mary and St. Hedwig's  
wish all the people of our parish family a  
Blessed Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.



*May the Lord  
Jesus Christ  
bring you peace this  
Christmas Season and a  
Blessed New Year!*

*St. Raphael's Church, Hewletton  
&  
St. Philip and James Church, Lisbon*



## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

## Family matters

December 28

## Feast of the Holy Family

## READINGS

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

members in your family stack up against what the sacred authors have written?

As a matter of fact, the creation and sustaining of family life is a pathway to holiness, to salvation, and to happiness on this earth.

However, a group of people under one roof does not necessarily create a family. Family virtues, such as those enumerated in today's readings as well as all other virtues must be cultivated, taught, practiced and experienced.

The fact of the matter is that parents oversee the family. No matter what pop psychology, self-help gurus or modern theories of parenting may claim, the successful and fruitful family is the one in which parents take charge actively teaching, practicing and living these virtues.

Children do not come predisposed or pre-conditioned to be obedient. They need to learn obedience. Children will try the patience of parents. In fact, most children have developed their own skills at manipulating parents. Parents must never give in or give up. Certainly, they should listen to the children, hear what they have to say. But, at the end of the day, the parental decision is the final one. Sometimes, letting a child have his or her own way is the first step in the child losing his or her way.

In saying all of this, parents should not be harsh or dictatorial, even though children may sometimes accuse the parents of being harsh or dictatorial and try to put them on a guilt trip. Parenting means being a leader 24/7. It may not be easy, but it's the right thing to do.

Children in the family have an obligation to be obedient. Obedience is

their pathway to holiness and success. Obedience does not mean that they are subject to the whims of parents. Obedience means that children respect the parents who ask only what is best for their children.

To have peace and harmony in a family, parents exercise their role as parents, and children listen and observe what the parents have decided.

The practice of family life must take place in an atmosphere of love, caring, affection and mutual respect. Remember that the classic and enduring definition of the word "love" is "willing the good of the other."

There is no doubt about it. Family life has challenges and takes dedication and work. Pope John XXIII said this: "It is easier for a father to have children, than for children to have a father." Chew on that one for a while. The Holy Father's phrase works also when "father" is changed to "mother."

Family is the natural order of life, but being in family takes work, dedication and solidarity of purpose. Families are created. They do not just happen automatically. Perhaps this prayer can help us understand better the roles in family life: *Lord, help us realize that the most valuable treasure we have is one another. Help us understand that being a mother, a father, a son, or a daughter is not easy. We must work at it. Help us make just one simple resolution for the year ahead: to do, each day, a little bit more in our families, a little bit more than we think we can. AMEN.*



### Blessing of the Son of God Living Among us

*The Sisters of St. Joseph have been blessed by the outpouring of support and care of our Bishop, our priests, our families, and friends across the diocese during this past year of transition.*





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

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith  
**Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Director**  
 622 Washington St., Ogdensburg, NY 13669  
 (315) 393-2920; fax 1-866-314-7296  
 info@rcdony.org

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Photo courtesy of the National Pontifical Mission Societies

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 that 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, visiting the lonely, or simply giving 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.

*Please remember "The Society for the Propagation of the Faith" when writing or changing your Will.*

## OBITUARIES

**Brushton** – Sarah Lorraine (Lake) Ghostlaw, 42; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 16, 2025 at St. Mary's Church.

**Croghan** – LeRoy J. Schindler, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 16, 2025 at St. Stephen's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery, New Bremen.

**Dannemora** – Keith Cringle Sr., 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2025 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in St. James Cemetery, Cadyville.

**Lake Clear** – John E. Wirsing, 93; Graveside Services in spring at St. John's in the Wilderness.

**Massena** – Vincent W. Regan, Sr., 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 19, 2025 at Sacred Heart Church; burial in Visitation Cemetery, Norfolk.

**Mooers Forks** – Norma (Sample) Rabideau, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 15, 2025 at St. Ann's Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Mooers.

**Morrisonville** – Wayne J. Garant, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 20, 2025 at St. Alexander's Church.

**North Bangor** – Hazel M. (Phillips) Brown, 95; Graveside services in the spring.

**Ogdensburg** – Robert J. Huot, 93; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 18, 2025 at Notre Dame Church; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – Joan R. Mashaw, 81; Funeral Services Dec. 15, 2025 at the Fox & Murray Funeral Home; burial in the Oswegatchie Mausoleum.

**Ogdensburg** – Sean T. McNamara, 66; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 17, 2025 at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in Cranberry

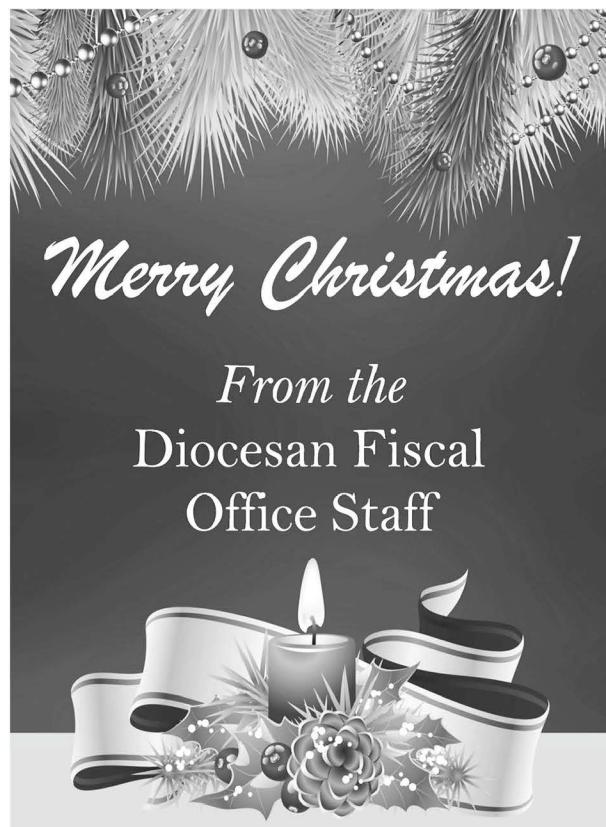
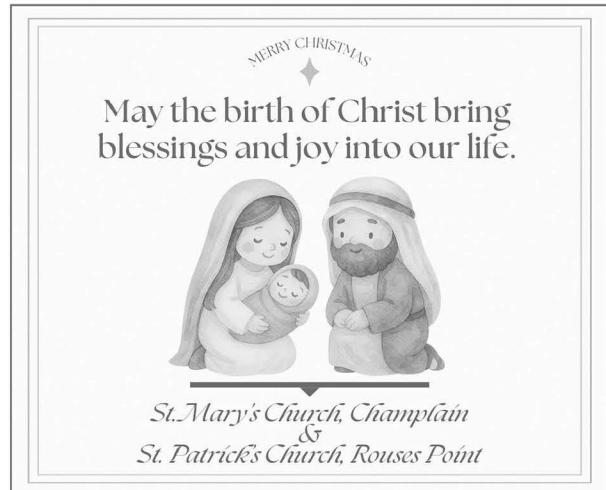
Lake.

**Ogdensburg** – Dorothy (Brasard) Murphy, 97; Services to be held at a later date.

**Port Henry** – Stephen Carl Burlingame, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 12, 2025 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Potsdam** – Wanetta Katherine James Tardelli, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 31, 2025 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Watertown** – Peter M. Crabb, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 12, 2025 at St. Anthony's Church; burial in Riverside Cemetery, Cape Vincent.



# Funeral celebrated for Sister Claire Fortier

A Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Claire Michel Fortier, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis, was celebrated on Saturday, December 20, at Our Lady of Victory Church in Plattsburgh.

Sister Claire, a resident of Victory Place Senior Community in Plattsburgh, was called to her heavenly home on December 16, 2025 at CVPH.

She was 93.

The second child of three, she was born Marie Olive Fortier on May 25, 1932, to Ovila and Jeannette (Roy) Fortier in Berlin, New Hampshire. Both her parents, her sister Jeannette Hillman, and her brother-in-law John Hillman predeceased her.

She attended grade school in Berlin, New



Sister Claire Michel Fortier, SCSL

Hampshire, and then Waterbury Catholic High School in Waterbury, Connecticut. The family then moved to Oakville, Connecticut where Sister Claire worked for four years in the office and facto-

ry for Autoyre Co., in Oakville and met the Sisters of Charity of Saint Louis who were in St. Mary's Parish in Oakville. In 1956 she entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Louis in Levis, Quebec, spent some time out in Western Canada, and made her First Profession on August 22, 1958, and her Final Profession on August 22, 1963, at St. Joseph's Novitiate in Cheshire, Connecticut.

Sister Claire obtained her Bachelor of Science Ed. from St. Rose in Albany, and a Certificate of Qualification from the State Ed. Department.

She obtained Certification in Religion from the Bridgeport Diocese and went for a Spiritual

Renewal Program in Niagara Falls.

Sister Claire was missioned and taught in schools in Brookfield, Connecticut, and in Plattsburgh and Keeseville, New York. She was also Superior at St. Joseph's Convent in Brookfield, Connecticut and at OLV Convent in Plattsburgh.

After her teaching career in the primary grades, she happily volunteered at OLV Clothing Store.

In February of 2014, Sister Claire underwent surgeries due to several fractures from a fall, and since then she has been completely retired, but continued visiting the sick Sisters of Charity of Saint Louis in nursing homes.

Sister Claire spent her

last years of retirement at Victory Place Senior Community.

Sister Claire Michel Fortier is survived by her sister, Sister Mary Francis Fortier, a cloistered Dominican Nun in North Guilford, Connecticut. She is survived by one niece and two nephews, one great niece and three great nephews, and aunts, uncles, and cousins. She is also survived by her Religious Community, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Louis.

A great deal of thanks to Dr. Gilbert Desmangles and nurse Morgan Bennet, who spent many hours with Sister in her passing.

Arrangements are with the Brown Funeral Home in Plattsburgh, NY.

## ● THANK YOU FOR SHARING IN THE CARING ●

*The Religious of the Diocese Wish to Thank All of the Generous People Who Contributed to the 2025 Retirement Fund Collection. You Will Be Remembered in Our Prayers.*

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

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

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

Sister Mary Ann Gour

### *Dominican Sisters of Hope (OP)*

Sister Deborah Blow  
Sister Barbara Langlois  
Sister Elizabeth Menard

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

Sister Cindy Sullivan

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

Sister Bernadette Ducharme  
Sister Louella Pelletier

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

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

### *Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (SMMC)*

Sister Justine Agbeko  
Sister Martha Duawome  
Sister Joyce Frances Nfodzo

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

Sister Brian Marie Latour  
Sister Janet Peters

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

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

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

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

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

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