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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 79 Number 40

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

## UNITED IN SERVICE



On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a group of enthusiastic volunteers gathered at the St. Joseph Outreach Center in Plattsburgh to clean and organize the soup kitchen, community room, and food pantry. Their efforts ensured the center remains a welcoming and organized space for those in need. Among the volunteers were Assemblyman Billy Jones and Town of Plattsburgh Supervisor Michael Cashman. The event was a beautiful example of community members coming together to live out the call to serve others. St. Joseph's Outreach is a ministry of St. Alexander's Church in Morrisonville. For more information about St. Joseph's please call Heather Contessa at 518-825-0742.

## CELEBRATING MARRIAGE



Corrine Willis of Clayton says God let her know her now-husband, Andrew, was "the one." The couple works together as they grow in holiness and in their marriage.

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## Pope: Faith is a 'force that sets love in motion'

By Kristina Millare  
Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis on Wednesday continued his catechesis on "Jesus Christ Our Hope," saying love is the force that compels people, including the Blessed Virgin Mary, to share their faith in God with others.

Unable to read his prepared catechesis due to a cold, the Holy Father asked an aide to read his reflection on St. Luke's Gospel account of the Visitation at his Feb. 5 general audience held inside the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall.

"The Virgin Mary visits St. Elizabeth, but it is above all Jesus, in his mother's womb, who visits

his people (cf. Lk 1:68)," he said. "Mary gets up and sets out on a journey, like all those who are called to in the Bible."

During the audience, the pope explained that the "unlimited readiness" of the men and women of the Bible is "the only act" that enabled them to respond to God's call, particularly during times of uncertainty.

"This young daughter of Israel does not choose to protect herself from the world," he said. "She does not fear dangers and the judgments of others but goes out toward other people."

Highlighting the need for people to know and feel loved by God, the 88-year-old pope encouraged Christians to be open

to receiving God's love, "a force that sets love in motion," and, like the Mother of God, passing it on to others.

"Mary feels the push of this love and goes to help a woman who is her relative but also an elderly woman who, after a long wait, is welcoming an un-hoped-for pregnancy, difficult to deal with at her age," he said.

"But the Virgin also goes to Elizabeth to share her faith in the God of the impossible and her hope in the fulfillment of his promises," he continued.

The Holy Father also praised the impact of Mary's humility expressed in her hymn of praise, the Magnificat, in salvation history.

"Mary does not want to sing 'out of the choir' but to tune in with the forefathers," he told pilgrims. "Mary sings of the grace of the past, but she is the woman of the present who carries the future in her womb."

After asking pilgrims at the Vatican to pray for peace in Ukraine and for all countries at war, the Holy Father invited his listeners to also welcome Mary into their lives and to ask "for the grace to be able to wait for the fulfillment of every one of his promises."

"By following her example, may we all discover that every soul that believes and hopes conceives and begets the Word of God," he said.

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# I mean it this time

"I'll pray for you."  
"You and your family are  
in my prayers."

"I'm praying for  
your intentions."

Sometimes it's in  
an in-person conver-  
sation, some-  
times in an online  
comment thread or  
email, but I've said  
some variation of  
those phrases elev-  
enty billion times.

To be completely  
honest, for years, I  
didn't pray for a lot  
of those people.

It wasn't that I didn't  
think their intentions were  
worthy of bringing to God  
in prayer. I wasn't inten-

tionally banishing people  
from my prayers. I just  
have the same amount of  
working memory  
as a large rock.

**Darcy L.  
Fargo**

At some point a  
few years ago, it oc-  
curred to me that I  
wasn't being a very  
good member of  
the Body of Christ.  
We're a family of  
faith. We're called  
to pray for each  
other and support  
each other. And  
while it wasn't in-  
tentional, telling

people I'd pray for them  
and failing to do so was  
dishonest.

Since it's unlikely that

my memory will improve,  
God and I had to come  
up with a way for me to  
participate in this part of  
Christian life, a way to re-  
member to pray for people  
and their intentions.

It took a while, and it  
took trying a few different  
methods. I tried sending  
myself text messages with  
names to remember later.  
I would look at it once and  
forget it forever. I tried  
adding prayer intentions  
to a calendar reminder  
that would go off at a set  
time every day. It turns  
out, I can ignore just about  
any reminder after I see  
it every day for a couple  
weeks.

In the end, God brought  
me to a two-part method.  
First, I pray for the per-  
son/their intention im-  
mediately. Just a quick, silent  
prayer. Then, if it's a situ-  
ation that will be ongoing,  
a situation for which a per-  
son might need continuous  
prayer, I add those people/  
intentions to a note on my  
phone. Sometimes I'll take  
the note out and pray for  
each person/intention in-  
dividually, and sometimes  
I'll just pray for "everyone  
on my prayer list."

Also, you're all on that  
prayer list. There's an en-  
try for "the readers of the  
North Country Catholic."

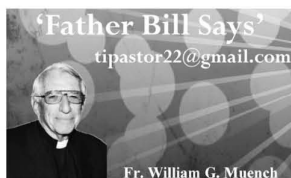
"I'll pray for you."

## It guides us as disciples of the Lord

I am still involved in the  
parish RCIA program. I am  
certain that you remem-  
ber this program that pre-  
pares those who are seek-  
ing to enter the Catholic  
Church. The sacraments  
that formally mark a per-  
son's entrance into the  
Catholic Church are bap-  
tism, confirmation and  
the Holy Eucharist.

Today a little bit about  
confirmation. You and  
I, as baptized Catholics,  
received confirmation in  
high school. For those in  
RCIA, this is an important  
sacrament of initiation  
into the Church. Many  
of these people have been  
baptized through another  
Christian faith; these bap-  
tisms are accepted by the  
Catholic Church. So, the  
formal entrance into the  
Catholic Church is with  
the sacrament of confir-  
mation. I hope this short  
review of confirmation  
will help you to remem-  
ber this important sacra-  
ment. Hopefully this will  
help you to continue to  
live your Christian life as  
a confirmed Catholic.

Let's start with the ba-  
sics: Confirmation is the  
sacrament that completes  
baptism. Confirmation re-



news our dedication to our  
faith and our dedication  
to our Savior, Jesus. Con-  
firmation strengthens this  
dedication by strengthen-  
ing the powerful gifts of  
the Holy Spirit. Confirma-  
tion guides us as a Catho-  
lic and as a disciple of the  
Lord Jesus.

In Sacred Scripture, we  
learn of the Pentecost. In  
the Acts of the Apostles,  
we learn that after the  
crucifixion of Jesus, af-  
ter his Resurrection and  
his Ascension to Heaven,  
the apostles continued to  
be fearful. They were not  
ready to bring Jesus and  
his message to the world.  
In the Pentecost, we are  
told, the Holy Spirit came  
to the apostles gathered  
in the Upper Room, trans-  
forming them into bold  
apostles now ready to  
teach and preach, now  
bold apostles to trans-  
form this world by bring-  
ing Jesus to others.

I believe that the Holy

Spirit continues even now  
through this sacrament of  
confirmation to empower  
Catholics to be true disci-  
ples of the Lord. The Holy  
Spirit leads the confirmed  
to be unafraid to live well  
as called by the Lord and  
to bring the message of  
Jesus and of the Catholic  
Church to others, and to  
live an empowered life to  
be witnesses of the Lord  
to transform their world.

The sacrament of confir-  
mation deepens the grace  
of baptism, the dedication  
to follow Jesus. This sacra-  
ment transforms a per-  
son and strengthens his or  
her bond with the Church  
and with the Lord Jesus.  
Confirmation increases  
the gifts of the Holy Spir-  
it, giving courage that  
the confirmed witness to  
Christ in word and action.  
This is a call to spiritual  
maturity.

We speak of the seven  
gifts of the Holy Spirit.  
These gifts empower a per-  
son to form a bold faith,  
a readiness to live well.  
These gifts of the Holy  
Spirit form the confirmed  
person into a dedicated,  
powerful Christian. The  
gifts of the Holy Spirit are  
wisdom, understanding,

counsel (right judgment),  
courage, knowledge, pi-  
ety (reverence), fear of the  
Lord (wonder and awe).  
The gifts of the Holy Spir-  
it continue through life to  
develop a confirmed per-  
son to be a disciple of the  
Lord. A confirmed person  
is called to make the Catho-  
lic Church constantly  
alive and strong, leading  
all in the way of the Lord.

Our hope is that the sacra-  
ment of confirmation  
will continue to lead each  
one of us, Catholics, to  
participate actively in the  
life of the Church. Con-  
firmed Catholics are chal-  
lenged to evangelize and  
defend the faith. We are  
all called to grow in per-  
sonal prayer and virtue.  
Each time I turn to you  
in this column - I pray to  
the Holy Spirit for those  
gifts that were given to me  
once in the Sacrament of  
Confirmation.

The Church encourag-  
es a person preparing for  
Confirmation to choose a  
saint as a model of faith.  
They are also encouraged  
to choose a sponsor to  
guide them through the  
sacrament and to contin-  
ue to guide them as they  
live their Catholic faith.



## CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

## 'God's hand at work in our lives'

By Suzanne Pietropaoli  
Staff Writer

Andrew and Corrine Willis were married on August 16, 2014, at St. Mary's Church in Clayton, where they are parishioners. Today, 10 years and two children later, the Willises explain, "We enjoy looking back on our path with appreciation for God's hand at work in our lives."

Neither expected to meet the love of their life that Saturday morning in February 2012 at the Miss Thousand Islands beauty pageant. A former contest winner, Corri was serving as emcee. Andrew, responding to a last-minute call from his mom (a pageant volunteer), had rushed from a late-night gig in Syracuse to the Watertown event to serve as sound engineer. "Corri and I had a very brief conversation about queuing up the needed songs: She would look at me; I would press the button. Got it! It was a silly, simple thing, but now we had this faith in one another, and we hadn't even formally met. It didn't hurt that her singing voice was the most beautiful sound I had ever heard."

Their brief exchange touched Corri as well. "I've always had a strong sense of being led by God, and I knew when I saw Andrew that he was the one." But there was more: Corri recalls that she had developed a response to suitors asking to hear her sing: "Sure! Come to Mass tomorrow! I'm singing there at 9 a.m." Andrew was the only one to ever take me up on the offer! After playing a late-night



The Willis family, Andrew and Corrine with Amelia (left) and Cadence.

gig nearby, he drove all the way to Clayton the next morning to attend his first Catholic Mass. I was pretty stunned, and I guess that's when I really knew he was the one. He fell in love with the faith (and me, presumably) and converted about a year later."

Corri's lifetime love for her faith quickly connected with Andrew's efforts to develop a personal relationship with God - a quest that began in earnest in 2006.

"When my older sister had her first child, she sent me a King James Bible with John 20:29

hand-written on the inside cover," he said. "Since then, I've been trying to make up for lost time. Meeting Corri and going through RCIA shortly thereafter put my faith journey into overdrive."

For Andrew, RCIA ignited a desire to keep delving into his newfound Catholic faith with Corri.

"I recall coming out of RCIA classes and immediately discussing what I had learned with Corri," he said. "We've continued learning together, through Formation for Ministry, Bible-in-a-Year

## Offering advice to couples

Andrew and Corrine Willis offer the following advice to couples:

- When your spouse says something you would rather not hear, pay attention! Progress rarely comes from an environment where people will justify your actions 100% of the time, as it never challenges you to grow.
- Discuss your values! When two individuals become one team tasked with raising a family, their differences have to be communicated clearly in advance so that you are both delivering consistent parenting to your children.
- Take your time! Don't rush things; don't let others hurry you into the "next phase." If your foundation and friendship don't fill you with hope and joy, everything else you build on top will wash away under the waves when they arrive—and they will come.
- Consider removing social media from your routine.
- Genuinely accompany each other!
- Go through some form of faith formation together! A simple daily reading plan in the myriad Bible apps or a podcast you can both listen to and discuss is a fantastic way to understand what God wants for you and what you mean to each other.

style plans, and walking hand-in-hand through the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Unraveling the mystery of God's plan together became just as much fun as pulling apart musical harmonies and arrangements."

Harmonizing comes naturally to this talented pair. Corri earned degrees in music education (voice) and worked as a vocal teacher in public schools. Andrew, a software engineer with a degree in Computer Science, "grew up through garage bands and playing by ear" on a bass guitar.

"Similarly, Corri was Catholic from the start, and I was only just confirmed," Andrew notes. "Those differing experiences were complementary, helping us produce things together that we'd never do alone...All these things contribute to what makes 'Us.'"

Life continues to shape that "Us."

"I think our biggest challenge has been

time management and communication, but we weren't fully aware of that until our children came into the picture," Corri said. "As a young couple, we could treat our time with musical groups and other activities as 'quality time' because we were in the same ensembles. But we never got the much-needed practice of carving out time for one another. The changes that kids require can feel isolating, but if you put in the effort to communicate how you're feeling and work to understand one another, you get through it and come out stronger."

Completely lacking experience with infants, Corri relates, "There were a lot of challenges for me in getting my feet wet as a nurturer of a tiny human. The huge obstacle that I was not prepared for were the million tiny sacrifices we make for our children each day. I still struggle with it at times, but

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



## CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

# Teens, young couples benefit from mentors

By Stephen Tartaglia  
Family Life Director

Marriage is the best predictor of happiness, health and success in our society. According to Brad Wilcox in his book "Get Married: Why Americans Should Defy the Elites, Forge Strong Families and Save Civilization," marriage rates in America have hit an all-time low. Fewer couples are getting married and of those that do, many of them divorce. To reverse the trend both problems have to be understood and addressed. I believe that mentoring both adolescents and married couples is a key component in helping to reverse this trend.

As adolescents and young adults widen their circle of friends, it's common for them to seek advice from each other. But the advice they receive from their peers is not always the best, especially if their friendships are based on shared experiences rather than shared values. Just because you've been in the same school since kindergarten, been on a sports team together or worked at the same restaurant for a long time with someone doesn't mean he or she is the best role model or the best person to give you advice, especially on moral issues.

Lawrence Kohlberg, a psychologist, said that people progress through ascending stages of moral development.

He famously outlined ways that educators could influence the moral development of their students without indoctrinating them and in ways that would be in line with the US Constitution. He taught that people at lower moral levels would be able to ascend to higher levels by interacting and spending time with people already at higher moral levels.

If an adolescent wants good advice, he or she should interact with people who are a little more virtuous, knowledgeable and experienced, and have the best interest of the adolescent at heart. Time spent interacting with these people is at the heart of mentoring. Adolescents from separated/divorced family situations are much more vulnerable to the negative influences so prevalent in our culture. They have a particular need for mentoring, especially in the area of romantic relationships.

But it's not just adolescents that can benefit. Marriage mentors help engaged and married couples in 3 ways:

1. They support the couple as they prepare for marriage and in the early years of marriage.
2. They help couples who are experiencing distress to repair and rebuild their marriage.
3. They inspire couples to move from having merely good marriages to great marriages.

Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott, in "The Complete Guide to Mar-

riage Mentoring," define marriage mentors as "a relatively happy, more experienced married couple who purposefully invest in another couple to help them effectively navigate a journey that they have already taken."

Marriage mentors are not parents, buddies or pals of the couple they are mentoring. They are not "on call" for every little crisis. Mentors are not teachers, meaning they don't prepare and present lessons, although they do share their experiences. Finally, they are not "know-it-alls." They don't have all the answers. Marriage mentors are couples who have had success in their marriage despite the inevitable problems and hard times, and they want to have conversations about these as they spend time with less experienced couples to help and support them.

No one expects mentors to be perfect, but they are expected to be good models of marriage, walking the walk and talking the talk. Conversely, not all married couples should be marriage mentors. There is some discernment that is needed both by the married couple and those that lead marriage mentoring programs. Here are some considerations Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott suggest might serve as caution flags for couples considering this ministry:

- Is either or both currently

battling an addiction?

- Does either have uncontrollable emotional outbursts?
- Have they recently suffered a significant financial or emotional setback?
- Is their marriage stable or fraught with frequent conflict?
- Are they still trying to find healing from some kind of abuse?
- Do they struggle with debt?
- Is one more motivated than the other to become a mentor?
- Is either or both pessimistic about marriage?

• Have others told them they may not be ready or in a good place to mentor at this time?

I would also ask if they are actively practicing Catholics in good standing with the Church. Part of the Catholic marriage mentoring process is attending Mass on a weekly basis with the couple being mentored. Weekly Mass attendance is one of the predictors of marital success. This requirement has the added benefit of helping the newly married couple become integrated into the life of the parish.

Finally, one of the great things about being a marriage mentor is that it enriches the marriage of the mentoring couple as well. If you are interested in learning more about marriage mentoring, please feel free to contact Steve Tartaglia in the Family Life Office at startaglia@rcdony.org or 315-393-2920.

## 'God's hand at work'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the harder I lean into scripture, the Church, Andrew, and my brothers and sisters in faith, the more natural it feels to sacrifice freely rather than begrudgingly. There is great joy and pride in watching my girls be themselves and do the things they love."

"The most significant hurdle we've faced was re-orienting our career plans to better serve our family and faith," Andrew added. "Corri gave

up her decade-long position as a music teacher to be at home with our children (Cadence, 8, and Amelia, 5) and take the reins on the St. Mary's Music Ministry. The idea was scary at first. She faced giving up a defining part of her identity. Still, we asked and listened, and ultimately, He answered via a daily music program on the evening radio in the car. Of course. Why wouldn't that be how He'd get our attention?"

Corri explains why this decision was so hard.

"A catechist and cantor since my teens, I got my first experience with singing and teaching through the Church and was confident that God was leading me to a vocation of music education," she said. "Leaving that was the hardest decision I have ever made, but I can see now how God Has used me more completely as a full-time mother and part-time organist than He

ever could as a full-time teacher and (what to me felt like) a part-time mother."

This couple's commitment to learning and living their faith shapes every aspect of their marriage and family. "Faith makes ALL the difference to us and to our family," explains Corri. "We seek out and nurture a relationship with God. We want our children to pursue a relationship with God like they would any other re-

lationship and invest the same amount of time and attention toward it. We talk to Him every day in the car on the way to school, we talk about situations in our life from a WWJD (what would Jesus do) standpoint, we say nighttime prayers for the people who need God's help. When we as parents normalize including God in our family and reaching out to Him, our children notice that and start to lean on Him as well."



## CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

# Free, total, fruitful: Living the divine design

**Angelo & Suzanne Pietropaoli**  
Directors, NFP Office

Every wedding is an occasion for wonderment at the beauty of human love, and at the awe-inspiring vows that the couple makes. In those vows, the newlyweds promise to love each other forever in a love that is free, faithful and fruitful. In other words, the marriage vows are not just pretty words. In fact, they express the very love with which God loves us!

It is awe-inspiring, as well, to watch the unfolding of the love story that begins in the Book of Genesis. There we learn that God created human beings in his own image, that he created them male and female, blessed them, and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. We also learn that a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, so that the two may become one flesh. And that God, looking at what he had made, "found it very good."

What is God teaching us in this familiar story? First, out of all that he has made, human beings alone have been created *in his image* – the image of a God who is himself a community (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) of loving persons. Secondly, we are created male and female so that we might image and participate in the free, total, faithful, fruitful love of the Blessed Trinity. Thirdly, this participation is made possible in a particular way through that truly marital union of man and woman

which makes them one flesh and at the same time opens them to becoming co-creators with God of new human persons. "These two meanings or values of marriage," explains the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2363), "cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family."

What does God expect from married couples? How can they respect both the love-giving and the life-giving meanings of the marital act? In AMORIS LAETITIA (222) Pope Francis explains that to do so is both possible and blessed: "The use of methods based on the laws of nature and the incidence of fertility are...methods [that] respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom."

Following God's design for human love, the Church faithfully encourages couples to seek to understand and apply this truth in their marriages. Natural Family Planning is NOT the old rhythm method. NFP is not predictive, but uses ongoing observations of the signs that indicate fertility/infertility within a cycle. Once taught to identify and understand these markers of fertility, the couple is able to assess the times of the cycle when conception can happen and when it cannot. These real-time signs, and the correct application of rules developed over

more than half a century, yield high effectiveness rates – up to 99%, which is on par with the pill and surgical sterilization, though entirely without side effects.

While NFP is unquestionably the safest method of family planning – and the only one that can be used to achieve pregnancy. It does require abstinence during the fertile time if a couple is avoiding conception. While this can be challenging at times, it does bear good fruit. This makes sense because NFP cooperates with nature (that is, with God's design). Couples using it do not treat fertility as a disease to be medicated or as an enemy to be opposed with a barrier. Couples who choose Natural Family Planning acknowledge that God is good and that children are indeed "a gift from the Lord."

Such couples open themselves to receive the blessings that accompany their gift of free, total, faithful love that withholds nothing, not even fertility, from the beloved spouse. In his APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION ON THE FAMILY (32), Pope St. John Paul II highlights the fruit of this way of life. His words express qualities which are at the heart of strong and

happy marriages: "The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the woman, and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility, and self-control." (Likely these contribute to the fact that NFP couples have a divorce rate un-

der 5%!)

God's ways are good! Our Diocesan NFP Office welcomes your questions, comments, and suggestions. Please contact us at [apietropaoli@rcdony.org](mailto:apietropaoli@rcdony.org). Visit us at [www.rcdony.org/nfp](http://www.rcdony.org/nfp). Also visit the national NFP office [www.usccb.org/nfp](http://www.usccb.org/nfp).

## Laura E. Barry

February 13, 1939 - January 27, 2025



Massena: Laura E. Barry, age 85, passed away on January 27, 2025, at North Country Nursing Center. Arrangements are under the care of the Phillips Memorial Home in Massena. Per Laura's wishes, there will be no calling hours or funeral services.

A graveside service will be held in Calvary Cemetery, Massena, followed by a Celebration of Life at the convenience of the family at a later date.

Laura was born on February 13, 1939, in Massena to the late G. Carlson and Anna (Montgomery) Barry. A 1957 Massena High School graduate, she was very active in band and the marching band, later went on to graduate from Watertown School of Commerce. She retired after a long career at Metropolitan Life Insurance, as an office Manager in 1995 to care for her beloved father. Laura took her Catholic religion to heart and spent her retirement years enjoying family and helping others. Many who read this will recall her activity with Hospice and organizing the Hospice Memory Tree. Others will recall her as a lector at St. Mary's Church and as a lector and lay minister at North County Nursing Home. She loved visiting the residents and sometimes read to them. She was active in Back the Pack and worked weekly to help provide a community dinner for the recipients. Laura also organized a prayer line for the sick and dying through St. Peter's Parish.

Laura was blessed with a wonderful circle of friends who stayed close to her in her three-month illness. Few are so lucky. She was a good person and wonderful friend and family member.

Laura is survived by her loving and devoted family, a brother William "Bill" E. Barry and wife Janet of Geneva, NY, along with several nieces and nephews and cousins.

In addition to her parents, Laura was predeceased by her brother Richard Carlson Barry in 2019.

Memorial contributions may be shared with St. Mary's Church; 105 Cornell Ave, Massena, New York 13662.

Family and friends are encouraged to share online memories, pictures and condolences by visiting [www.PhillipsMemorial.com](http://www.PhillipsMemorial.com)



*Support And Pray  
For Vocations*

## Environmental Stewardship

## Size doesn't matter

It is good to realize that all the creations fashioned by the Divine's hand are magnificent regardless of their size. Certainly, an adult moose standing nearby presents a breath-taking and unforgettable image compared to a worm. However, it has to be understood that bugs, weeds, chipmunks and crows are no less of a miracle in their existence, and their role in maintaining the overall health and wellbeing of the environment is just as vital as more popular organisms.

Spending time in nature is commonly cited by spiritually enlightened individuals as a good way to develop a closer relationship with God. Yet you don't have to go to the top of a mountain or sit on the shore of a wilderness lake to experience the wonder of creation. Enjoy the space in your own backyard and appreciate the intrinsic beauty that exists in a tree or shrub near your porch. A full-grown redwood or giant sequoia is impressive, but it is more important to establish a bond with the living organisms that God has arranged to live and grow near you.

We regularly pass by trees, shrubs, ferns, spiders and caterpillars we view as too common to spend time examining or admiring. But God does not view them this way. He sustains each and every thing in the heavens and on earth in order for them to exist, and His handiwork on a bug or blade of grass is no less miraculous than the massive structures of the universe.

Learning to treasure the smaller things in this world is an important habit to acquire. Not only will it add to the harmony of your immediate surroundings, but it will also help foster a sense of inner peace. The Creator has fashioned an ideal community of life for us to live in and we should take advantage of all the entities that surround us, as each has its own purpose in His interconnected web of life.

## Bishop's Public Schedule

**Feb. 10-13** – Catholic Leadership Institute Program in Ponte Vedra Beach in Florida

## 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)

## Rest in Peace

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

**Feb. 12** – Rev. Richard O'Donnell, 1949

**Feb. 13** – Rev. Richard J. Maloney, O.M.I., 1893; Deacon Edward F. McAuliffe, 1986; Rev. Harry E. Giroux, 2012

**Feb. 14** – Msgr. Gerald F. Kellogg, 1979; Rev. Charles Joseph Richard, 2007

**Feb. 15** – Msgr. James H. Driscoll, 1928

**Feb. 16** – Rev. André Marie Garin, O.M.I., 1895; Rev. Joseph Alexander Fournier, O.M.I., 1904; Deacon Francis C. Siskavich, 2021

**Feb. 17** – Rev. Joseph Alfred Hervieux, 1940; Rev. Francis B. Ruddy, 1976

**Feb. 18** – Rev. Charles Guillot, M.S.C., 1985

## CALLED TO SERVE

## Another day with AI

Is there something wrong with me? One day recently I was involved in a rather lengthy debate with a machine.

I knew it was a machine at the other end of my conversation because it did not ask me any very human questions. Things like, "how ya doing?" or "how much snow have you guys gotten?"

The responses also came in simple, declarative sentences. I have yet to meet a human being who talks that way even though the Dominican Sister who taught me about sentence structure in grade school was a proponent of simple, declarative sentences.

## Protecting God's Children

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

Come to think of it, she never spoke that way either.

Anyway, this machine, who was hiding inside a help button, insisted on giving me the same answer to my question posed in a number of different ways.

That is when I chose to divert from this pointless conversation with a device that had been graced with artificial intelligence. I clicked on the "get in line for a technical support person" button.

Almost immediately I recalled the words of the prophet Jeremiah in the first reading next weekend. "Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings." But I was stuck with that option or end up frustrating myself by dealing with a smart machine.

I opted to be cursed rather than cursing at the inanimate object.

The rest of the sentence from Jeremiah recommends we trust in the Lord instead of human beings. It is always

better to trust God, but I hesitated to bother him with this particular software issue.

The human I eventually communicated with was a real person. I could tell. He asked me how things were going.

For the umpteenth time I explained the problem. He, unlike the AI response I received earlier, demonstrated compassion, and suggested I try something.

The "something" did not work either, but my new friend was undaunted, and patient. He suggested an alternative something.

That did not work either.

We agreed I would send the problem file to him for analysis. It worked fine at his end.

Then my new friend wrote, "This experience sounds like attachment trouble that was specific to the older area" of the platform and suggested I use the platform now in the development stage.

That worked and I was happy.

As a rule, I do not quarrel with prophets, but in this case, Jeremiah, a human being came through for me and could be trusted.

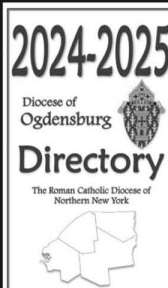
I will still take the Lord any day. As the psalmist said, "Blessed are they who hope in the Lord."

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



Deacon  
Kevin Mastellon

## 2024-2025 Diocesan Directories now available!



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# NY protects transgender surgeries, abortion

By Tyler Arnold  
Catholic News Agency

Lawmakers and officials in New York state are moving to protect transgender surgeries and abortion doctors following a new Trump administration directive and state-level pro-life efforts.

State Attorney General Letitia James told New York hospitals they were required under state law to continue performing transgender procedures in spite of a recent directive from the Trump administration.

President Donald Trump last week issued an executive order restricting transgender surgeries and drugs for youth, directing that every federal agency that offers "research or educational grants" to medical institutions must ensure those institutions are not administering transgender drugs to, or performing transgender procedures on, minors.

In a letter to hospitals on Feb. 3, James acknowledged that order but said hospitals in the state are under "obligations to comply with New York state laws," including laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of "gender identity."

"Electing to refuse services to a class of individuals based on their protected status, such as withholding the availability of services from transgender individuals based on their gender identity or their diagnosis of gender dysphoria, while offering such services to cisgender individuals, is discrimination under New York law," James wrote.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul also announced on Feb. 3 that she had signed legislation allowing doctors who prescribe abortion pills to conceal their names on the prescriptions in question.

The law will allow doctors to opt to "print the name of their practice" on prescription labels rather than their personal names.

The measure gives "additional protections for doctors prescribing medications used to perform abortions to patients" in states where it may be illegal to dispense the deadly prescriptions. Multiple states have restricted abortion drugs in the wake of Roe v. Wade's repeal in 2022.

The move comes after Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a lawsuit in December 2024 against an abortionist in New York, alleging she illegally provided abortion drugs to a woman in Texas.

Paxton's suit alleged that Dr. Margaret Daley Carpenter gave abortion drugs to a woman across state lines even though not licensed to practice medicine in Texas and the state prohibits the delivery of abortion drugs through the mail. Carpenter has since been indicted in Louisiana on similar charges.

Hochul in signing the bill into law said it would help make New York "a safe haven" for abortion doctors and women seeking abortions.

State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, meanwhile, said the measure would help "secure New York's status as a sanctuary" for women seeking abortions.

# Pope holds meetings at his residence while sick

By Hannah Brockhaus  
Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis has been holding meetings in rooms at his Vatican residence while sick with bronchitis, the Vatican said Thursday.

"Due to bronchitis, from which he is suffering at this time, and in order to continue his activities, on Friday, Feb. 7, and Saturday, Feb. 8, Pope Francis' audiences will be held at

Casa Santa Marta," the Feb. 6 message from the Holy See Press Office said.

The 88-year-old Francis' meetings with an association of Italian midwives and with Eastern Orthodox priests and monks on Feb. 6 were also held at his Santa Marta home instead of the Apostolic Palace as planned. The pope also did not read aloud his prepared speeches for those audiences.

Due to the light illness, the day prior, the pope had an aide to read his catechesis at his weekly public audience in the Paul VI Hall.

The pope, who has been suffering from visible breathlessness during recent meetings, has more and more frequently declined to read his prepared remarks to audiences or opted to have the remarks read by a priest aide.

# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Trump signs order keeping men out of women's sports

President Donald Trump signed an order to keep men out of women's sports on Wednesday afternoon in a move intended "to protect opportunities for women and girls to compete in safe and fair sports," according to the order. "With this executive order, the war on women's sports is over," Trump said as, surrounded by young female athletes, he signed the order, titled "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports." "Under the Trump administration we will defend the proud tradition of female athletes and we will not allow men to beat up, injure, and cheat our women and our girls," Trump continued. "From now on, women's sports will be only for women." The order rescinds funding from educational programs "that deprive women and girls of fair athletic opportunities, which results in the endangerment, humiliation, and silencing of women and girls and deprives them of privacy."

## Tennessee bishops welcome school choice voucher program

Tennessee Catholic bishops on Monday lauded the passage of legislation establishing Tennessee's first-ever universal school choice program, which is set to fund more than 20,000 scholarships to private schools. Gov. Bill Lee's Education Freedom Act of 2025, which passed on Jan. 30, will fund 20,000 scholarships, half of which are income-restricted. The Education Freedom Act provides \$7,000 scholarships to enable students to attend private schools while also increasing funding for public schools. It sets aside bonuses to be awarded to public school teachers for excellence, increases K-12 facilities funding, and the legislation promises that school district funding won't decrease due to disenrollment. The Tennessee Catholic Conference applauded the Education Freedom Act in a Feb. 3 statement. "This landmark legislation reflects our shared commitment to ensuring families that every child, regardless of background, has access to an education that nurtures their potential and supports their families' unique needs," the statement read.

## President announces task force to end anti-Christian bias

President Donald Trump has announced the launch of a new Department of Justice task force dedicated to fighting anti-Christian bias. During remarks delivered at the National Prayer Breakfast on Thursday morning, Trump said U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi would head the task force to "eradicate anti-Christian bias" and halt "all forms of anti-Christian targeting and discrimination within the federal government." According to Trump, Bondi and the commission will "fully prosecute anti-Christian violence and vandalism in our society and ... move heaven and earth to defend the rights of Christians and religious believers nationwide." "While I'm in the White House, we will protect Christians in our schools, in our military, in our government, in our workplaces, hospitals, and in our public squares," he said. "And we will bring our country back together as one nation under God."

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

## LUNCH TIME DISCUSSION

Join us for a lunchtime discussion of the encyclical letter by Pope Benedict XVI "Spe Salvi: On Christian Hope."

**Date:** Feb. 12, 19 and 26

**Time:** Noon to 1 p.m.

**Place:** Online via Microsoft Teams

**Features:** The document is about 30 pages and can be downloaded [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.pdf) Please join us for this opportunity learn about hope and enter more deeply into this Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope.

**Contact:** Please register at [www.rcdony.org/brownbag](http://www.rcdony.org/brownbag) The link for the virtual meetings will be sent to you on Feb. 10. For more information, contact Marika Donders at [mdonders@rcdony.org](mailto:mdonders@rcdony.org).

## FRIENDSHIP GROUP MEETING

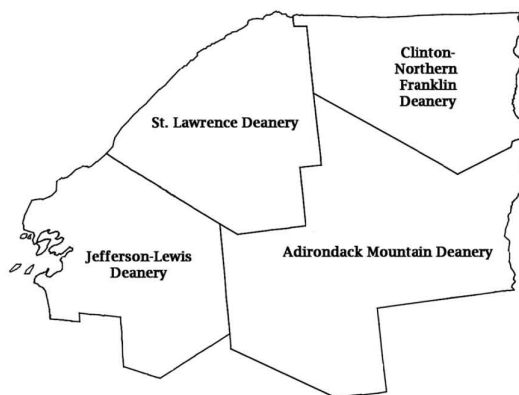
You are invited to our next Friendship Group Meeting, How to Experience Life-Changing Conversations.

**Date:** Feb. 27

**Time:** 7 p.m.

**Place:** Zoom

**Features:** This book will show you how to relate to others in their pain, frustration, hopes, and dreams. Using Scripture, real-world examples, and stories from his own formation, Dr. Christopher Reed provides approachable advice on how you can use sacred conversations to become your best self and build closer relationships with others and with the Lord. At this meeting, Father Craig MacMahon, OMV will lead us in discussing chapters 4 and 5



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.

of "Sacred Conversations."

**Contact:** The book "Sacred Conversations" may be ordered at [sophiainstitute.com](http://sophiainstitute.com). Enter Friendship25 at the checkout to receive 25% off. To sign-up, go to <https://mailchi.mp/sophiainstitute/friendship-groups> Questions? Contact Mary Beth Bracy at [mbracy@sophiainstitute.com](mailto:mbracy@sophiainstitute.com)

## CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

## PAINT AND SIP

North Bangor — Paint and Sip Fundraiser to be held.

**Date:** Feb. 20

**Time:** 6 p.m.

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

**Cost:** \$25

**Features:** Painting will be an Easter shadow candle.

**Contact:** Register by Feb. 18 by calling Irene Eldridge at 518-483-2508 or Anne Boyea at 937-546-0055.

## CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER

North Bangor — The parishes of

St. Augustine's and St. Mary's are hosting a Chicken and Biscuit Dinner.

**Date:** March 9

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

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

**Cost:** \$15

**Menu:** Chicken and biscuits, gravy, mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetable, cranberry and a dessert.

## 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

## CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER

Lyons Falls — St. John's Church will be having a drive thru Chicken and Biscuit Dinner.

**Date:** Feb. 25

**Time:** 4:30 p.m.

**Cost:** \$12

**Menu:** Chicken and home-made biscuits, mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetable and dessert.

**Contact:** To pre-order please call 315-348-8945 or 315-348-

8577. Deliveries are available also! Please order early!

## 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:** March 2

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

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

**Contact:** 315-348-6260

## ST. LAWRENCE

## YOUTH ROSARY DAY

Morristown — Youth in grades three through 12 are invited to learn more about the Rosary: Praying with Jesus and Mary.

**Date:** Feb. 21

**Time:** 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; 2:10 p.m. Mass at St. John's Church — Families welcome

**Place:** Our Lady of Grace Parish Center

**Features:** Youth day to learn more about the Rosary including mystery, what it means to meditate, how prayer transforms us and the joyful, luminous, sorrowful and glorious mysteries. Youth will make their own Rosary, pray the Rosary together and celebrate Mass.

**Contact:** Please register by Feb. 14 using the registration form found at <https://www.rcdony.org/parishevent>

## DIOCESAN EVENTS

## WOMENS DISCERNMENT

Canton — Come and join Bishop LaValley and the Campus Ministers to learn more about "The Call to Holiness and Mission."

**Date:** March 22

**Time:** 11 a.m.

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

**Features:** It is a call to "Let Go, Let God" fill our lives with His love, joy, peace as Pilgrims of Hope in this Jubilee Year. Any young woman 18-30 years old are welcome to attend. Holy Hour and Luncheon after presentation. Sponsored by the Vocation Office.

**Contact:** If you are interested in attending, register at <https://www.rcdony.org/womenslun->

cheon.

## PRIESTHOOD DISCERNMENT

Are you a single Catholic man, of 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 for the following gatherings.

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

Dates: March 22, May 3,

**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](http://www.rcdony.org/priesthooddiscernment). For more information contact Father Howard Venette — [hvenette@rcdony.org](mailto:hvenette@rcdony.org)

## SURVIVING DIVORCE

Watertown — If you or someone you know is separated or divorced and looking for hope and healing, please consider joining us for the Surviving Divorce Program. We are now accepting registrations for sessions held at the Watertown location.

**Date:** Tuesdays starting March 18

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Place:** In school behind St. Anthony's Church

**Cost:** \$25

**Contact:** For more information or help with registering, please contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920 [startaglia@rcdony.org](mailto:startaglia@rcdony.org).

## CLM RETREAT

Ogdensburg — All Commissioned Lay Ministers and Candidates are invited to register for the CLM retreat.

**Date:** May 2 — 4

**Place:** Wadhams Hall

**Cost:** Single, \$240.00 pp; Double, \$190.00 pp; Suite (double bed), \$220.00 pp; Suite (double bed), \$340.00 pp; Commuter, \$100. All costs include all meals.

Speaker: Father Leagon Carlin

**Contact:** Register at [www.rcdony.org/ffmretreat](http://www.rcdony.org/ffmretreat)

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## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

## In the image and likeness of God

This week's scripture readings present a striking contrast. Jesus blesses the impoverished, the sorrowful, and those who are maligned, despised and reviled. This act of blessing challenges our perceptions of those we consider the most vulnerable. Furthermore, Jesus curses the affluent and those who appear content with their material possessions.

Jesus' teachings stand in stark contrast to those of the world. The world often portrays us as disposable, akin to a box of tissues. It suggests that we are recyclable, like an old paper cup, and expendable, like a spare part. In response to these dehumanizing narratives, Jesus offers a profound affirmation: "Be joyful

and rejoice, for your reward in heaven will be great."

The Christian worldview, shaped by Jesus' teachings, underscores our inherent value for numerous reasons. First and foremost, we are created in the image of God. This notion carries immense significance, as it implies that we are imbued with divine essence.

Similarly, we believe that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. The image of God and the temple of the Holy Spirit are not contingent upon our social standing or financial wealth. Rather, as embodiments of God's image and sanctuaries of the Holy Spirit, we are called to perceive the world as God perceives it.

Regrettably, many have disregarded this

February 16

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READINGS

Jeremiah 17:5-8

1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Luke 6:17, 20-26

foundational scriptural principle that provides meaning to human existence. Frequently, we have sought meaning in material possessions, athletic achievements, social status and authority. While these pursuits are not inherently detrimental, they can easily become all-consuming, leading us to neglect the fundamental truth.

Many individuals have lost sight of their status as creatures in the image of God and have instead adopted a self-centered perspective, treating God as an extension of themselves. This stark deviation from the teachings of scripture is a cause

for concern.

In today's Gospel, Jesus' teachings and Jeremiah's exhortation in the first reading are unequivocal. If we substitute our own vision of the world for God's vision, we will be filled with woes and curses. As Jeremiah proclaims, "Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings."

As a Catholic and a devoted disciple of Jesus, we recognize that our worldview must diverge from the prevalent perspectives promoted on television, particularly in talk shows where participants often display their ignorance.

This differs from the teachings in many textbooks that have systematically omitted the contributions of the Catholic Church to society over the centuries. It also differs from the stances of politicians who advocate for legislation that endangers

human life even from conception, and from sports leaders who have replaced Sunday worship with athletic competitions.

There exists a fundamental truth that many have never grasped or forgotten. To the question, "Why did God create you?" the answer is straightforward: "God created me to know, love, and serve Him in this world and to be happy with him forever in heaven." It is as simple as that. We search extensively for the meaning of life, often mistaking fleeting moments of happiness for genuine fulfillment.

We are integral to God's vision of the world because we are created in His image. As St. Augustine eloquently stated, "Trust in God's mercy for the past, His love for the present, and His providence for the future." To that I say: "AMEN."



Msgr. Robert  
H. Aucoin

## A GROWING VOICE

## What's the impact?

I often don't realize how much of an impact my writing or even my existence can have until I have conversations with people whose lives I've touched. I also have a number of friends who have made a significant impact on my life and the lives of those around them, yet they still seem surprised when someone tells them that.

Several people have approached me at church to say that they

really love my columns or that they really needed the hug I gave them. I think we often forget just how much of an effect we can have with something as simple as a smile.



Erin  
Savarie

On the flip side, we also tend to forget about the immense love God has for us and how profound that love truly

is. We often put God on the back burner until we need Him, and I am cer-

tainly guilty of that. But the truth is, God loves us always - even when we are busy with a million things and forget to say our prayers; even when we make mistakes that we think are unforgivable; even when we don't have anything to ask of him.

So don't wait for the next conversation, the next miracle or the next proof that you have an impact, or that God has an impact on you. Reach out to your friends, continue making an impact, and, most importantly, reach out to God.

United States Bankruptcy Court  
for the District of Vermont

In re Roman Catholic Diocese  
of Burlington, Vermont, Case No. 24-10205-HZC

**Claims Notice for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Others  
With Claims Against the Roman Catholic Diocese of  
Burlington, Vermont**

If you were sexually abused by any person connected with the Diocese, a Catholic parish, or Catholic school within the geographic area of the Diocese, or have any claim against the Diocese, you must file a claim by April 4, 2025.

For more diocesan information: visit [vermontcatholic.org](https://vermontcatholic.org)

For the bankruptcy docket: visit  
<https://case.stretto.com/diocesefvburlington>

For U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Vermont  
information: visit [vtb.uscourts.gov](https://vtb.uscourts.gov)

For advice about your rights: contact an attorney

# Vatican Library exhibit highlights journeys

By AC Wimmer  
Catholic News Agency

As pilgrims make their way to Rome during the 2025 Jubilee Year, the Vatican Apostolic Library announced a new

exhibition connecting historical journeys to modern pilgrimages through a collection of rare 19th-century travel documents and contemporary artistic interpretations.

Opening to the public Feb. 15, the "En Route" exhibition represents the sixth installment in the library's ongoing dialogue between its historical patrimony and contemporary art, initiated in 2021.

"There is, of course, a connection to the jubilee, because the jubilee involves travel — pilgrims come, and then they depart. So, within the jubilee, the theme of travel is present," Don Giacomo Cardinali, commissioner of the Exhibition Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Library, told EWTN News.

"Each person interprets this theme according to their own nature, and we have interpreted it according to the nature of the library, which is a place of research, scientific activity, encounter, and culture."

The exhibition's title comes from an unusual newspaper series published by French journalists Lucien Leroy and Henri Papillaud. They funded their worldwide journey by printing editions in various cities they visited. A significant portion of the exhibition features the collection of Italian diplomat Cesare Poma (1862-1932), comprising approximately 1,200 newspapers from remote regions printed in various languages across five continents.

Three contemporary artists have been commissioned to interpret these historical materials.

Lorenzo Jovanotti Cherubini, a renowned Italian singer and globe-trotter, presents his travel instruments,

musical equipment, drawings, and a specially created travel journal with accompanying soundscape.

Artist Kristjana S. Williams worked directly with Vatican archives to create new artworks. "She grew up in Iceland, it's a black-and-white monochromatic landscape and she dreamt of exotic shores as she grew up. Having access to Vatican archives and being able to choose pieces to illustrate these stories was absolutely incredible for designers," Rachel Bushell, public relations director at Kristjana S. Williams Studio, told EWTN News.

Maria Grazia Chiuri, artistic director of Dior's women's collections, developed a digital installation examining six Victorian-era women who undertook solo world travels, exploring the relationship between fashion and journey.

"I'm almost sure it will inspire a great desire to travel," Cardinali told EWTN News. "And, above all, it will make people rediscover that there are many ways to travel: You can travel by transportation, on foot, but probably we travel much more, much better, and much farther with books. In fact, we travel every time we open a book, and probably the most distant places are the ones we've reached through books."

The exhibition will run through Dec. 20 at the Sala Barberini and adjacent halls of the Vatican Apostolic Library.

*Bénédicte Cedergren and Victoria Cardiel contributed to this report.*

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Diocesan NFP Office

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## 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

# Celebrating jubilee in exile

Displacement, hunger, cold, the fatigue of a daily life in refugee camps or in makeshift settlements in the forests cannot stop the Catholic faithful of Loikaw, a diocese in the Burmese (Myanmar) state of Kayah in the east of the country, from celebrating the Holy Year.

As Father Paul Pa, diocesan representative for the Holy Year 2025, said the Catholic community of Loikaw, with about 90,000 members scattered in an area marked by clashes and fighting between the army and the opposition forces, is striving for unity and has found the spiritual strength to celebrate its "Jubilee in exile." Christ the King Cathedral and the Pastoral Complex in Loikaw were seized and occupied by the military in November 2023.

It is a deep wound for the local church, which, however, "does not lose hope," says the priest: "Since we could not use the cathedral church as the Jubilee church, we have designated the Mother of God parish church in Sondu, where our Bishop Celso Ba Shwe currently resides, as the co-cathedral."

At the opening service of the Jubilee, the bishop encouraged the faithful to "hold on to hope" because "the Lord is with us, he supports us, he is the source of our hope." "Moreover," he continued, "hope comes from solidarity and mutual charity in this time of desert, darkness, suffering, displacement," "a time of exile when everyone longs to return home but cannot because of the widespread violence."

Like the other priests and religious of the diocese, Father Paul Pa is constantly on the move, visiting the Jubilee churches and refugee camps, noting the piety of the pilgrims who "arrive after long marches on foot, stop to pray, are moved, ask God for help, receive the sacraments, gain indulgences." The priest stresses that the service of the priests of Loikaw "today is above all a service of consolation and support for the afflicted."

In the midst of this painful condition, the faithful also sing songs of praise, as they have been provided with a "Jubilee song" and a special prayer that they recite with faith. The ministry of priests in Loikaw has become, above all, a ministry of consolation: "We say to the faithful: may a special shower of graces be upon you all, and we bless you," the priest recounts.

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

## OBITUARIES

**Champlain** – Samuel M. Blain, 74; Mass of Christian Burial July 7, 2025 at St. Mary's Church.

**Champlain** – Trevor Hart, 49; Memorial Mass Feb. 1, 2025 at St. Mary's Church.

**Champlain** – Hortense (Ashline) Premore, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 6, 2025 at St. Mary's Church.

**Chateaugay** – Patrick J. Dwyer, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 8, 2025 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Clayton** – Jean (Gokey) Turck, 94; Graveside Services in spring at St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Constable** – Joyce A. (Fleury) Washburn, 85; Mass of Christian Burial at later date at St. Francis of Assisi Church.

**Constableville** – Mary Lou (Samson) Croniser, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 8, 2025 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

**Gouverneur** – Claire P. (Weagley) Casey, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at St. James Church; burial in St. James Cemetery.

**Lowville** – Nancy J. (Burr) Hanno, 70; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 8, 2025 at St. Peter's Church.

**Lowville** – Carol Ellen Feisthamel Stoffell, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at St. Peter's Church; burial in Lowville Rural Cemetery.

**Malone** – Kenneth W. Scott, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at Notre Dame Church.

**Massena** – Anthony "Chuck" Bronchetti, 96; Funeral Services Feb. 5, 2025 at Donaldson Funeral Home; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

**Morrisonville** – Carl A. Provost, Sr., 80; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 10, 2025 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in St. Alexander's Cemetery.

**Morrisonville** – Kellie M. (Roushia) Simmons, 61; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2025 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in St. Alexander's Cemetery.

**Newcomb** – Marietta Marguerite DuPont Alitz, 83; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 5, 2025 at St. Therese's Church.

**Ogdensburg** – Anna Jean (Marlow) MacDougall, 93; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 8, 2025 at Notre Dame Church; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

**Ogdensburg** – Anthony Jon Sweeney, 75; Funeral Services Feb. 7, 2025 at Oswegatchie Mausoleum.

**Old Forge** – Rosemary Ledger Hudon, 87; Mass of Christian Burial in Spring at St. Bartholomew's Church; burial in Riverview Cemetery.

**Peru** – Timothy J. Connors, 74; Funeral Services Feb. 5, 2025 at the Hamilton Funeral Home; burial in St. Augustine's Cemetery.

**Plattsburgh** – Evelyn Helen (Ihne) Lashway, 73; Funeral Services Jan. 30, 2025 at the Brown Funeral Home.

**Plattsburgh** – Letha Estelle Cox Mitchell, 100; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 3, 2025 at St. Peter's Church.

**Port Henry** – William J. Snow, 58; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 8, 2025 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Potsdam** – Jane Elizabeth Bentz Atesoglu, 80; Mass of Christian Burial May 30, 2025 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Bayside Cemetery.

**Rouses Point** – Harvey J. Boutin, 95; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 8, 2025 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Rouses Point** – James Jeffries, 73; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Ticonderoga** – Christine Marie (teRiele) 65; Ross Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Parish Cemetery.

**Watertown** – Patricia A. (Charlebois) Powell, 92; Funeral Mass at a later date at Holy Family Church; burial in Glenwood Mausoleum.

**West Chazy** – Gary K. Fountain, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at St. Joseph's Church.

**Westport** – Jesse B. Sayre, 93; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 7, 2025 at St. Philip Neri Church; burial in parish cemetery.

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## CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

# Guidance in dating for young adults

**By Stephen Tartaglia**  
Family Life Director

Social Science research indicates clearly that marital status is a crucial predictor of important economic, emotional, and health outcomes for men and women throughout their adult lives. So says Brad Wilcox, in his book "Get Married: Why Americans Should Defy the Elites, Forge Strong Families and Save Civilization." Being married is a better predictor of happiness than other factors that get more attention in today's culture including education, work, money, race and gender. And he says marital quality is the top predictor of life satisfaction in America.

People don't just slide into top-quality marriages. It involves a

whole process of preparation and discernment, starting as a child growing up in a family. There they learn to receive and give love, to share, forgive and communicate. They learn about the human body, both male and female.

During puberty, their bodies and brains develop, their thinking becomes more abstract, they experience independence from their parents, their social circles widen, romantic or sexual relationships become important for them, and they begin seeking long-term commitment in their relationships. Their biological drives grow stronger, and they normally want what they are not yet ready to have. Parental support and guidance is critical at this phase. Without it, adolescents

are left vulnerable to the influences of others far less likely to share values that lead to a top-quality marriage and much more likely to encourage participation in the hook-up culture.

Kerry Cronin, Philosophy Professor at Boston College, contrasts the hook up culture with the dating culture. Hooking up is a brief encounter between two people in which the pair mutually use each other for sexual pleasure to one degree or another which results in shame, loneliness and despair. Dating, on the other hand, is a process of forming a real relationship with another person.

Cronin saw that society no longer supports dating so that young adults find it difficult to form meaningful relationships with each other that could lead to top-quality marriages. Cronin offered "The Dating Project" as a way to work against this trend by teaching her students to date rather than hook up. The Dating Project was so successful that it was made into a movie.

The Dating Project, a required part of her class at Boston College, teaches the importance and rules of dating and it requires the students to go on a date. Cronin's rules for the dating assignment were as follows: Ask in person, not through electronic medium; Ask within three

days; Pick someone who is a legitimate romantic interest; A new person, not someone you've dated before; Be open and honest that it is a date; It should only last 45-90 minutes at most; Make a plan ahead of time; You ask, you pay; But only \$10-15; No drugs or alcohol; No touchy - an "A-frame hug" at most at the end of the date; Tell three people so you have support, but not everyone; and Go alone...not in a group.

These were college students - young adults, not children. She reinforced with them that the dates were not to be in some sketchy, unsafe place, but rather in a public place where the pair could safely have a good conversation and get to know each other.

Here are a few links to learn more about Kerry Cronin and the Dating Project:

Kerry Cronin: The Imperfect Art of Dating

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3eyF-gTHmzE&t=670s>

Kerry Cronin - The Problems with Hook-Up Culture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mV7g-FUzICDU&t=3s>

Dating is a process which helps the young person discern marriage. But the process is gradual and moves through stages. Most people don't marry the first person they go on a date with. Rather, each dating experience allows a person to grow a little, to gather a little more information about themselves and other people. It helps them to see their own preferences, strengths and weak-

nesses. It helps them to assess their readiness and desire to enter the kind of relationship that could lead to a marriage. Done well with an active prayer life and good spiritual guidance, dating also helps people discover what God is calling them to.

Another great resource is the book *Pretty Good Catholic: How to Find, Date and Marry Someone Who Shares Your Faith*, by Rachel Hoover Canto. The book is a very good overview of dating in our times, covering these topics:

- Meeting people On-line and in person
- Stages of relationships and taking them in order
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Long Distance Dating
- Dating non-Catholics or different Catholics (Latin Massers, Charismatics, Conservatives, Liberals, etc.)
- Suggestions for maintaining a chaste relationship

- Readiness to date
- How and when to stop dating someone

Here's a link to an interview with Canto: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wpsj-FREgO\\_U&t=89s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wpsj-FREgO_U&t=89s)

These days it's less common for children to grow up in an ideal family with married parents.

Most adolescents and young adults benefit from mentors who can give them ethical and practical guidance on dating and developing real relationships rather than hooking up. Stay tuned for my next article on mentoring.

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