

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Transforming power of the holy story | Page 6

Vatican employees report mistreatment, distrust | Page 7

The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 80 Number 37

# NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

JANUARY 28, 2026

## Celebrating Catholic schools



**HAPPY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK!**

I love my Catholic School  
by Gwen Neill

**Catholic Schools**  
United in Faith and Community

**ST. BERNARD'S**

My favorite thing to learn is math because it challenges me so I get a brain workout.

Catholic Schools are unique because we have small classes so I get to know everyone better.

This is me at my favorite special: Co-op

Top 5 reasons that St. P's Rocks!

1. We have a great Library.
2. All my friends are great!
3. We have a mascot
4. Very kind teachers
5. We have fun events

This is me playing with friends!

This week, the North Country Catholic celebrates Catholic Schools in honor of Catholic Schools Week. (Left) Second grade students at Seton Catholic School in Plattsburgh welcomed a special group of visitors recently when Mayor Wendell Hughes, joined by Ward 1 Councilor Julie Baughn, spent time in Mrs. Nicole Terry's classroom discussing how city government works and how it serves the community. (Right) Students at St. Bernard's School in Saranac Lake share why they love their Catholic school in honor of Catholic Schools Week.

## Pope: In Christ, God shows us our identity

By Victoria Cardiel  
EWTN News

Pope Leo XIV said Wednesday that the grandeur of the Incarnation cannot be reduced to viewing Jesus as a mere messenger of "intellectual truths," but must be received as God's full embrace of the human condition — including Christ's "true and integral humanity."

Speaking at his general audience on Jan. 21 in the Paul VI Hall, the pope said that divine revelation is not primarily a set of abstract ideas but a living encounter in which God gives himself to humanity and invites a relationship of communion.

"We have seen that God re-

veals himself in a dialogue of covenant," the pope said, "a relational knowledge, which not only communicates ideas, but shares a history and calls for communion in reciprocity."

Continuing a catechesis cycle on Dei Verbum, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Leo XIV emphasized that believers come to know God by entering into Jesus' own relationship with the Father through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Wednesday's talk was part of a longer series on the documents of Vatican II which the pope began earlier this month.

"Jesus reveals the Father to us by involving us in his own

relationship with Him," he said.

The pontiff highlighted that in Christ, God not only discloses who he is, but also reveals who we are. "In Christ, God has communicated himself to us," he said, and "he has manifested to us our true identity as his children."

Leo XIV underlined that the integrity of Christ's humanity is essential to understanding revelation: "God's truth is not fully revealed where it takes something away from the human," he said, adding that "the integrity of Jesus' humanity does not diminish the fullness of the divine gift."

The pope also stressed that salvation is not limited to the paschal mystery understood

in isolation, but is bound up with Christ's whole person and presence: the Lord "who becomes incarnate, is born, heals, teaches, suffers, dies, rises again and remains among us."

Pointing to the believer's confidence grounded in Christ, Leo XIV said that following Jesus "to the very end" leads to the certainty that nothing can separate humanity from God's love, echoing St. Paul's assurance: "If God is for us, who is against us?"

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# Why the change?

If I were asked to rate the change on a scale of one to five, I'd give it a zero.

I travel through Potsdam at least a few times per week. A while back, New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) changed the traffic pattern on Route 11 in that village, reducing the number of traffic lanes and creating a center turn lane. A similar project was also done in Malone.

The change makes my commute through that community a few minutes slower.

As I've mentioned before, I'm not a patient person. It

annoys me every time I get stuck at the same red light for more than one cycle and every time I see aggressive driving as people try to pass other cars and skip the line.

**Darcy L. Fargo**

I was complaining about the traffic pattern to my father, who retired from DOT, when it occurred to me that I didn't know the intention of the project. In my years as a reporter for local secular

newspapers, I remember writing about at least a couple of DOT projects intended to slow traffic.

"If they intended to slow traffic, they knocked it out

of the park," I told my father.

My father confirmed that slowing traffic to improve pedestrian safety was, in fact, the purpose of the change.

"DOT has a marketing problem," I told my father. "If they put up signage explaining in just a few words, 'traffic pattern changed for pedestrian safety,' or something like that, I think most reasonable people would think, 'oh. Ok! It's annoying, but no one wants to hurt or kill a person.' Instead, I commonly hear people complain about traffic here."

It can be easier to accept a change if we understand the reason for it.

That's part of what makes faith so challenging. I don't know why God does certain things/allows certain things to happen. I don't know the plan. I don't know what's intended.

It can be hard to make that leap from "I don't know why this is happening" to "I trust God and his plan." I know I often fall on my face a few times - usually plummeting into fear, anger, confusion, sadness... - before God helps me stick the landing on that leap.

I continue to pray for the grace to accept God's plan even when I don't understand or like it.

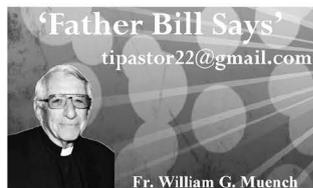
That's a grace that would tip the scale.

## 'Thoughts about being Catholic'

I am often asked to tell someone all about the Catholic Church, so today I plan to share with you some of my ideas about the Catholic Church. Recently, some new friends in the parish asked me about becoming Catholic, and I have been asked recently why I should continue to be Catholic. So let me share with you my thoughts about being Catholic.

I truly believe that the most precious gift I possess is being a member of the Catholic Church. I love the Catholic Church. Now, I was born into a Catholic family. And I have found so much peace and happiness as a Catholic and as a Catholic priest, I have been asked by many to help them to enter the Catholic Church - often because they have found Catholics to be very happy people.

The Catholic Church is people joined together by the Lord Jesus guided to live well by the Lord and finding hope for eternal

**Fr. William G. Muench**

happiness with God. Before the Church is something we organize, it is someone we belong to - it all starts with Jesus. It is people called by God, formed by Jesus and guided by the Holy

Spirit searching for happiness. St. Paul described the Church as the Body of Christ - an institution and a mystery. The Church is clergy and laity, in a deep sense of communion with a renewed dignity by

Baptism and a call by God to holiness. The Church continues to shape a way of life for all today.

The Church is a mystery rooted in God - divine and human. Jesus is the light of all nations, shining through the Church. The universal Church is a people, brought into unity just as the unity of the Fa-

ther, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Catholic Church is the people of God. Baptism incorporates all into the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Jesus. The Church brings the People of God together as a family - praying together, praying for each other, supporting each other. The Church unites all into a new spirit and a powerful happiness - working together to make their world a better, happier, more peaceful - a better world.

The Church is made up of clergy, the bishops united with the pope and laity - united in mission seeking holiness. Holiness is not reserved to the clergy. Every Christian is called to charity, fidelity - to daily conversion. The form and tasks of life are many, but holiness is one. So, that sanctity is cultivated by all who act under God's spirit - adoring God the Father in spirit and truth following Jesus that they may deserve to be partakers of

his glory.

The laity are not passive recipients but passive participants. The laity's mission is to sanctify the world from within it. The lay vocation is essential to the Church's mission - making the Church present in many places.

The Catholic Church is a pilgrim Church. Catholics are united with the Lord Jesus in this to find holiness - and to find perfection in the glory of Heaven - united together as the Communion of Saints. The Church Triumphant, with God in Heavenly glory, continues to support those now on mission as disciples of the Lord - as they live well in this life and seek their ultimate destiny in union with God.

The Church is united in a special way with Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church - inseparable with Jesus Christ and with the Church. Mary is the Mother of Believers and a sign of hope firmly rooted in the message of Jesus.

# Why we celebrate our Catholic schools

By Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin, SSJ

Superintendent of Schools

Catholic schools across the nation celebrate their mission during Catholic Schools Week. Our Catholic schools join in the celebration. Some diocesan schools celebrate CSW during the national celebration which begins the last Sunday of January and extends throughout the week. Some schools wait until February or March and join their celebration to marketing and recruitment efforts for the following academic year. Whenever it is celebrated, schools conduct open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the mission of Catholic schools and the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contribution to the Church, the local community and the communities of our nation.

*A Conversation: What Makes a School a Catholic School* was the focus of the annual Superintendent's Conference this past October. The conference was an opportunity for presenters, teachers, and administrators to reflect on the characteristics of a Catholic school: inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Christian anthropology, imbued with a Catholic worldview, sustained by Gospel witness and animated by communion and community.

The conversation topics were introduced by Monsignor Robert Aucoin, Vicar for Education, Dr. Giovanni Virgilio, Ex-

ecutive Coordinator of the Office of Religious and Independent School Support and Sister Ellen Rose, Superintendent of Schools. Throughout the presentations teachers and administrators participated in the conversation.

As our schools prepare for CSW in the coming days and weeks, I offer some conversation topics that were addressed at the conference. They identify the unique characteristics of our Catholic schools and highlight the reasons we celebrate our Catholic schools.

**Called to be saints!** I recall reading recently about a grandmother telling her grown son, now a father, that his greatest responsibility was to raise his children to be holy and to ask for the grace to help them get to heaven. Sending children to a Catholic school is one way to set them on the path toward holiness.

The French author and poet Leon Bloy wrote, "The only real sadness, the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint." The heart of Catholic education is the vision of the human person, made in God's image to know, love and serve Him in this life and to be happy with Him in eternity. Catholic education recognizes the eternal destiny of students and thus forms the whole person. Simply put Catholic schools form students who will be good citizens of this world, loving God and neighbor, and enriching society with the Gospel and who will also be citizens of the world to come.

The message the culture sends us is not always designed to help

us grow in holiness, but a Catholic education seeped in the Gospel lays the foundation for a life of virtue. "Faith instead of fear, humility instead of boasting, and sharing and contentment instead of greed are Gospel based swaps that make saints" (The Lasting Gift of Catholic Education, Sheri Wohlert).

**Founded on Christ.** Christ is not an afterthought or an add-on to the purpose and mission of a Catholic school. He is the center of the entire enterprise, the light that enlightens every student in the school. Fostering a relationship with Jesus and learning to live the

Gospel is the center of everything! As students grow in their knowledge of Jesus, they learn to imitate His actions and put His teachings into practice. Amid conflict, discipline, relationships and challenges, students are taught to seek the love and truth of Jesus to form behavior, attitudes and actions. Every academic institution imparts values - ideals for which a student is prepared to pursue and eventually achieve. The ideal that provides the foundation for our Catholic school is a person, Jesus Christ. "Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in others"

(St. John Paul II, Message to NCEA, 1979).

**Community:** Being part of a Catholic school, students learn they are part of the Body of Christ. Catholic school classrooms are special places to celebrate all the ways God has created us differently and perfectly, and that, despite our differences, we are all one in the Lord. Students experience that they are not isolated individuals. They are by nature connected to all the members of the Christ's Body and those who share a common humanity. Students learn to help others through outreach and service, drawing them into soli-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## a dozen reasons to choose Catholic Schools

Celebrate Catholic Schools 2026



We cultivate a faculty and staff of people who are dedicated, caring and effective.

We provide a safe and welcoming environment for all.

We offer an education that combines Catholic faith and teachings with academic excellence

We have a 99 percent high school graduation rate. 85 percent of our graduates go to college.

We partner with parents in the faith formation of their children.

We set high standards for student achievement and help them succeed.

We prepare students to be productive citizens and future leaders.

We provide a balanced academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture and life.

We use technology effectively to enhance education.

We emphasize moral development and self-discipline.

We teach children respect of self and others.

We instill in students the value of service to others.

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
NCEA.org/csw

# A week of 'fun, prayer and love' at St. James

By Samantha Campanaro  
Principal, St. James School

St. James plans on celebrating Catholic School's Week for a week in March, where each day is full of fun, prayer and love. When students at St. James speak about their school, the most common statement is that "everyone is so nice here." And while we try to embody this statement every day, we make additional effort during Catholic Schools Week to show others what we are all about.

Students are excited that they get to participate in "RACKing," which stands for "Random Acts of Kindness," where they choose a local business to do something nice for the people there. These have ranged from going to Dunkin Donuts and writing kind messages on the cups that would be used for customers, to stopping into a local bank to surprise the employees with baked goods.

This is something that students look forward to each year because at our school, loving others is just as important as the fun things. We plan on continuing this tradition during this year's Catholic School's Week.

Another favorite during this week, is our Talent Show. Students sing, dance, tell jokes and



(Left) St. James School students join in the celebration of weekly Mass, serving as altar servers and reading prayer intentions. (Right) Students in the school's higher grades read with younger students.

even give step by step instructions for how to set up a tip up for ice fishing!

While students are able to show off their creative side, their peers are right there to watch them and joyfully cheer them on. Students here are ex-



cited for their friends and love to support them!

Even the staff participate as well! And according to the kids, it isn't just during Catholic School's Week that teachers like to be fun and silly.

Violet, a student in third

grade said, "I love that every teacher tries to make the school day fun!"

Another thing that is incorporated into our Catholic Schools Week, is a beautiful Mass to start the week off. This Mass is highly attended, and students are able to say the prayer intentions and altar serve. In fact, when asked what makes St. James so great, two students answered, "It's great because we get to altar serve!"

Here at St. James, students attend Mass weekly, and students are always altar serving. Each day during Catholic School's Week has a theme. The themes are things such as, "bring anything but a backpack day," "wacky Wednesday," and "class virtues day" in which each class wears the same color to represent different virtues. This year, we also plan on incorporating a "Career Day," so students can speak with professionals about jobs they may be interested in! Our school is always a celebration. It's a celebration of ourselves, of each other and most importantly, God. Students are able to say why our school is different and special. And we love celebrating Catholic Schools Week so we can make some dedicated time to appreciating the opportunities of growth and love that our school provides.

## Celebrate our schools

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

gratitude with the broader community beyond the walls of the school.

**Catholic Worldview:** Catholic schools are distinct from other schools not merely by the presence of religion classes or by a Catholic spirit that pervades the relationships in the school community. They are distinct by the way the Catholic worldview informs academic instruction in every subject area. This means teaching every subject from within a Catholic

context: the supernatural vision of the person, the Gospel message, solidarity and community and the Christian understanding of the person.

Pope Leo XVI recently released an apostolic letter on Catholic education *Drawing New Maps of Hope*. While affirming the fruitful work of past church documents on Catholic education the Holy Father offered three priorities for Catholic schools. "The first concerns the interior life: young people

seek depth, they need spaces for silence, discernment, dialogue with their conscience and with God. The second concerns the human digital: let us train them in the wise use of technology and AI, putting the person before the algorithm harmonizing technical, emotional, social, spiritual, and ecological intelligence. The third concerns unarmed and disarming peace: let us educate them in non-violent language, reconciliation, bridges and not walls; "Blessed

are the peacemakers' (mt 5:9) becomes the method and the content of learning.

Saint John Paul II called Catholic schools "a gift to our nation." This gift is made possible through the dedication and commitment of many, including Bishop Terry R. LaValley, our pastors and parishioners, staff, administrators, education council members, parents and volunteers. At this special time of year for our Catholic schools, I extend my

gratitude to everyone who makes them successful centers of learning and faith formation.

If you would like to personally experience the unique character of a Catholic school, please call the school principal in your area and arrange a visit. Please pray for our schools. These are challenging times in which to sustain Catholic schools. But, as agents of evangelization and an invaluable "gift to the nation," they are worth our efforts and sacrifices.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETON

# Mayor brings government to life for students

Second grade students at Seton Catholic School in Plattsburgh welcomed a special group of visitors recently when Mayor Wendell Hughes, joined by Ward 1 Councilor Julie Baughn, spent time in Mrs. Nicole Terry's classroom discussing how city government works and how it serves the community.

Mayor Hughes' visit gave students an engaging look at city leadership, from repairing potholes and operating snowplows to ensuring clean drinking water. He explained how financial management, grants and funding support essential projects and services. Students asked

about building permits and project oversight and learned how city leaders foster growth by attracting businesses that bring jobs and opportunity to Plattsburgh. The discussion highlighted the many responsibilities involved in keeping a city safe, thriving and prepared for the future.

The second graders were especially interested in learning what the city does for children and families. Mayor Hughes and Councilor Baughn highlighted local parks, the city beach and the public library as spaces designed for learning, recreation, and community connection.

They encouraged students to find activities away from screens, including sports and outdoor play, and shared examples of family-friendly events the city offers.

The mayor and councilor also introduced students to the idea of civic participation. They explained how community members form coalitions and make their voices heard in local government, reinforcing the idea that everyone has a role to play in civic life. When asked why someone might want to work in government one day, Mayor Hughes emphasized the opportunity to serve others, and

Councilor Baughn highlighted the rewarding question at the heart of public service: "What can I do to help others?"

The visit concluded with an invitation for the class to take a future field trip to City Hall, extending learning beyond the classroom walls. Experiences like this and others, such as the school's recent participation in Model UN (United Nations) at SUNY Plattsburgh, reflect Seton Catholic's commitment to forming informed, engaged citizens and strengthening meaningful connections between students and the wider Plattsburgh community.

# St. Bernard's students share love of school

St. Bernard's School in Saranac Lake will celebrate Catholic Schools Week Jan. 25-31 with a schedule full of giving, learning, food and fun!

The week kicks off with a School Mass followed by an Open House on Sunday, Jan. 25.

Early in the week, each class will collect items from Grace Pantry, which provides household and personal care items for community members. Pre-K students are collecting toothpaste and toothbrushes, kindergarten students are collecting soap and lotion, first graders are collecting baby care items, second graders are collecting deodorant, third graders are collecting shampoo and conditioner, fourth graders are collecting paper products like toilet paper and paper towels, and fifth graders are collecting cleaning products.

On Jan. 26, the students celebrate "Be You Day" and can wear clothing that expresses their personalities - favorite colors, hobbies or anything that celebrates individuality. They day will include an assembly, Kids on the Block, about

disability awareness.

On Jan. 27, it's "PJs, Pancakes and Paws Day." Students can wear their favorite pajamas as they attend a school breakfast. Later, students will have an opportunity to participate in dog sled rides.

St. Bernard's students will mark "Shine Like the Stars Day" on Jan. 28, with students encouraged to wear clothing that shines, sparkles or shimmers. The students will also have an opportunity to experience a Star Lab show in the night sky, planets and constellations. Grace Pantry donations will also be delivered that day.

Jan. 29 is "Buzzy Bee Day," and students are encouraged to wear yellow and black as they participate in a spelling bee and "Buzzy word games."

It's "Move and Groove Day" on Jan. 30, and the students can participate in either a dance party or a quieter mindful movement session.

On Jan. 31, the school will wrap up its celebration with a family sledding and hot cocoa party.

Students at St. Bernard's School recently completed a Catholic

Schools Week activity related to why they love their Catholic School.

Omega, a student, said Catholic schools are unique because "we get to go to Mass together." Omega's top five reasons her school rocks included walk-a-thon, pajamas and pancakes, teachers, fun specials and friends.

Fjola said her favorite thing to learn is math, because "I like math groups." She also noted she finds going to Mass together to be unique.

Penny said the school's clubs are her favorite, especially club volleyball,

and she finds the school unique because they attend Mass together.

When asked for the top five reasons the school rocks, Skyler said, "everyone is kind, sometimes we get ice cream, all the teachers are kind, Ms. K-Hill was in the Olympics, everybody is different."

Ella said her school is unique because "we have Mass on Wednesday. We also have smaller classes." Ella's top five reasons the school rocks are, "teachers are very kind, friends are awesome, art is fun, Mrs. K-Hill is kind,

the walkathon is fun."

Gracie said the school is unique because "we get to wear uniforms and in the morning you can just put them on quickly." Her top five reasons the school rocks are "Dodge ball, art, Trunk or Treat, walk-a-thon, friends."

Gwen said the school is unique because "we have small classes so I get to know everyone better." Gwen's top five reason the school rocks: "We have fun events, very kind teachers, we have a mascot, all my friends are great, we have a great library."



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## Environmental Stewardship

## The importance of air

A person can live for a week or more without food and a few days without water, however the human body can live for only a few minutes without air. In Eastern spiritual practices, focused breathing is a fundamental activity believed to transmit "Life Force" energy into your being. In His first encounter with His disciples after the resurrection, Jesus breathed on them to transmit the Holy Spirit to them. And on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit engulfed the disciples in "the noise of a strong driving wind."

An occasional session of deep breathing allows the air in your lungs to be completely exchanged for fresh air. Doing this outdoors is especially beneficial in winter, as the air inside can become laden with various unwanted compounds. The air in public indoor spaces may harbor various germs from sick individuals who expel contaminated air into their surroundings.

Being outdoors in an area covered with trees might be the best place to visit and engage in deep breathing exercises, as trees are known to help clean air. Years ago, tuberculosis patients were strongly encouraged to spend long periods of time outdoors to improve their damaged respiratory systems. Some people maintain that it is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the air that is responsible for healing and not the chemical composition of this gaseous mixture.

In any event, air is viewed as a primary component of creation and one that needs to be cared for. Our society has come a long way in cleaning the air by reducing car emissions, factory smoke and the burning of garbage in burn barrels. Burning candles made of wax from fossil fuels can contribute to indoor air pollution and operating wood stoves and furnaces inefficiently places unwanted compounds in the air.

Because of the extreme importance of air to life, it should be treated with great care and reverence.

For thousands of years, people have used storytelling to make sense of their world. When combined with prayer, this tradition forms a significant spiritual discipline called Lectio Divina.

Lectio Divina - Latin for "Divine Reading" - is a reflective way of praying with Holy Scripture that originated with early Church Fathers like Origen (185-254 AD). An influential theologian for his time, Origen taught that focusing on Christ was crucial for understanding Scripture. St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547 AD), who is known as the father of Western monasticism, later formalized Lectio Divina and stressed the value of listening with the "ear of the heart." By practicing Lectio Divina, Scripture becomes more than just words - it leads to a deeper, personal connection

with God.

The Holy Bible, with its 46 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books, can be daunting for a Christian theologian, let alone a lay Christian. In Lectio Divina, a reader chooses a single passage which is manageable, creating less anxiety, and leads to a more focused approach to a particular reading. The Gospels, Psalms, or Sunday Mass Readings are the ideal choice for the meditative prayer practice. Before starting, it is important to place yourself in a quiet environment and calm any anxiety while acknowledging God's presence. We can offer a prayer to the Holy Spirit for inspirations such as, "Come,

Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and mind to listen to your word." The traditional steps of Lectio Divina are: 1) Reading the text slowly and attentively, listening for a word or phrase; 2) Reflecting on what stands out, repeating it and considering its meaning; 3) Praying to engage in a dialogue with God based on your reflection; 4) Rest quietly with God, experiencing peace and letting God work within you.

For instance, we may read "The Birth of Jesus" from the Gospel of Luke and focus in on, "And while they were there, the time came for her (Mary) to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2: 4-7)

After reading the passage, we might reflect that we are the Bethlehem innkeeper who turned away Mary and Joseph that night. Though the inn is full, we feel an unexpected compassion

for the travel weary couple at our door. We offer them the stable - a clean, warm, if humble, place to stay - and they accept gratefully. By helping them, we've perhaps unknowingly helped ourselves - our salvation. The next morning, shepherds arrive to honor the family, and even the animals seem drawn to the newborn child. We wonder what this remarkable sight could signify.

As we ponder the scene of the Blessed Family in this small, relatively insignificant village, we continue with Lectio Divina and pray upon our reflection on the passage. We may ask, "God, in what way can I comprehend the birth of your son whom you sent to save the world?" or "How does this passage affect me in the present?" or "What message of hope can I draw from these divine words given to us through our almighty and heavenly Father?" There are countless ways to reflect, and each person's experience is unique. When a certain sentence or phrase catches a reader's eye, it might be seen as a moment where God is sharing new under-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

## A KNIGHT'S REFLECTION

## Transforming power of holy story



Mike Langlois

## 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:

**March 29** - 6 p.m. - St. Mary's Church, Massena

**March 30** - 5:30 p.m. - St. Mary's Church in Canton

## Rest in Peace

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

**Jan. 28** - Rev. James A. McKenna, 1895; Deacon Richard E. Winter, 2004

**Jan. 29** - Msgr. James T. Lyng, 1965; Deacon John L. White, 2019

**Jan. 30** - Rev. John T. Sullivan, 1884; Rev. Eusebius Schlingmann, O.F.M., 1937

**Jan. 31** - Rev. James McGowan, 1910; Rev. B. J. O'Connell, O.S.A, 1925; Rev. Timothy M. Ladden, 2003

**Feb. 1** - Rev. John B. Doonan, 1949; Msgr. George T. Donnelly, 1968; Rev. Edward M. Delaney, 1977; Rev. Robert L. Cotter, 2015

**Feb. 2** - Rev. William Bennett, O.M.I., 1887; Rev. Amadeus Viger, O.S.A., 1915; Rev. George E. Racette, 1961; Rev. Gilbert O. Boisvert, 2017

**Feb. 3** - Rev. John McDonald, 1879

## Bishop's Public Schedule

**Jan. 28** - Noon - Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 29** - Noon - Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

**Jan. 30 - Feb. 6** - 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)

# Vatican employees report distrust of managers, workplace mistreatment

By Victoria Cardiel  
EWTN News

A survey of Vatican employees conducted by the Vatican Lay Employees Association (ADLV) found broad dissatisfaction with career advancement, widespread distrust of leadership, and significant reports of workplace mistreatment among respondents.

The poll — carried out between Dec. 15, 2025, and Jan. 7 and published on the ADLV website — is being described by the association as the first representative survey of staff working across Vatican offices and entities. The ADLV functions as an internal employee association, though it does not have formal union recognition in the Vatican's legal system, where strikes are not permitted.

According to the ADLV, 250 people responded to the questionnaire, about 80% of whom are members of the association. The Holy See employs roughly 4,200 workers, though most are not affiliated with the ADLV — a limitation the group acknowledged while describing the sample as “limited, but significant.”

Among the most striking findings: 73.9% of respondents said they perceive a clear distance between Vatican leadership — typically office heads and superiors, many of them cardinals or bishops — and employees. Just 12.8% said they were satisfied on that point.

More than 71% of participants said superiors are not selected through transparent criteria or a clearly defined professional path, while 26% said it is not possible to maintain a free and sincere dialogue with direct managers.

Respondents also reported a strong sense of professional under-appreciation. About 75.9% said human resources are not appropriately placed, valued, or motivated, and 75.8% said the workplace does not reward initiative, merit, or experience gained through seniority. **MORE THAN HALF REPORT MISTREATMENT**

The ADLV said more than 56% of respondents reported having experienced injustices or humiliating behavior from superiors — concerns the association argued merit urgent attention even though Vatican law does not for-

mally define “mobbing,” or workplace bullying, as a specific offense.

In a related finding, 73.4% of respondents said they perceive favoritism, unequal treatment, and insecurity about the protection of their rights, including concerns connected to the pension system.

The survey also indicated major frustration with career progression: 73% reported a perceived “block” in professional advancement and pointed to the continued suspension of a biennial wage step that had previously been added to base salary and factored into pensions and end-of-service benefits (TFR). The ADLV noted that Pope Francis eliminated the benefit in 2021 as a cost-saving measure amid Holy See budget deficits.

Assessments of labor reforms over the past decade were largely negative in the survey: 68% said reforms have not produced concrete benefits but instead increased restrictions, and more than 79% said insufficient investment is being made in staff formation and training.

## CALLS FOR REPRESENTATION AND DIALOGUE

The survey points to strong demand for officially recognized representative bodies with greater capacity to intervene in labor disputes. More than 71% of respondents said they would turn to the ADLV in the event of a workplace conflict, compared with about 10% who said they would go to the Vatican labor tribunal (ULSA).

Nearly 75% said direct dialogue between the ADLV and dicastery leadership is the most effective way to resolve problems.

Respondents also offered suggestions addressed to Pope Leo XIV, frequently urging that workers be given greater dignity, voice, and real protection through representation, transparency, dialogue, and respect for personal rights. The ADLV said Pope Leo's election has raised expectations for change, pointing to what it called early positive signs — including prompt action involving the labor tribunal, authorization of a bonus linked to the conclave that had previously been removed, and indications of openness to a shared path of dialogue.

# CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

## Nigerian government urged to secure release of worshippers

Christin Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), a U.K.-based human rights organization, has called on Nigerian authorities to “secure the release” of 167 worshippers reportedly abducted during coordinated attacks on three churches in Kurmin Wali community, Kajuru local government area (LGA) of Kaduna state. In a Tuesday, Jan. 20, report shared with ACI Africa, the sister service of EWTN News in Africa, CSW leadership condemned the mass abduction that reportedly took place on Jan. 18 while worshippers were attending Sunday church services. According to the report, attempts by CSW Nigeria staff to access the community to verify the incident were blocked by the military, which reportedly cited standing orders barring entry into the area. “CSW is highly concerned by the official efforts to obscure the abductions that took place in Kurmin Wali and to prevent residents from speaking to the press,” CSW's Founder President Mervyn Thomas said in the report. Thomas urged Nigerian authorities to “do everything in their power to secure the release of those abducted from Kurmin Wali on 18 January.”

## Catholics remain largest religious group across Latin America

A Pew Research Center report found Catholics remain the largest religious group across Latin America despite increases in other religious identities. The report, “Catholicism Has Declined in Latin America Over the Past Decade,” draws on a nationally representative face-to-face survey of 6,234 adults conducted from Jan. 22 to April 27, 2024, in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. The analysis was produced by Pew Research Center as part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project, which analyzes religious change and its impact on societies around the world. The research released Jan. 21 found that Latin American adults are more religious than adults in many other countries Pew has also surveyed in recent years, especially in Europe where many adults have left Christianity since childhood.

## Vatican weighing invitation to join Gaza ‘Board of Peace’

The Vatican has received an invitation from U.S. President Donald Trump to participate in a proposed “Board of Peace” focused on Gaza and is currently evaluating how to respond, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin said Wednesday. “We too have received the invitation to the Board of Peace for Gaza. The pope has received it and we are seeing what to do; we are looking into it in depth,” Parolin told reporters on Jan. 21, according to the official Vatican News outlet. “I think it is an issue that requires a bit of time to give an answer.” The cardinal said Trump is “requesting the participation of various countries” and noted that, based on what he had read in the press, “Italy is also reflecting on whether to join or not.” According to the report, the initiative aims to establish a Board of Peace to address global conflicts, with particular attention to the war in Gaza, as an entity independent of the United Nations.

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

## BROWN BAG

Join us for another online lunch-time discussion. We will discuss the book by Father Blake Britton titled RECLAIMING VATICAN II: What It (Really) Said, What It Means, and How IT Calls Us to Renew the Church.

**Date:** Start Thurs. Feb. 12 each Thurs. until March 26. Read/discuss one chapter each week.

**Time:** Noon

**Place:** Online via TEAMS

**Features:** You will have to purchase the book. The book is available via Amazon or Word on Fire and may also be available used from vendors such as Thriftbooks or Abe Books

**Contact:** Register at [www.rcdony.org/brownbag](http://www.rcdony.org/brownbag). A link will be sent to you before the start of the program. For more information contact Marika Donders, [mdonders@rcdony.org](mailto:mdonders@rcdony.org)

## 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:** 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

## SOAKING PRAYERS SESSIONS

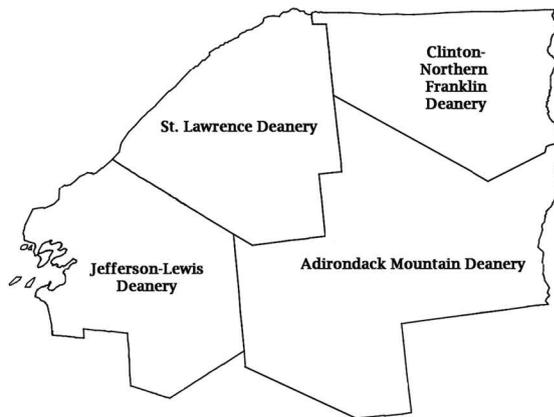
Plattsburgh – Come enjoy a relaxing prayer opportunity the first Monday of the month.

**Date:** Feb. 2, March 2, April 6

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

**Place:** Newman Center

**Features:** Session includes a



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@northcountycatholic.org](mailto:news@northcountycatholic.org).

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

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)

## FIRST FRIDAY

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

**Date:** Feb. 6

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

## BREAKFAST

Peru – St. Augustine's Knights of Columbus will be serving a Pancake Breakfast.

**Date:** Feb. 8, March 8

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. to noon

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

**Cost:** Adults, \$10; Children 5 to 11, \$5; under 5, Free; Take-outs, \$10

**Menu:** Pancakes, Waffles, Strawberry Sauce, Scrambled Eggs, Bacon, Home Fries, Real Maple Syrup, and much more.

## JEFFERSON-LEWIS

## AUGUSTINIAN GALA

Carthage – This year, we're rolling out the red carpet and inviting

you to step into the spotlight for an evening of glitz, glamour, and star-studded fun. It's your time to shine!

**Date:** Jan. 31

**Time:** 5 p.m.

**Place:** Elks Club

**Cost:** \$40 per person

**Features:** This dazzling night will feature signature cocktails, a gourmet dinner, photo ops, prizes for the best "movie-inspired" attire, and our much-anticipated Silent Auction, featuring treasures donated by our community. Proceeds play a vital role in advancing the mission of Augustinian Academy, helping us continue providing exceptional, faith-based education to all students, regardless of financial situation.

**Contact:** To buy tickets call 315-493-1301

## 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:** Feb. 1

**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:** Feb. 7

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

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

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

## THE MASS EXPLAINED

Hammond – Have you ever wondered where the prayers of the Mass came from? Or wondered why the stand, kneel, sit, stand again routine happens? Come learn why we do what we do and when.

**Date:** Five Saturdays beginning Feb. 21

**Time:** 8:45 a.m. coffee and donuts, programs begins at 9 a.m. and will last 45-60 mins.

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

**Features:** The program is FREE. Pre-registration is not required but suggested (need to have enough donuts!)

**Contact:** Please call Gene Kleinhans, 315-486-3813 or Chris McRoberts, 315-323-7784 to provide your name and a good phone number to call or text.

## ROSARY WITH DEVOTIONS

Ogdensburg – The Legion of Mary will pray the rosary with devotions

for First Saturday.

**Date:** Feb. 7

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Place:** Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg

**Features:** Rosary with devotions

## FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

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

**Date:** Feb. 7

**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:** Feb. 7

**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:** Feb. 8 (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.

## DIOCESAN EVENTS

## MEN'S DISCERNMENT GROUPS

Men ages 18–40, are you searching for purpose and wondering about God's plan for your life? Come be part of our Men's Discernment Groups.

Locations: Canton/Potsdam area, St. Mary's Church, start date to be determined facilitated by Fr. Scott Belina; Plattsburgh area, St. John XXIII Newman Center, start date Jan. 31 at 10 a.m., facilitated by Fr. Carter Pierce.

**Features:** A welcoming space

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

JANUARY 28, 2026

# Catholic News Agency becomes EWTN News

By Daniel Payne  
EWTN News

The Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) has rolled out a major rebrand of its EWTN News services, bringing multiple outlets and coverage brands under “one global news organization” committed to coherently covering the Catholic Church both regionally and globally.

In a Jan. 15 press release, EWTN — which was launched as a Catholic television network in 1981 by Mother Angelica, PCPA — announced that it was bringing Catholic News Agency and its affiliated international outlets under “a single, unified identity.”

Catholic News Agency was originally founded in 2004 in Denver; it was acquired by EWTN in 2014. In addition, the regional, language-based out-

lets of the Association of Catholic Information (ACI) Group, also acquired by EWTN in 2014, are in the process of being fully integrated into the EWTN News brand.

The new, unified EWTN News brand is accompanied by a new digital platform, EWTNNews.com. Initially launched in English, reflecting the U.S. roots of EWTN’s global Catholic news operation, the platform will soon expand with a Spanish-language edition and will continue integrating coverage in five additional languages to serve audiences worldwide.

EWTN Chairman of the Board and CEO Michael Warsaw said the move “reflects both who we are and who we are called to be: one global news organization, rooted in the teachings of the Church and committed to serving the faithful with accuracy,

integrity, and conviction.”

EWTN News President Montse Alvarado said the rebrand is “not simply about a new name or a new website — it reflects a deeper alignment of mission, editorial vision, and operations.”

“By uniting our global news teams under the EWTN News brand and launching a new platform, we are enhancing how we create and deliver content, embracing evolving forms of storytelling, and answering the Holy Father’s call to serve the truth with charity and courage,” Alvarado said.

Ken Oliver-Méndez, the editor-in-chief of the English service of EWTN News, said the media outlet “has been preparing for this moment for several years.”

“Fully integrating our work under EWTN News signals a

mature, unified newsroom,” he said.

EWTNNews.com is now live, with traffic from catholic-newsagency.com being gradually redirected over the coming days. The transition will be completed by Jan. 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists.

The new EWTNNews.com includes features reflecting EWTN’s ongoing technological transformation. A redesigned Watch section showcases a digital-first approach to news production and storytelling. Updated design elements also underscore a growing commitment to the audience experience.

In addition, new devotional features, such as daily readings, further integrate news consumption with prayer and catechesis.

## Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

for prayer, reflection, and honest conversation with others exploring the call to priesthood or a deeper walk with Christ. Refreshments and materials provided. Take the next step toward clarity and peace. Your journey begins here!

**Contact:** Deacon Garry Stevens, Vocations Coordinator at [gstevens@rcdony.org](mailto:gstevens@rcdony.org) or 315-854-6158

### THE RESCUE PROJECT

Ogdensburg - Come join us for a 9-week experience to hear how AWESOME the Good News of the Gospel really is!

**Date:** Starts Feb. 1 until Palm Sunday

**Time:** 12:30 p.m.

**Place:** Brzana Hall at St. Mary’s Cathedral

**Features:** Each session of this free program consists of a video presentation unpacking the story of the Gospel followed by small group discussion.

**Contact:** Register online at <https://www.rcdony.org/rescue>

For more information: contact Marika Donders at [mdonders@rcdony.org](mailto:mdonders@rcdony.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)

### SURVIVING DIVORCE

Canton - The Family Life Office will be offering the Surviving Divorce program again starting in late February.

**Time:** Meeting dates and times will be determined by the needs of the participants.

**Cost:** The program is free but we happily accept \$25 donations to offset the cost of materials.

**Features:** Surviving Divorce features twelve video presentations that cover topics such as shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse,

and annulment and remarriage. This program is for the newly separated and divorced and those still struggling with issues many years later.

**Contact:** To register, go to <https://www.rcdony.org/survivingdivorce>. For more information, contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920.

### GUGGENHEIM REGISTRATION

Camp Guggenheim registration and new staff application season is now open.

**Dates:** July 5 - July 10 for 11-13 year olds; July 12 - July 17 for 12-15 year olds; July 19 - July 24 for 12-15 year olds; July 26 - July 31 for 12-15 year olds; Aug 2 - Aug 7 for 16-18 year olds

**Cost:** \$450 per week, but if you register by March 1 with a deposit or scholarship application it will be \$425.

**Contact:** Register for camp at <https://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp/registration> Register for a staff position at <https://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp/new-staff-application> by Feb. 25

### DAY OF REFLECTION

Norfolk - All Catechists, Catechetical Leaders, Commissioned Lay Ministers, Youth Leaders and Candidates in Formation for Ministry are invited to a Day of Reflection.

**Date:** March 21

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mass will be at 9 a.m.

**Place:** Norfolk Parish Center

**Cost:** \$15 includes lunch (soup and sandwich)

**Features:** Presented by Sister Janet Schaeffler, OP. The theme will be “In Step with Christ: Embracing Discipleship and Accompaniment”.

**Contact:** Register by March 12 at [rcdony.org/dayofreflection](https://www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection)

### CHRISM MASS

Ogdensburg - All the faithful of



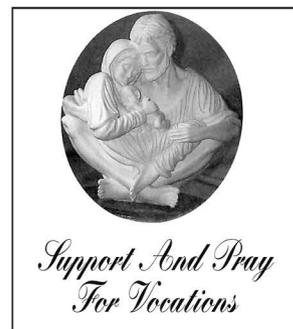
the Diocese of Ogdensburg are invited to join Bishop LaValley in the annual Renewal of Priestly Commitment, the Blessing of the Holy Oils, and the consecration of the Sacred Chrism for use in all the churches of our Diocese.

**Date:** March 26

**Time:** 11 a.m.

**Place:** St. Mary’s Cathedral

**Features:** This ritual symbolizes that we are one family in Christ. The Chrism Mass may be viewed at <https://www.rcdony.org/live-mass>. The Chrism Mass program will be available at the same link shortly before the Liturgy.



## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

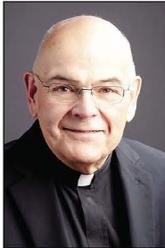
## To the mountaintop

Many years ago, in the late 1980s, I was administrator in Lake Placid until a new pastor was assigned. So, on one beautiful summer day, I decided to take advantage of Lake Placid and went to the top of the Olympic ski jump. From there, I looked around at the beautiful Adirondack mountain area. What a view! Without

even trying, I felt that I was on top of the world. Everything looked different or, perhaps I should say, I looked at everything differently. I was face to face with the vastness of God's creation: Mirror Lake,

the trees, the various peaks, the traffic, people going about their affairs. Nothing about this reality changed. The only thing that changed was my seeing things from a totally different perspective. However, when I looked down the ski jump, I definitely came to a conclusion: being a ski jumper would not be on my bucket list!

In today's Gospel, we read the beatitudes, the "Blessed are..." But note carefully, before Jesus speaks these beatitudes he takes his disciples to the top of a mountain. Why? Well, just as going up the ski



Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin

Feb. 1

Fourth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time

READINGS

Zephaniah 2:3;3:12-13

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

jump allowed me to see the world and myself differently, so, too, going up the mountain was Jesus' opportunity to teach the disciples to see the world and themselves and others differently.

Jesus leads his disciples to the mountaintop and teaches the beatitudes, an entirely different point of view on suffering and discipleship than the worldly perspective. Blessed are the poor, the meek and

the mournful. Blessed are the merciful, the clean-hearted and the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are insulted and persecuted. Suffering will not be the end for them, because they will be comforted, they will see God, they will be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven.

After hearing Jesus' words, the disciples find measurement that following Jesus is worth the cost - that good will have the last word. We, too, can adopt this beatitude point of view and see our suffering and hardship as does Jesus. Saint Paul tells us that God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and the weak of the world to shame the strong. We do not have

to be the wisest or the strongest person; we do not have to be "something" in the eyes of the world for we are everything in the eyes of the Lord.

The love and grace we receive in the Eucharist is a foretaste of the fullness of joy in Christ we will one day know. Suffering is real and discipleship is not without risk, but through his word and sacrament, we are within sight of the kingdom. When we pray and celebrate the Eucharist, we pray that we may know the beatitudes and that we may experience the blessings that can come only through living the beatitudes and seeing our lives and our world from the top of the mountain.

## CALLED TO SERVE

## A decree to a seraphic patriarch

It is pop-quiz time.

I detected a universal groan from the readers of this column! And from the Editor!!

Fear not. An incorrect guess will not affect your final grade.

What does *Seraphic Patriarch* mean?

Here is a hint. Members of the Franciscan Families of the First, Second, and Third Orders Regular and Secular are exempt from the quiz, unless said member does not know the answer.

I will give you a few minutes to frame your guess. No cheating.

Three-two-one. Times up.

*Seraphic Patriarch* is an honorary title given to St. Francis of Assisi. Pope Leo referred to Francis of Assisi, a dea-

con of the Church, as the seraphic patriarch in his Decree of January 10, 2026, to mark the "eighth centenary of the happy passing of Saint Francis of Assisi from earthly life to his heavenly homeland."

Seraphic refers to the seraphim, the highest order of angels who are known for their "fiery" love for God. Francis had an enthusiastic love of God. Patriarch means a founder, leader, or head of a family or religious order. As the founder of the Friars Minor (Franciscans) and the spiritual leader of the Franciscan family (including Poor Clares and laypeople), he is considered their founding father.

If your answer to the question, "What does

*Seraphic Patriarch* mean?" is close to the above, you are correct. Way to go.

The phrase was new to me when I read Pope Leo's decree. I was drawn to the decree since I was ordained on the Feast of St. Francis, as were many of my brother deacons. The Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary as it is called, marked a special Jubilee Year on the heels of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Saint Francis was the man who gave up his wealth and way of life to follow the teachings of God. He constructed the first Nativity scene as a memorial of

Jesus' birth, he composed a hymn to the sacred beauty of creation, and was blessed with the stigmata, bodily marks or wounds appearing on a person that correspond to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ.

He had a serious connection to all living things, even preaching to birds. That led to his patronage of animals



Deacon Kevin Mastellon

and the environment.

This Jubilee Year has indulgences tied to it. What are plenary indulgences and how do we earn them?

Darn...the Editor just told me to put my #2 pencil down. I will have to answer those questions about indulgences next week.

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

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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

# A new path to coexistence

In Manipur, India, violence erupted in May 2023 between the Meitei tribe and the Kuki-Zo tribe. Naga ethnic groups also live in this state, along with other minority groups. More than 60,000 people were displaced, and the different ethnic groups were isolated in strictly segregated areas. Since February 13, 2025, Manipur has been under the direct presidential administration of New Delhi, while the formation of a government is being considered, which could include members of the Kuki, Meitei, and Naga groups.

"As things stand, reconciliation in the state of Manipur is still premature. As far as I can see, there is still resentment in people's hearts, much suffering, and psychological trauma. It will take some time before the wounds heal and we can speak of dialogue again," says Father Marcus Thangminlun, CMF, a priest of the Claretian Missionaries who was recently ordained in the Claretian community of Manipur, in an interview with Fides.

"Today, it is very difficult to speak of coexistence," he observes. Father Marcus, who comes from Manipur and serves as a priest in this complex situation, emphasizes: "As a priest, I speak about peace and try to be an apostle of peace among both ordinary people and civil leaders. Above all, we always pray for peace."

"Our charism is to proclaim the Word of God and respond to the signs of the times: We are trying to do this here in Manipur, in a torn society. Only the Spirit of God can heal the wounds and bring about an era of reconciliation."

The Claretians have established the "St. Claret Mission" and opened three centers for displaced people in three rural districts of Manipur: "We help the people; we have established schools in the parishes to meet the needs of the displaced. These are internally displaced persons who have come primarily from the capital, Imphal, and cannot return to their homes and their lives before the conflict. In some cases, their homes and property have been destroyed. Today they are alone and have no means of survival; they have no schools. Among my confreres, four Claretians dedicate themselves to these people, bringing them comfort and concrete help."

"Some of the displaced," he recalls, "have found a small house to settle in, thanks to the help of the Diocese of Imphal. Many others have nothing; they live in total poverty. The social and political situation is at a standstill, and there are no easy solutions. We are hoping for everyone's goodwill."

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

## OBITUARIES

**Au Sable Forks** – June (Tellier) Nelson, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 12, 2026 at Holy Name Church; burial in Holy Name Cemetery.

**Brasher Falls** – Philip F. Davis, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 12, 2026 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Brushton** – Gail M. (Forkey) Fee, 87; Mass of Christian Burial May 1, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Brushton** – Leonard J. Oakes, Sr., 75; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 9, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Bombay.

**Canton** – John C. "Corky, Jack" Clarke, Jr., 70; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 23, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Carthage** – David G. Adams, 92; Private services.

**Carthage** – Marie (Bowman) Lofink, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 23, 2026 at St. James Church; burial in the New St. James Cemetery.

**Carthage** – Carol A. Mullany, 77; Mass of Christian Burial April 24, 2026 at St. James Church.

**Champlain** – Carol Cole, 79; Private services.

**Champlain** – Danny Scriver, 70; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2026 at St. Mary's Church.

**Clayton** – Therese A. (Phinney) Christensen, 82; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 16, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Dannemora** – Marie J. (Perry) Petraschune, 94; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 15, 2026 at St. Joseph's Church.

**Gabriels** – August R. Simpson, 100; Mass of Christian Burial June 8, 2026 at Church of the Assumption; burial in Paul's Cemetery, Bloomingdale.

**Harrisville** – Stuart Valentine, 86; Graveside services in spring at Harrisville Community Cemetery.

**Lake Placid** – Karen Marie Delaney, 69; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 24, 2026 at St. Agnes Church.

**Lake Placid** – Wayne Milton Dettwiler, 62; Funeral Services Jan. 16, 2026 at M.B. Clark, Inc. Funeral Home.

**Lake Placid** – Joseph Patrick Hackett, 69; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 17, 2026 at St. Agnes Church.

**Lake Placid** – Roberta D. (Alberino) Otranto, 84; Mass of Christian Burial May 16, 2026 at St. Agnes Church; burial in St. Agnes Cemetery.

**Lowville** – Harold R. Englehart, 99; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 22, 2026 at St. Peter's Church.

**Malone** – Gene L. Debyah, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 19, 2026 at Notre Dame Church.

**Malone** – Patricia A. (Penc) White, 88; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 17, 2026 at Notre Dame Church; burial in Notre Dame Cemetery.

**Massena** – Keith W. Bain, 85; Graveside services in Pine Grove Cemetery at a later date.

**Massena** – Joyce (LeGrow) Germano, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 19, 2026 at Sacred Heart Church.

**Massena** – Lawrence J. Patnode, 76; Mass of Christian Burial to be held at a later date; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Malone.

**Morrisonville** – Shirley M. (Yelle) Haskins, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 9, 2026 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in Gerald B. Solomon, Saratoga National Cemetery.

**Morrisonville** – Bernice Marie (Reid) Lapham, 99; Mass of Burial Jan. 20, 2026 at St. Alexander's

Church.

**Morrisonville** – Judith Ann (Rock) Seymour, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 19, 2026 at St. Alexander's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Norfolk** – Sallie A. (LeCuyer) Brothers, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 23, 2026 at Church of the Visitation.

**Ogdensburg** – Justine "Teeny" S. (Barr) Chateau, 83; Funeral Services Jan. 16, 2026 at Fox & Murray Funeral Home.

**Peru** – Pearl G. (Cody) Sorel, 90; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 15, 2026 at St. Augustine's Church; burial in parish cemetery.

**Plattsburgh** – Todd A. St. John, 59; Funeral Services Jan. 14, 2026 at Brown Funeral Home.

**Port Henry** – Thomas W. McDonald, Jr., 89; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 16, 2026 at St. Patrick's Church.

**Potsdam** – Thomas Gerald McKenna, 93; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 28, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Redford** – Mary Lou Gilmet, 61; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 23, 2026 at Church of the Assumption.

**Star Lake** – Patricia E. Woods, 92; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 10, 2026 at St. Hubert's Church; burial in Cranberry Lake Cemetery.

**Ticonderoga** – Farrelly Charles Ezzo, 72; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 20, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

**Ticonderoga** – Richard Anthony Ezzo, 73; Funeral Services Jan. 21, 2026 at the Wilcox & Regan Funeral Home; burial in White Church Cemetery, Crown Point.

**Ticonderoga** – Sylvia (Barnaby) McIntyre, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 19, 2026 at St. Mary's Church.

# NY backs off forcing abortion coverage

Daniel Payne  
EWTN News

A coalition of religious groups that includes an order of Protestant nuns and two Catholic dioceses scored a major victory after the state of New York backed off trying to force the groups to cover abortion in their health insurance plans.

The state government in a Jan. 16 agreement agreed to drop its efforts to force abortion cover-

age onto the dioceses of Ogdensburg and Albany, along with two Catholic Charities groups and numerous other religious plaintiffs.

The concession came months after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the state court of appeals to review the long-running case in light of a major religious liberty victory at the high court in June 2025.

That victory, Catholic Charities Bureau v. Wisconsin Labor

and Industry Review, saw the Supreme Court unanimously affirm that the U.S. Constitution “mandates government neutrality between religions” and that states may not impose unlawful “denominational preferences” between religious organizations.

In the Wisconsin case, the state had attempted to argue that a Catholic charity’s undertakings were not “primarily” religious and that the group thus did not qualify for a tax exemption. The

New York government had adopted a similar argument, exempting religious groups from the abortion mandate only if they primarily employ members of their own faith.

In a press release celebrating the New York victory, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty — which represented the religious groups in their fight against the mandate — described the state’s effort as a “disgraceful campaign.”

## Power of holy story

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

standing. Finally, the time spent reading, reflecting, and praying leads to quiet rest; to sit quietly with God in peace.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church advo-

cates for meditation, including Lectio Divina, as an essential component of prayer. “This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ” (CCC 2708). Similarly, the Holy Rosary, with its focus on the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries, is seen as a form of Lectio

Divina. Tradition says the Blessed Virgin Mary first gave the Rosary to St. Dominic of Guzman in 1208 after he prayed earnestly for help against the Albigensian heresy in southern France. Later, at Fatima in 1917, she renewed the call for daily Rosary prayers for peace, highlighting the importance of meditating on events from Christ’s life (the Mysteries of the Rosary) as it is written in Holy Scripture. While the Catholic Church does not require belief in private revelations like those at Fatima, those who do be-

lieve will find Mary’s divine guidance critical for growing closer to Jesus.

Whether practiced through the steps of Lectio Divina or the meditative rhythm of the Holy Rosary, sacred reading is an invitation to truly know God. By taking time to listen with the “ear of the heart,” we let the living Word move beyond words on a page and become a personal conversation with our Creator. God deeply desires a genuine relationship with us; all we need is to set aside the time.

*Mike Langlois is the grand knight of St. Augustine Knights of Columbus Council 7273 in Peru, New York. He is also the Upstate Conference coordinator for evangelization and faith formation for the New York State Knights of Columbus, which encompasses the Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Ogdensburg dioceses. Local Knights of Columbus councils interested in fortifying the faith of their memberships, or offering column topic ideas, can contact him at mjlang67@gmail.com.*

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## THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

### PRAYER SUGGESTION

O Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name a priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own dispositions and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul; take over his entire personality and life.

Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always. O Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of our priests, pray and intercede for (...)  
Amen.



## FEBRUARY

DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG, NY		2026					
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
1 BISHOP TERRY R. LAVALLEY	2 REV. JOSEPH W. GHIROUX	3 REV. L. WILLIAM GORDON	4 REV. LUKAS H. GRUBER	5 REV. ALBERT J. HAUSER	6 REV. PETER G. HELFRICH	7 REV. MICHAEL J. JABLONSKI	
8 OUR PASTOR	9 REV. JOSE K. JOHN, HGN	10 REV. JOSEPH KANIMEA, MSC	11 REV. PAUL J. KELLY	12 REV. THOMAS E. KORNYMEYER	13 REV. STEVE KOVACEVICH	14 REV. DONALD F. KRAMBERG	
15 POPE LEO XIV	16 REV. ARTHUR J. LABAFF	17 REV. ALAN J. LAMICA	18 REV. KRIS C. LAUZON	19 REV. CHRISTOPHER J. LOOBY	20 REV. JOHN J. LOOBY	21 REV. SHANE M. LYNCH	
22 DECEASED PRIESTS	23 REV. JHON DONALD J. MADRID	24 REV. LAWRENCE MANFRED	25 REV. E. MARULLO	26 REV. MICHAEL H. MARZANI	27 MSGR. CLARENCE J. MCAVOY	28 REV. KEVIN D. MCEWAN	

The Passion of our Lord

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## WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE ~ FEBRUARY 1st



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