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The Diocese of Ogdensburg Volume 80 Number 39

NORTH COUNTRY CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

SEEING DOUBLE



PHOTO BY DEACON KEVIN MASTELLON
Father Robert and Father Douglas Decker have served this diocese in excess of a combined 85 years as priests. They are twin brothers, born in 1950 to Mary Aline and Robert Decker. They grew up in the family homestead near Hammond in St. Lawrence County. Now in retirement, the men are often together to celebrate Mass in various parishes in the western side of the diocese. That's what brought them to St. Anthony's Church (Blessed Sacrament Parish, Watertown) one morning recently. The priests were assisted at Mass by two sets of twins from the parish, Olivia and Eleanor Barlaan and Mia and Matteo Kolb. The triplet twins celebrated the 8:00 am Mass on Sunday, February 1.

Celebrating marriage

With Valentine's Day fast approaching, the *North Country Catholic* honors the Sacrament of Matrimony with this annual Marriage Edition.

Read about "Marriage: God's Way" as discussed by diocesan Family Life Director Steve Tartaglia and learn about "Married Love and the Gift of Life" with Natural Family Planning.

SEE STORIES ON PAGES 3 & 4

EXPANDING CHILDCARE & SCHOOL COMMUNITY



SAINT AGNES
SCHOOL

The smartest start for your child

After a survey identified a community need for childcare for young children, St. Agnes School in Lake Placid, with help from grant and donated funds, started a new childcare program for youth under age 5. The school's principal says the young children have been a welcome addition to the school community.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

Pope tells religious: Be 'leaven of peace'

By Antonio Tarallo
EWTN News

Pope Leo XIV on Feb. 2 urged consecrated men and women to serve as "leaven of peace" and a "sign of hope" as he celebrated Mass for the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in St. Peter's Basilica and marked the 30th World Day for Consecrated Life.

The liturgy began with a candlelight procession, recalling Simeon's words that Christ is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles," as the pope processed from the basilica's entrance toward the main altar

in a dimly lit church "waiting" for the light of Christ.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the Gospel passage from Luke (2:22-40), where Simeon and Anna recognize and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. He described the scene as "the meeting between two movements of love: that of God who comes to save man and that of man who awaits with vigilant faith his coming."

Leo noted that Jesus presents himself as the son of a "poor" family — a detail he said shows God's respect for human freedom and his

solidarity with human need: Christ offers himself "in full respect for our freedom and in full sharing of our poverty," the pope said, adding that there is "nothing coercive" in the Lord's action "but only the disarming power of his unarmed gratuitousness."

Turning to those living vowed religious life, the pope said the Church asks them "to be prophets: messengers who proclaim the presence of the Lord and prepare his way." He urged them to "empty" themselves for the Lord, invoking the prophet Malachi's imagery of being "crucibles for the re-

finer's fire and vessels for the launderer's lye."

Leo framed the mission of religious communities as especially vital in societies where faith and daily life "seem increasingly to drift apart," calling consecrated men and women to witness that God "is present in history as salvation for all peoples." He also emphasized the dignity of the vulnerable — the young and old, the poor, the sick, and prisoners — saying they have "their sacred place" on God's altar and in his heart, and that each person is "an inviolable sanctuary" of God's presence.

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Not the journey I expected

I was excited about the trip, but I was also dreading or uncertain about parts of it.

When I described the trip to others in the weeks leading up to our departure, I would say, "my friend and I are going to stay at a Catholic seminary with a bunch of young men studying to be priests so we can go to Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney. You know? Like normal people do."

In addition to just being weird, both parts of that trip - the seminary and Groundhog Day - had me a bit uncomfortable.

I have never stayed at a working Catholic seminary before, and expe-



Dinner at Primanti Bros., a popular Pittsburgh-area sandwich chain, with seminarians from St. Vincent's Seminary. Pictured are (clockwise from front left) Deacon Dennis Ombongi, Sam from the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, Kevin McCullough, me, my travel companion, Sylvie Marion, Christopher from the Diocese of Steubenville, and Deacon Tyler Fitzgerald.

rience tells me that the best way to feel old is to spend time with a

bunch of young people. I thought staying with a bunch of college-aged

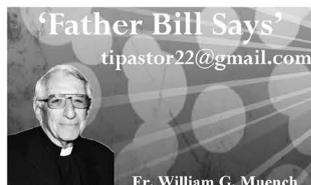
men - including three of our seminarians, Deacon Tyler Fitzgerald, Deacon Dennis Ombongi and Kevin McCullough - would be uncomfortable and awkward.

I was wrong.

Just being at the seminary, St. Vincent's in Latrobe, felt special. It felt like Jesus was there. Attending Mass and evening prayer at the seminary and having dinner with the three seminarians from our diocese along with two from Diocese of Steubenville was fantastic! Instead of being awkward and uncomfortable, being with these young men who love Jesus and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Lent is about love



Fr. William G. Muench

Time for Lent. This is the time for you and me to prepare for our annual retreat - time for Lenten prayer and mortification. I want to take a moment here to remind you that the principal reason for Lent is love. Jesus challenges us to love God above all things, with our whole heart and our whole soul and to love our neighbor as ourselves. So, we need Lent. We need a time to put new life into our relationship with our God - to be ready to live a more powerful love for our God. Thomas Merton, the Trappist Monk wrote often of the primacy of love over kindness, asceticism, contemplation, solitude, prayer. God has demonstrated his love for us. Lent is our time to strengthen and enliven our love for our God.

Lent is a time of renewal, a time to make our love for our God to come alive. We have a prayer at

Mass that prays that our love for God will shine forth, that our dedication to our God will influence how we live each day. Lent separates us from worldly things and opens our hearts in love for our God.

Recently, the Sunday Gospel reading reminded us of the Lord's Beatitudes. These Beatitudes show us the path to love and happiness. These Beatitudes are the goals to a happy and holy life as a follower of Jesus. They show us the way to change ourselves so that we learn to love like Jesus. We learn to be a loving person, constantly ready to bring happiness and love to our world and

ready to bring Jesus to our world. Lent gives us weeks of retreat to make us truly the loving People of God, living in the Lord's holiness and happiness of the Beatitudes.

Lent helps us remember the way to be poor in Spirit, to be gentle and meek followers of Jesus, to be merciful and forgiving like Jesus, to hunger and thirst for what is right, to be peacemakers.

Let me take a moment here to consider becoming a peacemaker. This demands greater dedication than just being a peaceful person. This demands that we want to demonstrate that we know we have to make our world better and more peaceful. That is not an easy dedication. It is simply attention to the little things. It may demand that we are ready to change what must be changed, that we are ready to walk with Jesus, that we are ready to

do Lent, ready to live out our discipleship.

Let me show you what I mean: Here are some qualities of a true peacemaker. Again, it is the little things. It begins with letting go of resentments and being ready to allow Jesus to calm what is angry inside me. So many little things, like refusing gossip, reaching our first after a disagreement, listening before judging, choosing words that heal, rather than wound.

So, you see, Lent is needed. Lent becomes a time to learn again all that Jesus expects of his disciples - like you and me. That is why the Beatitudes are so great in showing us the way, guiding us, helping us to discover that we can make this world of ours a better place and that I can truly be a missionary right here where I am. It is all about the little things. Lent makes saints.

CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

Marriage: God's way

By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Diocesan NFP Director

“And they lived happily ever after” works well enough in fairy tales. But in real life, a couple need a realistic understanding of what makes marriage survive and thrive. They also need encouragement to access the graces offered by God, the Author of marriage.

Supporting marriage and strengthening understanding of God's plan for this foundational vocation through solid Catholic marriage preparation are very significant elements of Steve Tartaglia's work as diocesan Family Life Director. Himself a child of divorce, Tartaglia brings this unique perspective, as well as great passion,

to these efforts—as he does today with Christina, his wife of 23 years, and their five children.

Tartaglia is open about the impact of his parents' divorce.

“They separated when I was 12,” he recalls, “reconciled briefly, started divorce proceedings my freshman year and divorced when I was a senior. I was the second of their six children. After the divorce, my parents dated other people, which was troubling for me. My mother eventually remarried, but my father did not.

“Divorce affected the six siblings in different ways because our experiences were different based on our ages. Each of us certainly carries on-going wounds, some of



NCC FILE PHOTO

Diocesan Family Life Director Steve Tartaglia and his wife, Christina, at the 2021 Marriage Jubilee Mass.

which come to the surface decades later. For me, watching my own children grow up within an intact family triggers sad

memories at times. My wife has mentioned that when I get together with my siblings, we always talk about the divorce—

which happened in 1988. Typically, children from divorced families suffer from the wound of silence, which means they just don't talk about their experiences and pain with anyone else. When they attend a Life-Giving Wounds retreat, they open up for what could well be the first time in their life, and they begin the process of healing.”

The next Life-Giving Wounds retreat will be held June 26-28 at the Good News Center in Utica. For information, contact sttartaglia@rcdony.org.

The closest Tartaglia can come to understanding his parents' divorce and subsequent annulment is that they “were seeking marriage

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Diocese of Ogdensburg Family Life Office

Helping to build strong families with programs and activities that strengthen family life.

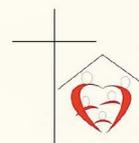
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- ◇ Know why families fall apart and what you can do to prevent this?
- ◇ Benefit from a network of support with other faithful families in this diocese?

If the answer to any of those questions is yes, contact:



Steve Tartaglia
Director of Family Life
Diocese of Ogdensburg
(315) 393-2920
sttartaglia@rcdony.org

CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

Why Natural Family Planning?

By **Suzanne Pietropaoli**
Diocesan NFP Director

What is Natural Family Planning, and why does it matter? The U. S. Bishops answer both questions in their document, "Married Love and the Gift of Life."

"Natural Family Planning," they write, "is a general name for the methods of family planning that are based on a woman's cycle. A man is fertile throughout his life, while a woman is fertile for only a few days each cycle during the childbearing years. A woman experiences clear, observable signs indicating when she is fertile and when she is infertile. Learning to observe and understand these signs is at the heart of education in natural

family planning. When a couple decides to postpone pregnancy, NFP can be very effective. NFP can also be very helpful for couples who desire to have a child, because it identifies the time of ovulation. Natural methods of family planning involve fertility education that enables couples to cooperate with the body as God designed it."

This cooperation with God's design makes NFP unique among family planning methods. As the Bishops make clear, "When couples use contraception, either physical or chemical, they suppress their fertility, asserting that they alone have ultimate control over this power to create a new human life. With NFP, spouses respect God's design for life and love. They may

choose to refrain from sexual union during the woman's fertile time, doing nothing to destroy the love-giving or life-giving union that is present. NFP does not change the human body in any way or upset its balance with potentially harmful drugs or devices." Instead, it empowers couples to live in harmony with their bodies, and with their fertility. The Bishops also note that NFP "leads couples to show greater attentiveness to and respect for each other."

"By using contraceptives," the Bishops conclude, "couples may think that they are avoiding problems, that they are exerting control over their lives. But the gift of being able to help create a new human being involves profound relationships.

It affects our relationship with God, who created us complete with this powerful gift. It involves whether spouses will truly love and accept each other as they are, including their gift of fertility. Finally, it involves the way spouses will spontaneously accept their child as a gift from God and as the fruit of their own marital love. Like all important relationships, it is not subject solely to our individual control. In the end, this gift is far richer and more rewarding than that."

If you would like to a complimentary copy of this document, or if you have questions, please email the Diocesan NFP Office: apietropaoli@rcdony.org. NFP information may also be accessed at our website, www.rcdony.org/nfp.

God's way

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

as something of an escape from their own families of origin, both of which struggled with a variety of issues." Happily, "It was the opposite for Christina and me when we got married. We were not seeking an escape; we were seeking the will of God for our lives. While we had both considered religious vocations, we discerned that—however beautiful—that was not what God was calling us to. As we dated each other, it became clear that what we were seeking was the Sacrament of Matrimony. And we decided to live out the sacrament the best we could.

"Before we were together, we both believed that God had big plans for us. We both came to each other believing God wanted us to do important ministry in the Church, and that we would be able to accom-

plish his plans better as a married couple than we would separately. First and foremost, it meant developing a family that was solidly Catholic. This means that we continuously learn the faith and practice it. It also means protecting our marriage from dangers, identifying and turning away from false gods that could hurt our marriage and family if we let them. It means always striving to put Christ at the center of our life together."

Remaining faithful to the Divine plan and relying always on the grace of God, Tartaglia's marriage and family life are quite different from those in which he grew up.

"I believe," he continues, "that the biggest problem that marriages face is having something other than Christ at the center of their lives. When Christ is replaced by a false god, an idol, the marriage and

family is damaged and built upon some shifting sands, which makes their lives together precarious. What finally destroys the marriage can be varied: materialism, addictions, infidelity or something else, but all are symptomatic of replacing Christ with an idol."

But, Tartaglia points out, "Marriages facing problems can recover. They do not need to have

a divorce. The grace of the Sacrament is always present so long as the couple avails themselves of it together." Such faith in the goodness of God and his presence at the heart of marriage could sound a bit like a fairy tale. Interestingly, though, there may also be empirical evidence for this vision. In 2018, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard re-

leased the results of a 14-year study of the role of religious practice in supporting marriages. Involving 66,000 participants, the study revealed that regular religious attendance was associated with a 50% decrease in divorce. And best of all? Less than one percent of couples who pray together divorce. The Maker of marriage did truly create it to be a blessing!



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Expanding childcare, building community

Grant, donations allow St. Agnes School to offer childcare for infants and toddlers

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

An effort to meet a local need for childcare has added a new program and lots of joy to St. Agnes School in Lake Placid.

"A couple years ago, our local town and village boards did extensive data surveys and research around the childcare desert that has existed in the North Country," said Katie Turner, principal at St. Agnes School. About a year and a half ago, they reached out to home-based childcare providers, center-based providers and us at St. Agnes School - those currently serving the under (age) 5 population. They told us there was an opportunity for grant funds and funding from local donors to get new infant and toddler programs off the ground or expand existing programs. We spoke with Father John (R. Yonkovig, pastor of St. Agnes Church) and the education council, and we de-

cidied St. Agnes was a good fit to pilot expansion. We already had pre-K3 and 4 in the building, and we already had kids as young as 2 and a half, so going down a bit in age didn't seem farfetched."

St. Agnes School worked with representatives from the state Office of Children and Family Services to plan and complete construction projects to ready the school building for younger children.

"We're currently licensed for two classrooms," Turner said. "One classroom is licensed to accommodate children from ages six weeks to 18 months. So far, our youngest child has been six months, but we're licensed for younger. The second classroom is for ages 18 to 36 months. That's worked very well with our current demographic. They can enroll right from there to our Pre-K3 program. Currently 20 is our cap for enrollment (for the childcare program). It's been a good fit for us. It's allowed us to make some movement

Now accepting applications

Applications for St. Agnes School's Childcare Program for the 2026-27 school year will be accepted from now until February 27. For more information, or to apply, visit <https://www.stagneslp.org/s/Infant-Toddler-February-2026.pdf>

toward increased childcare offerings in the community, and we've added in a way that has not affected or taken away from our current program offerings. We can help meet a community need while maintaining the integrity of the pre-school program and school-aged programs we've worked really hard to develop."

Turner noted the availability of grants and donor funding coincided well with other circumstances to enable the creation of the program.

"All the elements needed lined up," Turner said. "We had parents of our current students and alumni students who had experience with home-based or center-based care and appropriate state clearances, and their youngest children were school-aged, so they were ready for oppor-

tunities outside the home. Our enrollment numbers were right. The availability of space was right. We had generous donors supporting the program, and we had perfect circumstances for staffing. It all aligned perfectly."

The new, younger building occupants have been a great addition to the school, Turner said.

"The babies are adorable," she said. "The older students have been amazing. They've learned the babies' names and are excited to greet them when they arrive. It's extended our small community education feel to a younger population. It contributes to that family feel. We have families who have children in childcare, children in pre-k and school-aged children all in one place. It gives us an opportunity to build relationships with families that we can maintain for many years starting at six months old.

"That's a gift we never imagined for our program years ago. And it's been a real blessing to help these families navigate first-time parenthood and helping to create community."

Not the journey I expected

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

share a special fraternity with one another was inspiring and life giving.

Then there was Groundhog Day. I worked for nearly three years for *The Punxsutawney Spirit*, the newspaper in that community famous for its weather-predicting rodent. I had already been to "Hog Day" twice in my life. My early experiences at the event weren't all that positive. I strongly remembered getting no sleep

and freezing as I stood in one spot for hours so I could get the perfect photo of the moment they pull Punxsutawney Phil from his stump. I thought this year would be similarly unpleasant.

I was wrong again.

While we certainly didn't get much sleep (my watch said I got two hours and 40 minutes of sleep that night), and it was certainly freezing cold (single digit temperatures), Groundhog Day was fantastic fun!

My friend and I danced as a band played parodies of pop songs themed around Phil. We enjoyed fireworks early in the morning. We chanted for Phil along with a crowd of thousands of people. We booed loudly when the rodent predicted six more weeks of winter. It was wholesome, wild fun!

It turns out, I'm awful at predicting what God will bring my way. Where I expected discomfort, God brought joy.

My experience of that trip has me thinking about how many times in the last couple weeks I've told others that I'm dreading Lent.

I dreaded Lent last year, and God used that Lent to change my heart and change my life in countless ways.

While I'm not exactly looking forward to

parts of Lent, I'm going to trust God to make this Lent what He intends it to be for me.

I'm excited for that journey.



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Environmental Stewardship**Ecological awareness**

For many people, being in nature is more satisfying to their spirit than attending church.

For individuals sensitive to the health of their soul, being immersed in nature can provide fulfillment that is sensed and experienced in some unexplained way.

The natural world has many facets our body's nervous system and outside physical instruments are unable to detect. Yet these forces impact our being and can be noted in positive sensation. This energy creates the pleasurable or enjoyable feeling that develops throughout your subconscious bodily system. It is well known in the medical community that connecting with nature can lower blood pressure, reduce stress and anxiety and provide a more positive outlook on life.

St. Francis of Assisi, along with most of the mystics, recognized the impact nature has on the soul. By basking in the presence of the natural world with an open heart, it is possible to capture the boundless graces that flow through these precious open spaces.

However, just like being exposed to spiritual energy, a person has the choice to freely accept these gifts or harden their heart and reject them.

Lent is a season of prayer. During these last few weeks of winter and early spring, don't hesitate to spend time in nature as Jesus regularly did. Open your heart to all that there is around you. Look at the trees, shrubs, birds, squirrels and other entities that engulf you and sense their gratitude to the Creator for their existence. Notice the peace that eventually develops deep within your being and the urge to share this pleasurable sensation with friends and family.

Spiritual experiences in nature can have lasting effects and are among the most precious gifts from God. We must repeatedly ask God for His help in learning how to proceed with the great task of preserving His creations with our small steps forward.

Bishop's Public Schedule

Feb. 17 – 9:45 a.m. – Episcopal Council Meeting at Bishop's Residence followed by Lunch in the Brzana Conference Room

Noon – Diocesan Staff Mardi Gras Luncheon in the Brzana Conference Room

Feb. 18 – Noon – Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral

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. Upcoming sessions:

Feb. 13 – 1 p.m. – Holy Cross Parish, Plattsburgh

Feb. 17 – 3 p.m. – Holy Ghost Parish Center, Tupper Lake

Rest in Peace

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

Feb. 11 – Deacon David P. Wells, 2017

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

Mass of Christian Burial celebrated for Sr. Jean Marie Vianney Chiovitti

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sister Jean Marie Vianney Chiovitti, a Sister of St. Joseph, at St. Anthony's Church, Watertown, on Feb. 3. Father John Demo was celebrant, and Father Donald Robinson was homilist.

Sister Jean Marie died at Samaritan Summit Village January 29, 2026, at the age of 105.

She was born Mae Joan Chiovitti, daughter of Liberato and Nicolina Pichielli Chiovitti, on October 17, 1920, in Toronto, Canada. Sister Jean Marie was educated in Toronto, Canada.

It was while reading Father Daniel Lord's article for youth in the Sunday Visitor, that Sister became intrigued with the ad for the Watertown Sisters of St. Joseph. The ad included their different ministries, and their work at



Sister Jean Marie Vianney Chiovitti, SSJ

St. Patrick's Children's Home struck her as being a real need.

Sister Jean Marie entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on March 4, 1940. She received the habit on August 25, 1940, and made Final Profession on August 27, 1945. She received her education from Mater Dei College, Ogdensburg, NY, Nazareth College Normal School, Rochester, NY and further studied Pastoral Training at the Toronto School of Theology of Toronto.

Sister Jean Marie spent 19 years at St. Patrick's Home, taking care of 50-60 boys ages 2-16, and at the same time taught in the Watertown Catholic Schools. These were the days when class sizes were in the 40's and even 50's. For a few years Sister Jean Marie was principal, teacher and superior at St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga and St. Joseph's School in Malone. She also taught in Dannemo-

ra, Massena, and Gouverneur. For many years, Sister Jean Marie taught Vacation Bible School throughout the Diocese of Ogdensburg during the summer months.

In 2000, when Sister Jean Marie celebrated her 60th Jubilee, nearly 100 former residents of St. Patrick's Children's Home attended. Sister celebrated her 75th Jubilee in 2015. In 2025 Sister celebrated her 85th Jubilee.

During her retirement, Sister Jean Marie had volunteered time to Whispering Pines and Samaritan Keep Nursing Homes, and driven Sisters to appointments. She continued to be active on the computer using e-mail to her family, former students, and former residents of St. Patrick's Home.

Sister is survived by her nephew Joseph Monaco, Mississauga, Ontario and her nieces Valerie Nunn of Waterloo, Ontario and Corinne Malloy, Lindsay, Ontario.

Besides her parents, she is predeceased by her brothers Norman, Carl, and Michael; and her sisters Anne Monaco, Clara Mauro, Sally Nunn and Elizabeth Leo.

Funeral arrangements are with Cummings Funeral Service, Inc.

Contributions in Sister Jean Marie's memory may be made to the Sisters of St. Joseph, 866 Arsenal St., Watertown, NY 13601.

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

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious, employees or volunteers, contact Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terriane Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, 5050 Route 374, Merrill, NY 12955; terrianeyanulavich@yahoo.com; Phone: 518-569-0612; or Father Christopher Carrara, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; ccarrara@rcdony.org Phone: 315-393-2920 ext. 1340.

If you have a complaint of suspected sexual abuse or related misconduct by the bishops, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service at 800-276-1562 or www.ReportBishopAbuse.org

Students swap 'pints for pews'

By Patrick J. Passmore
EWTN News

Just over a year ago in County Wicklow, Ireland, three young men decided to sidestep the secular Christmas season tradition of hitting 12 pubs and instead visited 12 different churches for Sunday Mass.

Forty churches later, Luke Doogue, 20, and his friends Neil, 19, and Stephen Patterson, 17, have found themselves explaining on Irish national radio how on earth they decided to swap "pints for pews."

"This journey didn't start with holiness; it started as an alternative to the traditional '12 pubs of Christmas,'" Doogue told EWTN News.

He continued: "We were looking for a reason to get up on a Sunday morning that didn't involve questioning our life choices the night before. What we called '12 churches' began half as a joke and half as a challenge: Could we replace pints with pews and still enjoy ourselves?"

The initial idea came from Patterson, a promising golfer who is now on scholarship in Rome, Georgia.

"We went to Grangecon first; Mass was said by Father Ger Ahern. We got nine churches done, but we didn't get 12 before Christmas. So we said 'lads we have to get our 12.' Twelve came, 15 came, suddenly we were looking down the barrel of 40. It stopped being a challenge and became something we genuinely looked forward to."

Doogue told EWTN News: "Getting to know people in our own parish proved just as important as traveling further afield. Mass became something



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUKE DOOGUE AND PROVIDED BY EWTN NEWS

Stephen Patterson (left) and Luke Doogue (center) pictured with Irish television and radio presenter Oliver Callan (right) after being interviewed on Callan's prime time RTE radio show.

we shared. The breakfast table often became the place where the readings were unpacked, how Communion tasted was discussed, and the homily was debated — usually between bites of a fry."

One of the trio's earliest Masses was in Bolton Abbey in nearby Moone. "It's tiny, there isn't a sound when you walk in, and there's three or four monks saying mass at 8:30 a.m. Stepping into places like Bolton Abbey reminded us that Mass can feel like an experience. Quieter, more reflective, suspended from normal routine."

Doogue told EWTN News that for them there is a near-perfect Mass length. "In our view, it sits comfortably in the 35th- to 42nd-minute window. Too short it feels rushed; too long, and you find yourself mentally planning your breakfast

order."

He continued with a laugh: "Sometimes there's nothing beats a sub-30 Mass. Last week we got a 27.5-minute one!"

The said their favorite Masses contain the right elements, including, crucially, the Nicene Creed. "Why anyone thought it was a good idea to shorten a creed so great remains a mystery to us," Doogue said.

And the million-dollar question: How long should a homily be?

According to Doogue: "Not too long, not too short. Four to six minutes. More than seven minutes is too long."

Music also plays a huge role, he said, and a good choir adds to the experience.

Sunday Mass attendance and Catholic devotion in Ireland isn't what it used to be. What do the

friends of these Gen Zers think?

"Honestly, they thought we were mad. But over the months, we've had people come with us. We've had a few more people join the group. We love our faith, but the social element's huge, like meeting people after Mass, chatting with the priest."

For Patterson, Sunday Mass is now something he looks forward to. "I'm watching a video, playing golf, or a bit of football, and then on to Mass on a Sunday. I take it as a complete recess and you can reflect on what you did during the week, what you're going to do next week."

Doogue admitted that before their new Sunday obligation, he would miss Mass once or twice in a month. He summed up the attendance pattern of many of his Catholic peers as "CEO or CFO Mass-goers." CEO stands for "Christmas and Easter only"; CFO denotes "Christmas and funerals only." He said the interest in their "12 churches" demonstrates a newfound hook in attracting people to attend Mass and suggests a curiosity in the Catholic faith.

Many priests enjoy seeing the trio at the end of Mass and hearing their story.

"The bishop thought it was brilliant. So did our old parish priest," Doogue said. The parish priest in question enjoyed the stories so much he invited the trio to the parochial house where they tucked into Chinese food before discussing the fine details of diverse congregations across dioceses.

"We've had friends say, 'You know what, it's a good idea, we might try

it out,' and people text saying, 'Whenever you're in our parish, tell us and we'll go to Mass with you,'" Doogue said.

One thing has become clear to the young men: Priests who smile, make eye contact, speak plainly, and take time to chat before or after Mass transformed their experience. Conversations at the church door made them want to return.

The trio said they have no intention of giving up their alternative to the "12 pubs of Christmas" with its very different spiritual appeal.

Doogue told The Way, the Irish Bishops' media platform: "We don't know how many churches we will end up visiting, and we are not in any rush to stop. If loving Mass, community, friendship, and breakfast makes us mad, then we are more than happy to be."

And the hook — is it the spiritual element? The travel? The novelty?

"It's a mix of all," Doogue said. "Starting it was great socially. As it went on, it got more spiritual."

The three of them have received invitations from priests across Ireland to attend Masses in their local churches, but far from being a "Tripadvisor" for parishes, the trio said that while they maintain a high degree of reverence at liturgies, they now fancy themselves "connoisseurs" of what ultimately makes a "good" Mass.



CALLED TO SERVE

God called it the sky

The nighttime sky is one of the beauties of the North Country.

We cannot compete with the likes of the Chilean Andes. The mountaintops there host several huge telescopes that scan the skies. The peaks boast arid conditions and clear skies. But our distance from major metros, like Montreal, Boston and New York, gives us a nighttime advantage over those luminescent cities.

Had I been more attentive during my astronomy elective at Potsdam College, I could identify the various constellations that grace us each year with their appearance in the night sky.

I'm lucky now if I can point out the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper. Jupiter is on my list of identifiable stellar bodies too. That's the big planet near the full moon the other night.

Right?

Deacon Dan McGrath takes pictures through his telescopes of distant stellar objects and posts them occasionally. I love those pictures. Dan lives in St. Lawrence County.

Recently an article that crossed my screen surprised me. The headline was: "Here's How Many Starlink Satellites Are Flying Over You Right Now. And It's Just the Beginning." The article went on to say there are about 10,000 little satellites spinning above Earth now and the vision is for millions.

The satellites will improve our communication systems world-

wide. We apparently do not get news from places around the globe fast enough now!

I am concerned about my ability to stare into the heavens and just think about my existence. It will become so crowded in near space that my star gazing will give way to satellite gazing. The world above the clouds will become like the Long Island Expressway. The "distress way" was once called "the longest parking lot in the world" by a radio announcer I liked.

Space scientists have

considered that futuristic problem. For people who enjoy the night sky, like me, SpaceX has been working to reduce the brightness of satellites by painting them black and using mirror films to prevent interfering with astronomy. My friend, Dan, thanks you.

What about space vehicles like Artemis II? That's the manned vehicle that will circle the moon. It was set for launch Feb-

ruary 8 but had to be delayed because of "several hydrogen leaks" in the main booster. The launch is now planned for March.

Do NASA trip planners have to take satellite positioning into consideration when they plan the next launch to the moon? Perhaps computers will do the math? I suspect they do.

It is my job to worry about such things. Sure, I find time to resolve

trivial things like food, shelter and heat for my family, but it is the issues of the cosmos and how God will react to our messing with his creation that really sets me to thinking.

But I gotta go. The snow shovel awaits. Again.

See you Ash Wednesday.

Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown.

He is the Director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg.



Deacon
Kevin Mastellon

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FACES OF FAITH



The Knights of Columbus Sarto Council #1059 recently held an Exemplification Ceremony for three new members. This ceremony was in honor of long-time Knight, Dan Fay who passed away in 2025. Dan was a Knight for 56 years, having joined on April 1, 1969. Grand Knight Corey Swinwood read the proclamation and presented it to Dan's daughter, Kelley Glasgow and his sister, Shelia Harrington. The newest Knights in the Canton Council are Zadok Roiger, Blake Foster and Jesse Sovie. Pictured are (from left) Zadok Roiger, Corey Swinwood, Kelley Glasgow, Sheila Harrington, Blake Foster and Jesse Sovie.



Ogdensburg Mayor Michael Tooley recently presented a proclamation proclaiming January as Human Trafficking Month at an event held on the topic at Ogdensburg Library. Pictured are, from left, Cindy Wilson, Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ, Kobe Harrington, Mikaela Kasprzak, Mayor Tooley and Kathy Lawrence.



Grand Knight Corey Swinwood of Canton Sarto Council 1059 presents to Connie Jenkins, Director of Church and Community, Canton, a check for \$1,000 in Memory of deceased Knight Dan Fay.



The Port Leyden Food Bank sponsored by St. Martin's Parish located in the church's rectory, received a donation of 800 items from the South Lewis School Junior High National Honor Society on Monday, December 21. The students hold a challenge amongst classes to help collect needed supplies under the guidance of their advisor, McKayka Gesullo. The food bank serves southern Lewis County, however no one is turned away. Hours are 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., Monday-Friday, or by appointment (315) 348-5575. Chris Chaufty directs the food bank. The Food Bank of Central New York helps supply needed items as well as grants are secured to purchase items. Other churches (not just Catholics) also donate items.

CATHOLIC WORLD AT A GLANCE

Vatican, SSPX to meet; unauthorized consecrations announced

The Vatican will receive representatives of the Priestly Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) following the traditionalist group's announcement that it plans to consecrate new bishops without permission from Rome — a move that could incur automatic excommunication of all bishops involved and deepen the group's rupture with the Catholic Church. The Vatican meeting will take place Feb. 12 at the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and will be led by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the dicastery. The SSPX delegation will be led by its superior general, Father Davide Pagliarani, 55. Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said "the meeting will be an opportunity for an informal and personal dialogue, which may help identify effective instruments of dialogue that could lead to positive outcomes," according to the official outlet Vatican News. At present, only a meeting with the prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith is planned, and it is not known whether Pope Leo XIV will also receive the SSPX superior general.

US bishops mark 100th anniversary of Black History Month

February 2026 marks 100 years of commemorating Black History Month in the United States and Catholic bishops are marking the milestone. Bishop Daniel E. Garcia, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, and Bishop Roy E. Campbell, chairman of the USCCB's Subcommittee on African American Affairs, marked the anniversary by urging the faithful to "be faithful stewards of memory" and "courageous witnesses to truth." In a statement released Feb. 3, the bishops highlighted the anniversary and called the milestone "an opportunity for us to prayerfully reflect on the ways history has been preserved, honored, and passed on across generations." Reflecting on the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter against racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts," the bishops recognized "that the lived experience of the vast majority of African Americans bears the marks of our country's original sin of racism."

Monastic-style retreat planned for pope, Roman Curia for Lent

A week of spiritual exercises for Pope Leo XIV and the Roman Curia at the start of Lent will take on a distinctly monastic character, with the retreat returning to the Apostolic Palace but relocating to the Renaissance-era Pauline Chapel, decorated with frescoes by Michelangelo. In previous years, the retreat was held in the palace's Redemptoris Mater Chapel, known for mosaics associated with Father Marko Rupnik, who has been accused of sexual and spiritual abuse. The preacher for the exercises will be Bishop Erik Varden of Trondheim, a Cistercian of the Strict Observance (Trappist). A Norwegian who was baptized as a Lutheran by nonpracticing parents, Varden studied at Cambridge and later converted to Catholicism, a change he has linked to the inspiration of music. He has served as bishop of the Diocese of Trondheim since 2020. "It is a responsible task. I hope, in one way or another, to be of service," Varden told EWTN News.

Experts: Organ donation could help drive assisted suicide rates in Canada

By Daniel Payne
EWTN News

Advocates and civic officials are warning of the high numbers of donated organs from assisted suicide victims in Canada, arguing that organ donation programs for suicidal individuals could lead to additional pressure for such patients to decide to end their lives by assisted suicide.

Data have shown consistently high numbers of organ donations in Canada tied to the country's medical aid in dying (MAID) program. A 2024 study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, for instance, found "a substantial increase in deceased [organ] donation after MAID in the first five years of implementation in Quebec."

And a 2022 study in the American Journal of Transplantation found that nearly half of euthanasia victims in the survey who donated organs came from Canada.

Jim O'Neill, the deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), recently said in an interview with the Washington Examiner that the data suggesting a link between euthanasia and organ donation is "very unfortunate."

"We thought we'd seen all the possible horrors, you know, in America, and then Canada had this strange new horror that was really just shocking," he said.

Claire Middleton, a doctor of anesthesia at the University of Toronto, told EWTN News that it is "impossible to include conversations about donation at any stage during the MAID process without the potential of influencing and actually encouraging the decision" to go through with euthanasia.

Middleton, a Christian, said she is "totally opposed to MAID and [has] been from the outset." Her ethical concerns over organ donation after MAID stem from that belief, she said.

"We know that some patients who request and are approved for MAID actually change their minds multiple times right up to the actual event," she said. "Many factors may come into play at this time, but how much harder for them to back out of the whole process if they have agreed to donate and now feel they will be disappointing a potential transplant recipient."

"Some patients may actually make an initial choice for MAID because they view their lives as worthless and feel that the world would be a better place if they gave their organs to others," she said.

But "every human being is equally worthy of being valued and supported — no one group of patients should take priority over another," she argued.

Lawmakers in Canada have for years debated the possibility of extending assisted suicide to those suffering solely from mental illnesses rather than terminal medical conditions.

In 2024 the government delayed implementing that expansion until at least 2027, though advocates have continued to warn that individuals with mental illness are uniquely vulnerable to MAID.

Middleton said that vulnerable patients such as those suffering from mental health issues "may see their lives as worthless and just the possibility of organ donation via MAID may sway their decision."

If the death program is ultimately extended to mental illness patients, "concerns about truly informed consent and absence of undue influence would surely increase significantly," she said.

Some officials have even suggested euthanizing patients directly by removing their organs, in part to ensure that no damage is done to the organs themselves.

Robert Sibbald, the director of health ethics at London Health Sciences Centre, argued several years ago that the best "mode of death" for those donating their organs might be "to retrieve [the] organs" outright.

"We're so invested in this dead donor rule, and I think that over time, that rule has become so ingrained in the medical community that we hold it out as a foundational principle, not only a rule, but a value," Sibbald said at the time.

But "is the dead donor rule even relevant?" he asked.

Alex Schadenberg, a pro-life advocate and the executive director of the Ontario-based Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, admitted that the "problem begins with the legalization of medical homicide."

"Ethically speaking, if it is OK to kill someone, then why isn't it OK to kill them by removing their organs?" he pointed out.

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

Surgeons: Delay gender surgeries on minors

By Amira Abuzeid & Tyler Arnold
EWTN News

In an official break with major medical organizations in the U.S., the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) issued a position statement this week recommending that due to the “low certainty” of benefit, plastic surgeons should delay surgeries related to treating gender dysphoria in children — including breast and chest, genital, and facial surgeries — until a patient is at least 19 years old.

In its Feb. 3 statement, the ASPS, which represents more than 11,000 plastic surgeons, or 90% of those in the U.S. and Canada, said there is “insufficient evidence demonstrating a favorable risk-benefit ratio for the pathway of gender-related endocrine and surgical interventions in children and adolescents.”

The group also cited low certainty of long-term benefits, the likelihood of potential harms, and the irreversible nature of surgeries in a developmentally

vulnerable population.

The procedures, which supporters call “gender-affirming care,” include surgeries to remove or reconstruct healthy genitals to make them resemble those of the opposite sex.

They also include chest procedures that remove the healthy breasts on girls or implant prosthetic breasts on boys and facial surgeries that attempt to feminize boys and masculinize girls.

According to the ASPS statement, the recommendation is based on a review of evidence including the 2024 Cass Review from the United Kingdom and a 2025 report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The U.S. report detailed the lack of evidence to support such procedures for minors along with the potential for irreversible harm. The report came out one year after the Cass Review arrived at similar conclusions, which led to the near-total restriction of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for minors

in the United Kingdom. Surgeries for minors have been banned there for longer.

In July 2024, the ASPS first broke with the consensus of all major medical associations in the U.S. — including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, World Professional Association for Transgender Health, and the American Psychological Association — when it cited the evidence as “low quality” for the benefits of so-called “gender-affirming care” for minors in a Feb. 3 statement to City Journal.

“This position statement is not a retroactive judgment but a forward-looking response to evolving evidence,” the statement reads.

The ASPS emphasized that its position statement is not a clinical practice guideline. Instead, the group encourages its members to use their “personal and professional judgment” as they “balance compassion with scientific rigor, developmental considerations, and concern for

long-term welfare” of their patients.

Alfonso Oliva, a board-certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon and a board member at the Catholic Medical Association, told EWTN News that he welcomes the statement, but it does not go far enough.

“It goes a long way to try to protect adolescents from harm,” he said, “but I would like to see it go through age 25, which is when the young adult brain is completely formed, so they’d have better decision-making ability.”

“At least by 19 we’re not going to transition children who would desist when cared for and loved and counseled appropriately,” he continued.

Oliva said it is “almost impossible to pick out which adolescents will persist in their gender dysphoria into adulthood and which will desist” and that according to the evidence, “most adolescents who have gender dysphoria will over time, on their own, desist.”

NY Archdiocese: Insurer posed as victim group

By Daniel Payne
EWTN News

The Archdiocese of New York is arguing in state court that its longtime insurer has secretly been “waging a shadow campaign” and posing as a victims’ rights group in order to “undermine and weaken” the archdiocese amid an ongoing insurance dispute.

In a Jan. 31 legal filing at the New York State Supreme Court obtained by EWTN News, the archdiocese said that Chubb Insurance — which the archdiocese sued in 2024 over an alleged failure to pay out financial claims for sex abuse victims — has for several years been “secretly” posing as the “Church

Accountability Project,” allegedly encouraging abuse victims to “pursue claims against the [archdiocese].”

The archdiocesan filing said the insurer has secretly run the website in order to “elevate Chubb’s own financial interests” and improve its leverage in the ongoing lawsuit.

As of Feb. 4 the “Church Accountability Project” website prominently displays the Chubb logo at the top of its page. But archives of the website from around a year ago make no mention of the site’s alleged alignment with Chubb.

“The Archdiocese of New York tolerated and covered up horrific sexual abuse against children for decades,”

the older, un-branded version of the website states. The project said it was “committed to holding the Archdiocese of New York accountable.” The current version of the website contains partly similar language.

A Chubb spokesman on Feb. 4 described the filing as “the latest desperate tactic to delay justice and distract from the decades of horrific child sexual abuse the Archdiocese of New York enabled and concealed.”

“It’s quite telling that the archdiocese is more outraged about the facts coming to light on a platform we created than they are about the abuses they condoned, concealed, and covered up,” the statement

said. “The archdiocese is delaying payment to deserving victims and failing to provide insurers needed information.”

In 2024 amid the newly filed lawsuit against the insurer, New York archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan told the faithful that Chubb was “attempting to evade their legal and moral contractual obligation to settle covered claims which would bring peace and healing to victim-survivors.”

The insurer in turn argued that the archdiocese “tolerated, concealed, and covered up rampant child sexual abuse for decades, and despite having substantial financial resources, they still refuse to compensate their victims.”

In its Jan. 31 filing the archdiocese requested punitive damages against Chubb. It described the alleged “Church Accountability Project” maneuver as “wanton sabotage” and “just the latest in an example of the depths to which Chubb is willing to stoop.”

The rebranded “accountability” website, meanwhile, alleges that the archdiocese “repeatedly refused to share crucial details regarding what they knew and when” regarding child abuse.

“The insurance purchased by the archdiocese is designed to cover accidents, not to compensate for deliberately concealing a pattern of abuse,” the website says.

VIRTUAL EVENTS

BROWN BAG

Join us for an 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.

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. A link will be sent to you before the start of the program. For more information contact Marika Donders, 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: Meet new people and unpack the Christian faith together. Alpha is for anyone who's curious. No judgement, no pressure. Each session unpacks a big question of life, faith and purpose and is designed to spark conversation.

Contact: For more information contact Debra Lennon at lennon-debra26@gmail.com, 518-524-4388

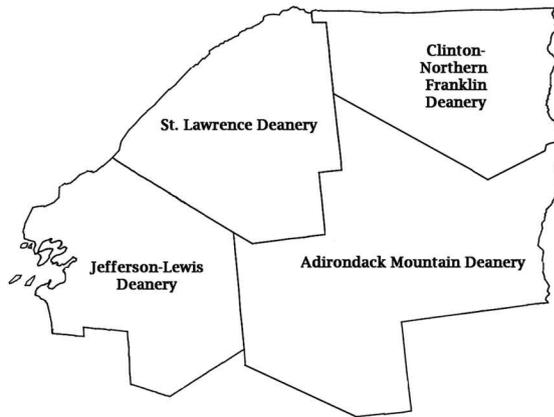
TECH WORKSHOP

Lake Placid - Mercy Care for the Adirondacks will host a Technology Assistance Workshop open to all older adult community members.

Date: Feb. 26

Time: 9 a.m. to Noon

Place: BOCES Adirondack Educational Center



The North Country Catholic welcomes contributions to "Around the Diocese". Parishioners are invited to send information about activities to:
North Country Catholic, PO Box 326,
Ogdensburg, NY 13669
e-mail news@northcountrycatholic.org.
Items must be received in the NCC office by the Wednesday before publication.

Features: Mercy Care is scaling up its programs to empower Elder Friends to have access to a digital device and provide instruction on how to use it through its iPad permanent loan program. Roberta Bryson of NBT Bank will offer a presentation about online banking management, navigating the online portal, and fraud protection. There will be an opportunity for one-on-one assistance with cell phones and tablets.

Contact: Registration is required. To request more information or to register, please contact Lexi Bevilacqua, Director of Programs and Mission Integration at abevilacqua@adkmercy.org or at 518-523-5446.

CLINTON NORTHERN FRANKLIN

POND HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Lyon Mountain – St. Bernard's and St. Edmund's Parish to have their second annual Pond Hockey Tournament.

Date: Feb. 14

Time: 8 a.m. until finished

Place: Church pond in front of St. Bernard's

Cost: \$75 per team (4 team members allowing 1 sub per team)

Features: Last year we raised \$2,000 for the parish in which the Lyon Mountain Knights of Columbus Council #7215 hosted the

event. Depending on the number teams that register, that will determine how many games will be played. All games are to be 3 on 3 with no goalies in which current Pond Hockey Rules and Regulations to be utilized. There will be all day food and drinks at the American Legion post 1623.

Contact: For more information and to register contact Mike Chase at 518-578-2638, Pete Siskavich at 518-578-5280 or Kyle Siskavich at 518-420-2474

FISH FRIES

AuSable Forks - The Au Sable Knights will be holding three fish fries every other Friday night.

Date: Feb. 20, March 6 and 20

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30

Place: Holy Name School/Parish Center

Cost: Adults, \$15; Children under 12, \$10; Take-outs available.

BREAKFAST

Altona – St. Ann's and Holy Angel's parishes to have a breakfast prepared by the ladies of St. Ann.

Date: Feb. 22

Time: 8 a.m. to noon

Place: Holy Angels Hall

Cost: Adults, \$13; Children 5-12, \$7; under 5 Free

Menu: Eggs, Eggcups, Sausage, Bacon, Pancakes, French Toast, Baked Goods, Home Fries, Coffee,

Tea and Juice.

SOAKING PRAYERS SESSIONS

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

Date: March 2, April 6, May 4 and June 1

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

Place: Newman Center

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

Contact: evemcgill16@charter.net

FIRST FRIDAY

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

Date: March 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: 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.

LENTEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL

Morrisonville - The Morrisonville Catholic Daughters invite everyone to a special Lenten Soup for the Soul evening.

Date: March 10

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Place: St. Alexander's Church

Features: A simple soup dinner will be served followed by a special presentation by Shannon Loo-by and her daughters, Helen, Vivian, and Bernadette, who will share about their experience serving

as Catholic missionaries in an orphanage in Honduras. Donations will be accepted to support the ministry of the Catholic Daughters.

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

SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER

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

Date: Feb. 7, March 14

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, March 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

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.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Date: March 1
Time: Following 11 a.m. Mass
Place: St. Hedwig's Church
Contact: 315-348-6260

LENTEN RETREAT

Watertown – All are welcome to attend the annual Sisters of St. Joseph Lenten Retreat.

Date: March 15
Time: 2 p.m. to 4
Place: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Dostie Hall

Features: Join us for an afternoon of prayer as we reflect on Christ's call to move from our blind sights to a deeper insight into His life, death and resurrection presented to us by Father Leagon Carlin who is studying at St. Paul's University, Ottawa. His theme is: "Lead Kindly Light". There will be an opportunity for prayer and for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Contact: Register with Sister Mary Eamon (smelyngssj@yahoo.com) or with Sister Bethany Fitzgerald (srbethssj@gmail.com) by March 10.

ST. LAWRENCE**VALENTINE CASINO NIGHT**

Canton – St. Mary's is celebrating its 150th anniversary with a special casino night on Valentine's Day.

Date: Feb. 14
Time: 6 p.m. to 9
Place: St. Mary's Parish Center
Cost: 18+ \$40 per person or \$75 per couple

Features: The evening will include gaming, grand prizes, adult beverages, music, and hors d'oeuvres.

Contact: Tickets are available at the Canton Parish Office or by calling 315-386-2543. (Limited number available)

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: March 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: March 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: March 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: March 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 Gonther

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 Feb. 7 at 10 a.m. facilitated by Fr. Scott Belina; Plattsburgh area, St. John XXIII Newman Center, start date Jan. 30 at 10 a.m., facilitated by Fr. Carter Pierce.

Features: A welcoming space 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.

Contact: Deacon Garry Stevens, Vocations Coordinator at 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

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

IHC MYSTERY PLAYERS

The IHC Mystery Players will present the Way of the Cross around the Diocese and beyond.

Lent 2026 Prayer Schedule: February 22, 2 p.m. at Summit Village, Watertown; Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Seton, Baldwinsville; March 8, 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian, Watertown; March 12, 7:30 p.m. at Corpus Christi, Round Lake; March 13, 7:30 p.m. at St. Michael's, South Glens Falls; March 14, 7:30 p.m. at St. Bernard's, Saranac Lake; March 20, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Family, Little Falls; March 22, 7:30 p.m. at St. Cecilia's, Adams; March 27, 7:30 p.m. at Pope John XXIII, Liverpool; March 29, 7:30 p.m. at St. James, Carthage; April 2, 8 p.m. at IHC, Watertown; April 3, 7:30 p.m. at St. Patrick's, Watertown

Contact: For more information go to <https://www.ihcschool.org/mystery-players>

SURVIVING DIVORCE

Canton - The Family Life Office will be offering the Surviving Divorce program 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 Sr. Janet Schaeffler, O.P. 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.

HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Massena – New location and save the date! Highway to Heaven

Date: May 16

Place: Sacred Heart Church

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE

Going beyond the minimum

"I just couldn't help myself." "Well, I really didn't mean it." "Yes, but there were extenuating circumstances." "It's not my fault; the devil made me do it." Have you ever heard those phrases before? Maybe you have said them.

Well, take those sentences and compare them to the first words of today's first reading: "If you choose, you can keep the commandments." The psalm continues: "Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord." And Paul reminds us: "We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age."

Jesus himself says: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abol-

ish but to fulfill."

Written for Jews, Matthew is showing that Jesus, in referring to the law of Moses, fulfills what Moses taught. Jesus does not destroy the teaching of Moses and the prophets any more than adulthood destroys childhood. One complements and complements the other.

The immature and mature analogy may strike home to some of us. The immature seeks only to do the minimum. What do I have to do to pass? What hoops do I have to jump through? How can I avoid a particular tough course and still graduate? How do I make myself look busy so that I can impress the boss?

The mature person

Feb. 15

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READINGS

Sirach 15:15-20
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-37

avoids those questions, dismisses the easy way, sees the job and its tasks as a pathway to help him mature and grow and achieve greatness.

When Jesus speaks in today's Gospel, he insists that his followers must observe the law, the prescriptions of the law, all 600-plus prescriptions. However, the law only points the way to something greater. He gives several examples.

Let's look a little closer at just one of the sins. What does Jesus say about anger? Much of our culture infested itself with disagree-

ment, argument and anger? Turn on cable television, and it's a veritable shout-fest of accusations and attacks. Turning on the computer doesn't provide anything better. Especially now, when we have powerful weapons literally at our fingertips - through chat rooms and social media and blogs - the world is constantly screaming at itself. Very often, so many work to make matters worse. We can say whatever we want about someone or some situation, and often-times, we can hurt others and still maintain anonymity. Expressing anger in these fora not only hurts ourselves and others, it also forces us to maintain our immaturity.

But Jesus tells us: what we are doing is not only uncharitable, not only sinful, but it is,

in fact, a kind of murder. When we harbor hate, and fuel anger, we kill. We kill charity. We kill community. We kill love. We kill the Gospel. And Christ's message, then and now, seeks to give Gospel life. To make it come alive, in ourselves, and in others.

So, our theme is really two-fold. First, we must go beyond the minimum requirements of religious practice. Secondly, we have the power to choose to do the right and correct the wrong. In our current era, freedom of choice has come to mean to do whatever I want. However, freedom of choice really means that no one is forcing us to do what is right. We have to choose what is good, right and holy.

With Jesus at our side, let's make sure that we are always at his side!

Pope Leo's prayer intention for February

EWTN News

Pope Leo XIV's prayer intention for the month of February is for children with incurable diseases.

In a video released on Feb. 5, the Holy Father prayed that the faithful would realize that "the smiles, even in the midst of pain," of chil-

dren suffering from incurable diseases, "are a testimony of [God's] kingdom."

In the full video shared on the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network website, Pope Leo recites an original prayer written specifically for this month's prayer intention.

Here is the pope's full

prayer:

Lord Jesus, who welcomed the little ones in your arms and blessed them tenderly,

today we bring before you the children living with incurable illnesses.

Their fragile bodies are a sign of your presence,

and their smiles, even in the midst of pain, are a testimony of your kingdom.

We ask you, Lord, that they may never lack proper medical care, human and compassionate attention,

and the support of a community that accom-

panies them with love.

Sustain their families in hope,

in the midst of weariness and uncertainty, and make of them witnesses of a faith that grows stronger through trial.

Bless the hands of doctors, nurses, and caregivers,

so that their work may always be an expression of active compassion.

May your Spirit enlighten them in every difficult decision, and grant them patience and tenderness to serve with dignity.

Lord, teach us to recognize your face in ev-

ery suffering child.

May their vulnerability awaken our compassion,

and move us to care, accompany, and love with concrete gestures of solidarity.

Make of us a Church that,

animated by the feelings of your heart

and moved by prayer and service,

knows how to uphold fragility,

and in the midst of suffering, becomes a source of comfort,

a seed of hope, and a proclamation of new life.

Amen.

Visit our website

www.northcountrycatholic.org

- Read local stories and commentaries
- Search archived papers
- View diocesan events and much more

 Find us on Facebook!




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

Charity in the Lunar New Year

Let us all learn from the example of Chinese Catholics during this season and care for those in our community that are struggling with loneliness, poverty, lack of shelter and illness. May we be there for our neighbors in their times of need.

On the eve and in the early hours of the Lunar New Year, Feb. 17, Catholic parishes throughout China will be filled with families eager to participate in Eucharistic celebrations, give thanks to God and invoke his blessing, as well as light candles, firecrackers and fireworks to share moments of fellowship. However, for a month now, Catholic communities in mainland China have been carrying out pastoral activities and charitable initiatives traditionally linked to the Lunar New Year.

Bearing witness to their faith through works of charity and mercy, Chinese Catholic communities demonstrate how the Christian spirit and the Chinese virtue of caring for the most vulnerable flourish in harmony.

According to the church news portal xinde.org, ahead of the Lunar New Year—which, according to Chinese astrology, will usher in the Year of the Horse—the Catholic charitable foundation “Nanjing Ark” has launched a grassroots initiative to provide “a warm winter” for people in need and with disabilities, such as blind children, former leprosy patients and elderly people suffering from illnesses. In collaboration with civil organizations, the foundation has donated funds to support families with sick children. Furthermore, its volunteers have distributed 40 eye care kits to teenagers as part of the “Luminous Childhood” initiative, in partnership with an eye hospital; visited the Municipal Center for the Prevention of Occupational Diseases, expanding assistance to patients cured of leprosy; and delivered 50 quilts to needy elderly.

In the Apostolic Prefecture of Lindong, Inner Mongolia, the Dengkou community promoted various awareness and support activities for elderly people living alone and students facing difficulties in honor of the Lunar New Year...

The Taihu community in Wuxi City supported adults with autism, visiting a rehabilitation center to help overcome loneliness and allow everyone to feel included in the festive atmosphere shared by families...

Meanwhile, 20 volunteers from the Tian'ai (“Love of God”) Association of the Archdiocese of Guangzhou have renewed the tradition of supporting the elderly and people with disabilities, reaching even cities and villages far from the metropolis...

Article from FIDES missionary news service of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Please remember the Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Ogdensburg INC. when writing or changing your will.

OBITUARIES

Canton – Harry Dale Podgurski, 88; Mass of Christian Burial in spring.

Dannemora – Hugh C. Drollette, 81; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 5, 2026 at St. Joseph's Church; burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Fort Covington – Valerie Ann LeBlanc, 74; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 5, 2026 at St. Mary's of the Fort Church; burial in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Fort Covington – Leslie M. (de-Varona) Osborn, 96; Mass of Christian Burial May 15, 2026 at St. Mary's of the Fort Church.

Heuvelton – Shelly J. (Price) Reed, 68; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2026 at St. Raphael's Church; burial in St. Hubert's Cemetery, Star Lake.

Hogansburg – Felicia A. Jacobs, 75; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 6, 2026 at St. Regis Church.

Inlet – Dr. William Andrew Guiffré, 91; Mass of Christian Burial May 16, 2026 at St. Anthony's Church; burial in Old Forge.

Lyon Mountain – Judy D. (LaPoint) Noreault, 83; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 3, 2026 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Peter's Cemetery.

Massena – Elyn M. (Grow) Hall, 67; Mass of Christian Burial in spring at Church of the Sacred Heart.

Massena – Lee E. Thomas, 81; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 2, 2026 at St. Mary's Church; burial in Calvary Cemetery.

Ogdensburg – Cheryl (Morley) Claxton, 67; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 6, 2026 at St. Mary's Cathedral; burial in the Oswegatchie Mausoleum.

Ogdensburg – Eleanor (Marlow) Stevenson, 92; Mass of Christian

Burial Feb. 7, 2026 at Notre Dame Church

Plattsburgh – Judith K. (Brown) Clancy, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2026 at St. John the Baptist Church.

Plattsburgh – Tricia L. Begor, 54; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 31, 2026 at St. John's Church.

Port Henry – Mary Josephine Clow, 53; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 3, 2026 at St. Patrick's Church.

Saranac Lake – Frances I. (Lewis) Snyder, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 31, 2026 at St. Bernard's Church; burial in St. Bernard's Cemetery.

Tupper Lake – Alice Irene (Duket) Baker, 88; Mass of Christian Burial in Spring at St. Alphonsus Church; burial in St. Alphonsus Cemetery.

Around the diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Features: Featuring the Shroud of Turin replica exhibit, Father Jonathan Meyer, National Preacher of the Eucharistic Revival, Award-winning musician Sarah Kroger. Join Bishop LaValley and friends from around the North Country and beyond for Mass, Adoration and more.

Contact: Mary Beth Bracy at marybethbracy@gmail.com for more information.

DYING WITH CHRIST, LIVING WITH HOPE

Plattsburgh - When we make a commitment to die with Christ, we can truly live with hope. Learn about NYS Assisted Suicide Legislation and Canada's MAID.

Date: May 30

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

Place: St. John Newman Center
Cost: \$10 donation, includes lunch

Features: Discussions feature theologians and healthcare professionals giving perspectives on suffering, grief, dying and our Christian duty to care.

Contact: Registration online at: <https://www.rcdony.org.living-withhope>

NEIGHBORING DIOCESES

COUPLES RETREAT

Canandaigua – Couples Valentines Retreat to be held.

Date: Feb. 13, 7 p.m. to Feb. 15, Noon

Place: Notre Dame Retreat House

Cost: \$325 per couple

Features: Spend Valentine's weekend deepening your faith, strengthening your bond, and celebrating God's gift of love. The weekend will include a special Valentine's social and dinner on Saturday evening as part of this uplifting retreat. The retreat will be

run by Fr. Jim Dahlinger, SJ, Deb & Keith Northridge and Jodie Scordo.

Contact: For more information email jscordo@notredameretreat.org

CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE

Syracuse - The Diocese of Syracuse's 18th IGNITE Catholic Men's Conference to be held.

Date: March 28

Time: Registration at 8 a.m., event 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Place: Bishop Ludden-Grimes Jr./Sr. High School

Cost: \$65 by March 9, \$70 after, \$75 at the door

Features: The theme will be “Trust in His Strength” A great lineup of speakers, Father Larry Richards and Brandan Powell. Bishop Lucia will start the day with Holy Mass.

Contact: For more information go to www.ignitecatholicmen.org.

SPECIAL COLLECTION
ASH WEDNESDAY - FEBRUARY 18, 2026



SUPPORT THE CHURCH IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE



RESTORE THE CHURCH BUILD THE FUTURE

More than 30 years ago, the bishops of the United States established the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe to help the Church rebuild and resume its mission in countries where for decades, communist regimes had confiscated churches and persecuted priests, consecrated religious, and laity. The end of those communist regimes restored the Church's freedom to preach the Gospel, pray, and carry out public ministries such as health care and education.

Since its founding in AD 996, Hungary's Archabbey of Pannonhalma has been a center of prayer and learning and a treasured symbol of Hungarian religious and cultural heritage. For centuries the monks of this Benedictine community dedicated their lives to prayer, hospitality, and education at all levels, from primary through university. After World War II, Hungary's communist regime dissolved monastic orders and allowed the monks only to operate their secondary school. The community faced consistent intimidation.

Today, the communist regime is gone, and Pannonhalma is once again a center of faith-enriching learning. Funding from the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe made possible three such programs in 2025. In February, the Benedictine school of Pannonhalma

offered secondary students an art education course designed to deepen their spiritual growth by incorporating their Catholic faith into their appreciation of art. In August, the archabbey conducted a liturgical workshop for Catholic clergy, seminarians, and laity committed to deepening their understanding and experience of liturgy. Finally, in September, the archabbey brought together international ecumenical leaders, Catholic clergy from Hungary, and leaders from Protestant and Orthodox Christian churches for a symposium on fostering Christian unity, held in a setting of theological reflection and personal encounter.

Your support for the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe at Mass helps the Church in Hungary and 27 other countries to rebuild and continue the mission to share the Gospel with new generations. More information about the collection and the range of projects it supports can be found at www.usccb.org/cee.

If you prefer to donate online, see QR code.

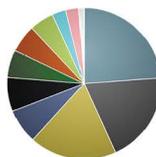


2024 DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS

Total Number of Grants Approved: 547
Total Amount Approved: \$9,588,486

EXPENSES

Grants and Donations	91.79%
Program Costs	4.52%
Promotions and Fundraising Expenses	2.84%
Administrative Expenses	0.85%
Total Expenses	\$10,449,046



PROGRAM AREA	GRANTS	AMOUNT	PERCENT
Emergency*	8	\$2,283,000	23.81%
Evangelization	121	\$1,862,944	19.43%
Construction	145	\$1,772,954	18.49%
Equipment/Accommodation Purchase	33	\$704,306	7.35%
Operational Support	50	\$692,726	7.22%
Scholarships	79	\$562,314	5.86%
Social Aid	44	\$561,935	5.86%
Education	24	\$497,085	5.18%
Vehicle Purchase	15	\$280,758	2.93%
Seminary Support	14	\$263,687	2.75%
Multimedia	14	\$106,777	1.11%

*Includes grants for urgent humanitarian and pastoral responses to the crisis in Ukraine.



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Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe
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