Jesus maps the path to peace

YANGON, MYANMAR (CNS) - Jesus’ love “is like a spiritual GPS” that guides people past the everyday obstacles of fear and pride and allows them to find their way to a relationship with God and with their neighbors, Pope Francis said.

Christ’s message of “forgiveness and mercy uses a logic that not all will want to understand, and which will encounter obstacles. Yet his love, revealed on the cross is ultimately unstoppable,” the pope said Nov. 29, celebrating his first public Mass in Myanmar. According to the Vatican, 150,000 people attended the Mass at the Kyaikkasan sports ground. Thousands of them had traveled hundreds of miles to be at the Mass, and many of them camped out on the sports field the night before the liturgy. Pope Francis acknowledged the sacrifices made by the people as well as the struggles Catholics face as a tiny minority in Myanmar and as citizens of a country struggling to leave violence behind and transition from military to democratic rule.

Appeal set for retired religious

The 30th annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious will be held Dec. 9-10 in parishes in the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

“The North Country has been and continues to be blessed by men and women who give their lives in service to the Lord as consecrated religious,” said Bishop Terry R. LaValley. “Now is our turn to support them through the Retirement Fund for Religious.”

The annual collection benefits 32,000 aging Catholic sisters, brothers and priests in religious orders in the U.S.

SPECIAL SECTION, PAGES 7-10

Under Four Flags

St. Joseph Sister Mary Christine Taylor completes history of the City of Ogdensburg

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

THANK YOU, SALLY

Bishop Terry R. LaValley presented the Bishop Edgar P. Wadhams Award for Distinguished Service to Sally Rusaw during a farewell gathering recently held with members of the diocesan staff. The award reads: “A native of St. Mary’s Parish in Potsdam, Sally shared her faith and wisdom with young people as a teacher and librarian in our Catholic Schools, librarian and instructor at Mater Dei College, liturgical musician, religious volunteer at Ogdensburg and Riverview Correctional Facilities, and archivist at our diocesan chancery. In all these roles, Sally generously shared her faith and guided others to the Lord. Her faithful service, kind words, prayers, loving gestures, gentle presence and exemplary witness have been blessings to the countless individual lives she touched and have enriched us as all as a Catholic Diocese.”

GIFT THAT LASTS ALL YEAR: Subscription to the North Country Catholic, p. 16
EDITOR’S NOTE

Welcoming days filled with hope

The Diocese of Ogdensburg promises to be an ideal spot to properly observe the Season of Advent this year. As Catholics we know that these December days should focus on “hope” and Pope Francis has something to say about the topic: “Hope doesn’t come with power or wealth, but with trusting in God,” he said.

Isn’t that a good thing for the church of the North Country? Without a lot of power or wealth we have made a commitment to offer hope to the people in Latakia, Syria. In return, we can expect that the power of faith among persecuted Christians will be a great source of hope for our own sometimes wobbly Christian faith.

We will also have the chance to assist a group of people whose very lives have been a source of Christian hope for us all – the religious men and women who built up our parishes, schools, hospitals. Next weekend we can “give back” to help our treasured Sisters and Brothers in their retirement.

The road on our way towards hope, of course, must be paved with prayer. We’ve been praying with and for our religious brothers and sisters throughout our lives but prayer for the people of Syria may be a new experience.

As we prepare to welcome Bishop Antoine Chbeir to the diocese next week, the members of the Solidarity in Faith Committee have offered a prayer for the people in his diocese. It’s a perfect Advent prayer of hope:

Almighty eternal God, source of all compassion, the promise of your mercy and saving help fills our hearts with hope. Hear the cries of the people of Syria: bring healing to those suffering from the violence, and comfort to those mourning the dead. Empower and encourage Syria’s neighbors in their care and welcome for refugees.

Convert the hearts of those who have taken up arms, and strengthen the resolve of those committed to peace. O God of hope and Father of mercy, your Holy Spirit inspires us to look beyond ourselves and our own needs. Inspire leaders to choose peace over violence and to seek reconciliation with enemies. Inspire the Church around the world with compassion for the people of Syria, and fill us with hope for a future of peace built on justice for all. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace and Light of the World, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Advent: a time to consider our poverty

Advent can be a difficult season of the Church year to explain, especially to fit it into present ideas. Our Church tells us that during Advent we do not begin our decorating for Christmas – and we don’t in the Church. In fact, we dress down to purple. But we do decorate at home, inside and outside. Personally, I got my Christmas tree up last week.

Advent is the season for preparing for Christmas. We all get involved in the usual Christmas stuff – gift buying, writing cards, holding Christmas parties and such. And it is a busy time – with all these enjoyable activities.

Again, personally speaking, I thought about having a Christmas party next week. But wait! This is not exactly the kind of preparations that Advent Spirit means. However, I like all of these things.

So, let us consider this time of Advent spiritually. For Catholics, Advent is an important opportunity to grow spiritually. It is meant to be a time of prayer and possibly a good time for daily Mass as well as on Sundays.

Advent is a time for some meditating on the Christmas story.

Advent is the time we again sort out that yearly question – “What is the true meaning of Christmas?”

I am certain that you know the correct answer: Christmas is the celebration of the Birth of Jesus. We believe that God became incarnate among us with the birth of Jesus. Jesus becomes one of us – human in every way. He lived among us, he showed us what life is about, he died for us as our Savior, he rose to a new life in resurrection to lead us to our resurrection.

I would like to add something more to our consideration of Advent Spirituality as our preparation for Christmas. This week, I came across one of those daily meditation books. This book, “Grace in Every Season,” used the writings of Catherine Doherty. The editor, Mary Bizzett, chose a paragraph for each day from Catherine’s writings.

I want to share with you the meditation for the first of December. “This is the month of Christ’s birthday. The Son of God and Man of Man was born in a cave. Over the centuries men and women have sentimentalized it. It is a time for us Christians of the twenty-first century to take another look at this cave and him who was born in it. People who live in caves are not the wealthy of this world. They are poor.”

Advent is our time to again fill our hearts for the Jesus who loved us so much that he would die for us. He was born in a cave and, this, part of our celebration must involve the honor we pay this child, realizing his readiness to be born in poverty.

Jesus chose to be born in poverty – his parents, Mary and Joseph, were poor. Jesus lived his life in poverty. Jesus came to teach and guide us, despite his poverty. Jesus transformed our world – Jesus transformed all of our history – this Jesus accomplished all of this even though he lived in poverty.

So, our Advent must be about poverty. This is not an easy message to speak about. Advent and Christmas have become times of spending and buying. Many make a great deal of money because of Christmas. Yet, spiritually we are encouraged to recognize Christ’s poverty during Advent.

Our preparation for the Birth of Jesus must be filled with our recognition of the poverty of Jesus and our call to be poor also. “Are we going to the cave like the shepherds, who were also poor?”

It is time for us to understand how poor we really are and establish a real relationship with Jesus in his poverty. We have so much, yet, we are still very needy. There is so much we like to do, so many ways we would like to help, so many opportunities to make our world a better place yet, we fail. We are just too poor.

We need to allow Jesus to be part of our lives, part of our Advent. Jesus born in poverty changed the world. Jesus now wants to help us to see how, despite our own poverty, we can accomplish so much, help so many, make this a better world.
Diocese prepares for visit of Bishop of Latakia, Syria

Bishop Terry R. LaValley will welcome Bishop Antoine Chbeir of the Maronite Diocese of Latakia, Syria, to the Diocese of Ogdensburg Dec. 11-18. Several public events have been scheduled throughout the week.

The Ogdensburg diocese has established a twinning relationship with Latakia as a response to Pope Francis’ call to assist Christians of the Middle East who have been persecuted for their faith.

In his 2017 Chrism Mass homily, delivered April 6 at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Bishop LaValley said, “Particularly in the Middle East, the birthplace of our Savior and home to the beginnings of our Church, Christians are experiencing an ‘ecumenism of blood’ where our sisters and brothers in faith are under constant pressure to abandon their land, even their faith - or die.

“The decrease in the Christian population in the Middle East is staggering,” he said. “If nothing changes, soon there will be no Christians left residing in the most ancient of Christian places. Genocide is happening in our midst.”

The twinning initiative, Solidarity in Faith, “is our practical diocesan response to the Holy Father’s call to assist these suffering families and communities,” the bishop said.

The Maronite Catholic Diocese of Latakia is comprised of about 45,000 Catholics with 30 parishes, 27 priests and 27 consecrated religious. War has wreaked havoc on the region; in addition to normal pastoral activities, the Church in Latakia also must minister to thousands of displaced Syrians who have sought a safe refuge.

The Solidarity in Faith Committee, headed by Father Steven Murray of Watertown, has worked with the two bishops to facilitate Bishop Chbeir’s visit to the North Country.

The Syrian bishop will preside at liturgies and meet parishioners at the following sites:

- Dec. 12 at 11 a.m. and the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse in Watertown
- Dec. 13 at 12 p.m. at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Ogdensburg
- Dec. 14 at 10 a.m. at Seton Catholic Central in Plattsburgh
- Dec. 16 at 4 p.m. at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Ogdensburg
- Dec. 17 at 11 a.m. at the Church of the Holy Family in Watertown

Further information about Solidarity in Faith is available on the website www.rcdony.org/solidarity.

Sr. Christine Taylor, SSJ completes history of city

The Society of the Sisters of St. Joseph has published a new documentary history of Ogdensburg entitled Under Four Flags.

The Society of the Sisters of St. Joseph has published a history of Ogdensburg, Under Four Flags

The large volume of 730 pages covers the era from 1748 to 1960 and is enhanced by hundreds of photos obtained from the Monsignor Anthony A. Milia Collection, the Edward P. Benton Collection and memorabilia contributions from natives of Ogdensburg.

The history has valuable appendixes including lists of politicians who have served in the government of Ogdensburg, the Religious Sisters who have staffed the hospital, orphanage, and educational institutions, and brief summaries of early businesses in the city.

Under Four Flags is the result of extensive research by St. Joseph Sister Mary Christine Taylor, Ph.D., in the archives of the Society of St. Sulpice in Oka and Montreal, the Northern New York newspapers, the St. Lawrence County Clerk’s Office, the City of Ogdensburg Records, the Parish/Rosseel Special Collection at St. Lawrence University, the Ogdensburg Public Library and the archives of the Chancery Office of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns of the Cross) in Ottawa, the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement in Graymoor, and the Society of St. Viator in Quebec.

Only a limited edition of the history has been printed to date. Those desiring to purchase a copy may contact Sister Mary Christine Taylor at the Sisters of St. Joseph, 1817 NYS Route 95, Apt. 8, Bombay, NY 12914.
PICTURE THIS, FUTURE FATHERS AND SISTERS

The students at St. Augustine’s Church in Peru had their photo taken in priest and nun cutouts as part of their study about vocations. During the month of November, classes each week included a lesson, article, project, game or discussion about vocations and all the ministries that are available to lay Catholics. Pictures of the diocesan seminarians are on display in the classrooms and each class starts with a prayer for them. The children have learned about the importance of priests, religious and lay people in parishes and we will continue to pray them.

Deacon Ron Gingerich, center, of St. Peter’s Church, Lowville, was sworn in by the Lewis County Sheriff’s Department, and the Fire and Emergency Management Office, to act as chaplain for both organizations. Deacon Gingerich succeeds Father Christopher Carrara, left, who has been re-assigned to St. Lawrence County. Fire and Law enforcement chaplains play a vital part in ministering to both organization, on scene to participants and to the victims of accidents and disaster. The dialogue opened in this ministry often translates to involvement with the local church. Shown with Father Carrara and Deacon Gingerich is the Rev. Canon Samuel Lundy, Jefferson County Fire and Emergency Management Office chaplain.
Father Ted Crosby delivers keynote address for Fall Event of ERCLMA

Lay ministers are treated to a day about Mary

By Patricia Marie
Contributing writer

WEST CHAZY - The Eastern Region Commissioned Lay Ministers' Association (ERCLMA) hosted its Fall Event Oct. 28. Father Ted Crosby, pastor of St. Joseph’s Church, was the keynote speaker.

Father Crosby celebrated an opening Mass, assisted by Deacon James Crowley, diocesan chancellor and delegate for pastor ministers.

In the morning session, Father Crosby focused on the Church's absolute and full support of Mary’s role in the Catholic Church. He explained that it’s found in Chapter 8 of Lumen Gentium from the Vatican II documents. The chapter is dedicated to Mary and is rich in Marian theology which is scripturally based. He suggested that even non-Catholics who read it would have a better understanding of Catholics devotion to Mary and her importance in the Church.

Father Crosby explained that Mary remains a centerpiece of the Catholic faith. In fact, the Church fathers debated if there should be a separate document about Mary - or to include her the official Vatican II document. Ultimately, the decision was made to include her because she isn’t separate from the Church, she is part of the church, Father Crosby explained.

He called Mary the ultimate lay minister, “sometimes quiet and unnoticed.”

The afternoon session was focused on four Marian Dogmas: Mary's Immaculate Conception, Mary’s Perpetual Virginity, Mary’s Divine Motherhood and her Assumption.

Father Crosby’s teaching combined references to Church documents, Church tradition and biblically centered instruction.

The priest also shared stories that help his listeners understand his point with great clarity.

One such story is about St. Bonaventure who said of Mary ... ‘God could have made a better world, but He could not have made a better Mother.’

To reinforce his point that Mary and Jesus are inseparable as she constantly leads people to her son, Father Crosby told another story about 12th century, Dominican priest. St. Hyacinth was known for his evangelical work throughout Poland and southern Russia. One day while he was in Kiev, the city was under siege but he was not aware of it until after he had finished Mass. He had to suddenly flee the church.

He immediately took the Blessed Sacrament with him and as he was leaving, he passed by a statue of Mary. He had a great devotion to her and he heard her say to him, “My son, would thou leave me behind and alone without my Son?”

As St. Hyacinth explained to her, the statue was too big and heavy for him to carry along with the Blessed Sacrament. However, when he attempted to pick up Mary’s statue, he found that it was as light as a feather so St. Hyacinth was able to save both Mother and Son.

(Editor’s note: Father Crosby’s talk is available on the diocesan website on YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/B1dVM739L24.)

The Sisters of the Precious Blood wish to thank Msgr. Whitmore for all that he does.

His homilies are always inspiring and our little chapel is nearly filled each day for Mass.
God bless him, his love for and knowledge of music adds so much to each day's celebration.

We are so blessed to have him with us!

The recent Fall Event of the Eastern Region Commissioned Lay Ministers, held in West Chazy, opened with a Mass at St. Joseph Church. Father Ted Crosby, pastor and keynote speaker for the day presided with assistance from Deacon James Crowley, left, diocesan chancellor and delegate for pastor ministers; and Deacon Jack Lukasiewicz of Our Lady of Victory Parish in Plattsburgh.
Fishers Club: young men gather to discern vocations

The Fishers Club, a gathering of men who are considering a vocation to the priesthood, will convene early in 2018.

The Fishers Club, started in 2015 at St. Mary’s in Potsdam, provides opportunities to discern with others who are experiencing the same call. There are currently two groups: the Midlanders in Potsdam/Canton and the Lakesiders in Plattsburgh.

The groups meet on a Sun­day afternoon for discern­ment, evening prayer and dinner; each gathering is fa­cilitated by a priest. The groups are open to high school juniors and older. Five of the current dio­cesan seminarians participated in the program.

Carter Pierce of Heuvelton, a second year college seminarian said, “It at first sur­prised me, the number of men who came to the discern­ment group, brave enough to consider this un­conventional vocation - the priesthood. I quickly learned I was not alone trying to de­cipher God’s call and this group gave me great advice to determine His will for me.”

Schedules will be pub­lished the North Country Cath­olic and parish bulletins.

Information is also avail­able from Father Douglas Lucia, moderator of the Mid­landers at dlucia@rcdony.org/ 315-348-4466; or Father Howard Venette, Moderator of the Lakesiders, pastor.stbarts@ roadrunner.com /315-369-3554.
Retirement Fund for Religious

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

Collection Weekend
Dec. 9th and 10th
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On December 9 and 10, our parishes will conduct the appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious**, an annual collection that benefits 32,000 elderly Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

Our senior religious are a treasure. Their dedication and hard work laid the foundation for Catholic schools, hospitals, and numerous social service organizations across the North Country. We are indebted to the many religious communities of men and women who have served and continue to serve across our Diocese. We are grateful for their ongoing prayer and witness that enriches us in countless ways. I am sure you can recall a sister or brother who made a positive difference in your life.

Most religious worked for years for small stipends, leaving a substantial gap in retirement savings. Rising health-care costs and decreased income compound the challenge to meet day-to-day needs such as medications and nursing assistance. The Retirement Fund for Religious offers financial support that helps religious communities provide quality, loving care for older members while ensuring younger religious can continue the good works of their elders.

I understand you are asked to support many worthy causes. I invite you to give what you can. Most importantly, please pray for God’s continued blessing on all our women and men religious. Rest assured they are praying for us!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg

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Orders Serving in the Diocese

- Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
- Dominican Sisters of Hope
- Franciscan Friars of the Atonement
- Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement
- Mid-Atlantic Community of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
- Servants of Mary
- Sisters of Charity of St. Louis
- Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod
- Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood
- Sisters of St. Joseph

...through the many religious men and women who came to our Diocese.
Across the United States, hundreds of religious communities lack financial resources sufficient to meet the retirement and health-care needs of aging members.

- There are more than 32,000 religious past age 70 living in the United States.

- Last year, the average annual cost of care for senior religious was $42,000 per person, while skilled care averaged more than $63,000. In 2016, the total cost of care for women and men religious past age 70 exceeded $1.2 billion.

- By 2027, retired religious are projected to outnumber wage-earners by more than three to one.

- Many elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests worked for little to no pay, and now their religious communities do not have enough money for their care. Please support the Retirement Fund for Religious collection at Mass.
You share in their prayer life and free others for ministry...

Sister Catherine Laboure Goodbout, a Sister of St. Joseph for 67 years, celebrated her 100th birthday Oct. 29.

Grateful for all the support you have given us throughout the years.

Religious of the Diocese of Ogdensburg

... when you give to those who have given a lifetime.

Amount Enclosed: $ ____________
Name__________________________________________________________
Address_____________________________________________________________________
City __________________________ State ________ Zip __________

Make your tax-deductible check payable to your parish. Write Retirement Fund for Religious on the memo line and give it to your parish collection.

You can express your gratitude for all the religious have done and will continue to do by giving to your parish’s annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious - OR - send your donation directly to:

RETIREMENT FUND FOR RELIGIOUS
P.O. Box 106
Canajoharie, NY 13317

Comforting · Nurturing · Teaching · Nursing · Sharing · Loving · Caring
Rohingya crisis shows danger of identity politics

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

DHAKA, BANGLADESH (CNS) -- The themes chosen by the local bishops for Pope Francis' visits to Myanmar and Bangladesh - "Love and peace" and "Harmony and peace" - sounded naive or just too "nicey-nice" to some people.

But when love, peace and harmony are missing, the situation is pretty much hell on earth. The Rohingya refugees from Myanmar now living in teeming camps in Bangladesh could testify to that.

Pope Francis, on the other hand, wanted to testify to the Gospel. And that meant emphasizing love, peace and harmony.

The situation of the Rohingya is an extreme example of what happens when one's ethnic or religious identity incites such strong fear or pride or that it creates iron-clad categories of "us and them."

And when the lines are drawn that clearly, the migration of the minority group is a natural result.

Holy Cross Father Daniel Groody, an associate professor of theology and global affairs at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, told Catholic News Service he had been in Myanmar a year and a half ago studying the situation of the Rohingya, as they identify themselves, or the undocumented Muslims from Rakhine state, as the government refers to them.

"They are the most stateless people I have ever encountered," Father Groody said. In Myanmar, "they are not only undocumented, they are so totally defined as 'other' that they are considered nonpersons."

Some media and human rights groups criticized Pope Francis for accepting the advice of local Catholic leaders and not referring to the Rohingya by name while in Myanmar.

The wisdom of that decision will probably be debated for some time.

"But I think his very presence says everything," Father Groody said.

Pope Francis has not publicly berated any government official of any country during a visit. He treats them with respect, listens and - drawing on the values they profess - he tries to show them what the next step toward the common good should be.

"It requires real care," Father Groody said.

"You wouldn't want to see him do this gang-buster prophecy thing and ride into the sunset, thinking he'd done the heroic thing. I think he's not just trying to be heroic; he's trying to be a bridge-builder."

"There's real heroism and courage in just being able to build bridges," the priest said. "In the long run, that may be more effective, and in the end, that's what matters."

Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, a member of the pope's international Council of Cardinals, was in both Myanmar and Bangladesh for Pope Francis' visit.

In his own country, the cardinal has seen how the identity question and ethnicity and religious belonging can become points of social tension. But it wasn't always that way, he told CNS.

Growing up, he said, the neighbors in his apartment building in Mumbai were Hindu, Muslim and Christian. "We were very good friends. We never saw a different religion or culture as the basis for any division."

"Now, all of a sudden, I must say that it has changed, and I blame politicians for this," he said. "Politicians used and are still using religion to get votes."

And in neighborhoods where people just accepted that they each had their own faith and culture, the cardinal said, now people are starting to think, "Oh, he is different from me."

Playing up differences has had deadly results in Myanmar and India and in many other places around the world. And the fear caused by those acts of violence and terrorism have fed isolationism and an exaggerated "us-first" attitude.

In response, Cardinal Gracias said, "the whole Christian Gospel value of love seems a cliche - but it is a commitment, love is a decision to imitate Jesus" and rescue those in danger and help those in need, including migrants and refugees.

Obviously, he said, reasonable measures must be taken to ensure people allowed into a country are not coming to do harm.

"There's a real point there, but on the other hand, when you see the tremendous amount of suffering people have undergone, when they are fleeing persecution, economic injustice and violence and they are looking for a better life and to contribute to society, you have to act," he said.

Or, as Father Groody said, "A sovereign state's right to protect its borders is a recognized right, including in Catholic social teaching, "but it is never seen as an ab solute right and never as reason for violating human rights."

"Sovereign rights must be evaluated in view of human rights and the universal destination of goods, which means that every human being should have at least the minimum necessary for a dignified life," Father Groody said.
**SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS**

Advent: a time to rouse us all to our roots

Advent is a time of a time of “stirring up,” of rousing all of us to our roots, partly in the spirit of repentance, and even more in a rousing in joy to a world-shaking event.

God is coming to earth in human form. He will transform and renew us.

Of course, it happened a few thousand years ago, but it happens again, through the power of the Holy Spirit this year too!

We must be really alert and listening so as not to miss our chance for the gifts it brings.

In the first reading, God is pictured on His throne, surrounded by the angels. He sends his prophet, Isaiah, with the news: “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that... her guilt is expiated.”

In effect, God says that they have suffered enough. “Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low...”

Then he tells his messengers to go up a high mountain and shout: “Here is your God...Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms, he gathers the lambs...!”

St. Peter, in the second reading, is more urgent: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar.”

He echoes John the Baptist in his plea for all people to repent and be cleansed of their sins. Why? So that all will benefit from the redemption promised by the Son who is to be born in Bethlehem is the God-man. Christ is Himself the Gospel of Mark which tells us how important it is for us to hear the voice of John crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths... One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals...”

There is definitely a note of urgency and excitement in Advent.

How we all need to really listen to God’s Word in these fast-moving two weeks until Christmas Day!

Spend some special prayer-time every single day as the Holy Spirit works powerfully to bring “Joy to the World.”

**MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS**

Destroying my freedom in the name of freedom?

In an August 2015 column in The Washington Post, George F. Will argued in favor of physician-assisted suicide, summing up his perspective this way: “There is nobility in...affirming at the end the distinctive human dignity of autonomous choice.”

His conclusion, however, raises several important questions: Shouldn’t death-dealing actions directed against ourselves be seen as a deep repudiation of our autonomy, insofar as suicide eliminates our personal freedom once and for all?

If our ability to freely make choices is among the highest of our human faculties, isn’t it a radical contradiction to mount an attack on that autonomy through suicidal acts? Isn’t there a certain absurdity to marshaling our freedom to obliterate our freedom?

Autonomy is often described as being able to do what we want, being “self-governing” and “self-directing.” Authentic freedom, though, doesn’t actually mean the ability to do whatever we want; it means the ability to do what we ought, in accord with who we are.

To grow in freedom and autonomy means acting in such a way that we attend to, and respect the designs written into our nature. Otherwise, autonomy collapses into a caricature of its real meaning, or worse, into raw violence and forcefulness against ourselves or others.

We can consider a simple example: exercising autonomy with respect to our cars doesn’t mean doing whatever we want with it, like pouring milk in the gas tank, and orange juice in the oil reservoir.

If we intentionally sidewise other vehicles as we drive along, and strike pedestrians on the sidewalk, these would be acts of violence, not acts of “autonomy” or “free choice.”

Authentic freedom with an automobile implies using it in an ordered way to get from A to B, driving safely and legally, and even doing the right maintenance and upkeep on it, maintaining respect for the way the vehicle was designed and intended to be used.

Freedom and autonomy regarding what we eat and drink, to consider another example, doesn’t mean we can consume anything at all.

We can legitimately choose between apples and oranges, but not between milk and drain cleaner. If, in the name of autonomy, we were to declare that we’re free to do whatever we want with our bodies, and we ingested drain cleaner on purpose to make ourselves ill, we would actually undermine and surrender our personal autonomy.

We would no longer be able to do what we might wish to do, as our body rebelled and constrained us to a stretcher on our way to the emergency room or poison control center.

Looking at a misguided choice of this kind reminds us how our autonomy is never absolute. This kind of choice would also raise doubts in the minds of those who cared about us regarding our mental and moral sanity.

To deem self-inflicted sickness to be desirable would itself be a sickness, a kind of lie, spoken in the name of a perverted sense of being free to do whatever I want, even to the point of self-harm or self-anihilation.

The decision to intentionally end our own life by an act of suicide (whether alone or with the assistance of others) pivots our uniquely human power to make sound choices into a seditious power directed against our own good.

To self-inflict death in collusion with a physician would constitute a profoundly disordered decision, and a radically corrosive attack on our autonomy. Rather than something dignified, this abuse of freedom is ethically indefensible.

If sane people can recognize that drinking poison to get ourselves sick is wrong, how can we feign that ingesting drugs or using other means to kill ourselves is somehow right and noble?

Abusing our own freedom or autonomy isn’t free or autonomous; instead, it enslaves and diminishes us. When medical professionals pivot in their role of healing and curing, and instead become accomplices in terminating the sick and vulnerable, they, too, undermine their own autonomy and corrupt their own professional freedom to genuinely care and “first do no harm.”

True autonomy is not limitless or absolute, but is necessarily conditioned by the truth of who we are and the way we function.

 Properly exercised, our personal freedom manifests a genuine nobility, and a real dignity. We should never will that our final “autonomous choice” be directed against that noble dignity.

Rather, we must flee the tyranny of false autonomy if our lives are to be authentically marked by human freedom in its full splendor.
WONDER

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

“Wonder” (Lionsgate) is a beautiful film about ugliness.

Its protagonist is August “Auggie” Pullman (Jacob Tremblay), a 10-year-old boy born with facial deformities whose misshapen visage becomes a moral Rorschach test for the people around him.

This gentle, moving drama centers on Auggie’s struggle to win acceptance from his peers as he transitions from being educated at home to attending the fifth grade of his local middle school. But it also explores the lives of his supportive parents, Nate (Owen Wilson) and Isabel (Julia Roberts), and his loving older sister, Via (Izabela Vidovic).

Via gives Auggie unstinting affection despite the fact that his emotional needs have left her feeling overlooked by Mom and Dad.

Though reluctant to subject Auggie - who usually goes out in public wearing an astronaut’s helmet that conceals his face from view -- to the potential ordeal of school life, Nate and Isabel know it will be the best thing for him in the long run. They find an ally in Auggie’s principal, Mr. Tushman (Mandy Patinkin), a rabbi-like figure who serves as the movie’s ethical core.

As for Auggie’s fellow students, their attitudes range from the open friendliness displayed by easygoing Summer (Millie Davis) to the cruel hostility embodied by would-be top dog Julian (Bryce Gheisar). Somewhere in the middle is Auggie’s on-again, off-again pal, Jack Will (Noah Jupe).

Though fundamentally kind and, eventually, genuinely fond of Auggie, Jack is case study in subtle variability and the negative effects of peer pressure. When circumstances enable Auggie to overhear some heartless remarks about him that Jack makes simply in order to fit in with the crowd, the effect is devastating.

A later scene in which Julian comes to recognize the full impact of his bullying also carries a wallop.

Subplots involving Via’s best friend, Miranda (Danielle Rose Russell), and newfound love interest Justin (Nadij Jeter) reinforce the idea that all of us are potential heroes or villains. Though some of the people in Auggie’s world are wholly good - his parents and Justin, for example - no one is presented as irredeemably wicked.

In adapting R.J. Palacio’s 2013 best-seller, director and co-writer (with Steven Conrad and Jack Thorne) Stephen Chbosky has created a winning and memorable film about the significance of ordinary life and the lasting impact of everyday choices. Despite a few mature elements, the movie’s valuable lessons make it appropriate fare for most teens.

The Catholic News Service classification is A-II - adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG - parental guidance suggested.

ALSO PLAYING... COCO

In the animated movie “CoCo,” a young Mexican lad’s (voice of Anthony Gonzalez) strives to follow in the footsteps of his hometown’s most famous son (voice of Benjamin Bratt) by becoming a world-renowned musician. The film takes a supernatural turn on the Day of the Dead when he is mysteriously transported to the afterlife as depicted in the folklore associated with the pre-Columbian aspects of that celebration. While free of any age-inappropriate content and strong on the importance of family solidarity, co-director Adrian Molina’s script, penned with Matthew Aldrich, is stuffed full of notions about the fate of the departed that clash with revealed truth and so are unsuitable for impressionable viewers. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II - adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.
ADIRONDACK

NAVE LESSONS, CAROLS
Lake Placid - The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE) will present a program of Lessons and Carols
Date: Dec. 17
Time: 4 p.m.
Place: St. Agnes Church
Features: Anthems, carols, and hymns to celebrate the Christmas story along with community readers and congregational singing in the beloved tradition of King’s College, Cambridge. NAVE, under the musical direction of Andrew M. Benware, is a mixed chamber choir of professional and amateur singers that performs choral music from a variety of periods and styles with harmonies of four to eight parts.
Price: suggested donation of $10.
Contact: More information on Facebook or drew.benware@gmail.com.

CRAFT SHOW
Morrisonville – 6th Annual Craft Show to be held.
Date: Dec. 9
Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Place: St. Peter’s Church
Features: Works of local vendors selling jewelry, quilts, homemade holiday crafts, wood crafts, candles, Adirondack items, fresh wreaths, and much more. Lunch will be available at Padre’s café. Bake sale and homemade chocolates

NAVE LESSONS, CAROLS
Plattsburgh - The Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble (NAVE) will present a program of Lessons and Carols
Date: Dec. 16
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: St. Peter’s Church
Features: Anthems, carols, and hymns to celebrate the Christmas story along with community readers and congregational singing in the beloved tradition of King’s College, Cambridge. NAVE, under the musical direction of Andrew M. Benware, is a mixed chamber choir of professional and amateur singers that performs choral music from a variety of periods and styles with harmonies of four to eight parts.
Price: suggested donation of $10.
Contact: More information on Facebook or drew.benware@gmail.com.

PANCAKE BREAKFAST
Treadwell Mills – The Knights of Columbus will hold an all you can eat Pancake Breakfast.
Date: Jan. 7, Feb. 4, March 4, April 22

CLINTON

CRAFT SHOW
Morrisonville – 6th Annual Craft show to be held.
Date: Dec. 9
Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Place: St. Agnes Church
Features: Anthems, carols, and hymns to celebrate the Christmas story along with community readers and congregational singing in the beloved tradition of King’s College, Cambridge. NAVE, under the musical direction of Andrew M. Benware, is a mixed chamber choir of professional and amateur singers that performs choral music from a variety of periods and styles with harmonies of four to eight parts.
Price: suggested donation of $10.
Contact: More information on Facebook or drew.benware@gmail.com.

FIRST SATURDAY DEVOTION
St. Regis Falls – First Saturday Devotion and Holy Hour to be held.
Time: after 4:30 p.m. anticipated Mass
Place: St. Ann’s Church

EUCARISTIC ADORATION
Plattsburgh – Eucharistic Adoration is held throughout the year every Wednesday.
Place: St. John’s “Holy Family” Adoration Chapel, downstairs
Time: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

SECTULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
Plattsburgh – The Sacred Heart Fraternity Secular Franciscan Order meets the first Sunday of the each month.
Time: 2 p.m.
Place: St. John’s Holy Family Chapel

ST. NICK BREAKFAST
Fort Covington – St. Nick Breakfast to be held.
Date: Dec. 9
Time: 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Place: St. Mary’s of the Fort Parish Center
Cost: Adults, $7; Children 5-12, $5; under 5, Free
Features: photo area with St. Nicholas, Raffles, bring or write your letter to St. Nicholas

HEARTS ON FIRE
Malone – Hearts on Fire to be held the first Friday of the month.
Schedule: 7 p.m., Praise & Worship Holy Hour; 8 p.m., Bonfire, snacks
Place: Notre Dame Church

HOLY HOUR FOR Vocations
Watertown – Holy Hour for vocations
Date: Monday-Friday
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 10:30
Place: Holy Family Church

EUCHARISTIC PRAYER GROUP
Waverly – Our Mother of the Eucharist Prayer Group to meet the 2nd Thursday of every month.
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8
Place: Msgr. Sesi Hall, St. Anthony’s

INTERNATIONAL CHERCHE
Houseville – An exhibit of International Creches-Nativities is set
Date: Dec. 17, 21 Jan. 7
Time: The display may be viewed before or after the 11 a.m. Masses or between 1 p.m. to 3 or by appointment during the week.
Place: St. Hedwig’s Church
Features: This exhibit is free and open to the public. Bring family and friends and experience the universality of Christ and Christmas through the eyes of many different cultures.

OPLEATEK CHRISTMAS WAFER
Houseville - The Polish Christmas Wafer or OPLATEK is available from St. Hedwig’s Church.
Cost: $3 per package plus postage.
Features: The Christmas Wafer of OPLATEK is part of a Polish, Lithuanian and Slovak custom that is observed during the Vigil of Christmas (Wigilia). After the first star is visible, family and friends gather around the dinner table to share the OPLATEK, which symbolizes the presence of Christ, the Newborn Child. The OPLATEK is sent and shared with family and friends all over the world as a symbol of love, unity and forgiveness while wishing God’s Blessing on each other this Holy Night.
Contact: 315-348-6260.

OPLEATEK CHRISTMAS WAFER
Watertown - The Polish Christmas Wafer or OPLATEK is available from St. Hedwig’s Church.
Cost: $3 per package plus postage.
Features: The Christmas Wafer of OPLATEK is part of a Polish, Lithuanian and Slovak custom that is observed during the Vigil of Christmas (Wigilia). After the first star is visible, family and friends gather around the dinner table to share the OPLATEK, which symbolizes the presence of Christ, the Newborn Child. The OPLATEK is sent and shared with family and friends all over the world as a symbol of love, unity and forgiveness while wishing God’s Blessing on each other this Holy Night.
Contact: 315-348-6260.

ST. LAWRENCE

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION
Massena – The Massena Catholic Community Book Club meets once a month
Date: Third Thursday of each month
Time: 7 p.m.
Place: Sacred Heart Rectory
Features: Copies of book are often available through our parish’s subscription.
Contact: www.massenacatholics.com or : smarion@massenacatholics.com

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION
Massena – St. Mary’s & St. Joseph’s hold Benediction, Adoration on Fridays
Time: 9 a.m. to 10
Place: St. Mary’s Family Room

COLLEGE MARCH FOR LIFE
Washington, D.C. - A pilgrimage to the annual March for Life for those between the ages of 18 and 35 is set
Date: Jan. 18-21
Cost: All-inclusive $185
Features: Father Bryan Stitt, Chaplain and Mary Skiland, Campus Minister, will accompany the group. The Pilgrimage will include the Vigil Mass for Life at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the March for Life and participation in the Cardinal O’Connor Conference on Life. The fee covers hotels, meals, and stops at shrines and memorials.
Contact: fora registration form, email: Father Timothy Candy, Diocesan Director of Campus Ministry from@broadstreetcatholics.org. Space is limited. Registrations with payment must be submitted by Dec. 15.

YOUTH BUSES FOR LIFE
Washington D.C. – Registration for High School Pilgrimage to the March for Life in Washington D.C. has begun
Date: Jan. 18 to 20
Cost: $150, includes transportation, hotel, breakfast, two dinners and shirt.
Features: Three coach buses will depart the North Country. Pickup locations: New York State - Massena, Canton and Gouverneur; Western bus - IHC in Watertown and Eastern bus - Our Lady of Lourdes in Schroon Lake. Bishop LaValley will be joining the buses in DC.
Contact: Online registrations at www.rcdony.org/pro-life or call 518-524-0774/518-891-2309
A blessing to the MCA

Who is a missionary?
Sister Cindy Sullivan, BVM, a native of Massena, was sent to Ecuador through the Peace Corps where she met the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She joined the community and was sent back to serve in Quito, Ecuador as a BVM Sister.

Sister Cindy was missioned for 43 years to be Jesus’ hands, feet, eyes, and ears to the Body of Christ families in the “Working Boy’s Center”. She reminds us that a missionary is a person who has been “sent.”

Many of you know Sister Cindy from her Mission appeals in our parishes over the summers when she was on home visits with her parents. She is now missioned back here in the North Country.

Her missioning to the North Country is a big blessing for the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA). She has traveled around the Diocese of Ogdensburg to visit the Catholic Schools reminding students that we are all missionaries.

Eager students asked the question, “What do missionaries do?” To that question Sister Cindy asks the students, “What would Jesus do in any given situation? That is what a missionary needs to do.

The young missionaries in St. Mary’s, Canton; Augustinian Academy, Carthage; St. James, Gouverneur; St. Agnes, Lake Placid; Holy Family, Malone; Trinity Catholic, Massena; Seton Academy, Plattsburgh; St. Bernard’s, Saranac Lake; St. Mary’s, Ticonderoga, and Immaculate Heart Elementary, Watertown are great in answering the questions of how they can be Christ’s hands, feet, eyes, and ears. They get it! They help by accepting the assignment of being “missioned”. They pray for other kids and make sacrifices raising money. Many are bringing in clothes, food and toys for local need during the upcoming holidays.

Sister Cindy is hopeful that the “missionary captains” in each classroom, with the help of their teachers, will keep the importance of being Christ’s Body as missionaries alive and well. Sister Cindy will keep in contact with the schools on their progress of life as missionaries and will revisit the schools.

Thanks to principals, moderators, faculty and staffs for the warm welcome and for being open to meeting the new challenges of helping kids to help kids. The mission office is anxiously awaiting stories and photos from the schools of the kids taking their missionary assignments seriously.

Sister Cindy would like to visit students in parish religious programs. She is happy to come speak in your classroom. Please contact Molly Ryan in the mission office by phone at 315 393 2920 or via email at mryan@rcdony.org to set up a meeting or to be put in touch with Sr. Cindy. God Bless!

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

www.rcdony.org/mission

OBITUARIES


Carthage — Terry L. Rigabar, 55; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 28, 2017 at St. James Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Colton — Lawrence C. Rousell Jr., 72; Memorial Mass Nov. 29, 2017 at St. Patrick’s Church.

Louisville — Lisa A. Baxter, 49; Mass of Christian Burial, Spring, 2018 at St. Lawrence Church.

Lowville — Florence Bickford Burke, 84; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 30, 2017 at St. Peter’s Church; burial in the Lowville Rural Cemetery.


Lyons Mountain — Lillian Pain, 91; Mass of Christian Burial Nov. 29, 2017 at St. Bernard’s Church.


Plattsburgh — Donna L. (McGee) Pren­­oveau, 71; Funeral Services Nov. 26, 2017 at the Brown Funeral Home; burial in St. Peter’s Cemetery.


Potsdam — Irene (Russell) Gilson Forbes, 94; Funeral Services Nov. 29, 2017 at the Garner Funeral Home; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.

Ticonderoga — Becki Sue Wykes, 53; Funeral Services Dec. 2, 2017 at the Harland Funeral Home.

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HIBERNIAN GIFT

For Thanksgiving, members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) donated turkey dinners, with all the fixings, to the St. Mary’s food pantry in Evans Mills. Father Christopher Looby, pastor of St Mary’s, received the donation from the AOH, noting that many residents in the Evans Mills area have family members in the U.S. military and would welcome the gift. Members who made personal donations to cause were Kevin Shaughnessy, Tim Sweeney, David Ard, Sean Hennessey, Dick Lawlee, Bill Flynn, Jim Fitzpatrick and Tom Shaughnessy. Sean Hennessey, president of Watertown’s AOH Division, named in honor of Msgr. James Ruddy, said, “The AOH was founded on the motto of Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity. Hopefully this donation, by members of the Msgr. James Ruddy Division, lives up to our mission.” The AOH is the oldest and largest Irish Catholic fraternal organization in the world with the Msgr. James Ruddy Division located in Watertown. Practicing Catholics of Irish ancestry, over the age of 16, who would like to learn more about the Order should email nnirish@gmail.com. The AOH meets regularly in the Watertown area with a focus on faith and a united Ireland. Pictured, from left, are David Ard, Dick Lawlee, Bill Flynn, Father Looby, Mr. Hennessey and Kevin Shaughnessy, treasurer.

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