‘Never lose hope in God’s love’

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Christians must never lose hope and should remind themselves that God loves them even at their worst, Pope Francis said. God’s love provides “security” both in difficult moments and even when “I have done something terrible and evil,” the pope said Feb. 15 during his weekly general audience.

“No one can take this security from us. We must repeat it like a prayer: God loves me. I am sure that God loves me!” he said.

Among the thousands of pilgrims present at the Paul VI audience hall were numerous student groups from Europe, including several children’s choirs from Italy and Spain.

When greeting the Italian-speaking pilgrims, the pope was interrupted by each choir who broke out in song to greet him. Despite several applause, one choir continued singing to the amusement of Pope Francis. He laughed heartily while praising them for their persistence in finishing the entire song.

Bishop on ‘welcoming the stranger’

Bishop Terry R. LaValley has issued a statement on migrants and refugees noting that “the current worldwide refugee and immigration crisis brings us face to face with our Baptismal call to be a beacon of hope for all people.”

“Our Catholic faith compels us to unclench our fists and open our arms, as Jesus did on the cross,” the bishop said. “Opening our minds and hearts to acknowledge that we are part of the human community will motivate us to think and behave as people of welcome and compassion.”

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Rites held for Deacon Wells

Deacon David P. Wells, 72, who served parishes in Heuvelton and Lisbon, died Feb. 11

FULL STORY, PAGE 3
Aren’t we lucky to be Catholic?

Every so often it’s good to be reminded about how lucky we are to be Catholic. Sometimes the reminder comes when it’s least expected.

For me, it happened this past Friday on a day of funerals at St. Mary’s Cathedral.

In the morning, mourners packed the church to bid farewell to Deacon David Wells. Fellow deacons, priests, family members and friends came for all over the diocese to honor a gentle man who spent his live answering the call to serve others – in Vietnam, as a nurse and, long after others embraced retirement, as a deacon.

The pews of the cathedral weren’t filled because Deacon Wells was famous or wealthy. They were filled because, as Catholics, we know that this man of God had wealth beyond measure. He shared it in the love he showed everyday to every person he met.

As one group of mourners left the cathedral, another came streaming in, this time to say goodbye to a woman who had given 93 years of faithful service to her family, church and community.

As this funeral neared its end, her eldest son offered memories of his mother. In the course of his storytelling, the son talked about another funeral he recently attended. There, the mother of his friend who had died made a memorable statement: “isn’t it wonderful to be Catholic?”

It’s wonderful indeed when the rituals and beliefs of our faith carry us through the most painful days. It’s wonderful, too, we can look to Catholic teachings to answer the most vexing questions of the day.

Bishop LaValley does that for us this week in his statement on migrants and refugees. Echoing Pope Francis, the bishop reminds us that Catholics are called to welcome the stranger.

We are called to respect every life and move through our days with the same kind of sacrificial love Jesus showed to us.

This is certainly not an easy undertaking but the tools our faith gives us – prayer, the Eucharist and each other – make it all possible. Lucky lucky us!

The homily: essential part of every Mass

The recent issue of America Magazine, a Jesuit publication, brought up some questions about what priests say in their homilies at Mass. In particular, the magazine brings up a discussion of involving politics and current events in the homilies and how these ideas touch our faith in the Lord Jesus.

I know that I have wondered sometimes just what I should bring up in a homily. I know that of us in such a situation would visit to offer Mass that this congregation is probably divided – whether it is political affiliations or sometimes local situations.

I know that I feel that I might be constrained as offering an endorsement because of something I say so I step away to avoid creating divisions instead of building communion with God in my homily.

I do know that there are some contemporary issues in which the teaching of the Church is clear although they may not be clear to all Catholics. So these issues unfortunately can still be divisive; they demand a deeper explanation.

There are many questions and concerns about what to bring up in a homily. Let me share with you some of my own ideas about homilies with you.

The homily is an important and necessary part of every Mass. The Second Vatican Council encouraged all priests or deacons to present a homily at every Mass.

The homily is meant to be rather different from a sermon. A homily is based on the Scripture readings of that Mass; the message and lessons for a homily should come from the Scriptures assigned for that Mass.

A homily depends on our trust in God. We accept what comes in the Scriptures that are assigned for this particular feast day.

Let me tell you a little of my path to becoming a preacher. It began with a gift. That gift was being involved in a public speaking program during my college days at Wadhams Hall. The professor of that program was Father Joseph Bailey. I must say that he was tough on us. I remember well the anxiety each time it was my turn to speak. He was so challenging yet, so successful with us.

I know personally that he transformed me from a timid high kid into a more confident speaker.

Preaching is an important part of every priest’s ministry. I love to preach. It has been a most enjoyable part of my life as a priest. I realize that my ordination means above all my call to celebrate the sacraments of the Church, especially the offering of Mass.

Mass is a powerful moment in my own life, truly a constant transforming moment. The celebration of Mass brings Christ more completely into my life and into my ministry.

I have the privilege of bringing the presence of Jesus to the people of each congregation through the Holy Eucharist. Celebrating the Sacrifice of the Mass allows me to draw a community together into a family.

We, priests, because of our ordination, are allowed to say the same words that Jesus spoke at the Last Supper, consecrating the bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ.

For me, the heart of my life as a Christian and a Catholic, priest, is the Blessed Eucharist. It is such a powerful sacrament. Reception of the Holy Eucharist unites Jesus to all the Church, in a beautiful way. The sacrament becomes truly a part of us. We never leave Jesus is Church – Jesus becomes a part of all we do as his disciples.

It is all about gratitude. The word Eucharist means thank you. The Mass is a celebration of our gratitude to our God. The message of our preaching is gratitude.

All that I say in a homily is wrapped up in my gratitude to the Lord for all that Jesus did for the Church, gratitude for all the gifts with which the Lord has blessed me.
 Welcoming the stranger

How should we respond to this reality (World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017)?

With this simple question, Pope Francis places before us the invitation and the challenge to live the Gospel mandate of welcoming the stranger.

The current worldwide refugee and immigration crisis brings us face to face with our Baptismal call to be a beacon of hope for all people. Jesus welcomed the children. He reached out in compassion to the sick and the outcast. He never turned His gaze away from the marginalized. Every broken person who encountered Jesus found themselves in the presence of one who restored their dignity and worth.

The majority of refugees are fleeing war, persecution, oppression and other violence. These individuals and families are seeking safety, economic security and a better life. Our own North Country hosts several hundred men and women who migrate here to provide essential labor for the dairy farms and apple orchards. How do we think about and include them in our community or parish? What type of outreach do we provide to them? Their goal is to earn money for their families.

Most of them will return home after two or three years. Will they take home stories of the kindness and hospitality of the people of the North Country or will they return to their country with stories of rejection and hostility? We are the ones who will make the difference as to which story becomes the ongoing narrative.

Many of our brothers and sisters in our global community are suffering. Forced to flee their homes and their countries, they experience exploitation, violence, hunger and homelessness. They live in fear.

As long as they suffer, we suffer. Their pain is our pain. Demeaning rhetoric and hateful behavior towards our suffering brothers and sisters should leave us heartbroken. We all agree that fair, efficient and stringent vetting policies and practices are needed. No one argues against secure borders. However, we must remain vigilant that our policies are not based on exaggerated fear, racism, ethnic oppression or religious intolerance.

Other than our Native American brothers and sisters, we all claim an immigrant past. Many of our families came to the United States because they were fleeing religious, economic and other types of oppression and persecution.

Our nation experiences a deep richness in culture when ethnic groups live in peace with one another and share their diversity.

Our Catholic faith compels us to unclench our fists and open our arms, as Jesus did on the cross.

Our industries, universities, healthcare systems and other institutions are strengthened by the gifts and talents of our immigrant neighbors. Our Catholic faith compels us to unclench our fists and open our arms, as Jesus did on the cross. Opening our minds and hearts to acknowledge that we are part of the human community will motivate us to think and behave as people of welcome and compassion. We will be capable of allowing the light of the Gospel to shine on this current humanitarian crisis. It is only then that we can answer Pope Francis question “How should we respond to this reality?”

I invite you to pray for all of us. May our hearts and minds be open to living the Gospel values of charity, justice and hospitality. Let us pray for our brothers and sisters who are suffering from violence, persecution and oppression. Let us join together to pray for our global community. May peace be the goal and the reality.

Funeral held Friday for Deacon David Wells, 72

OGDENSBURG—A Mass of Christian Burial for Deacon David P. Wells, 72, was held Feb. 17 at St. Mary’s Cathedral. He died Feb. 11 at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Syracuse.

Entombment followed at Foxwood Memorial Park.

Surviving is his wife Dorothy “Dot” Wells; a son David (Alison) Wells of Norwood; two daughters Jo Ann “Jan” (Cory) Cunningham of Ogdensburg; and Julie (Lewie) Bice of Ogdensburg; a brother Robert (Sheila) Wells of Ogdensburg; eight grandchildren Robert & Chelsea Bice, Emma Wells, Hunter Tull, Calvin Tulp, Jude Wells and Amber & Katie Cunningham along with many nieces, nephews & cousins. A brother Michael Wells and a sister Judith Ann Ramie predeceased him.

Deacon Wells was born Jan. 23, 1945 in Ogdensburg, a son of the late Michael L. and Aileen (Arnold) Wells. He graduated from Ogdensburg Free Academy and continued his education at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric School of Nursing and Syracuse University where he earned his nurse practitioner license. He entered the US Navy in 1962 during the Vietnam War, and earned his honorable discharge in 1967. He and his wife were married Nov. 20, 1965 at the St. Paul’s Church in San Francisco, California.

During his career he was employed at Massena Memorial Hospital as a nurse practitioner for many years and later transferred to the Massena VA Hospital where he also worked as a nurse practitioner and clinical director until his retirement in 2007.

He was ordained a deacon Oct. 5, 2013 by Bishop Terry R. LaValley at St. Mary’s Cathedral. He served at St. Raphael’s Church in Heuvelton and other area churches when needed.

Deacon Wells was a member of the Knights of Columbus where he held 4th degree status and enjoyed traveling, camping, watching grandchildren’s sports & assisting with their games. He also enjoyed listening to country music and the “oldies,” watching Heuvelton Central School Bulldog Sports and spending time with his family. Memorial contributions can be made to the Richard Winter Cancer Center or the Diocese of Ogdensburg Deacon Program.
Ideas for observing the Season of Lent . . . for parish or at home

Counting down to 40 days

By Marika Donders
Diocesan Director of the New Evangelization

I know that it seems we just gotten back to the green vestments of ordinary time, but now is the time to think about Lent. Sometimes we think that in order to make a difference, we have to do something big in our parishes – a big program with lots of participants. But this year, rather than think of one big event, consider doing several smaller projects. After all, Jesus started with twelve disciples and he called them one or two at a time. Start small, impact a few people who can then impact others.

Hold a Mardi Gras celebration
The Tuesday before Lent is Mardi Gras (literally Fat Tuesday). The celebrations could be something as simple as a pancake dinner (traditionally, pancake dinners were one way to use up bacon, eggs and butter before Lent started). You can also add some beads and play some New Orleans Jazz music. If you want to get a little more elaborate, consider playing games or having arts and crafts such as creating Mardi Gras masks for the kids (and those young at heart). The great thing about Mardi Gras is that even non-Catholics celebrate it (who doesn’t like a party?), but most don’t know the connection to Catholicism or the celebration of Lent. It’s an informal teachable moment.

Invite people for Ash Wednesday
When your parish did the census, did you find any Catholics who no longer attend Mass? Consider sending them an invitation to join the parish for Ash Wednesday. It could be something simple, like having parishioners personally invite neighbors, or printing up invitations to mail out. If you do invite them, it would be good to have another follow up “easy entry” event planned during Lent to which you can invite them. They may not be ready for Stations of the Cross, but perhaps they would be open to come to a simple meal of soup and bread or perhaps a movie night (see below).

Soup and bread meals during Lent
Plan one or several simple community meals of soup and bread. Ask several parishioners to bring in crockpots of soup, ask others to bring bread. Provide plates/bowls, napkins, spoons and cups water (or coffee) to drink. Keep it simple. Perhaps have a printed prayer for people to pray grace together, which they can take home to use with their families. Add a free will offering basket for alms to offer to a food pantry or St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Lenten Movie Night
There are a lot of wonderful inspirational movies or movies that will make you think about our faith, or about the human condition. Some suggestions would be: The Way (about the pilgrimage to Santiago), Schindler’s List (Poland during WWII), Romero (about Bishop Romero of El Salvador), Shadowlands (about CS Lewis and his love for Joy Gresham), Of Gods and Men (about the Trappist monks in Algeria threatened by terrorists who must decide whether to go or stay). There are many other movies that you might consider. It would be helpful after watching the movie to have a short discussion. It could be something as simple as asking people what struck them in the movie, what moved them? If you add a time of spontaneous prayer inspired by the themes of the movie at the end of the evening, you can turn the simple movie night into a Cinema Divina.

Deepen our Lenten Devotions
Often, we participate in Lenten devotions more out of habit (it is simply what we do as Catholics) rather than as an intentional way to encounter Jesus Christ in a deeper level. This does not mean that we should give up our devotion such as Stations of the Cross or Penance services, but rather, that we also need to give people an opportunity to reflect on the experience. Have you used the same booklets for the Stations of the Cross for the past 20 years? Perhaps get another set of meditations or have someone add a 5-minute personal reflection on some Lenten theme at the beginning. It could be something as simple as having someone share why they attend Stations of the Cross or something as expansive as someone sharing their experience of walking the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem. Perhaps include special intentions for the evening, offering the Stations of the Cross for someone who is suffering or in need.

Lenten Resources and Ideas

Lenten Movie Night

Lenten Resources for 2017, see the Evangelization Blog: rcndon.org/evangelization/blog.html or contact Marika Donders at mdonders@rcndon.org.
Support the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe

Please Give Generously
Ash Wednesday - March 1, 2017

Restore the Church
Build the Future

Your donations help strengthen the Church of this region through grants to Catholic organizations that help those in need receive food, shelter, medicine, pastoral care, and compassion through the light of Christ.
Diocesan Vocation Office sets regional gatherings

OGDENSBURG - The Diocesan Vocation Office has scheduled regional meeting for all those involved in parish vocation ministry.

Any parish without vocation ministry may also send parishioners to any of these meetings.

The meetings will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 on the following dates:
- Feb. 25: St. Augustine Parish Center, 3029 Main Street, Peru
- March 1: Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Mary’s Cathedral
- March 4: Hearthsquare Room, SSJ Motherhouse, 1425 Washington St., Watertown
- March 11: St. John’s Parish Center, 6148 State Route 30, Lake Clear
- April 8: Parish of the Visitation Parish Center, 3 Morris St., Norfolk

During the meetings, the participants will review the goals of the WE ARE CALLED diocesan vocation plan. There will be discussion of ideas that have worked well and what is required for further progress. Participants will also hear about the annual parish reporting mechanism for vocation ministry.

Registration should be made at least three days ahead of the meeting by emailing or calling: Diocesan Vocation Office (Cathy Russell, Coordinator) crussell@rcdony.org 315-393-2920.

DOVS seeks members

In other vocation news, the diocesan DOVS (Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocation Society) is seeking new members. DOVS is a group of people who pray for and work to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the diocese. They meet most months, plan events to thank priests and religious and annually take a pilgrimage.

The next meeting will be held March 15.

Further information is available from Conni at 315-265-276 or the Vocations Office at 315-393-2920.

To Report Abuse

If you have a complaint of suspected misconduct involving diocesan clergy, religious employees or volunteers, contact Victims Assistance Coordinator, Terriianne Yanulavich, Adult & Youth Counseling Services of Northern New York, PO Box 2446, Plattsburgh, NY 12901; e-mail-terriianneyanulavich@yahoo.com Phone: 518-483-3261; or Father James Seymour, the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy at 315-393-2920, ext. 1340

NORTH COUNTY CATHOLIC HAS GONE GREEN

Here is what one subscriber has to say:

“What a pleasure to be able to read the North Country Catholic online. I am pleased that it has been offered in this manner - as sometimes I don’t have time to sit and read a paper - but when I can’t sleep at night - I log onto the computer. Very nice gesture - thanks”

To sign up to receive the MCC in your e-mail you can call our office at 315-608-7556.

Environmental Stewardship

Concern rooted in the Bible

Regardless of where we choose to stand in the debate of whether climate change is real or not, and what is causing it, as Catholics we believe that we have been given a sacred trust by God set forth in Genesis 1-2 to care for creation.

This “common home” we call planet earth is the source from which our bodies are fashioned, molded and sustained by daily as are all other species of life.

The challenge we face as Christians is how do we safeguard and protect the quality of life on this planet? We only need to look at the cities around the world to witness the need to wear masks to protect from carbon emissions from coal industries and motor vehicles to know that our health depends upon what we do now.

We need only to listen to the daily news to realize the challenge before us to ensure access to clean water for all. These concerns are not about politics; they are about justice rooted in the Bible. “What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do unto Me.”

Our daily choices affect not only our own health but that of all our brothers and sisters, and all living creatures. Looking around our local communities that have invested in cleaner energy options can be an inspiration for us to learn more about them and find out how we can invest in a healthier environment now and for our children.

Consider making this a priority this week.

Mark your calendars

Dr. Gerry Gacioch, chief of cardiology at Rochester General Hospital’s Heart Institute who is also one of 17 Catholic Climate Ambassadors trained by the Catholic Climate Covenant, is slated to offer a presentation April 2 at 1 p.m. in the Emmaus Room at St. Peter’s Church in Plattsburgh.

The presentation will focus on Catholic teachings associated with climate change and environmental stewardship for year 2017 – especially associated with Laudato si’ on Care of Our Common Home, the encyclical from Pope Francis; and what people can be doing as individuals and doing together.
Nationwide rallies call on Congress to defund Planned Parenthood

CHICAGO (CNS) -- The organizers of rallies held across the country Feb. 11 to call for defunding Planned Parenthood said their message to Congress is to redirect taxpayer’s money to facilities that “do a better job meeting the real health care needs of women and families without specializing in abortion.” More than 15,000 people attended 229 rallies held in 45 states. Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago, was the national organizer of the rallies, or #ProtestPP. Other groups coordinating the events included Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, Created Equal, 40 Days for Life and the Susan B. Anthony List.

“This is a nationwide event, but at the same time, it is a local community concern,” Scheidler said in a statement. In rallying to tell “Congress to quit sending money to an organization that specializes in killing children,” participants also declared “that they do not want Planned Parenthood to continue operating in their neighborhoods.” According to its 2014-15 annual report, Planned Parenthood received $553.7 million annually in government health service grants and reimbursements, which is 43 percent of its overall revenue. Federal money is allocated to the organization through Medicaid and public family planning services. Planned Parenthood performs 34 percent of U.S. abortions.

Trump administration urged to do all it can to ‘care for creation’

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Quoting Pope Francis’s encyclical “Laudato Si,” three Catholic leaders wrote to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson Feb. 17 urging the Trump administration to do all it can to care for creation both domestically and globally. “The Judeo-Christian tradition has always understood the environment to be a gift from God, and we are all called ‘to protect our one common home,’” the leaders wrote to Tillerson in a joint letter. It was signed by Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Domestic and Human Development; Bishop Oscar G. Cantu of Las Cruces, New Mexico, who is chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace; and Sean L. Callahan, who is president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services. The letter emphasizes the importance of adaptation policies and specifically calls for continued U.S. support of the Paris climate agreement as well as the Green Climate Fund, which provides poorer nations with resources to adapt to and mitigate changing climate realities.

Advocates expect to see more asylum seekers cross Canadian border

TORONTO (CNS) -- Canada can expect to see more asylum seekers crossing its nearly 6,600-mile, mostly unguarded, border with the United States as enforcement toughens at the U.S.-Mexican border and President Donald Trump continues to issue executive orders to restrict refugee arrivals, advocates said. “It appears things will get worse for refugees (in the U.S.),” Scalabrinian Father Vinzenzo Rosato told The Catholic Register, Canadian Catholic weekly. “The whole situation is creating a lot of uncertainty.” The Scalabrinian order is dedicated to serving migrants and refugees worldwide and runs safe houses for refugees along several borders, including the U.S.-Mexican border. The forces that have driven about 300 refugee claimants to cross into Manitoba from Minnesota and North Dakota since last April — including more than 40 who have arrived in Emerson, Manitoba, in just two weeks — may mean that the Scalabrinians have to set up similar safe houses near the Canada-U.S. border, Father Rosato said. “This could become a real exodus and a new phenomenon,” he said. “If we have to provide for the immediate needs, I think we would be ready.”

Counteract vitriol by toning it down, talking less, listening more, pope says

ROME (CNS) - Addressing the fear of immigrants, dissatisfaction with a “fluid economy” and the impatience and vitriol seen in politics and society, Pope Francis told Rome university students to practice a kind of “intellectual charity” that promotes dialogue and sees value in diversity.

“There are lots of remedies against violence,” but they must start first with one’s heart being open to hearing other people’s opinions and then talking things out with patience, he said in a 45-minute off-the-cuff talk.

“It necessary to tone it down a bit, to talk less and listen more,” he told hundreds of students, staff and their family members and friends during a visit Feb. 17 to Roma Tre University.

Seated on a platform facing an open courtyard, the pope listened to questions from four students, including Nour Essa, who was one of the 12 Syrian refugees the pope had brought to Rome on a papal flight from Lesbos, Greece, in 2016.

The pope said he had received the questions beforehand and wrote a prepared text, but he preferred to answer “from the heart” and be “more spontaneous because I like it better that way.”

Asking what a “remedy” could counteract the world’s violence and how to live well in such a fast-paced, globalized world of “social networks,” the pope said today’s frenetic pace “makes us violent at home.”

Family members don’t bother saying “good morning” to each other, they absentmindedly say “hi” or eat together in silence, each absorbed with a smartphone, he said.

The faster the pace in life, the more people become “nameless” because no one takes the time to get to know the other, ending up with a situation where “I greet you as if you were an object.”

The tendency to de-personalize others, which starts in one’s own heart, at home and with relationships, “grows and grows and it will become violence worldwide,” he said.

“In a society where politics has sunk very low… one loses the sense” of building up civic life and social harmony, which is done through dialogue.

Pope Francis commented on the way many electoral campaigns and debates feature people interrupting each other and asked, “Wait! Listen carefully to what the other thinks and then respond,” he said, and asked for clarification when the point isn’t understood.

The pope said universities must be places dedicated to this kind of openness, dialogue and respect for a diversity of opinions and ideas.

An institution cannot claim it is offering higher education if there is no “dialogue, discussion, listening, where there is no respect for how others think, where there is no friendship, joy of play,” he said.

People go to university to learn and listen, but not passively, the pope said. It is a place to actively seek the good, the beautiful and the true, as a journey done together over time.

He also critiqued the so-called “fluid economy,” which leads to a lack of stable, “solid” employment.

Networked trades and transactions in which a person can make - like a business friend of his did - $10,000 in 10 minutes trading commodities is an example of this “fluid” economy, he said.

This “liquidity” erases “the culture of work” and everything that is “concrete” about labor “because you cannot work and young people don’t know what to do,” which can lead them to addictions or suicide.

Or the lack of work leads me to join a terrorist militia. ‘At least I have something to do and have meaning in my life.’ It’s horrible,” he said.

Essa, the 31-year-old Syrian woman, told the pope she, her husband and small boy were living in a refugee camp in Lesbos until “our life changed in one day, thanks to you.”

The Scalabrinian order is dedicated to serving migrants and refugees worldwide and runs safe houses for refugees along several borders, including the U.S.-Mexican border. The forces that have driven about 300 refugee claimants to cross into Manitoba from Minnesota and North Dakota since last April — including more than 40 who have arrived in Emerson, Manitoba, in just two weeks — may mean that the Scalabrinians have to set up similar safe houses near the Canada-U.S. border, Father Rosato said. “This could become a real exodus and a new phenomenon,” he said. “If we have to provide for the immediate needs, I think we would be ready.”

Canada-U.S. border, Father Rosato said. “This could become a real exodus and a new phenomenon,” he said. “If we have to provide for the immediate needs, I think we would be ready.”
Do not worry... I will never forget you

Of all the emotions which affect our thoughts and memories, the emotion of fear lingers in our minds and memories long after the actual experience that caused it. Perhaps we had locked ourselves out of our car late at night in a deserted parking lot. Where to turn for help? We all remember the fear that gripped his country on 9/11/2001. Often fear causes us to panic with an overreaction that doesn’t really eliminate what caused our fear in the first place—and causes more harm than good.

In today’s first reading, the Israelites have just come out of exile. They’re discouraged. They think God has forgotten them. And so, through the prophet Isaiah, God says the most comforting words to them, “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” As Israelites desperately needed to hear those words, so do we. Often and often again we have fears that God has forgotten us, forgotten that He ever created us. May we say those words to ourselves whenever our fear of abandonment paralyzes our hearts with fear. And listen how the Gospel fits in so well today with Christ’s teaching on fear. A large crowd is gathered on a mountain, giving rapt attention to the words of Jesus. You’re part of the crowd. How very consolation are the words you hear from Jesus: “...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear...look at the birds in the sky, they do not sow or reap...yet your Heavenly Father feeds them...”

You strain to hear more, as Jesus tells you not to worry about what you are to eat or drink or wear. “Oh you of little faith, Your Heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness and all these things will be given you besides.” Do not worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”

What wonderfully soothing words, and they are so true for us today! They have power to quiet our fears and calm our nerves—if we have sufficient faith to trust in Him. We are tempted to question Jesus’ words when we see such discouraging scenes of starvation and death in countries around the globe, and even in our own nation. Then we must remember that Jesus did not place the whole burden on God the Father.

In our second reading today, St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that all in the community are “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Doesn’t that remind us that much of the burden is ours? Remember what St. James told us. “If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead’ (Jas 2:14).

It is today’s community of faith, the contemporary “Body of Christ”, that must help make the promises of the Sermon on the Mount a reality.

Lack of prayer turns God's word into philosophical idea

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Without spiritual courage and a love for Jesus, the word of God will be proclaimed as just "a good, philosophical or moral idea," Pope Francis said.

A preacher "may say something interesting -- something moral, something that will make you feel good, a philanthropic good -- but there is no word of God," the pope said during Mass in the chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae. In his homily Feb. 14, the feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Pope Francis said the world needed missionaries and "brave heralds" of the Gospel like the two great evangelists and co-patron saints of Europe.

Reflecting on the day’s first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, in which Paul and Barnabas announce the good news to the Gentiles, the pope said the word of God must be preached with “frankness and strength.” He also commented on the day’s Gospel of St. Luke in which Jesus sends out 72 disciples to preach the good news, noting that Jesus highlights how necessary it is for those who preach the Gospel to also pray. "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest," Jesus said. The pope explained that Jesus’ words express the importance of prayer when planting the seed of God’s word so “that the Lord may water this seed and it may sprout.”

"Without prayer, you can have a beautiful conference, a beautiful instruction: good, good! But it is not the word of God. The word of God can only come from a prayerful heart," he said.

Scripture Reflections

FEB. 26

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READINGS

Isaiah 49:14-15
1 Corinthians 4:1-5
Matthew 6:24-34

Our Readers Write

Defund Planned Parenthood

This past weekend, America spoke out and asked the 115th Congress to reroute taxpayer dollars from Planned Parenthood, including Planned Parenthood of the North Country, Plattsburgh to comprehensive health care centers.

More than 225 #DefundPP events took place in 43 states and the nation’s capital, drawing tens of thousands of people rallying to protest tax dollar support of Planned Parenthood.

Each year Planned Parenthood performs over 320,000 abortions, 34% of the annual total. They provide less than 2% of manual breast exams, less than 1% of pap smear tests, and zero mammograms for women in America. That’s not addressing women’s health, reproductive or otherwise.

Why not redirect our tax money to Federally Qualified Health Centers that provide a wider range of health care services and a higher standard of care?

Reallocation tax dollars to supporting legitimate providers of comprehensive women’s health care frees us from having to deal with Planned Parenthood’s increasingly negative image. Congress has investigated Planned Parenthood’s involvement in harvesting and selling fetal tissue.

Do we really want that kind of business in our neighborhood?

I urge Plattsburgh and North Country NY - area residents to call your US Senators Chuck Schumer 202-224-6542 & Kristen Gillibrand 202-224-4451 or US Representative Elise Stefanik 202-225-4611 and insist that they defund Planned Parenthood now!

NANCY BELZILE
WILLSBORO

Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters from readers of the North Country Catholic. Due to space limitations, we ask that the number of words be limited to 300. We cannot accept letters which support ideas which are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Send letters to North Country Catholic, PO Box 326, Ogdensburg, NY, 13669 or e-mail to news@northcountrycatholic.org
**John Wick: Chapter 2**

By Kurt Jensen

Catholic News Service

The stylized, nearly cartoonish nihilism and resulting high body count in "John Wick: Chapter 2" (Lionsgate) create most of the apparent appeal of this second drama about a professional assassin.

The rest, as directed by Chad Stahelski from Derek Kolstad's script, consists of small moments -- quite small, since there's nearly no dialogue -- of mordant and questionable humor. Violently pulled out of retirement, Wick (Keanu Reeves) arrives in Rome for an assignment.

"Are you here to see the pope?" a worried-looking Winston (Ian McShane), the owner of the Continental Hotel, asks. Assured that's not the case, Winston tells Wick that he has a room available to use as a base of operations.

The Continental is also the name of a secret international network of assassins of which Wick is the indisputable star, since he's acrobatic, amazingly versatile and fearless. He also, in this episode, has a bounty on his head, so when he's not shooting or committing mayhem in a muscle car, he's being shot at.

The core story has Wick unwillingly drawn into a plot to seize a seat at the High Table, a criminal enterprise. Italian playboy Santino D'Antonio (Riccardo Scamarcio) wants the seat held by his fur-adorned sister, Gianna (Claudia Gerini).

To get it, he orders Wick to treat Gianna with extreme prejudice.

Since a previous life-or-death commitment to Santino leaves Wick with no choice but to accept this mission, he takes to it in the manner of James Bond being equipped by Q. He'll have to face off against Gianna's loyal bodyguard, Cassian (Common). And Santino has a large squad of goons who don't wish to see Wick get away alive.

It's not a movie that requires concentrated attention. What's needed instead is a tolerance for -- and enjoyment of -- elaborately choreographed stunts and chase sequences.

The film contains pervasive action violence with little blood, a suicide and brief full female nudity. The Catholic News Service classification is L -- limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R -- restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

**Also Playing**

Dane DeHaan stars in a scene from the movie "A Cure for Wellness," a creepy, but otherwise pointless horror exercise. A Wall Street business executive (DeHaan) is dispatched to a Swiss spa to convince a higher-ranking colleague (Harry Groener) who has mysteriously decided to remain there permanently that he must instead return to headquarters to sign off on a big pending merger. As the young wheeler-dealer eventually discovers, however, despite the soothing manner of the resort's proprietor (Jason Isaacs), something is profoundly amiss, and his own chances of ever leaving the place are remote. The Catholic News Service classification is L -- limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R -- restricted.

**Immaculate Heart Central School Mystery Players**

**LENT 2017: “Jesus Turners Falls Again”**

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www.ihcschools.org/spiritual-life/mystery-players
PETER PAN at IHC
Watertown — IHC to present their High School Musical, Peter Pan.
Date: March 3 at 7 p.m. and March 4 at 1 p.m.
Cost: Adults, $10; Students, Seniors, and Military, $8; under 5, $6
Features: Our students will be soaring to new heights with the help of flying and production experts, Flying With Foy.
http://flyflyboy.com Peter Pan is presented in through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).

ALL YOU CAN EAT BREAKFAST
Moos — All you can eat breakfast to be held to benefit new church doors.
Date: March 5
Time: 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Place: St. Ann’s Hall
Cost: Adults, $8; Children 6-12, $5; under 5, Free
Contact: Nancy Belzile 518-593-6024

WEEKLY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION
Watertown — Holy Hour for Vocations to be held every Tuesday.
Time: 3 p.m. to 6
Place: St. Anthony’s Church

DIVINE MERCY DEVOTIONS
Housesville — Divine Mercy Devotions for the month of March to be held.
Date: March 5
Time: 3 p.m.
Place: St. Hedwig’s Church
Features: The program includes: Vespers (Evening Prayer), Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Benediction. At 2:25 p.m., before the monthly devotions, the first DVD of a monthly 10-part series entitled: Divine Mercy in the Second Greatest Story Ever Told, Will be presented.
Contact: 315-348-6260

SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALL DINNER
Evans Mills — Spaghetti and Meatball dinner to be held to benefit the Indian River Knights of Columbus.
Date: March 4
Time: 4 p.m. to 7
Place: St. Mary’s Parish Center
Contact: 629-4678

BISHOP BARRON STUDY PROGRAM
Massena — Begin the journey from sin to sanctity with Bishop Barron’s 9-week study program “Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Lively Virtues.”
Date: Tuesdays through April 4
Time: 2 p.m. to 4 and also offered at 6:30 p.m. to 8:30
Place: St. Mary’s Social Hall
Cost: No Charge (though a free will offering will be accepted)
Contact: Visit website at www.masse­nacatholics.com or call the parish Rec­tory at 315-769-2469.

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION
Massena — St. Mary’s & St. Joseph’s parish offers a Eucharistic Holy Hour and Benediction.
Time: Thursdays, immediately following the 8:15 a.m. Mass until 10 a.m.
Place: St. Mary’s
As we approach the Lenten season

From the Director’s Desk
Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ
Diocesan Mission Director

Sacrifice. Many times our daily lives are already full of great sacrifice. We can experience illness or loss of a loved one, economic stress or setbacks, and so many different types of daily pain and challenges. We offer these to Jesus. We remember His own sufferings for us on the Cross. Knowing that, we can reach out, with Jesus’ love, to those in greater need, in greater darkness.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith is always featuring stories from the developing lands where real life missionaries are slowly making a difference. This Lent, we talk of Sister Augustine and the Sisters in her Religious Community are doing just that in a village in South Africa. At St. Anthony’s Clinic in Witbank, South Africa, the Sisters there are providing medical help for more than 1,400 children each year and healing with the mercy of Jesus. Most of the children there are alone and have suffered the loss of their parents from HIV/AIDS. Sister Augustine explains, “Each child we meet offers an opportunity for us to see and serve the Lord. Through our care, we strive to provide not only healing but also enduring hope.”

This Lent, with your prayers and Lenten sacrifice to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, you can make a gift of “enduring hope!” Your gift helps sustain the work of Sister Augustine, as well as priests, Religious and lay catechists in the Mission Church who help to relieve suffering as they reach out with the hope that sustains us as well on our own dark days.

Through your sacrifice, you are sharing your love with the poor, reminding them of Jesus’ great sacrifice for us and giving them a glimpse of the hope of His Resurrection! I am most grateful for your missionary heart and spirit of sacrifice. Please be assured of my prayers for you and your family during this Lenten Season and especially at Easter! God Bless from the Mission Office.


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Subscribe online at www.northcountrycatholic.org or call our office at 315-608-7556 to subscribe today! Options to receive the NCC in your mailbox or in your e-mail.

OBITUARIES

AuSable Forks — Mary (Dolan) Keating, 92; Funeral Services Feb. 15, 2017 at Holy Name Church.

Brasher Falls — Kathleen T. “Katie” Collins, 80; Funeral Feb. 18, 2017 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Brushton — Elizabeth M. (Hanna) Mayer, 51; Funeral Services Feb. 14, 2017 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Bombay.

Brushton — Norman G. Tatro, 71; Funeral Services Feb. 15, 2017 at St. Mary’s Church.

Cadyville — Marvin G. Weaver, 84; Funeral Services Feb. 14, 2017 at St. James Church; burial in Whispering Maples Mausoleum.

Champlain — Reginald A. Mayo, 78; Funeral Services Feb. 13, 2017 at St. Mary’s Church.

Gouverneur — Trina Marie (Gale) Holmes, 50; Funeral Services Feb. 11, 2017 at the Green Funeral Home.

Harrisville — Bryan C. Zink, 55; Funeral Services Feb. 16, 2017 at Frary Funeral Home.

Hogansburg — Anthony John McDonald, 53; Funeral Services Feb. 17, 2017 at St. Regis Church.

Hogansburg — Mae V. Tarbell, 92; Funeral Services Feb. 16, 2017 at St. Regis Church; burial in St. Joseph’s Cemetery.

Malone — Cyntis C. Primeau, 75; Funeral Services Feb. 17, 2017 at Notre Dame Church; burial in the Saratoga National Cemetery, Schuylerville.

Massena — Patricia A. (Martin) Larabee, 76; Funeral Services Feb. 16, 2017 at the Donaldson Funeral Home; burial in Massena Center Cemetery.

Morrisonville — Jean A. (LaComb) Williams, 78; Funeral Services Feb. 18, 2017 at St. Alexander’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Ogdensburg — Jean R. Brown, 90; Funeral Services at the Fox & Murray Funeral Home; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Ogdensburg — Elizabeth Elliott Leonard, 93; Funeral Services Feb. 17, 2017 at St. Mary’s Cathedral.

Plattsburgh — Theresa Rose (Collins) Connroy, 85; Funeral Services Feb. 16, 2017 at St. John’s Church; burial in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Plattsburgh — Barbara Jean (Guay) Fre­dette, 83; Funeral Services Feb. 17, 2017 at St. Peter’s Church.

Plattsburgh — Jacqueline E. (Girard) Maille, 87; Funeral Services Feb. 18, 2017 at St. Peter’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Watertown — Ramon F. “Ray” LaLone, 84; Funeral Services Feb. 18, 2017 at St. Cecilia’s Church; burial in St. Cecilia’s Cemetery.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

ST. LAWRENCE

LENTEN ADORATION
Massena – Lenten Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to be held.
Date: Beginning March 3 every Mon. and Fri during Lent
Time: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Place: St. Mary's Church family room

DAYS OF DISCERNMENT
Potsdam – Discerning men are invited to come together & consider the call the Roman Catholic Priesthood.
Dates: March 5;
Time: 3 p.m.
Place: St. Mary's Rectory
Features: Reflection and vespers. No reservation necessary. Open to men who are Juniors in high school and older.
Contact: Your Catholic Campus Minister or Father Stephen Rocker, pastorsmp@gmail.com, 315-265-9680; or Fr. Doug Lucia, frdoug@twcny.rr.com

EUCARISTIC ADORATION
Massena – St. Mary’s & St. Joseph’s hold Benediction and Adoration every Friday

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CAMP GUGGENHEIM REGISTRATION
Registration for 2017 season for Camp Guggenheim is now open through www.rcdony.org/camp.
Features: Weeks one through five are specifically designated for 12-15 year olds, while Week Six is just for 16-18 year olds.
Contact: For more information contact the Office of Youth Ministry at 315-393-2920 or vtalonde@rcdony.org or visit camp website: rcdony.org/camp/guggy

DOVS MEMBERS SOUGHT
D.O.V.S (Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocation Society) is a group of people who pray for and work to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our diocese is seeking new members. DOVS meets most months, plan events to thank priests and religious and annually take a pilgrimage.
Date: Next meeting is March 15
Contact: Call Connie at 315-265-276 or the Vocations Office at 315-393-2920

YOUTH RALLY REGISTRATION
Youth Rally for 2017 is to be held.
Date: May 6
Place: HHC
Features: This full-day event will feature keynote speaker Paul J. Kim, prayer, interactive workshops, games, and Mass presided by Bishop LaValley. Each group attending needs to have one Virtus-trained and background-checked adult for each eight students. Youth leaders can register themselves and youth at www.rcdony.org/youthrally/register.
Contact: Kelly at kdonnelly@rcdony.org

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REGISTER FOR NCYC BY MARCH 1
National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) will be held in Indianapolis.
Date: Nov. 16-18
Features: A group from the Diocese of Ogdensburg will be traveling to this conference where youth from across the country gather to pray, hear renowned speakers and performers, and participate in a variety of interactive programs. Interested students must be in grades 9-12 during the ’17-’18 academic year. A deposit and registration is due by March 1, and registration is limited.
Contact: Get details and register at www.rcdony.org/youthncyc/ncyc

Aiden and Lucas Mott, fourth grade students at Seton Academy in Plattsburgh, show their family poster to their classmates. The poster shows how the Mott family is called to love. The school families made posters showing how they are called to love and these posters are displayed in the front hall during Catholic School Week.

Mrs. Illsco’s third grade class at Trinity Catholic in Massena, tried their hand at making their own totem pole this week. After completing a unit on the Northwest Pacific Native American tribes called the Snohomish and Suquamish, the “Owl Clan” class broke into groups and created one section of the pole, each. They then assembled the whole structure and marveled at each section’s diversity and beauty.