St. Mary’s School to close

CANTON – On Dec. 6, the families of St. Mary’s School learned the school would close at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

The closure was unanimously recommended by the St. Mary’s Parish Council, Education Council and Finance Council.

The recommendation was relayed by Father Bryan D. Stitt, pastor of St. Mary’s Parish, to Bishop Terry R. LaValley, who accepted the recommendation.

The faculty learned of the decision on Dec. 5. FULL STORY, PAGE 12

The Reason for the Season

Religious Education students from St. Mary’s in Clayton braved the cold on Dec. 7 to stage a living nativity. The event was organized by Doreen Garret and was well received by those traveling through the town, who greeted the youth with honks and waves.

Pope: Rise of populism due to lack of dialogue

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Ignoring the reality lived by men and women today has caused a resurgence of old ideologies, such as populism, that inevitably do more harm than good, Pope Francis said.

Speaking off-the-cuff with staff and members of the Italian Jesuit magazine, “Aggiornamenti Sociali” (“Social Updates”) Dec. 6, the pope said that prejudices – certain “schools of thought and positions taken do so much harm” in the world.

“Today for example in Europe, we are experiencing the prejudice of populism, countries who close in on themselves and turn to ideologies,” he said. “But not just new ideologies – there are a few – but to the old ones, the old ideologies that created the Second World War.”

Founded in 1950, “Aggiornamenti Sociali” offers “information but above all formation,” as well as “criteria and instruments to confront today’s most debated issues and participate in social life in a conscious way,” according to the Jesuit magazine’s website.

The pope told the staff and writers he had prepared to read an eight-page speech, but he feared that “after the third page, there will be few left who will listen.”

In his off-the-cuff remarks, the pope highlighted the importance of listening, saying it is the “fundamental attitude of every person who wants to do something for others.”

“Listen to situations, listen to problems, openly, without prejudices,” he said. “Because there is a way of listening that is ‘yes, yes, I understand, yes, yes,’ and it reduces them, a reductionism to my categories. And this cannot be.”

The resurgence of ideologies like populism, he explained, is a product of not listening because “it is a projection of what I want to be done, what I want to be thought, what I think should be.”

“It is a complex that makes us substitute God the creator: we take the situations in our own hands and work,” he continued. “Reality is what I want it to be; we place filters. But reality is another thing, reality is sovereign. Whether we like it or not, it is sovereign. And I must dialogue with reality.”

Dialogue, he added, is an important step in confronting today’s societal ills. Christians are not called “to impose paths of development or solutions to problems,” but instead, to initiate “a dialogue with that reality starting from the values of the Gospel, from the things Jesus has taught us, without dogmatically imposing but with dialogue and discernment.”

Honoring Mother Cabrini

St. Patrick’s Church in Peasleeville, a small hamlet in the Clinton County Town of Peru, is the home of a shrine honoring Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini. Faithful gathered there on Mother Cabrini’s feast day to celebrate the first U.S. citizen to be canonized. FULL STORY, PAGE 5
EDITOR’S NOTE

A gift that leaves us speechless

For a while, we weren’t sure if my son, Jake, who is on the autism spectrum, would ever talk. Now, we’re not sure if he’ll ever be quiet.

So, it made my day, possibly my year, when he opened his early Christmas present, tickets to see our beloved Pittsburgh Steelers play the Buffalo Bills, and was rendered speechless.

Jake inherited what I refer to as “the collector gene” from my husband. Since I live with two collectors, my house is full of stuff. So, when it comes to holidays and birthdays, we’ve adopted the practice of giving “experience gifts” as often as possible.

When people ask what to get Jake for Christmas or birthdays, I typically respond, “the last thing we need is more stuff, but we can’t have too many memories or good times.”

We’ve received and gifted movie theater gift cards, theater tickets, sporting event tickets, theme park passes and other similar items. In addition to providing us with a multitude of fun experiences, this practice gives us time together.

Since my husband dislikes both football and cities, he’s not joining us for this trip to Pittsburgh. Jake and I will have the eight-hour car ride there and back to talk football, sing loudly and badly with the car radio, and just enjoy spending time with each other, and that’s before we even consider the time we’ll get to spend together bashing around Pittsburgh before the Sunday evening game.

Our experience gifts aren’t just gifts of fun, they’re gifts of ourselves—our time, our attention, our laughter and our joy.

This season, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, we’re celebrating the ultimate gift of self. We’re celebrating that our Savior became man and eventually gave His life to give us salvation.

As we get caught up in the gift buying, cookie making and party attending, I pray we remember to give of ourselves. I pray we give gifts of time, both to our loved ones and those in need. And I pray we remember that we’re celebrating the ultimate gift.

And I pray it leaves us speechless.

John the Baptist’s vocation was Advent

It is Advent. Let us take a moment to remember St. John the Baptist. John’s vocation was Advent. He came to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus. Personally, St. John the Baptist is one of my favorite saints. In many ways, his vocation is the same as mine. As a priest, I am called to bring Jesus to others. John the Baptist is a true guide for me, both as a preacher, and as an evangelist. Actually, every disciple of Jesus is called to this vocation—to bring Jesus to others, to bring Jesus’ love and peace to others. Such is our call as a Catholic. I know you know this story, but let us again remember John the Baptist.

John was called the Baptist because he used a baptism of water as a sign in his mission. It was truly a clever idea. Remember that this style of baptism of John was not the same as the Baptism of Jesus—our Sacrament of Baptism—our sacrament of dedication and new life with the Lord. John made it clear that he was not the Messiah and one greater than he would come after him who would baptize in the power of the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist preached to the people on the shores of the Jordan River. He urged the people to change their lives, to be better people, to make their world a better place and to prepare themselves for the coming of the Savior. As a sign of acceptance and a reminder of this experience, John invited them into the river and plunged them into the water as a baptism of faith and repentance. This was something to be remembered for a lifetime.

We are told in Matthew’s Gospel that one day Jesus came to where John was speaking. Jesus got in line with the others to be baptized by John. John was well aware of Jesus’ identity. In fact, John wanted Jesus to baptize him. However, Jesus insists he wants to join with all those coming to John. It does become a supernatural moment. We are told that the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus. A voice from Heaven is heard, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” (Matt 3:17)

Later, in Matthew’s Gospel, we learn that John the Baptist was placed in prison, as he had been criticizing the king. While in prison, John wants his disciples to discover Jesus as Messiah. So, he sends them to ask Jesus if he is the one who is to come. Jesus answers with words of the Old Testament prophets. He says this: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.” (Matt.11:4)

Jesus then goes on speaking to the people, saying: “This is the one about whom it is written ‘Behold I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.’ ” Jesus adds to this: “I say to you, among those born of woman there has been none greater than John the Baptist.”

St. John’s Gospel, chapter 3, tells us that before John’s imprisonment, John was teaching his disciples about Jesus. “No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said that I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. So the joy of mine has been made complete. (John 3:22-29)

John the Baptist ends his teaching by saying, “He must increase, I must decrease.”
IHC students develop spirit of giving, service

By Patricia Minter-Powell
Immaculate Heart Central

WATERTOWN - Immaculate Heart Central (IHC) School’s mission statement ends with the imperative: “...form responsible citizens whose Christian values will transform the world.” In reality, however, the future tense of its mission is very much being played out in the present, especially during this season of giving.

A quick glance, for example, at IHC’s December community service calendar provides a special insight into the many ways the students at this small North Country Catholic school are actively transforming their world.

It also reflects the broader meaning of “community” as interpreted by its students and administrators.

Furthermore, it reflects the true spirit of the season as our students give the most precious of all gifts, the gift of oneself.

During this month alone our students will reach out to the marginalized, the impoverished, the lonely, the elderly, the hungry or the forgotten. Close to “home,” they’ll serve dinners of fellow-ship to those seeking to stretch their food budget or perhaps just get a respite from an otherwise lonely evening at home. They’ll dance and sing with the disabled, sign and illustrate hundreds of cards for shut-ins and elderly and help children from low-income families celebrate the joy of creating Christmas crafts.

IHC students will also provide a “night-out” for parents of young children, assist clients at our local Urban Mission, help tutor fellow students, clean our school’s chapel and ready our halls for Advent.

Expanding their outreach they’ll fill health kits for refugee children, participate in a dance marathon to raise funds for our “sister” school in Tanzania and begin the process of supporting our troops through participation in a local “Adopt-A-Platoon” program for deployed service men and women.

The students are also learning how much they can gain by serving and giving to others.

“Our annual Dance for Kitenga is so much fun,” exclaimed Jack Charlebois, an eighth-grade student. “It’s hard to believe that we’re dancing and still supporting a good cause!”

“I enjoy serving at Dollar Dinners because I meet new people and listen to their stories. It gives me a new perspective on things,” added Melinda Rivera, an IHC senior.

“I like Kids Night Out events because it’s an opportunity to learn how to look after someone other than yourself and you get to watch and allow kids to be kids,” said Mallory Aliacie-Loving, an eleventh-grade student.

“I love doing Urban Mission’s Food Sense Program, because it’s so fun to help people check in before they get their food,” said Sharon Moniello, an IHC senior.

“It’s so nice when you see the same face every time!”

Margaret Mead got it right when she famously stated: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world.”

Through their simple acts of kindness, the students of Immaculate Heart Central are getting it “right” each and every day while providing living testimony to the success of our school’s mission and the ultimate power of the gift of self.
Saint Frances Cabrini honored at local shrine

By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing writer

PEASLEEVILLE — On the feast day of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini on Nov. 13, faithful celebrated her patronage with a Mass offered by Father Alan D. Shnob, pastor of St. Augustine’s in Peru, at her shrine in Peasleeville.

Father Shnob, who played a crucial role in the shrine’s renovation, spoke about the parish’s gratitude for Cabrini’s continued favors and blessings.

Bonnie Snider attended the Mass and shared a powerful story of Cabrini’s intercession. Snider explained that when her grandson Mason was one-and-a-half years old, he was diagnosed with leukemia. Pleading for Cabrini’s assistance, Bonnie promised to visit her shrine weekly if her grandson was healed.

Mason was cured and is now a 14-year-old athlete.

Snider continues to travel to the shrine each week in thanksgiving.

Charles Normandin, a retired mason who helped repair the shrine, believes that he saw Cabrini there.

“I drove up to the shrine, there was a white flash, a puff, almost like you looked into a beam of light,” he said. “I looked back and there was a woman there in the mist. I got out of my car and I approached the shrine. I looked at her and she turned. I said, ‘It is a beautiful day up here,’ and she said ‘Yes, it ‘tis.’ She was looking at the work I had done, repairing the shrine. That was the year before (1995).

“I said, ‘Do you know what body of water it is down there? It’s Lake Champlain.’ ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘That’s what they call it.’ She walked off the shrine down to the side walk, she had only two steps to go down. I heard this clunk, clunk. I walked down the side walk with her and I stopped. She proceeded to keep walking on. She said, ‘Have a nice day.’ I said, ‘Yes, you have a nice day.’ And she continued on walking toward the Church. She told me ‘If you don’t want to see me vanish, look at me here. So, I turned and looked at the shrine.’

Normandin said he is convinced the vision he saw was Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, also known as Mother Cabrini.

“I was thinking of the power of the Maker to have her come; that affected me more than anything after I knew who she was,” he said. “The power of God Himself, to see it, to talk to her, it dumbfounded me. I was overwhelmed with it, kind of like a shock. It was her, definitely it was her.”

Normandin described her long skirt, wooden shoes, ruffled blouse, and accent.

“It appeared to me to be a real person,” he said. “It was as real as any person could be, like I’m looking at you. You could feel the power of God. I believe that she was looking at the shrine, but she didn’t have to look, she already knew it.”

Joyce Lucia-Kolb, a Peasleeville native, recounted the history of the shrine, located in the small Clinton County hamlet. She noted that St. Patrick’s Parish, now an oratory, wanted to honor the first American citizen to be canonized.

Father Harold P. McCabe, pastor of St. Patrick’s in 1946, the year Mother Cabrini was canonized, was greatly devoted to the saint and wanted to begin a shrine to her. Parishioners worked for its construction and, as a result, thousands of people visited the shrine from as far away as Michigan. Numerous people of all faiths came by busloads from New York City and Canada.

“The parish wanted to build a shrine to her and one of the parishioner’s volunteered,” she said. “We were a parish of farmers... All of the families donated rocks from their farms. My parents’ farm is directly across the road from the church.”

Lucia-Kolb said the shrine and Mother Cabrini have had a significant impact on her life.

“The church and the shrine were our life,” she said of her family. “We did the haying for the church land that had at one time been a part of our farm but had been donated to the church to prevent development. We cared for the flowers, candles, lawns, etc. Mother Cabrini has been my life since I was born.”

Lucia-Kolb said she believes her family experienced a miracle she attributes to Mother Cabrini’s intercession.

“When my son was a baby, he regularly had ear infections both inner and outer and often both at the same time,” she said. “The doctor wanted to do surgery. (When he was) about a year and a half old I put the relic (of Cabrini) on his ears. He never had any more infections and his hearing was superior. I remember when I was very young there was a pair of crutches left on the shrine. The caretaker said the person left them there and walked away.”

Born in 1850, near Milan, Italy, Cabrini loved the Holy Eucharist from a young age. She longed to be a religious, but her health was too poor to join the teaching Sisters.

Cabrini founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, desiring to travel to China, but the Pope told them to go to the United States instead. They left Italy in 1889 and arrived in New York City without a home.

Father Shnob noted that, although only five feet tall, Mother Cabrini was indomitable. She and the sisters in her community ministered to Italian immigrants and traveled the Americas and Europe founding schools, orphanages, and hospitals.

At the time of Cabrini’s death in 1917, she had over 4,000 sisters and more than 50 houses, in addition to 67 institutions: hospitals, schools, and orphanages worldwide. Though afraid of water, Cabrini crossed the Atlantic 23 times. She is patroness of immigrants.

Her incorrupt body is on display at St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Shrine in Manhattan.

Recently Mother Cabrini was in the news when the New York City public arts program decided to build statues of women in our state. When they held a poll to decide which statues to erect, Mother Cabrini received the most votes. Nevertheless, they decided not to include her.

Citizens spoke up, however, and Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that a statue of Cabrini will be sculpted.
As he tries to navigate his way through this morass of competing motives, Benoit enlist the help of Harlan’s caring and sensible Latina nurse, Marta (Ana de Armas). Marta makes an excellent witness and guide to events because she has an unusual medical condition: she cannot tell a lie without getting sick to her stomach.

Yet even Marta’s role in the mystery is not what it initially appears. Clever twists and turns, worthy of Christie herself, abundant humor and sly social commentary make Johnson’s movie a dandy treat.

There is a hard edge to the proceedings, though, since so many of the figures on screen are grasping, entitled, selfish and perpetually quarrelsome. Those qualities are, of course, being satirized. Yet at least some viewers may not care for the company of such ethically impoverished characters. There is also at least one important aspect of the story requiring mature discernment — another good reason, along with thematic and vocabulary considerations, to steer kids elsewhere.

Still, in the end, good triumphs over evil and Johnson handles this final development just as deftly as he treats the rest of his material. As a result, there’s a particular relish to the wrap-up. Call it the sweetly moral chery atop the flavorful cinematic sundae that is “Knives Out.”

The film contains brief gory violence, a morally complex situation, drug use, sexual references, about a dozen profanities, a few milder oaths, a couple of rough terms, frequent crude and crass language and an obscene gesture.

The Catholic News Service classification is A-III — adults.

The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned.

Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters from readers of the North Country Catholic.

• Due to space limitations, we ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

• 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

Environmental Stewardship

What’s on your list?

This week, we continue our reflections on some of our Christmas traditions and how they connect us with the heavens and earth. Another familiar tradition is the Advent wreath. It was originally adopted by Christians in the Middle Ages as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. It combines the symbolism of wreaths, evergreens and candles. The addition of candles to the wreath provides us with another connection with the natural world—bees. Candles have always been an important part of our Catholic celebrations. The wax that fuels the light reminds us of warmth and comfort. They are not only an important part in our Advent and Christmas celebrations but are also an important part of the Easter celebration. In the Easter Vigil Exultet, the work of bees is mentioned and praised in the prayer over the Easter Candle. Light, like honey, is a symbol of blessing and goodness.

Another custom of the Christmas season includes fruit. At the turn of the last century in the northern hemisphere, good children would receive their only orange of the year as a Christmas gift. Baskets of fruit are often given as gifts. As a Christmas symbol, fruit recalls the 12 Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These fruits result from the activity of the Gifts of the Spirit in our lives. As we enjoy the fruits of this season, we may give thanks for these gifts of the earth and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And what about all those Christmas cookies and breads of the season? These pastries are made with flour and remind us of the many uses of bread in the Scriptures. The Christmas cookies are often cut out in the shapes of stars, trees or gingerbread men.

As we continue to prepare for Christmas, what other customs do you find that join heavens and earth together in our celebration? What ways of celebrating this season can you find that will protect, heal and honor the gifts of creation?
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St. Agnes Church
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Buffalo’s bishop resigns, Albany bishop named admin

BUFFALO, N.Y. (CNS) – Buffalo Bishop Richard J. Malone told Catholics Dec. 4 he asked Pope Francis to allow him to retire early so the people of the diocese “will be better served” by a new bishop who is “perhaps better able” to bring about “reconciliation, healing and renewal” in addressing the abuse crisis.

In a three-page letter, he said that “despite the measurable progress we have achieved together,” he made his decision “after much prayer and discernment.” The “spiritual welfare” of the faithful will be better served by a new bishop.

Bishop Malone released his letter as Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, announced Pope Francis had accepted Bishop Malone’s resignation and named Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger of Albany, New York, as Buffalo’s apostolic administrator.

At 73, Bishop Malone is two years shy of the age at which bishops are required by canon law to turn in their resignation to the pope.

For more than a year, he has faced questions about how he has addressed the clergy sex abuse crisis, particularly a situation involving two priests’ relationship with a seminarian that he has called “a very complex, convoluted matter.”

Bishop Malone has headed the Diocese of Buffalo since 2014. In his five and a half years in Albany, he has been a national leader in responding to the clergy abuse crisis.

“My family just expanded and we have 600,000 wonderful Catholics (in the Diocese of Buffalo). It’s a very wonderful Catholic diocese,” Bishop Scharfenberger said in an interview with The Evangelist, Albany’s diocesan newspaper. “I want to do a lot of listening and I want everybody to feel that they do have my ear. I don’t want anyone to feel excluded.”

“I am very well aware that there has been a lot of hurt and polarization and trust breaches,” he added. “We only have one healer and that is Jesus, and we are going to turn every thing into his hands and trust that he will guide the way.”

Bishop Scharfenberger said he plans to visit the Diocese of Buffalo in western New York weekly. As for how long he could be in the dual role, he said: “I have no idea ... these things can take over a year. I know it will be a high priority to find the right successor.”

In his letter, Bishop Malone referred to the apostolic visitation the Vatican had assigned Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, New York, to conduct in October. When the visitation was announced, Bishop Malone welcomed it.

On Oct. 31, the Brooklyn Diocese announced completion of the visitation and said Bishop DiMarzio had submitted his report to the Congregation for Bishops. It has not been made public.

“Inevitably some will surmise that my decision” is the result of this visitation, Bishop Malone wrote. “While I was made aware of the general conclusions of the report, which were a factor in my discernment, my decision to retire early was made freely and voluntarily” and reached “after honest reflection” and with “a deep and abiding commitment” to the best interests of the church in western New York.

Bishop Malone did not share details of what the report contained in his letter.

“This has been a difficult period in the life of the church in Buffalo. Throughout this process, the lay faithful, religious and clergy were in my prayers,” Bishop DiMarzio said in a Dec. 4 statement.

At the Vatican’s direction, he said, the visitation was thorough, “conducted with urgency” and carried out with “the good of the people of the Diocese of Buffalo” being the foremost consideration. More than 80 people were interviewed over a period of several weeks “to gather information for this administrative review,” he said.

“With the pope’s 50 years as a priest” Washington (CNS) – The Catholic faithful across the United States are being invited to pray for Pope Francis as he celebrates 50 years as a priest. Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has sent a letter to bishops across the country asking them to encourage parishioners to honor the jubilee during Advent with special prayers and Mass petitions. The letter included a prayer for the pope as well as two petitions that can be used at Mass or in praying the Liturgy of the Hours. The archbishop also invited the faithful to use any other appropriate prayer for the pope if they desire. Four days before Pope Francis celebrates his 83rd birthday Dec. 17, he will celebrate 50 years as a priest — a ministry he sees as being a shepherd who walks with his flock and yearns to find those who are lost. The prayers are being sent in English and Spanish to those who write. They were developed by the USCCB Secretariat for Divine Worship. The USCCB also plans a social media effort to spread the message about the prayers.

Caritas delivers food aid to flood victims in Muslim Somalia

Nairobi (CNS) — Caritas, the relief arm of the Catholic Church, has delivered food aid to Muslims in Somalia, who are currently facing floods and living in a fragile peace environment due to a prolonged Islamist insurgency. The aid reached families in Berdale, a small town center of 50,000 people, including 6,000 people displaced from their homes. The town has been cut off following flooding that left most areas submerged, making it difficult for the people to access emergency food, medicine and shelter. “Caritas Somalia is carrying out interventions working with another NGO in Berdale severely hit by the floods. The intervention was finalized (Dec. 3). It consists of food for 1,000 families for one month,” Archbishop Giorgio Bertin, apostolic administrator of Mogadishu, told Catholic News Service. Nearly 273,000 people have been displaced in the flood with at least killed 17 others being killed in the Horn of Africa country, according to U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Some are now sheltering under trees or in emergency tents. According to agencies a combination of floods, drought and conflict have displaced an estimated 575,000 people this year alone. Scientists say a weather phenomenon in the Indian Ocean is causing unusually heavy rains across East Africa, with swollen rivers bursting banks and some areas experiencing floods and mudslides.
**ADIRONDACK**

**FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS**
Lake Placid – The Festival of Lessons and Carols to feature the Northern Adirondack Vocal Ensemble.

- **Date:** Dec. 22
- **Time:** 4 p.m.
- **Place:** St. Agnes Church
- **Cost:** Donation of $10

**Features:** Anthems, carols, and hymns illuminate the Christmas story with community readers and congregational singing.

**Contact:** For more information contact drew@benware@gmail.com

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**CLINTON**

**CRAFT SHOW**
Morrisonville – St. Alexander’s Catholic Church will be having their 8th Annual Craft Show.

- **Date:** Dec. 14
- **Time:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Additional Information:**
- **Contact:** For more information contact Jessica Hargrave by email: jhargrave@rcdony.org or by calling 315-393-2920

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**JEFFERSON**

**CATHOLICISM SERIES**
Watertown – Bishop Robert Barron’s “Catholicism” DVD presentation and discussion to be held.

- **Date:** Dec. 12 (Part 5)
- **Time:** 7 p.m.
- **Place:** Dostie Hall at Sacred Heart Church

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**LEWIS**

**INTERNATIONAL NATIVITY EXHIBIT**
Houseville – All are welcome to an International Exhibit of Christmas Creches-Netivityes.

- **Date:** Dec. 21
- **Time:** 4 p.m.
- **Place:** Holy Family Rectory

**Features:** Explore the faith through stories, biographies, & images; like a world tour of persons, places, & cultures. All believers welcome. Refreshments.

**Contact:** Holy Family Rectory, 315-782-2468

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**YOUTH BUSINES FOR LIFE**
Washington, DC – Registration is now open for the Youth Buses for life.

- **Date:** Jan. 26, 2020
- **Time:** 2:30 p.m.
- **Place:** Eastern Region, John XXIII Newman Center

**Features:** Buses depart the North Country and the cost will include transportation, three hotel stays, three breakfasts, two dinners, two lunches, t-shirt, sling bag and an awesome experience! Waterdown bus departs from IHC in Watertown. Northern bus departs from Massena with stops in Canton and Gouverneur. March for Life in our nation’s capital and participate in the Life is Very Good Rally and Mass and the National Profile Summit!

**Contact:** Registration and more information at www.rcdony.org/prolife

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**DISCERNMENT RETREAT FOR MEN**
Watertown – The Knights of Columbus will hold a discernment retreat.

- **Date:** Jan. 5 – 7
- **Time:** Sunday Evening to Tuesday Morning
- **Place:** Christ the King Retreat House, 500 Brookford Rd

**Features:** Have you felt the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as a Catholic Priest? Gather with other young men from across New York State who are considering the call to the priesthood. Hear dynamic talks on the priesthood and Western region of the diocese. Enjoy Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as well as time for silent prayer. Have an opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Take your spiritual life to the next level. Be inspired to live your life generously.

**Contact:** For more information contact Jessica Hargrave at jhargrave@rcdony.org or call 315-393-2920

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**CONFIRMATION RETREAT**
Net Ministries challenges young Catholics to love Christ and embrace the life of the church.

**Schedule:** March 28, St. Augustine’s Church, Peru, from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; March 29, at Sacred Heart Church, Watertown

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**AROUND THE DIOCESE**

**Visit our website**
www.northcountrycatholic.org
- Read local stories and commentaries
- Search archived papers
- View diocesan events and much more

**Find us on Facebook!**
Advice for living in today’s desert

Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday is the most joyful of all the Sundays of Advent. As we light the rose candle of our Advent wreath, we wonder why there is such cause for rejoicing. After all, the world around us resembles a desert, dry and hopeless.

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, we get our answer! “The desert shall rejoice and blossoms shall spring up. The desert will exult and blossom. Even the crooked will be made straight, and the rough places smooth. The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together.” The prophet Isaiah tells us that even in the midst of the desert, there is a promise of salvation. This promise is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, who is the fulfillment of all the promises made in the Old Testament.

As I carefully unwrapped and hung the ornaments on the tree this year, I was struck by how many of them were made by hand, crafted expressly for me and my family. How had I never noticed this before?

There’s Santa’s head, fashioned by a walnut, yellowed cotton gently encircling it, forming the hair, mustache and beard. Colored markers long ago cruelly inked the eyes, nose and lips. My mother’s mother made that Santa, a grandparent who died many years ago. How will I ever forget that’s what makes them so special.

Handmade ornaments, such as this star filled with tinsel and a Cub Scout photo, are signs of genuine love.

There’s the hand-stitched cherub, a needlepoint work of art made by a long-time friend. Each stitch is an expression of time, talent and love...for me. That hand-sewn angel always sits high on the tree, like Gabriel announcing the coming birth of Jesus.

There’s the bright orange miniature sweater, a ball of yarn attached with two toothpicks pretending to be knitting needles. That sweater was woven by my Aunt Mae, now of blessed memory. She wasn’t really our aunt, just a close family friend, with a limpid smile and a generous heart. I miss her.

There’s the extra-large shiny red ball with a hand-painted black belt and a gold buckle transforming it into Santa’s stomach, a gift from our future daughter-in-law. Her humor, simplicity and thoughtfulness are all reflected in that decoration.

I can’t even count the number of ornaments created for my husband and me by our boys as they made their way through each year of elementary school. Handprints on construction paper, clothespin reindeer heads, a plastic star filled with tinsel and a beaming Cub Scout photo. There’s even a tiny tree with a handwritten note from one brother to the other: “Merry Christmas Mikey! Love, Joey.” (That one still overwhelms me with parental pride.)

In an age where technology races to remove the human touch from every aspect of our lives – think grocery store self-checkout lines and the absence of toll booths – humans were necessary to make these ornaments. Human hands lovingly crafted each one-of-a-kind item. Human thoughts centered on me and my family as they were shaped. Genuine heartfelt love came tucked inside each one.

Research confirms that producing art – any kind of art – improves physical health and reduces stress and anxiety. Moreover, the act of giving has been shown to increase happiness and may actually increase a person’s life span. I pray that the acts of creating and giving these wonderful Christmas decorations filled the gift-givers with as much joy, serenity and satisfaction as they have given to me.

The Christmas story reveals that God loves us so much that he gave us His only Son, a Son who ultimately died for us and redeemed us. It is this spirit of selfless generosity that illuminates my Christmas tree and fills me to the brim with gratitude this Advent.

No one else in the entire universe has the treasured ornaments that adorn my Christmas tree. Each one is slightly imperfect. And that’s what makes them perfect. Perfect and priceless.

By Kathleen Gallagher
Director of Pro-Life Activities
New York State Catholic Conference
Obituaries


Carthage — Margaret Mary (Strife) Young, 76; Funeral Services Dec. 10, 2019 at the Beazannilla-McGraw Funeral Home.

Copenhagen — Genevieve Elizabeth Baker, 102; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 9, 2019 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.


Ellenburg — Eugene C. Nichols, 61; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 6, 2019 at St. Edmond’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.


Lowville — Philip W. Smithling, 87; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 4, 2019 at St. Peter’s Church; burial at Martinsburg Cemetery.


Malone — Lane Joan Twiss, 83; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 6, 2019 at Notre Dame Church.

Morrisonville — Glenn A. Monto, 79; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 9, 2019 at St. Alexander’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.


Ogdensburg — Frederick R. Kocyla, 92; Mass of Christian Burial in Spring at Notre Dame Church.


Potsdam — Jean M. (Bedore) Forget, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 4, 2019 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.

Saranac Lake — Virginia (Gallagher) Bristol, 100; Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 6, 2019 at St. Bernard’s Church.


Watertown — Gertrude H. (McDonald) Smith, 89; Funeral Services Dec. 3, 2019 at the Reed & Benoit Funeral Home; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Letter to the editor

To the Editor:

I was glad to read about the faithful in Croghan honoring St. Francis (12/4/19, p. 14). His radiant sanctity and radical poverty are a useful challenge to each of us to follow Christ. However, I hope people will look beyond the stereotypes of the saint of Assisi and try to see his whole message. For instance, Father Augustine Thompson’s 2013 biography, “Francis of Assisi: The Life,” shows a saint unfamiliar to most of us.

Francis held the utmost regard for the Eucharist and the Mass. He stressed total reverence for Our Lord and for everything used in the Mass, especially the sacred vessels and vestments. Thompson writes, “In his [St. Francis’s] final words to his followers, the issue he found most pressing was not poverty, not obedience, but proper reverence for the Eucharist” (153).

Radical living for Christ does not preclude reverent worship. In fact, it demands it.

Sincerely,
Greg Cook
Malone, NY
IHC fifth-grade student gets education assistance

Clavery Nebie is the 2019-20 recipient of the Gary F. West Faith-Based Education Scholarship. Nebie is an Immaculate Heart Central Elementary School fifth-grader. West and his wife, Kim, presented Nebie and her family with a $500 award this week.

The funds will help Nebie continue her primary education at Immaculate Heart Central School. Following his retirement as IHC elementary school principal in 2018, Mr. West established the scholarship as a component fund of the Northern New York Community Foundation to provide financial assistance to students attending the school.

Mr. West served for 40 years in various capacities in public and parochial education in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties.

St. Mary’s School to close at end of the school year

CANTON — On Friday, Dec. 6, the families of St. Mary’s School learned the school would close at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

The closure was unanimously recommended by the St. Mary’s Parish Council, Education Council and Finance Council. The recommendation was relayed by Father Bryan D. Stitt, pastor of St. Mary’s Parish, to Bishop Terry R. LaValley, who accepted the recommendation. The faculty learned of the decision on Thursday, Dec. 5.

“It is a sad day for me when I am asked to approve the closing of one of our schools,” said Bishop Terry R. LaValley. “St. Mary’s School has served the parish and community very well since its humble beginnings in 1930.”

Generally, closures of Catholic schools have occurred when there has been a pattern of declining enrollment and the inability of the school and community members to raise the funds necessary to operate the school.

Last January, the Councils agreed to certain benchmarks that would need to be met to continue operating the school after this current year.

Despite countless efforts, the school will not meet these benchmarks this year.

Failure to attain the budgeted benchmarks for tuition, enrollment, and fundraising place great hardships on the parish, which is responsible for ensuring the school’s financial obligations are met.

“We thought we’d have to close last year after the Councils voted to do so, but the school staff and volunteers pulled out all the stops. We increased marketing, including television, mailings, signage, and tabling; we increased initiatives in fundraising, including regional appeals, grant-writing, and the formation of a Parent-Teacher Organization; and we implemented developments to our aftercare program including Brain-Science, crafts, Nature up North, language and music. We tried it all. After 90 years, this is like a death in the family. But with every death we have hope in New Life.”

St. Mary’s parish, including the involved Councils, is working with the diocese and involved stakeholders to aid our school family in this time of transition and to explore future uses for the school facility.

With this being our school’s 90th anniversary, we will have a variety of opportunities for the students, faculty, parents, alumni, parish, and greater community to honor those nine decades of excellence.

Letter to the editor

Dear friend of Champlain Valley Right to Life (CVRTL),

As many know we are living in trying times. So much sadness and despair, negative news all around us, so many needs, so many suffering and so many in need of our prayers and attention.

CVRTL feels this pain too and will not give up on the mission it was created for over 40 years ago. I feel, it’s time to turn the ship and set sail onto new waters.

I have been leading as chair since February of this year and am so thankful and blessed to continue the mission of creating a culture of life in the North Country of New York.

CVRTL does a lot of wonderful, positive educational endeavors throughout the year and cannot do it without your help. Volunteers help in many ways and with many volunteers much can be done.

Our next event is this coming Monday, Dec. 9 beginning at 10 a.m.

We will bring the joy of Christmas to the most needed and desperate place in our community, the abortion facility at 66 Brinkerhoff Street.

We will sing praises to Jesus, the Child that was brought unto us for our salvation. All are invited, song sheets and hand warmers will be provided, just bring yourselves and a friend or two dressed and bundled in warm clothing and a willingness to sing. It’s always a joyful time!

Take a moment to visit the new website and if you can forward this message to at least one person in your address book our volunteers may grow as God desires.

May you all be blessed this Christmas season with His love. Christ the savior is born! Thank you so much for all you do for LIFE!

Nancy Belzile
Chair, CVRTL

Support And Pray For Vocations