Ordinary people called to be extraordinary witnesses

Living out and proclaiming the Gospel are inseparable aspects at the heart of an authentically Christian life and witness, Pope Francis said in his message for World Mission Sunday.

"Every Christian is called to be a missionary and witness to Christ. And the church, the community of Christ's disciples, has no other mission than that of bringing the Gospel to the entire world by bearing witness to Christ," the pope wrote in his message for the celebration, which will be held Oct. 23.

The theme chosen for the 2022 celebration is taken from the Acts of the Apostles: "You will be my witnesses." The Vatican released the pope's message Jan. 6.

In his message, the pope reflected on three key "foundations of the life and mission of every disciple," beginning with the call to bear witness to Christ.

While all who are baptized are called to evangelize, the pope said the mission is carried out in communion with the church and not on "one's own initiative."

"Indeed, it was no coincidence that the Lord Jesus sent his disciples out on mission in pairs; the witness of Christians to Christ is primarily communitarian in nature," the pope wrote. "Hence, in carrying out the mission, the presence of a community, regardless of its size, is of fundamental importance."

Furthermore, he added, those who follow Jesus are called not only to proclaim the Gospel, but to bear witness to it by the way they live their lives.

"Missionaries of Christ are not sent to communicate themselves, to exhibit their persuasive qualities and abilities or their managerial skills," he said. "The example of a Christian life and the proclamation of Christ are inseparable. One is at the service of the other. They are the two lungs with which any community must breathe if it is to be missionary."

Jesus sent and continues to send his disciples out to evangelize the whole world, the pope said, and that has and continues to involve bearing witness to Christ even amid persecution.
There’s nothing ordinary about it

“IT’S a good thing we don’t have a normal family. Darcy would have nothing to write about.”

Those wise words came from the mouth of my niece, Emma.

Emma has been featured in this column before, most recently for her ability to look stunning in what is otherwise a really ugly sweater. I’ve written about other members of my family, too. I’ve written about my family’s antics at Halloween. I’ve written about some of the funny happenings associated with being a twin. I write regularly about my husband and son, our adventures and our conversations.

My family is full of characters. Most of us are loud and a bit silly. When we get together, it’s a bit chaotic.

We have a saying in our family: “Normal is just a setting on the dryer (or washer, depending on the family member and their appliance setup).” We don’t strive for normal. We enjoy the crazy things that happen when we’re all together.

I thought of Emma’s wise and funny words as I reflected on the fact that we’ve entered “Ordinary Time.”

A Google search tells me that Oxford Languages defines “ordinary” as “with no special or distinctive features; normal.”

I feel like “Ordinary Time” is a misnomer.

We may not be celebrating Easter or Christmas, and we may not be observing Lent or Advent, but our lives as Christians don’t seem very “ordinary.”

In my nearly four years writing this column, I frequently hear about how my writing reflects the fact that I see God working in everyday life.

Our God loves us.

God is working in our lives every day, every minute, every second. His work doesn’t stop because we’re not celebrating a specific season. That’s pretty extraordinary.

Our God has gifted us his Church, through which we can grow our relationship with him. He’s given us the opportunity to receive our Lord body and blood, soul and divinity. That’s pretty extraordinary.

These may be “ordinary times,” but our God is extraordinary.

There’s nothing “normal” about him.

Reflecting on the sacrament of baptism

Today, let us consider baptism. Every time you walk into a Catholic Church, a Catholic has been taught to dip their fingers into the Holy Water font and bless themselves. This acts as a reminder of their baptism.

The Feast of the Baptism of Jesus that we celebrate at the end of the Christmas Season acts as a reminder to us of our own baptism also. This feast day also provides us with an important opportunity to dedicate ourselves once again to living our Christian life.

So, the sacrament of baptism is a time to realize that we are called, we are dedicated, we have a vocation.

As a Catholic, my most important vocation is to be a disciple of Jesus. At my baptism, I affirmed Jesus’ call: “Come, follow me.” This is my vocation. This is the call to be a disciple of Jesus.

My Christian vocation is the call to be “the salt of the earth; to be the light of the world.” For me, Christianity is about how to live, not just about what to believe. Faith must be translated into action. As my friend, Catherine Doherty, would say, “Don’t bother proclaiming that you believe unless you act accordingly.”

We, Christians, have a very positive role to play in the world today. Never forget how much you have to offer; our world desperately needs all that we have to offer. As we read in the Gospel, we will discover that as a Christian we have a deeper and more authentic way of living our lives.

Our Christian vocation causes us to have a vision of a higher and a purer life to rise before us. Living out our Christian vocation expands the possibilities of human love and courage. We are welcomed into a believing community. We are challenged to make that community better and more alive.

Today, as we consider our Baptismal vocation, let us consider the sacrament of baptism. The Feast of the Baptism of Jesus gives us a defining moment in the life of Jesus – the beginning of his public ministry. The Gospel tells us that at the baptism of Jesus by St. John the Baptist, that Jesus prayed, and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in a bodily form. The Father put his seal of approval on Jesus and on the mission he is about to begin.

Let us take a moment to remember the actual ceremony of our baptism. This ceremony is filled with so many important images that help us understand all that baptism should mean to us. We are given a name, as we are somebody, chosen and welcomed into the family of God’s people. We are signed with the Sign of the Cross, the mark of Christ’s love for us all.

Water is poured over us. Water is a symbol of cleansing. In baptism, we are cleansed of sins. Water is a symbol of life. We are given a share in the undying life of God.

Just as kings, prophets and priests are anointed with oil and marked out as God’s ministers to the community, we are anointed with the oil of chrism, so that we may be envoys of Christ in this world. We have a vocation. We are called to a ministry. We are called to make a difference in this world.

A white garment is offered as a sign of Christian dignity. A candle is lighted to demonstrate the precious light of faith.

From a spiritual point of view, baptism is the greatest thing that can happen to us. To be baptized is to be chrismated – made like Christ. It is a lifetime task to learn what it means to be a Christian and to grow into it.
Father Gallagher was ‘a priest in the vineyard’

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

ALTONA — A quiet and reserved man, Father Adrian Gallagher will be remembered for his love of the Church and the sacraments and his ability to reach others.

“He was something,” said Father Michael J. Jablonski, pastor of St. Joseph’s Church in Dannemora and Church of the Assumption in Redford. “He wasn’t a flashy man. He didn’t like attention on him. He was a worker – a priest in the vineyard. Through that, he worked with the people the Lord sent him.”

Father Gallagher, pastor of Holy Angels Church in Altona and St. Ann’s Church in Mooers Forks, died unexpectedly on Jan. 5. He was 58. A complete obituary can be found below.

Father Jablonski said he became friends with Father Gallagher around five years ago through their common connection with Father Gilbert Boisvert.

“(Father Adrian) and Father Gilbert knew each other from when Father Gilbert taught at (Mount Assumption Institute) in Plattsburgh,” Father Jablonski said. “I met him through Father Gilbert. We’d all go out to eat together. As Father Gilbert’s health grew worse, we swapped numbers, and our friendship grew from there. (Father) Adrian became my spiritual director.”

Father Jablonski said he will always remember his friend’s “love for the Church.”

“He loved the Church the Lord established, and he loved the sacraments and saw them as a gift from God,” he said. “He really felt strongly that it was important for people to be formed. It was important to him to teach the sacraments and celebrate them worthily.”

Father Jablonski noted that Father Gallagher recently oversaw renovations at St. Ann’s Church.

“He wanted things to honor our Lord and king,” Father Jablonski said. “It was all part of the love he had for the Church and the sacraments.”

Despite his quiet and reserved nature, Father Jablonski said Father Gallagher was loving and caring to others.

“He had a good sense of humor,” he said. “He reached people by joking with them in his own way. And his rectory was always open. It went back to his Franciscan charisma. He believed in helping people in need. He gave of himself. He was always available to hear a confession or lend an ear. He always tried to be available and bring Jesus to those around him.”

Father Jablonski said he learned a lot about how to be a pastor from Father Gallagher.

“He was my spiritual director and dear friend,” he said. “It’s been a blessing to me to hear the stories he shared about being a friar, about the people he met and about how the witness of Christ they showed him. It baffled my mind. He had beautiful stories. He also showed me to remember the dignity of the sacraments of the Church. We need them walking this Christian life. They’re our Lord’s hands working in our reality.”

In 2017, as he celebrated 25 years of priesthood, Father Gallagher reflected on his vocation and ministry.

“I am very humbled and blessed to be a priest of Jesus Christ,” he said. “Each Mass reminds me of the tremendous gift God has bestowed upon me. In these 25 years, my greatest blessing has become the deeper depth of faith I have acquired in being exposed to the faith of those who have remained faithful despite tremendous hardship.”

Funeral Mass for Father Gallagher is on Jan. 11

Reverend Adrian Gallagher, 58, pastor of Holy Angels Church in Altona and St. Ann’s Church in Mooers Forks, died unexpectedly with the hope of eternal life on Wednesday, January 5, 2022.

Born Bret Douglas Adrian Gallagher in Malone on June 8, 1963, he was the son of Douglas L. and Ellen Marie (Wallace) Gallagher. His parents survive.

Reverend Monsignor Dennis J.Duprey, V.F. will preside over the reception of the body at 3 p.m. on January 10 at Notre Dame Church in Malone. Calling hours will follow until Evening Prayer at 6 p.m. led by Monsignor Duprey. Calling hours will continue from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on January 11 in the church.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at noon on January 11 at Notre Dame Church. Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley, bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, will be the principal celebrant. Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia of the Diocese of Syracuse and the priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg will concelebrate.

Following the Mass, burial will be in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Malone.

Father Gallagher graduated from Franklin Academy in Malone before following God’s call and entering Wadhams Hall Seminary College in 1982. After two years at the seminary, he joined the Conventual Franciscan Friars, St. Anthony Province, in Ellicott City, Maryland. He made his First Profession of Vows on August 15, 1984, and he made his Solemn Profession of Vows in the Order of Friars Minor Conventual on August 2, 1988, in Our Lady of the Angels Church in Albany, New York. During that time, he received a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy at St. Hyacinth College and Seminary in Massachusetts, and a master’s degree in Theology at DeSales School of Theology in Washington, DC. He was ordained to the priesthood July 18, 1992, in Baltimore by His Eminence William Cardinal H. Keeler.

With the friars, Father Gallagher served as parochial vicar at Mater Dolorosa Parish in Holyoke, Massachusetts, and at St. Stanislaus Basilica in Chicopee, Massachusetts; as instructor at Archbishop Curley High School in Baltimore, Maryland, and at St. Francis High School in Athol Springs, New York, where he also served as campus minister, as guardian delegate at St. Hyacinth Senior Friars residence in Chicopee, Massachusetts; and as pastor at Our Lady of Hope Church in Coal Township, Pennsylvania, and St. Patrick’s Church in Trevorton, Pennsylvania. He was also a member of the Marian Apostolate Council and the Senior Friars Commission.

During his summers in western New York, Father Gallagher worked with runaways and teens battling addiction.

In 2013, Father Gallagher returned to the Diocese of Ogdensburg to be closer to family. He was incardinated as a priest of the diocese on February 29, 2016. He was appointed pastor of St. Joseph’s in Mooers and St. Ann’s in Mooers Forks in 2014 and was given additional responsibilities as pastor in Altona and Sciota in 2017.

In addition to his parents, Father Gallagher is survived by a sister, Amy Gallagher; brothers, Brendan and Brian Gallagher; a niece, Norah; and a nephew, Dylan.

Funeral arrangements are under the care of Brusso-Desnoyers Funeral Services Inc. in Malone.
Memorial Mass to be held Jan. 13

Rev. Patrick J. O’Reilly, 84, died peacefully with hope of eternal life on Sunday, January 2, 2022, at the Midland Regional Hospital in Portlaoise, Ireland, where he had resided since 2014.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated by the Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley, Bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, at 11 a.m. on January 13 at St. Bernard’s Church in Saranac Lake. Priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg will concelebrate, and Father Mark R. Reilly will be the homilist.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Wednesday, January 5 at St. Peter and St. Paul Church, in Portlaoise, Ireland.

Burial will be in Clonalvy Cemetery, Ardcarne, County Dublin, Ireland.

Father O’Reilly was born in Ireland on Nov. 17, 1937, the son of Thomas and Marcella O’Reilly. His parents predeceased him.

Father O’Reilly was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Patterson, New Jersey, in Ireland on June 6, 1965. He arrived in the Diocese of Ogdensburg on June 6, 1973, and he was incardinated as a priest of the diocese on June 1, 1977.

In the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Father O’Reilly served as parochial vicar in St. John the Baptist Church in Plattsburgh, St. Mary’s Church in Ticonderoga, Our Lady of Victory Church in Plattsburgh, St. Joseph’s Church in Malone, St. Patrick’s and St. Augustine’s churches in Peru, St. Mary’s Church in Champlain, Holy Family Church in Watertown, St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid, Immaculate Conception and St. John the Baptist churches in Keeseville, and St. Catherine Church; and as administrator of St. John the Baptist Church in Madrid and St. John the Evangelist Church in Lafayette.

After retiring in October of 1994, Father O’Reilly continued to serve as chaplain at Uihlein Mercy Center in Lake Placid and Tupper Lake.

In addition to his parents, Father O’Reilly was predeceased by his brothers, Darragh, Eamon and Christopher O’Reilly.

He is survived by his sisters, Margaret, Mary and Sheila; his brothers, Philip and Myles; sisters-in-law; a brother-in-law; and nieces and nephews.

By Darcy Fargo
Editor

Known for his heavy Irish accent, Father Patrick J. O’Reilly will be remembered for his joy, patience, positive attitude and love of the Lord.

“He was my associate for four years in Keeseville,” said Msgr. Joseph G. Aubin. “We got along very well. He was a character. There’s no question about it.”

Father O’Reilly died Jan. 2, 2022, at the Midland Regional Hospital in Portlaoise, Ireland.

Msgr. Aubin said Father O’Reilly had gifts that enabled him to help parishioners and individuals in need.

“He wasn’t so organized about appointments, but he had a gift for talking to the elderly and downtrodden,” Msgr. Aubin said. “He was a great talker. He could talk forever without stopping. When people asked, I always said, ‘I would take Father O’Reilly back if I had the opportunity.’ People were surprised by that because of his organization problems. I always said, ‘he reaches people I don’t reach.’ There was no limit to his patience. Sometimes, he would spend a whole afternoon with one person. People loved him.”

That love overcame difficulties surrounding Father O’Reilly’s heavy Irish accent.

“He could be very difficult to understand,” Msgr. Aubin said. “But people would say, ‘I don’t know what he’s talking about most of the time, but I love him anyway.’ Nothing bothered him. He had a real holy way about him. He was always so positive.”

Msgr. Aubin said he remembered fondly members of Father O’Reilly’s family visiting their shared rectory in Keeseville.

“He came from a very large family,” he said. “He had 13 or 14 nieces and nephews who would come to visit. They were all characters, the whole bunch of them.”

While Father O’Reilly loved the North Country, he visited his native Ireland annually, often returning to his small hometown.

“He came from just north of Dublin,” Msgr. Aubin said. “I visited his home once. It was a very small village. The main square had four pubs in it. I saw a man there, and I told him I was a priest from the United States, and there was a priest who served there with me for four years who came from here. Right off, the man said, ‘Father Patrick O’Reilly.’ I was very sad to hear he died, but I wasn’t surprised to hear he died near Dublin. That was his favorite part of Ireland.”

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated by the Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley, Bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, at 11 a.m. on January 13 at St. Bernard’s Church in Saranac Lake.

“He was a good man,” Msgr. Aubin concluded. “People loved him.”
By Mary Beth Bracy
Contributing Writer

MALONE – St. André Bessette’s feast day – January 6 – reminds us to always seek his patronage. So many faithful in the North Country have and continue to be blessed by their patronages. When visiting St. Joseph’s Oratory in Montréal, pilgrims are greeted by a beautiful state of St. Joseph. On the base of the statue are the words: “Go to Joseph!”

St. André was clear whose intercession miracles were wrought through: St. Joseph. Msgr. Joseph Aubin of Holy Cross Parish, Plattsburgh shared that three of his aunts were Sisters of St. Joseph. In 1935, one of his aunts and his mother traveled from Rochester to Montréal. Msgr. Aubin’s aunt had arthritis and his mother said “We’ll go down to Brother André and see if he will bless you.”

The day they went there were about 50 people pressing to see him in a small waiting room, Msgr. Aubin recalled his mother saying, “it was a mob scene,” he said.

They were only there for about a minute and a half. When they met Brother André, he looked at Msgr. Aubin’s aunt and said to her: “Sister, aren’t you a Sister of St. Joseph? Why bother me, go to your patron.”

St. André was a first cousin to the grandfather of Mary Steenberge (née Bessette), a Malone resident. She still has a lot of cousins in that area. Brother André visited her uncle in Chateauguay around the late 1920s. As a family, they’ve always prayed for St. André’s intercession. They took a trip once to where St. André was born in St-Gregoire-d’Iberville, Québec. For several years, Steenberge said she has read every book that she could find on St. André.

“St. André is such a special person to me, he was chosen by God from the moment he entered the world,” she said. “When he was born, they didn’t expect him to live. One of his relatives baptized him immediately. How precious that was that God accepted him and purified him from the moment he was here.”

“How his life was typical of the way life was in those days,” Steenberge continued. “They were extremely poor and lived in a one-room cabin.”

Steenberge noted that life was “extremely hard” for St. André, the ninth of 13 children, four of whom died in infancy. “His father was killed by a tree that fell on him,” said Steenberge. “His mother died when he was 12, and he was very close to his mother. He was farmed out with other relatives. He was very prayerful and he always said, as French families did and my family did, the Rosary at night. When saying the Rosary, he was always at his mother’s knee. His little fingers would be on the Rosary with hers. It was normal in those days. It was so simple, it was God, Jesus, Mary and Joseph and that was their faith. They worked hard and did a lot of sacrificing.”

Steenberge said she believes St. André was gifted by God and was gifted to God’s people. “He just was a very special child, and I’ve always thought that God had him from the beginning,” she said. “He was just a miracle from the time he was born. God’s hand was out there and said that ‘you are mine, you will always be mine,’ and he was. His faith was given to him by God, not any book, he couldn’t read or write. It just shows that God chooses those that are so empty that He can work with them. And that’s how he accomplished everything, prayer was with him perpetually.”

Some of the books Steenberge read said that when he was with his relatives, St. André would spend a lot of time in a corner of the barn looking at the Crucifix that one of his uncles had bought for him. “His whole life was one of sacrifice and openness to God and to St. Joseph,” Steenberge said. “It was normal for all families at that time to pray to St. Joseph, to the Blessed Mother, and Jesus. That’s all they knew. It was just that blind faith and hope, these theological virtues were things they lived on.”

Speaking of St. André, Ms. Steenberge relayed “The history of how God used him through the years, because he was so open, he didn’t question, he truly believed. That’s just how his life unfolded.”

A lot of St. André’s sisters were in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island where there was a lot of employment opportunity, she explained, but “his health was so fragile that he had to go back to Canada. It was a miracle that the Holy Cross Fathers accepted him. He was so holy and they sensed that he was like a living saint. He was a doorkeeper for more than 40 years. Miracles started there. He was such a quiet, gentle person, but he did have a lot of humor. He spoke very little. There were a lot of people that thought he was crazy or when he started healing people, they were against it. This didn’t distract him; it’s the Holy Spirit was involved him all along the way.”

St. André, Steenberge said, “had a lot of innocence. The story is how he healed. He and St. Joseph, in my mind, are so much alike because St. Joseph was such a humble, chaste, and obedient man. God was able to mold him into what the world needed. My personal feeling is that there is a mystery that surrounds St. André that we will never know, we will never know as humans how close he was with God, St. Joseph, and Our Blessed Mother. It is a great, great secret, when God uses people. St. André was empty so God was able to mold him into what He wanted.”

Only in Heaven will we know the vast numbers of people who have been healed through the intercession of St. Joseph and St. André. On a personal note, when my maternal grandmother Bertha Hamel Bennett was a young child she was brought to see Brother André because she was suffering from debilitating arthritis. When Brother André prayed over her, she was healed. As a result, my family has always had a devotion to Brother André, so much so that one of my nephews is named André. I think it’s safe to say that, if it wasn’t for the intervention of St. Joseph and St. André, I also wouldn’t be here right now.
Pro-life activities director to retire

Kathleen M. Gallagher, who for the better part of four decades has served as director of pro-life activities for the New York State Catholic Conference, is retiring at the end of January.

In that time, she has not only represented the New York State Bishops, but has been a national leader in the pro-life movement, advocating against abortion, capital punishment and euthanasia, and in favor of supports for pregnant women in need and people near the end of life.

“No one in New York State or across the country has done more to advocate on behalf of all human life from conception until natural death than Kathy Gallagher,” said Timothy Cardinal Dolan, archbishop of New York and president of the NYSCC. “She is a giant of the pro-life movement, who my brother bishops, past and present, have depended for nearly four decades to fight for the most vulnerable among us. We thank her for her tireless service. While she is moving into retirement, we’re thrilled that Kathy has agreed to serve as a valued consultant on the many issues related to respect for life that we continue to encounter. God knows we need her voice.”

Gallagher is a native of Long Island who graduated from the New York Institute of Technology, and joined the Conference in 1984 after a brief stint working in the state legislature. She has served the Conference in that time as its pro-life lobbyist and spokesperson.

Among her many other duties, she served as staff liaison to the Catholic church chaplains. She has received the Diocesan Pro-Vita Award from the Dioceses of Rockville Centre, Brooklyn and Buffalo, and the Bishop Broderick Award from the Diocese of Albany. Her monthly Respect Life column continues to appear in numerous diocesan publications across the state.

“I am grateful to Cardinal Dolan and the Bishops for allowing me to represent them for so long, and blessed beyond measure to have received a salary to advocate for moral principles in which I deeply believe,” Gallagher said.

In addition to fighting against such threats to life as abortion, the death penalty, and assisted suicide, Gallagher has also had notable affirmative pro-life victories, including the enactment of the Prenatal Care Assistance Program, serving low-income mothers and their babies; the continuation of the state-funded Maternity & Early Childhood Foundation, which provides alternatives to abortion; and the enactment of the Health Care Proxy Law, containing considerable protections for the most vulnerable populations, thanks to amendments she helped draft.

She helped build formidable coalitions, including New Yorkers for Life, which was responsible for holding off New York’s egregious abortion expansion law for more than a decade, and the New York Alliance Against Assisted Suicide.

She is a principal author of Now and at the Hour of Our Death, an NYSCC-published booklet which offers guidance on end-of-life decision making, and she spearheaded the creation of a video and website based on the booklet.

The website, catholicodilefe.org, offers national resources for nearly every state.

“I’ve been fortunate to work side by side with Kathy for my entire 21-year tenure at the Conference,” said Executive Director Dennis Poust. “I’ve learned so much from her, and just as important, I’ve been blessed with her friendship. Pro-life work is not an easy vocation, but Kathy never lost faith. She has continued to put all of her passion into her work to implement policies that protect human life in the law and to convert hearts toward a Culture of Life.”

Gallagher has been married to the radio personality Joe Gallagher for 34 years.

The couple have two sons and are expecting their first grandbaby in the spring.
Annual March for Life still on this year in Washington

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The 49th annual national March for Life with a rally on the National Mall and march to the Supreme Court Jan. 21 will go on as scheduled this year amid a surge in the omicron variant in the nation’s capital.

Outdoor events are not affected by the District of Columbia’s vaccine mandate for indoor gatherings, but participants should expect to wear face masks. Indoor events associated with the annual march will have to comply with city COVID-19 restrictions.

The national Pro-Life Summit, sponsored by Students for Life, is also scheduled to take place Jan. 22 at Washington’s Omni Shoreham Hotel. The event will feature former Vice President Mike Pence as its keynote speaker. Pence has been a frequent March for Life speaker, and in 2020 he introduced President Donald Trump at the event’s rally.

The March for Life has canceled its three-day Pro-Life Expo and is combining two planned Capitol Hill 101 panel discussions Jan. 20 into a single event. The organization is still holding its annual Rose Dinner Gala.

Participants who are 12 and older attending the panel discussion or dinner will have to provide proof of receiving one COVID-19 vaccination by Jan. 15, or, if they are seeking a medical or religious exemption, they must have proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 24 hours of the event.

The Pro-Life summit is also requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination following the city’s regulations. The summit, which in previous years has drawn more than 2,000 high school and college students, notes on its website that it is accepting vaccine exemptions “for a strongly (or sincerely) held religious belief … in writing or orally” and it is also requiring masks at all events.

March for Life never projects attendance figures, but an informal survey by Catholic News Service of a few groups planning to attend this year’s march indicates that the turnout may approach pre-pandemic levels.

Last year’s march was turned into a virtual event due to the pandemic and the violence at the Capitol on Jan. 6. Only an invited group of 80, joined midway by more than 100 others, marched from the nearby Museum of the Bible to just behind the Supreme Court. It was the first outdoor event in Washington since the Capitol violence, with both the Capitol and Supreme Court surrounded by high fences.

In previous years, total attendance for the rally and march up Constitution Avenue was estimated to be as high as 100,000.

“We have nearly 250 students and faculty headed to D.C.,” said Ed Konieczka, assistant director of university ministry at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. “That is five full buses – our largest contingent since leading the march in 2017.”

A similar number was estimated by organizers of the bus caravan for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana.

However, the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, decided in December 2021 that the COVID-19 risk was too high to sponsor a bus caravan.

Bevin Kennedy, diocesan secretary for communications, cited “the difficulty of monitoring and mitigating the COVID risk with a group of over 100 participants.”

The march is held annually on a date nearest the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion.

The first march was held Jan. 22, 1974, organized by Nellie Gray, a government lawyer, and the Knights of Columbus. The idea was to form a “circle of life” around the Capitol and the Supreme Court.

Jeanne Mancini assumed leadership of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund after Gray died in 2012.

This year’s theme is “Equality Begins in the Womb.” The rally is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. with a performance by singer Matthew West. The march starts at 1:15 p.m. after the political speeches are completed.

There is considerable anticipation that this year’s march could be the last one with the Roe decision hanging in the balance.

Later this year, the Supreme Court will announce its decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization appeal by Mississippi to remove a lower court’s injunction on its law banning most abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy.
**VIRTUAL EVENTS**

**THE CHOSEN SEASON 2**
Join the Office of New Evangelization and the parishes of St. Mary of the Fort in Fort Covington/St. Mary in Waddington for a viewing and discussion of the second season of THE CHOSEN, either in-person or via zoom.

**Date:** Starting Jan. 4
**Time:** 6:30 p.m. to 8
**Place:** Virtual or at St. Mary’s Parish Center, Waddington or Fort Covington Adult Center
**Features:** It is highly recommended that participants have seen season 1 before participating in this second series of 8 episodes. We will watch the video via zoom.

**Contact:** Online Registration is required at www.rcdony.org/chosen

**BROWNBAG CHAT**
The Office of New Evangelization will be running a new Brownbag Chat on Wednesdays.

**Date:** Starting Jan. 5
**Time:** Noon to 1 p.m. via zoom
**Features:** We will use the Revive Parishes Series by Bishop Andrew Cozzens on The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church. We anticipate running the series in seven sessions. In each session, we will watch a video together via zoom and then have an informal discussion. The Eucharist is indeed Jesus Christ, and as Catholics, a gift that requires our response. And what a gift it is! In this groundbreaking new course, Bishop Cozzens breaks open the new document published by the USCCB: “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church.” This is the perfect companion resource.

**Contact:** If you would like to join us this series of lunch-time chat discussions, please sign up online at https://www.rcdony.org/brownbag. For more information, contact Marika Donders at mdonders@rcdony.org

**ADIRONDACK**

**FIRST FRIDAY PRAISE AND WORSHIP**
Lake Placid – Monthly praise and worship to be held.

**Date:** First Friday of the month
**Time:** 7 p.m.
**Place:** St. Agnes Church
**Features:** Music led by Joey and MC Izzy. Time for fellowship and snacks afterwards. Will be livestreamed as well on St. Agnes Facebook page.

**CLINTON**

**BRUNCH**

Lyon Mountain – Lyon Mountain American Legion to have brunch.

**Date:** Jan. 23
**Time:** 9 a.m.
**Cost:** Adults, $10; Children under 12, $7
**Menu:** Scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, pancakes, garlic parmesan wings, breaded mushrooms, home fries.

**LATIN MASS**

Port Henry – Extraordinary Form Latin Mass to be held each Sunday.

**Schedule:** 1 p.m. on Sundays
**Place:** St. Patrick’s Church
**Features:** The traditional Latin Mass celebrated according to the 1962 Missal of St. John the XXIII.

**JEFFERSON-LEWIS**

**RESPECT LIFE PRAYER GATHERING**
Watertown – Lifesight to hold a respect life prayer gathering.

**Date:** Jan. 24
**Time:** 6:30 p.m.
**Place:** Watertown Municipal Building
**Features:** Join as we pray for renewed respect for all human life, particularly those most vulnerable. Refreshments to follow at the First Presbyterian Church. Social distancing guidelines will be followed.

**HOLY HOUR AND DIVINE MERCY**

Houseville - A Holy Hour of Adoration with the Divine Mercy Chaplet will be observed the first Sunday of the month.

**Date:** Feb. 6
**Time:** Following 11 a.m. Mass
**Place:** St. Hedwig’s Church
**Contact:** 315-348-6260

**ST. LAWRENCE**

**PRAYER AND ADORATION**

Massena – Commissioned Lay Ministers are invited to gather for Adoration and Rosary.

**Date:** Every third Wednesday of the month (Jan. 19th)
**Time:** 6:30 to 7 p.m.
**Place:** Sacred Heart Church

**11TH AND 12TH GRADE RELIGION CLASSES**

Ogdensburg – St. Mary’s Cathedral Parish is kicking off its 11th & 12th grade religion class. Youth in the application grades from outside the Cathedral Parish are welcome to attend.

**Date:** Monthly Jan. 23, Feb. 13, March 13, April 10, May 15
**Time:** 5 p.m. to 7:30
**Place:** Brzana Hall below St. Mary’s Cathedral
**Features:** We have no curriculum; you will help decide what we discuss! Lots of discussion, less lecture. Games with prizes. Dinner included. We ask families to consider taking a month and providing dinner. Past families have been very creative from spaghetti dinners to breakfast dishes to bringing in pizza or subs. Classes are self-contained units. Can’t make it in October, you are still invited for November, December… no makeup assignments! Guests welcome! Bring a friend!

**Contact:** If you have questions or concerns that can’t wait, contact Deacon Jim Crowley via email jcrowley@rcdony.org or Jessica Hargrave via email jhargrave@rcdony.org.

**FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY DEVOTION**
Massena – Sacred Heart Church to have first Saturday Rosary Devotion.

**Date:** Feb. 5
**Time:** 3:15 p.m.
**Features:** First Saturday Rosary Devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. Confessions will be available. Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 p.m.

**DIOCESAN EVENTS**

**LOVING AUTHENTICALLY**
Commissioned Lay Ministers and candidates are invited to this program that is designed to strengthen the participant’s conviction about the truth, beauty and importance of Church teaching on natural law and sexual morality and to give participants a basic understanding of the ethical basis of the teaching.

**Schedule:** Two remaining opportunities to attend. Jan. 29 at Emmanuel Room, St. Peter’s Church, Plattsburgh; April 23 at St. Peter’s Church, Lowville.
**Time:** 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
**Presenters:** Deacon John Fehlner & Dr. Maura Fehlner, Mr. Steve Tartaglia and other members of the Family Life Department.
**Features:** Cost is free and all are welcome. Must watch an 80-minute video prior to the event. Link to video will be sent after registration. Bring your own lunch.

**Contact:** Register at: https://www.rcdony.org/lovingauthentically. If you have questions, contact Family Life Director, Steve Tartaglia at startaglia@rcdony.org or call 315-393-2920

**PRESENTATION OF FORGIVEN**
A Continuation of the Eucharist Initiative. Explore the transforming power and the healing grace of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Discover the merciful way that God calls us back to Himself when we have sinned.

**Date:** March 26
**Time:** 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
**Place:** Clayton, Watertown, Lowville, Norfolk, Ellenburg, Plattsburgh, and Saranac Lake

**Features:** All are welcome. More details including how to register soon to come.

**DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST**
Ogdensburg – A day of reflection based on the fourth video of Presence, “Biblical Foundations.”

**Date:** April 9
**Time:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
**Place:** Wadhams Hall
**Cost:** $25
**Speakers:** Sister Bernadette Marie Collins, SSJ & Sister Mary Gregory Munger, SSJ
**Features:** A Continuation of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Lunch will be provided.

**Contact:** To register go to: www.rcdony.org/diggingdeeper

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**World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life**

Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day for prayer for women and men who live the consecrated life.

The universal day of celebration is February 2 which is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This day is known as Candlemas Day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the Light of the world. Consecrated religious live their vowed life of poverty, chastity and obedience as prophetic witnesses of joy and hope of the Christian message. They offer a radical commitment to God.

Parishes will celebrate World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life on February 5-6. There are religious communities within our diocese that serve the people of the North Country by their daily prayer, involvement in parishes, schools, Religious Education programs, Diocesan offices, etc.
NEW YORK (CNS) – Who needs one James Bond when you can have five Jane Bonds? That’s the premise behind "The 355" (Universal), an entertaining thriller featuring a quintet of lady spies.

Like Ian Fleming, who based his 007 character on a real-life secret agent, "The 355" is similarly inspired, hearkening back to an unnamed female operative in the Revolutionary War. Known only by her code number (355), this colonial spy relayed vital information on British troop movements to Gen. George Washington.

Fast-forward to 2022, and screenwriters Simon Kinberg (who also directed) and Theresa Rebeck honor this legacy with five variations of the heroine, albeit with far more fashion choices, love interests, weapons and exotic locations around the world.

The plot is a familiar one. Global disaster looms when mercenaries acquire a top-secret, pocket-sized cyber weapon that destabilizes technology with a single touch. Recognizing a common enemy, governments from the United States to China unleash their best undercover spies to capture the device.

Leading the charge are CIA agent Mason "Mace" Browne (Jessica Chastain), British MI6 operative Khadijah Adiyeme (Lupita Nyong’o) and German agent Marie Schmidt (Diane Kruger).

"They can start World War III from the simple reach of their keyboard," Mace intones.

In their sights is a fellow spy from Colombia, Luis Rojas (Edgar Ramirez). Luis foiled an attempt by the baddies to sell the device and is on the run, with the weapon in his pocket. His government dispatches comely psychologist Graciela Rivera (Penelope Cruz) to London to bring Luis home.

Fate intervenes, the weapon is lost and Graciela reluctantly joins forces with the female trio as they follow the criminals’ trail across Europe, Africa and Asia.

In Shanghai, things get even more interesting when a mysterious woman, Lin Mi Sheng (Bingbing Fan), intervenes, motives unknown.

As "The 355" unrolls at a breakneck pace, viewers may wince at the violence and high body count. But like the best of the Bond films, mindless escapism and grand entertainment are on the menu, a welcome tonic whether shaken or stirred.

The film contains excessive but bloodless violence and gunplay, implied premarital intercourse and one crude word. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III – adults. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG-13 – parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

**Bishop's reflections prod readers' spiritual lives**


Sometimes when reading reflections, one can almost hear what the author is saying. When they are published, it’s as though the printed word is transformed into an audiobook. That is what the reader will experience with Bishop Donald Hying’s "Love Never Fails."

Bishop Hying, who heads the Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin, and previously served as an auxiliary bishop in Milwaukee and as bishop of Gary, Indiana, asks thought-provoking questions.

In a chapter titled "Spiritual Spendthrifts," he asks, "How can I ever really know the joy of salvation unless I lift up my experiences of anxiety, dread, sin and isolation to God on the cross? Can I really appreciate the gift of my life in Christ until I have, somehow, been painfully uprooted from my complacent self-sufficiency?"

He draws upon a variety of sources, quoting Scripture, Robert Frost, G.K. Chesterton, Henry David Thoreau, Pope Francis and a number of saints, including Augustine, Teresa of Avila and John Paul II, not as an academic exercise but to make a point. "Love Never Fails" is inspirational but never preachy.

When Bishop Hying writes about concerns throughout the church, e.g., providing excellent faith formation for children, youth and adults; parishes that are “lively, flourishing, welcoming and loving,” and where celebration of sacraments is done well; and living the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, he invites but doesn’t lecture.

When he calls gratitude and thankfulness "hallmarks of the mystical journey," the reader can almost hear Bishop Hying’s words aloud: "Let your life be more about praising than complaining, more about what has been given than what is lacking. Gratitude and humility contain the great secret of joy and peace. ... What we are searching for has already been given. We just need to reach out and receive it and then pass it on."

Numerous times he mentions his family, growing up as the youngest of six boys in a home where the Good Lord was nurtured by the example and the environment of his parents. "They can start World War III from the simple reach of their keyboard," Mace intones. "Love Never Fails" is inspirational but never preachy.

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Ordinary Time isn’t dull or boring

It seems that Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany were hurried through our lives this year. We needed Christmas so badly this past year (and thank God we can call it “last year”). And now this Sunday, Jesus’ infancy and Jesus’ public life, is so cer-
tain of His special powers.

January 16
Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Even though Jesus is reluct-
ant, He is not about to re-
ject His mother! He blesses the couple with far more wine than they needed. From this hour on, His time will never be His own. Soon after this event, he enters the syna-
gogue at Capharnaum and announces the coming of the Kingdom. From then on, He will be swept up in a whirlwind life of teach-
ing those open to the truth of his passion...and on and on...even to Cal-
vary.

The Church refers to these next six weeks before Lent as “Ordinary Time.” It’s a time for us to become involved in the ordinary Christian life – daily prayer and medita-
tion, constant attention to our neighbor’s needs, responsible carrying out of those duties that flow from our relationships as parents, children, teach-
gers, and caregivers. We needn’t get frightened, of course, for we don’t work alone. In today’s second reading from Corinthians, St. Paul assures us that we have the powerful help of various gifts of the Spirit. Each should use the particular gift God has given without worrying which is the greater gift.

How can “ordinary time” be dull or boring when God says in the today’s first reading from Isaiah that He loves us as a bridegroom loves His bride, and that He rejoices in us as His delight? If God is happy with us and our weak efforts, then we should enter into this sea-
son with confidence and joy.

We offer a sacrifice of praise

When we have all fin-
ished joyfully singing the
Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) at Mass, we kneel. That is everyone except the priest celebrant, any priests concelebrating Mass and the deacons as-
sisting the celebrant.

The U.S. practice is to
kneel from the Sanctus to
the Amen response to the
Memorial Acclamation unless there are extenu-
ating circumstances or you are the priest cele-
brant, any priests concel-
bearing Mass and the deacons assisting the cel-
brant.

The deacons who are
assisting the celebrant do not kneel until the cele-
brant joins his hands and extends them over the
bread and wine. The ac-
tion is called the epi-
clesis.

In some churches, a
server rings bells when
this action occurs. I tell
servers the bell ringing
harkens back to the days
when the Mass was in
Latin. Since the celebrant
had his back to the con-
gregation and almost no
one knew what he was
saying, the bell ringing
was a signal that some-
thing important was
about to happen, that is
the consecration.

I can remember the
people standing on the
side or back of church
and the ushers all kneel-
ing when they heard the
bell ring. The signal
worked! Some churches
still ring a bell at the in-
vocation of the Holy
Spirit over the gifts. The
general instructions for
the Mass say this should
be done, “if appropriate,”
whatever that means.

The deacon assisting
the celebrant stays stand-
ing when everyone
else kneels after
the Sanctus. The
deacon kneels at the
epiclesis. He
remains kneeling
until the celebrant
shows the chalice
to the congrega-
tion. Everyone
else remains
kneeling.

I have my own theory
about the deacon kneel-
ing and standing at times
that are different from
everyone else.

From the Sanctus to
the epiclesis, he remains
standing as a sign the
deacon is clergy, or-
dained to assist at the
sacrifice of the Mass. He
kneels at the consecra-
tion as a sign of humility
but also a symbol of his
relationship to the con-
gregation. The deacon
stands before everyone
else to again acknowledge his unique position
during the Mass.

The deacon’s most
important moment
during the Mass, in my
opinion, comes at the
end of the Eucharistic
Prayer. Standing next to
the priest who is
elevating the Body of Christ for
to adore, the
deacon simultane-
ously elevates the chalice
with the Blood of Christ.

The priest intones the
doxology, “Through him,
and with him and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, all glory and honor
is yours, for ever and
ever.” We all respond
“Amen!”

Ask a priest what it was
like the first time he
presided at Mass and said
the words of institution,
“for this is my body
which will be given up for
you” and then over the
wine “this is the chalice
of my blood.” Christ,
through the actions of
the priest, changed the
bread and wine into his
body and blood as “a
sacrament of love, a sign
of unity, a bond of char-
ity” according to the Vati-
can Council. I suspect
that moment for the new
priest was awesome.

Standing alongside the
celebrant, listening to
him praise God for the
gift of the Eucharist,
holding the chalice aloft
for all to see is an awe-
some moment for me.
Amen is not enough.
Thank you seems appro-
priate.

Deacon Kevin Mastellon
ministers in Watertown.
He is the Director of Per-
nament Deacons for the
Diocese of Ogdensburg.
Muslim community prays for nun

In her long life "she sowed good wherever she went." For this reason, even the Shiite Muslims in the Lebanese city of Hermel, in the Beqa’a valley, wanted to say a prayer for Sister Barbara of Jesus, the 90-year-old Catholic nun of the Little Sisters of Jesus who died on Christmas Eve. They invited the entire population of the city of Hermel, in the Beqa’a valley, to say a prayer for Sister Barbara "sowed good things wherever she went." "All the people of Hermel miss you as an example of piety, charity and purity," read a banner hoisted at the entrance to the mosque district to express gratitude for Sister Barbara and to entrust her soul to "the great mercy of God."

At the funeral, eyewitnesses reported, "Sister Barbara's fellow sisters received expressions of condolences from high-ranking members of the local community. The mayor expressed gratitude for the presence of the sisters in the region, recalling that their discreet work has accompanied him throughout his life, since he was a child. For the soul of Sister Barbara, the many Muslims who attended the ceremony recited Al-Fatihah, the "merciful and gracious" God that constitutes the first Sura of the Koran. All those present were offered the traditional unsweetened coffee, as is customary when expressing condolences in the Lebanese Christian and Muslim communities."

"Sister Barbara Kassab, originally from Egypt, spent her whole life doing good for her Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters in a country that has been wounded and at times torn by numerous internal conflicts. "Great sadness on earth and great joy in heaven at the passing of Sister Barbara," read the funeral announcement with which the Christians in the region announced their death. It was recalled that Sister Barbara "devoted her life to work in the Church, to social works at the service of the community and above all the poor in the region." Gratitude was expressed for the presence of Barbara and her sisters who offered everyone comfort and consolation "in our difficult days," and represent "a shining sign in our world shrouded in darkness. Her soul - the message added - will be a Christmas present for the Child of Bethlehem. Go in peace, virtuous mother and sister, and may your soul be of help to us, our families, our society and our entire region." 

Article from FIDES missionary news service of the Pontifical Mission Societies

OBITUARIES


Brushton — Elizabeth G. (Sawatis) Russell, 93; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 8, 2022 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.


Defereit — Richard A. Smith Sr., 94; Graveside services in spring at Black River Cemetery.

Morrisonville — Robert Broadwell, 83; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 6, 2022 at St. Alexander’s Church.

Morrisonville — Margaret A. (Palisino) Gerhardt, 80; Mass of Christian Burial May 2, 2022 at St. Alexander’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.


Plattsburgh — Susan Laudrie Martin, 71; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 4, 2022 at St. Peter’s Church; burial in St. Peter’s Cemetery.


Watertown — Carrol J. Tufo, 87; Mass of Christian Burial to be held at Holy Family Church.

Canadian bishops plans for healing, reconciliation effort

TORONTO (CNS) – A national framework for a five-year, $30 million (US$23.5 million) fundraising campaign to help with healing and reconciliation of residential school survivors and their communities is coming in the new year, Bishop William McGrattan, vice president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, told The Catholic Register weekly.

Church officials hoped that plans for the campaign, first announced Sept. 27, would be complete by November, but getting the framework in place for a national diocese-by-diocese effort has turned out to be more complicated than first thought.

Bishop McGrattan said he hoped that in January or February, "announcements of details would be able to be shared with the public and with Catholics."

“We realize that it has taken longer than expected, but it’s important that we do this right and that we make sure that it is both transparent and that it demonstrates accountability,” Bishop McGrattan said.

“We’ve drawn upon the expertise of people in terms of governance — yes, fundraising and also legal — because we do have to make sure that these funds are received by a nonprofit and are directed to a nonprofit organization or initiative. There are a lot of details.”

Extra care is being taken to ensure that mistakes made with the 2008-2014 "best efforts" campaign will not be repeated, an insider on the campaign organizing committee told The Catholic Register.

The organizing committee, made up of bishops, finance officers and fundraising experts from dioceses across the country, is focused on ensuring the campaign is consistent with the 94 Calls to Action that came out of the 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the source said.

That report said the removal of Indigenous children from their families over a century, when they were sent to residential schools, amounted to “cultural genocide.” About 60% of the government schools were run by Catholic dioceses and religious orders.

In a September apology, the Canadian bishops acknowledged the residential school system “led to the suppression of Indigenous languages, culture and spirituality, failing to respect the rich history, traditions and wisdom of Indigenous peoples.”

“We acknowledge the grave abuses that were committed by some members of our Catholic community: physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, cultural and sexual. We also sorrowfully acknowledge the historical and ongoing trauma and the legacy of suffering and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples that continue to this day,” the bishops said.

Unlike the previous $25 million "best efforts" campaign that raised just $3.7 million, the CCCB commitment to raise $30 million over five years is absolute. If parishioners and donors fail to give the full amount, dioceses will make up the difference. Much of the organizing effort has gone into ensuring that, while bishops can be held accountable for the money raised, they are not seen as directing or dictating how the funds are spent.
By Kathleen M. Gallagher
Director of Pro-life Activities
New York State Catholic Conference

Very soon, I plan to retire from my position with the New York State Catholic Conference. I have worked for this organization for 38 years; I literally grew up here. Lots of people have told me I’m not old enough to retire, that I should stick with it. You know what? I’m old enough.

I’m old enough to remember having meaningful conversations with elected officials to help shape the most effective family friendly policies in our state. Now I’m old enough to have witnessed enough to have witnessed some of those very same policies disappear.

Case in point: I walked the halls of the Capitol together with the National Organization of Women in mutual efforts to ban surrogacy motherhood for and vitamins, only to see it get tied up in the courts.

I’m old enough to remember working with a committee of moral theologians (shouldn’t there be some indulgences for that?) to craft a statement providing guidance for Catholics on end-of-life decision making. Of all the projects I ever did for the Bishops’ conference, I think I am most proud of this and I remember feeling physically sick in 2019 as government officials celebrated its enactment into law.

I’m old enough to remember countless discussions with state officials advocating for the rights of people with developmental disabilities to have their religious needs met in the communities in which they live. Old enough to remember organizing lots of conferences and retreats for the state’s Catholic prison chaplains, a group of dedicated women and men I am so fortunate to know.

I’m old enough to remember coordinating Public Policy Forums, our powerful lobby day in Albany; beginning the Catholic Action Network, our electronic database of Catholics; and hosting “Capitol Compass,” our issues-based television talk show. Old enough to remember conducting media training seminars for Catholic spokespersons, serving on the Board of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty, leading the efforts of the Cardinal Cooke Pro-Life Commission, building an alliance of formidable and diverse organizations against assisted suicide.

I’ve offered educational presentations in church basements, at national conferences, in seminars and elementary school classrooms, even once on a cruise ship full of physicians! I’ve authored hundreds of columns on topics like human trafficking, stem cell research, capital punishment, domestic violence, euthanasia, the consistent life ethic, faithful citizenship, and so many more.

I’ve been vilified by those on the right because I’ve called racism a life issue and I’ve never protested outside an abortion clinic. I’ve been disparaged by those on the left because of a pre-conceived notion that I am a right-wing zealot Catholic.

I’ve always tried to be a bridge-builder, to make “life” my single issue, to inspire everyone to know the truth that we are all connected, and disrespect for one human life over here only endangers other human lives over there. We must exclude no one from our compassion and mercy. I hope and pray that somewhere along the journey I succeeded, that a seed or two were planted that will take root long after I am gone.

I am grateful to Cardinal Dolan and the Bishops for allowing me to represent them for so long, and blessed beyond measure to have received a salary to have received a salary to have received a salary to have received a salary to advocate for moral principles in which I deeply believe.

Lots of people have told me I’m not old enough to retire, that I should stick with it. You know what? I’ve got my first grandbaby on the way and an artwork career to grow. I’m old enough. And I’m ready.