Pope: Congolese Catholics are ‘lung’ for Church

The enthusiasm, joy, and missionary zeal of Congolese Catholics give oxygen to the whole Church, Pope Francis said during his final meeting in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday.

“As a Church we need to breathe the pure air of the Gospel, to dispel the tainted air of worldliness, to safeguard the young heart of faith. That is how I imagine the African Church and that is how I see this Congolese Church,” he said during an encounter with the country’s bishops.

Pope Francis met 57 of the 74 current and retired bishops of the DRC at the headquarters of the national bishops’ conference of Congo (CENCO) before heading to the country’s N’Djili International Airport for a flight to South Sudan, which he visited Feb. 3-5.

The pope said during his Jan. 31-Feb. 3 visit he saw the Church in the DRC as “a young, dynamic and joyful Church, motivated by missionary zeal, by the good news that God loves us and that Jesus is Lord.”

“Yours is a Church present in the lived history of this people, deeply rooted in its daily life, and in the forefront of charity,” he told the bishops. “It is a community capable of attracting others, filled with infectious enthusiasm and therefore, like your forests, with plenty of ‘oxygen.’ Thank you, because you are a lung that helps the universal Church breathe!”

According to the Vatican, there are more than 52 million Catholics in the DRC, almost half of the country’s total population of over 105 million people. The country, which covers 905,600 square miles, is divided into 48 Catholic dioceses.

After praising the beautiful features of the Church in the DRC, Pope Francis said he was sorry to have to speak of another side to the bishops’ country.

“Sadly, I know that the Christian community of this land also has another face,” he said. “It is the face of a Church that suffers for its people, a heart in which the life of the people, with its joys and trials, beats anxiously. A Church that is a visible sign of Christ, who even today is rejected, condemned and reviled in the many crucified people of our world; a Church that weeps with their tears, and like Jesus, a Church that also wants to dry those tears.”
Given a complement

I say it almost every time someone asks about my husband.

"Adam is the antithesis. I'll talk to anyone and everyone. You could meet him 20 times, and he'd still only say five words to you."

Almost universally, the response is, "opposites attract."

I don't like to think of us as "opposites." That word feels somewhat adversarial to me. I prefer to say, "we complement each other."

I hate driving on winter roads. Adam doesn't mind it, so he drives in those conditions. He hates driving in cities or unfamiliar places. I don't mind that, so I handle that kind of driving. Adam's not so great at managing schedules and the more administrative part of running a household, so I handle most of that. I'm no good at fixing things or building, but he takes care of those tasks. Adam is methodical and deliberate in making decisions, which balances out my tendency to be impulsive and adventurous.

Oxford Languages defines "complement" as "add to (something) in a way that enhances or improves it; make perfect."

Adam's not perfect. I'm not perfect. When we put our skills, talents and personalities together, though, there's not much we can't do, but we're still not perfect. Similarly, our marriage isn't perfect.

Despite our imperfections, we're trying to do what our Lord calls us to do, and we're trying to help each other get to heaven.

We're using our imperfect love to work together to get to perfect love, to become complete. It fits the definition of "complement" pretty well.

That's also worth talking about almost every time someone asks about my husband.

Spending time with Sacred Scripture

The Second Vatican Council encouraged, even demanded, that Sacred Scriptures be a necessary, important part of the life of the Catholic Church. I remember well that the Scriptures were an important part of my life. I grew up loving the Scriptures. As a priest, they are who I am. The council came at the beginning of my priesthood, leading me to never forget the importance of the Scriptures for my ministry.

Let me tell you about a conversation I had with a friend, a member of the Madonna House Community. She was telling me, and some others, about her conversion — her finding God. Someone encouraged her to read the Bible. So, she decided to accept the challenge and to read the whole New Testament. She said that after reading the whole New Testament, she didn't understand. She thought maybe she missed something. So, she decided to read the whole New Testament again. After, she had to admit she still didn't understand, but she also had to admit that she could truly say how much her whole life had changed — all for the good. She was a different person.

The Second Vatican Council had a profound effect on transforming the love and the reading and the studying of Sacred Scripture for all of us as Catholics. This was so truly needed. Before the council we, Catholics, were not good at talking about Sacred Scriptures. They were not an important part of our spirituality. We had the Scriptures — every time Mass is celebrated, since the earliest days, there are readings of several Scriptures. However, the Council Fathers realized that the Scriptures were not a good part of the life of the Church.

One of the documents published by the council is the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. In this document, there are four chapters that concern the Sacred Scriptures. The council begins this section by reminding us of our belief in the Scriptures. The Fathers wrote this: "For, since they are inspired by God and committed to writing once and for all time, they present God's own Word in an inalterable form, and they make the voice of the Holy Spirit sound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles."

The Council goes on to make it clear that the Scriptures should inspire the Church and accomplish. Here is another sentence from this document: "It follows that all the preaching of the Church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture." Since the days of the council, priests and deacons are encouraged and required to begin preparing for the celebration of Mass by studying and praying over the Scriptures assigned for that Mass. We speak now of a homily at Mass, intended to help the people of God to understand the message of this day's Scriptures, bringing the people to the Word of God. Pastors are encouraged by the council to open wide the Bible to the people of God.

The council also gave full support to the many professional Scripture Scholars and their efforts as they accept the challenge to determine the meaning of the Scriptures. There have been controversies in times past whether it is good to allow certain intellectuals to work on the Scriptures, the Word of God. In the words of the council, "This Sacred Synod encourages these sons of the Church who are engaged in biblical studies constantly to renew their efforts, in order to carry on the work they have so happily begun, with complete dedication and in accordance with the mind of the Church."

Personally, my priesthood began with and was profoundly influenced by the Second Vatican Council. So, the Scriptures have been and continue to be important and profoundly influential all that I have done as a priest. My homilies and my retreat talks begin with the Scriptures. St. Jerome wrote, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

One more thing from the Council, "Let them (all of us) remember, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man."
MARRIAGE WEEK: TO HAVE, TO HOLD, TO HONOR

Love, marriage, faith and family

By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Staff Writer

In 2016, the couple met on a blind date. One year later they married with their eyes wide open.

Tyler and Megan Bourgeois were introduced by mutual friends who convinced each that the other “would be a good match because we were Catholic.” And in fact, the matchmakers got that exactly right, the couple explains as they reflect on their relationship.

From the beginning, “We just connected well. It was good to know we were both Catholic, and that faith would not be an obstacle,” they observe. “We both agreed that faith is the most important aspect of a strong marriage. We were excited to start a relationship, to have a partner, someone on your team – who, yes, is a different person, but has the same worldview and values.”

Tyler and Megan were married October 13, 2017, at Megan’s home parish of St. Stephen’s in Croghan. They now live in Boonville with their family.

The births of our children (Meredith 4½; Elizabeth 2½; and Ambrose 3 months) of course stand out for us! It’s been a great blessing to have our little kids; they’re fun, energetic, and funny to watch! The innocent joy that children have is such a beautiful thing to witness. Of course it can be challenging, three kids under five, when they’re all having a bad day, or are mad, or crying, or pestering each other – no fun. We’re working on growing in virtue, especially in patience. But we see the great blessing that a family is.

“Sometimes it’s really great, others not so much. But at the end of the day, we are on the same page with the important things; we are a team. Whatever we are going through, we’re not going through it alone. It’s a blessing to know that you have a solid teammate to face those challenges with. If we simply put first things first, thank God for all your blessings even in the hard times, you grow through it. We grew closer through those experiences because we relied on each other and each of us had the opportunity to be supportive of the other (imperfectly, of course). Through that you build trust. You start to believe, not just know, that the person you’ve dedicated your life to is really there to be your partner. They’re on your team, and you are not alone.”

For these teammates, taking their faith seriously is primary. Part of that involves actively supporting one another’s faith efforts.

“We try to encourage each other in the faith, we try to live our faith as part of our daily lives. We try to make time for each of us to attend different retreats, and we all attend Family Guggenheim. Faith helps us have an awareness that we need to offer each other grace and space in our daily lives. We belong to St. Joseph’s parish in Boonville (which Tyler has attended all his life). In the past, we have taught Confirmation preparation there, and helped out with building and beautification projects.”

Megan and Tyler Bourgeois on their wedding day. The couple was married October 13, 2017, at Megan’s home parish of St. Stephen’s in Croghan. They now live in Boonville with their family.

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

Find us on Facebook!
By Suzanne Pietropaoli
Natural Family Planning Director

Congratulations! Perhaps you are newly married, or perhaps you are still busy getting ready for the big day. Issues and adjustments of all kinds demand your attention, and it might be easy to let some things just slide.

Even so, starting a new life together is the perfect time for the two of you to have a heart-to-heart talk about family planning.

Really? Wasn’t that all settled at the clinic or the doctor’s office?

Well, that is the first thing to consider: being a fertile woman is not a disease that needs medical treatment. The ability to conceive and bear children is a good and healthy thing, and the alternating phases of female fertility and infertility have been well documented for nearly a century.

Today any woman can learn to understand her own fertility by observing its physical signs or biomarkers. These reflect the hormonal changes that govern the female cycle and indicate times of fertility and infertility within that cycle. Natural Family Planning teaches women to identify and evaluate these changes.

This knowledge gives her an entirely natural, healthy, highly effective (98-99% effective) way to plan a family – simply by abstaining during the fertile time of the cycle.

Also, because Natural Family Planning is true family planning, the same knowledge enables a couple to identify the optimum time for conception when that is their family planning intention.

NFP is also unique because responsibility for conception is shared by both husband and wife. After all, since a woman is fertile only a few days each cycle and a man is continuously fertile from puberty until death, it hardly makes sense that she should bear the burden of risky contraceptives.

And yes, the hormonal contraceptives currently used by 61 million American women carry significant health risks. Learn all you can, even if you may need a magnifying glass to read the fine print in the package inserts.

This information will alert you to some of the immediate medical hazards risked by women who use the Pill and other chemical contraceptives including Norplant, patches, Yazz, rings and IUDs. In addition to raising the risk of blood clots, heart attacks, strokes, gallbladder disease and depression, these chemicals substantially increase the lifetime risk of breast cancer. Learn more at https://bcpinstitute.org, website of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute. Let the facts inform your choices.

There are also other values to consider in your approach to family planning.

Couples who choose contraceptive drugs and devices view fertility as a problem – HER problem, which she must fix. But in fact, a fertile woman is not broken or defective, but is perfectly healthy. Natural Family Planning recognizes this truth and educates couples to accept and respect the woman in her totality. NFP empowers women: family planning is no longer a female “problem,” but a responsibility shared by husband and wife.

Knowledge is always powerful, and learning to understand and respect how our bodies are designed has a powerful influence on couples who use it. It fosters attentiveness, appreciation, patience, and communication, which tend to strengthen a couple’s relationship.

It is also important to consider this question in light of God’s plan for married love. Especially in a culture that regards sex as something that human beings fashion for themselves, it is essential to consider sexuality from the perspective of the God who made it, and all of us.

When you stand before the altar of God on your wedding day, you promise yourselves to one another in a love that is free, permanent, faithful and open to the gift of children.

This is the kind of love with which God loves us, and it is the absolutely unconditional love for which we all long. It is the love that God intends should be embodied in every act of sexual intercourse, an act that by its nature says: “I love you totally. I give all of myself to you forever, and I freely and completely accept all that you are.”

Yet contraccepted intercourse says something quite different: “I love you, but not all of you. I give myself to you, but not all of me. I withhold my fertility.” I will not accept your fertility.” In this way, married love can become conditional, demanding and divisive rather than unifying a couple in giving and receiving the total gift of each to the other.

At every level – health, effectiveness, relationship, faith – God’s plan is good. Time spent learning it yields tremendous benefits over a lifetime. NFP methods and modes of learning have evolved to include many online options, as well as in-person classes. Different NFP methodologies appeal to different people, and there is certainly something that will suit your preferences.

The Catholic Church, which has always taught and continues to teach that God made sex to be both unitive AND procreative, has endorsed natural methods of birth regulation for the better part of a century and supported research and teaching organizations. Such organizations approved by the Church thus have long histories of reliability, which is not the case for the many random fertility awareness methods currently crowding the internet.

The most comprehensive single site for this information is hosted by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops: https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning.

We also invite you to connect with our diocesan NFP Office at www.rcdony.org/nfp or email us at apietropaoli@rcdony.org.
Catholic Schools: A place of encounter

By Sister Ellen Rose Coughlin, SSJ
Diocesan Superintendent of Schools

Catholic Schools Weeks is an annual celebration of Catholic Education in the United States. The national celebration begins on the last Sunday of January and extends through the following week. A number of our schools will celebrate during the national celebration January 31 – February 4. Others choose to celebrate the week at a different time.

Schools typically observe the week with Masses, open houses, special activities for students, families, parishioners and the wider community. Catholic Schools Week is an opportunity to reflect on the mission of Catholic schools and their distinctive features.

As I prepared to write this article, I recalled April 17, 2008. I was at Catholic University of America with the diocesan Catholic school superintendents and Catholic university presidents from across the United States.

We were invited by Father David O'Connell, the president/rector of Catholic University to attend a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI during his apostolic visit to the United States. The meeting and the address which the Holy Father delivered that day remain a cherished and inspiring memory.

“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God . . . in Jesus Christ who reveals his transforming love and truth” (Pope Benedict, Catholic University of America, April 17, 2008).

A Catholic school is a place of encounter, a place to meet Jesus Christ, to learn about Him, to experience His redeeming love and to grow in a relationship with Him. Drawn by the power of the Gospel, this encounter leads students to lead a life in imitation of Jesus.

Survey data indicates that parents choose Catholic schools for their strong academic program, orderly, disciplined environment and a secure and safe environment. Strong academic programs, an orderly and secure environment, however, do not address the unique mission of a Catholic school.

The foundation of our mission is a person, Jesus Christ. It is His life and His message that a Catholic school imparts. It is the Catholic world-view integrated throughout the academic program and lived and shared throughout the total school program that distinguishes a Catholic school.

“A school’s Catholic identity is not simply a question of a number of Catholic students. It is a conviction – do we really believe that only in the mystery of Jesus does the mystery of the human person become clear” (Pope Benedict XVI, CUA, 2008).

Catholic schools see education as a process that forms the whole person in terms of eternal life. The specific purpose of Catholic education is the formation of students who will be good citizens of this world, love God and neighbor and enrich society with the leaven of the Gospel and by the example of their faith.

We believe every human person is created to enjoy one day the beauty and joy of eternal happiness. As communities of faith, Catholic schools instill in students their destiny to become saints – citizens of eternal life.

Every academic institution imparts values – ideals for which a student is prepared to pursue and eventually achieve. The difference in a Catholic school is not found in “what makes the difference” but rather in “who makes the difference.” Christ is the difference that defines who we are and why we exist. He is the one who leads our students to a bright future in this world and eventually in eternal life.

“Therefore, I say to you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; nor about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life?” (Matthew 6:25-28, NABRE).

Catholic Schools: A place of encounter
Parish nurse training to be offered in Plattsburgh

PLATTSBURGH – Mercy Care for the Adirondacks, a mission sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, will offer the Foundations Course for Faith Community Nursing (parish nursing) on March 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, and 25. Attendance at all six sessions is required.

The in-person course is open to Registered Nurses of all faiths and will be offered at St. Joseph’s Outreach Center in Plattsburgh.

Mercy Care provides the training at no cost to participants in the Diocese of Ogdensburg but pre-registration is required.

The Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course is supported by a grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation.

To register please visit www.adkmarcy.org. For more information, contact Lexi Bevilacqua at abevilacqua@adkmarcy.org or 518-523-5446.

Mercy Care for the Adirondacks has trained more than 50 parish nurses throughout the North Country.

HOW DOES A PARISH NURSE HELP?

Volunteer Faith Community nurses (often referred to as parish nurses) provide health education, advocate for clients, connect them with resources in the community, listen and provide support in times of illness. Their focus is on the whole person with special emphasis on the spiritual. The volunteer parish nurse does not do hands-on nursing or duplicate what is available through the public health nurse, but does bring his or her nursing experience and faith to the service of others. As a volunteer Parish Nurse, you are offered the opportunity to choose the number of hours you will be able to give.

CLERGY AND VOLUNTEER PARISH NURSE EXPERIENCE

Clergy in churches where there is a parish nurse presence have expressed their appreciation of this ministry.

Father John Yonkovig, pastor of St. Agnes Catholic Church in Lake Placid remarked, “Our Parish Nurses have been invaluable during this time of Covid-19 and ongoing aftermath.”

Penny McGill, R.N., Mercy Care parish nurse said, “I have found that parish nursing is less about physical care and more about nourishing the human spirit.”

FACULTY

• Sister Catherine Cummings, RSM,

Ed.D., R.N., Mercy Care’s Mission Director, Course Coordinator

• Jane Stratton, MS, RN, NPD-BC-BC, Parish Nurse Educator, Lead Faculty and Primary Course Instructor

• Donna Beal, Mercy Care Executive Director

• Sister Bethany Fitzgerald, SSJ, Faith Formation Educator, Sister of St. Joseph of Watertown, NY

• Angela Sheehan, RN, MS, NPP, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Private Mental Health Practice, Faith Community Nurse Educator, Rensselaer and Saratoga Counties

• Rev. Paul Kelly, Chaplain, Elderdwood of Uihlein at Lake Placid

• Mandy Snay, MPH, RD, CDN, Director of Health Planning & Promotion, Clinton County Health Department

• Kasey Stewart, Ph.D., Coordinator, North Country Hub Enhanced-Multidisciplinary Team, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Ogdensburg

• Barbara J. Hofrichter M.Div., D. Min, U.C.C. (Pastor Retired), Hospice Bereavement Coordinator (Retired)

Parish Nursing is one of the fastest growing specialties in nursing. It has spread rapidly throughout the country. Care is given in accordance with each individual’s values and spiritual beliefs.

Mercy Care’s mission is to enhance in every dimension the fullness of life for elders living in their community. For more information, please visit Mercy Care’s web site at www.adkmarcy.org.
20 AGs warn CVS, Walgreens against abortion pills

By Tyler Arnold
Catholic News Agency

As CVS and Walgreens continue to seek federal approval to sell an abortion drug, 20 attorneys general whose states restrict abortion warned the companies receive FDA certification. The drug can be used to abort a preborn child up to 10 weeks of gestation, according to the FDA; however, the World Health Organization has stated it can be used up to 12 weeks of gestation. Walgreens and CVS are both seeking certification to sell the drug but have not yet received approval or begun to sell it.

After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, several states enacted abortion laws that outright ban abortion in most cases or impose a cutoff earlier than 10 weeks. In these states, the bans often apply to surgical abortion and abortion-inducing drugs. Some states also specifically ban the sale of abortion-inducing drugs through the mail. After CVS and Walgreens expressed their intent to distribute the abortion drug through mail orders, a coalition of 20 attorneys general sent letters to the companies, warning them they cannot sell the drug in their states.

As attorney general, it is my responsibility to enforce the laws as written, and that includes enforcing the very laws that protect Missouri’s women and unborn children,” Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, who led the coalition, said in a statement. “My office is doing everything in its power to inform these companies of the law, with the promise that we will use every tool at our disposal to uphold the law if broken.”

The letter states that companies must “keep apprised not only of federal law but also of the laws of the various states.” It adds that these laws reflect a commitment to “protect the lives and dignity of children” and women.

Explaining their concern, the state officials cite research published in 2015 that found that abortion-inducing drugs are nearly six times more likely to cause complications for women than surgical abortions. They also note that abortions performed away from medical professionals carry an added risk.

In the letter, the attorneys general also caution that mail orders of abortion-inducing drugs “invite the horror of an increase in coerced abortions” because there is no medical oversight and “a person can obtain an abortion pill quite easily and then coerce a woman into taking it.” The attorneys general also expressed the opinion that mailing abortion drugs violates federal law, which is contrary to a Department of Justice opinion issued earlier this year.

A spokesman for Walgreens told CNA that the company is aware that it may be unable to provide the drug in every location.

“We are not dispensing mifepristone at this time,” a Walgreens spokesman said. “We intend to become a certified pharmacy under the program; however, we fully understand that we may not be able to dispense mifepristone in all locations if we are certified under the program.”

CNA reached out to CVS for comment but did not receive a response by the time of publication.

Some pro-life groups praised the attorneys general for defending preborn children against the abortion drug within their respective states.

“Ohio Right to Life is thankful for Attorney General Dave Yost and the 19 other attorneys general who united to not only uphold and protect our state laws but also federal law,” Ohio Right to Life President Mike Gonidakis said in a statement.

“This is what true pro-life leadership looks like, and we are proud to stand behind them,” Gonidakis added.

“Not only is the lackadaisical distribution of mifepristone via the mail illegal per federal law, but it is also extremely dangerous for women,” he said. “We have stated since the very beginning that this FDA approval is nothing short of anti-women and prioritizes a political agenda over medical safety. It is time for the Biden administration to prioritize the health and safety of women and children.”

The Utah-based Sutherland Institute, which promotes religious freedom and family values, also approved of the attorneys general’s actions. Bill Duncan, a religious freedom policy fellow with the institute, told CNA that the letter is an “appropriate exercise of their responsibility.”
SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER
Evans Mills — The Indian River Council 7471 Knights of Columbus will be having a spaghetti & meatball dinner.

- **Date:** Feb. 11
- **Time:** 4 p.m. to 7
- **Place:** St. Mary’s Parish Center
- **Cost:** Adults, $9; Seniors, $8; Children 12 and under, $5; under 5, Free; Quart of sauce, $6
- **Contact:** For more information call 315-629-4678

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**WOMEN’S PRAYER AND HEALING RETREAT**
Watertown — The Department of Faith Formation will be having a Women’s Prayer and Healing Retreat.

- **Date:** March 31
- **Time:** 6:30 p.m. to 8:30
- **Place:** Sisters of St. Joseph Hearthside Room
- **Cost:** $20
- **Features:** The retreat will be run by Sister Mary Michelle Fox, OP, a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville.
- **Contact:** To register go to www.rcdny.org/healingretreat

**MEAL DRIVERS NEEDED**
The St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging is seeking drivers for home delivered meals in Brasher Falls, DeKalb, Canton, Gouverneur, Morris-town, Ogdensburg, Potsdam and Star Lake.

- **Features:** These drivers deliver nutritious meals to older adults. Many are homebound and receive a lunchtime meal Monday through Friday.

A critical component of this program is the daily wellness check that is provided by this service. Drivers receive a mileage reimbursement. Typical deliveries take place between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Routes can be between one hour and two hours. You can volunteer for one day a week or several.

- **Contact:** If you are interested please contact Danielle Durant at 315-386-4730.

**BISHOP BARRON STUDY PROGRAM**
Massena — St. Peter’s Parish will have an 8 week study program using Bishop Barron’s “Conversion.”

- **Date:** Tuesdays starting Jan. 31
- **Time:** 2 p.m. or 6:30 p.m.
- **Place:** St. Mary’s Social Hall
- **Contact:** St Peters Office at 315-769-2469 or visit website at massenacatholics.com for info and registration

**THE CHOSEN 1 & 2**
Massena — St. Peter’s Parish will be showing “The Chosen” 1 and 2.

- **Date:** Season 1 starts Wednesdays Feb 1 and Season 2 starts Mondays Jan 30
- **Cost:** Adults, $10; Under 12, $5; under 5, Free; Omelets, add $3; Takeouts available
- **Contact:** For more information contact Grand Knight Gil Gonthier 315-212-5166

**ROSAURY WITH DEVOTIONS**
Ogdensburg — The Legion of Mary will pray the rosary with devotions for First Saturday.

- **Date:** March 4
- **Time:** 8 a.m.
- **Place:** Notre Dame Church, Ogdensburg
- **Features:** Rosary with devotions

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

- **Date:** March 4
- **Time:** 3:15 p.m.
- **Features:** First Saturday Rosary Devotion to OUR Lady of Fatima. Confréssions will be available. Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 p.m.

**MEN’S PRAYER GROUP**
Massena — First Saturday of the month, men’s prayer group to meet for Mass and Adoration.

- **Date:** March 4
- **Time:** 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.
- **Place:** St. Mary’s Church
- **Features:** Coffee and doughnuts after service in the parish center
- **Contact:** Bob Brothers at 315-842-2886

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**ADORATION**
Plattsburgh — Adoration to be held weekly.

- **Date:** Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
- **Time:** 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- **Place:** St. John’s in the Holy Family Basement
- **Features:** Come to an out of the way place and rest awhile in Jesus’ Presence. Pray for the sick, suffering, vocations, our priests, country and peace in the world.
- **Contact:** For more information, to become a substitute or to sign up for an hour, please contact 518-563-3773.

**JEFFERSON-LEWIS**

**SPAGHETTI & MEATBALL DINNER**
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- **Contact:** For more information call 315-629-4678

**PANCAKE BREAKFAST**
Carthage — A pancake breakfast to be held to benefit Augustinian Academy

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**CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER**
Lyons Falls — St. John’s Church will have a drive thru chicken and biscuit dinner.

- **Date:** Feb. 15
- **Time:** 5 p.m.
- **Cost:** $12
- **Menu:** Chicken and homemade biscuits, real mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetable, cranberry sauce, and a Valentines dessert.
- **Contact:** To guarantee your dinner, please call 315-348-8945 or 315-348-8477. Any questions, contact 315-766-6897.

**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:** March 5
- **Time:** Following 11 a.m. Mass
- **Place:** St. Hedwig’s Church
- **Contact:** 315-348-6260

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**ST. LAWRENCE**

**MEAL DRIVERS NEEDED**
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- **Features:** These drivers deliver nutritious meals to older adults. Many are homebound and receive a lunchtime meal Monday through Friday.

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**ST. LAWRENCE**
40 CANS FOR LENT
Canton — The Knights of Columbus in Canton invite you to participate in the “40 Cans for Lent” program as part of your Lenten journey.

Features: Simply donate one can of food or a non-perishable item for each of the 40 days of Lent. Donations can be made at any of the doors at St. Mary’s Church 68 Court St. in Canton. Lent provides an opportunity for each of us to live generously to show gratitude for God’s gifts to us and to share those gifts with others.

DIOCESAN LIFE

SURVIVING DIVORCE
The Family Life Office is offering the Surviving Divorce Program, starting late February in Gouverneur, Canton and Potsdam/Colton.

Dates: Facilitators at each site will contact registrants to establish exact dates and times for the meetings.

Cost: $25

Features: Surviving Divorce features twelve video presentations that cover topics such as shock and grief, anger and forgiveness, money issues, dealing with children and a former spouse, and annulment and remarriage. This program is for the newly separated and divorced and those still struggling with issues many years later.

Contact: Register online at www.rcdony.org/survivingdivorce. For more information contact Steve Tartaglia at 315-393-2920 or startaglia@rcdony.org.

LOVING AUTHENTICALLY
All are invited to attend this free seminar, Loving Authentically: Sex, Happiness and Catholic Teaching designed to deepen our understanding of how Church doctrine on sexual morality connects with our happiness.

Schedule: Three times and locations to attend. Feb. 12, 2023 at Newman Center, Plattsburgh 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; April 22, 2023 at St. Bernard's Saranac Lake 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; May 20, 2023 at St. Mary’s Ticonderoga 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Features: Program will be a showing of “Unprotected: A Pope, the Pill, and the Perils of Sexual Chaos.” With Q & A led by Natural Family Planning Directors, Angelo and Suzanne Pietropaoli and Catholic Theologian, Maura Hearden Fehlner, Ph.D. Lunch will be provided.

Contact: to register go www.rcdony.org/lovingauthentically. For more information contact Stephen Tartaglia at 315-393-2920 or startaglia@rcdony.org.

RITE OF ELECTON
Ogdensburg — The Rite of Election (ROE) this year will be held the first Sunday of Lent. Come to the Catholic Church to experience this liturgy and offer prayer and support to the Catholic Candidates preparing for full initiation into the Catholic Church this Easter.

Date: Feb. 26
Time: 2:30 p.m.
Place: St. Mary’s Cathedral
Contact: Anita Soltero at asnoltero@rcdony.org or 518-310-3669 with questions.

YOUTH LENTEN RETREAT
Lenten Retreats for youth in grades 7 to 12 to be held.

Schedule: March 4 at Sacred Heart Church (Dostie Hall), Watertown 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. with Mass at 4:30 p.m.; March 18 at St. Peter’s Church (Emmaus Room) 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. with Mass at 4 p.m.

Features: During this retreat, youth will be able to have fun while putting together the “Best Lent Yet!” plan. There is no fee to attend and, retreatants are encouraged to attend the Mass offering.

Contact: Registration is required to attend. The deadline to register is March 1. To register visit www.rcdony.org/lentenretreat When registering, please choose the date and location that works best for you. For more information, contact Tom Semeraro @ 315-393-2920 ext. 1415

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT
Massena — The Vocation Office and the Office of Youth Ministry is sponsoring a Middle School Retreat (Grades 6-8) in the St. Lawrence/Franklin region of the Diocese.

Date: March 22
Time: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Place: St. Mary’s Social Hall
Features: The purpose of a Middle School Retreat is to guide young women and men to prayerfully consider what God’s plan is for their lives. Retreat is open to students in Grades 6-8 both in Catholic schools and public schools. It is a retreat day and is considered a legal absence.

Contact: Contact your pastor, Catholic school principal, or Religious Education Coordinator for a registration form.

DAY OF REFLECTION
Ogdensburg — The Department of Faith Formation will be hosting a Day of Reflection.

Date: April 1
Time: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Place: Wadhams Hall
Cost: $30, lunch is included
Features: Sister Mary Michael Fox, OP, a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville will present “Blessed, Broken, Given: Living Eucharistia”

Contact: To Register go to www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection

YOUTH RALLY
Lake Placid — “We are Jesus in the World” Youth Rally to be held for Middle and High school age students.

Date: April 22
Time: 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with Mass to follow at St. Agnes Church
Place: High Peaks Resort
Cost: $35, includes full day pass, lunch, snacks, games and giveaways.

Features: A super presentation from Monet Souza and a bouncing concert from Catholic recording artist, Joe Melendez. Closing Mass will be offered by Bishop Terry LaValley.

Contact: To register please go to www.rcdony.org/youth/rally If you have any questions please contact Jeannie Grizzuto at the Youth Office, 315-393-2920.

GUGGENHEIM SUMMER CAMP
2023 registration is open. New this year is a mini session for youth 11-13 years old along with the annual sleepaway camp weeks for ages 11 to 18.

Dates: The season starts July 5th and ends Aug. 11th.

Cost: Mini session is $200 and the weeklong sessions is $425 per camper. Meals and accommodations are included in the registration fee.

Features: There are so many fun things to do at camp! Like arts and crafts, Project Adventure, Liturgy, rappelling, hiking, basketball, or soccer. Guggenheim has its very own beach where you can swim, pool around on our watercrafts and play watersports. Evenings at camp are packed with fun activities like bonfire time, a dance, outdoor movies, and camp-wide games. Summer Camp Guggenheim is a fun place where you can make great friends, escape the craziness of the world, and just chill with cool people like you.

Contact: To sign up for camp please visit: www.rcdony.org/youth/camp or call, Jeannie Grizzuto at 315-393-2920 ext. 1413

SIDEWALK ADVOCATES FOR LIFE
Experience Sidewalk Advocates for Life’s new virtual basic training 2.0.

Features: Sidewalk Advocates for Life employs peaceful, prayerful, loving, and law-abiding outreach outside of abortion centers to aid mothers in crisis and connect them with life-affirming resources in the effort to save their preborn children and end abortion. By God’s grace, this effort has witnessed over 9,000 women turn around at abortion centers and CHOOSE LIFE!

Contact: To get started, fill out the brief application at sidewalkadvocates.org/trainingapp. Upon receipt, we’ll be in touch with next steps for accessing the online training.

SUMMER CAMP YOUTH DIRECTOR
Saranac Lake — The Diocese of Ogdensburg is seeking an energetic and dedicated individual for the position of Summer Camp Director at the Guggenheim Center.

Features: Summer Camp Guggenheim has been a “home away from home” for young people ages 12 to 18 years old since 1972. Hike, Swim, Praise, and a whole lot more! Summer camp Guggenheim is a high energy camp filled with exciting activities and opportunities for campers to experience their faith and joyfully celebrate it.

Contact: To apply please visit: www.rcdony.org/information/employment Questions or inquiries Tom Semeraro, Director of Youth Ministry 315-393-2920 ext. 1415 www.rcdony.org/youth

NEIGHBORING DIOCESES

CATHOLIC MEN’S CONFERENCE
Syracuse — Diocese of Syracuse Catholic Men’s Conference, Ignite 2023 to be held.

Date: March 25
Time: 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.
Place: SRC Arena & Event Center
Cost: $55 through March 7, $65 after March 7, $70 at the door

Features: Scheduled speakers include Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Christopher Stefanick, Mike McClint and Gus Lloyd. Open to men ages 16 - 96. We are expecting a close to sell-out crowd based on the slated speakers.

Contact: For more information and to register:https://www.ignite-catholicmen.org

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to make the change
Laws: Rules so we behave ourselves

The first time I seriously looked at the Book of Leviticus in the Bible was probably during an Old Testament course in Formation for Ministry. I was stunned to learn that a Jew had 613 laws to follow just to prove to God that he loved him. That seemed like a lot of laws and some of them were curious to this westerner. Like, “any animal that has hoofs you may eat, provided it is cloven-footed and chews the cud.” (Leviticus 11:2-3 in case you were wondering.) I am guessing that’s beef, so I looked it up. Cloven-footed, which is new to this kid from Queens, are two-toed animals like cows, sheep, goats, deer, llamas, alpacas, buffalo etc. Pigs are out, according to Leviticus, for a number of reasons. I’ve never tasted alpaca. I did have some reindeer once, but that’s another story. Back to laws. I’ve broken a modern law or two in my day. Nothing serious, I don’t think, but I’m sure I have been bad. I’m sure I’ve gone through a red light or a stop sign. Perhaps I violated an open container law in my college days. This sounds like boasting or pushing my luck, but I have never had a mark on my driver’s license. I may have deserved a few but was not given a ticket. Thank you, officers!

The laws of which I speak are serious but relatively minor. Stop and think about all the laws, federal, state and local laws that we could potentially violate. I read somewhere there are 30,000 enacted laws in this country. That 613 seems like a walk in the park now.

What started me on this path was the readings for next weekend, the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The response to Psalm 119 is “Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!” The prayer over the offerings refers to “those who do (God’s) will.”

The scripture readings all talk about laws. I have not come to abolish the law, Jesus says in Matthew’s Gospel, but to fulfill them.

What laws? Those commandments God gave Moses etched on a couple of slabs are laws. The people of that time needed “don’ts” to understand. Don’t steal, don’t murder, don’t covet people or things and so forth. We need those don’t reminders too.

Jesus says we are in big, eternal trouble, if we break even the least of these commandments. The verdict is even more ominous for me if I teach someone how to violate a commandment. That goes for you too!

The rules in Leviticus were intended to teach Israelites how they could remain pure, sanctified in the eyes of God. All 613 laws are intended to help people stay holy, as God is holy. Jesus revealed more about God in his time on earth. Jesus gave us the do’s; the Beatitudes. They are the virtues and values in life that result in blessings and rewards.

The Ten commandments and eight beatitudes. Together these simple laws constitute the real road map for Christian perfection.

Deacon Kevin Mastellon ministers in Watertown. He is the director of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

TO HAVE TO HOLD TO HONOR

Natural Family Planning
Supporting God’s gifts of love and life in marriage

Diocese of Ogdensburg
Natural Family Planning Office
518-483-0459
Email: apietropaolo@rcdyny.org
Website: www.rcdyny.org/nfp

www.usccb.org/nfp

10 COMMENTARY NORTHCOUNTRYCATHOLIC FEBRUARY 8, 2023
Destruction, hope in Myanmar

The Burmese army set fire to the ancient Church of the Assumption, built in 1894 in Chan Thar, a village inhabited by Catholics in the region of Sagaing, located in the northeast of Myanmar. During the action on January 15, soldiers also set fire to the nearby convent of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary (FMM), who were forced to flee with some 3,000 villagers. Their homes, numbering around 500, were also destroyed, and only rubble remains of the village. Local sources of Fides note that clashes continue in the area, as the area is considered a stronghold of the People’s Defense Forces (PDF) rebels, who oppose the Burmese military junta that came to power with the coup of State in February 2021.

Sister Rita, one of the nuns who fled, told Agenzia Fides: “We asked the inhabitants of the village to leave their homes, not to oppose the soldiers and not to resist, to avoid massacres and brutality. The soldiers want to crush any resistance from the civilians. They enter the villages, occupy buildings like schools and churches and camp there. From there, they carry out raids from house to house to flush out the rebels. They stayed in our church for three days and when they left they set fire to the church and our convent.”

The nun affirms that “by a miracle,” the church’s adoration chapel was not affected by the flames. “We see there a sign from the Most High: even in this brutal and senseless violence, the Lord is always with us. Our region was known to be one of the most peaceful and harmonious in the country. Now it’s a place of devastation and rubble. It’s terrible.” […]

The local community remembers with sadness that at least eleven children died following a regular army airstrike on a civilian populated area in Sagaing on September 16.

The Archbishop of Mandalay, Marco Tin Win, notes: “We are living in a time of great suffering. Half of the territory of the Archdiocese of Mandalay is affected by the clashes and this worries us greatly. We are helping thousands of internally displaced persons, in five centers set up in five Catholic parishes: we are doing what we can.”

“While violence rages especially in some areas,” says the Archbishop, “we do not lose hope because we know we have the Lord with us. The faithful have confidence in Him and the fact that the chapel of adoration of the destroyed church was spared by the flames is a symbolic fact which consoles the faithful and reminds them that our only refuge is the Lord.”

— Article from FIDES missionary news service of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

OBITUARIES

Alexandria Bay — Dean C. Honeywell, 85; Funeral Services Feb. 7, 2023 at Costello Funeral Home.


Brushton — Donald L. “Duck” Labarge, 69; Memorial Services Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Mary’s Parish Center; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery.


Carthage — Helen G. (LaParr) DeLong, 91; Private Services to be held; burial in Fairview Cemetery.

Colton — Richard V. Manning, 78; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 3, 2023 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in Chapel Hill Cemetery.

Ellenburg — Betty (Bushey) Carter, 93; Memorial Mass in spring at St. Edmund’s Church; burial in parish cemetery.

Hopkinton — Anne Regan Fiedler, 95; Mass of Christian Burial in the spring at Holy Cross Church; burial in St. Mary’s Cemetery, Potsdam.


Massena — Tom A. Portolese, 66; Mass of Christian Burial to be held in the spring; burial in Calvary Cemetery.


Ogdensburg — Carrie L. (Badlam) Moore, 98; Funeral Services Jan. 31, 2023 at the Oswegatchie Mausoleum.

Ogdensburg — Judith (Cree) Ryan, 81; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at Notre Dame Church.

Ogdensburg — Kathleen Murnen Silver, 82; Funeral Services Feb. 10, 2023 at Frary Funeral Home; burial in Foxwood Memorial Park.

Olmedsville — Geraldine Joan (Kelly) Meehan, 85; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 6, 2023 at St. Joseph’s Church.


Plattsburgh — Serge W. Guay, 73; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. John’s Church.


Potsdam — Jay F. Eseltine, 73; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 1, 2023 at St. Mary’s Church.

Ticonderoga — Joseph Guyette Sr., 86; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Mary’s Church; burial in St. Mary’s Parish cemetery.

Watertown — Lenore M. (Vorce) LaDuke, 89; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Patrick’s Church; burial in Glenwood Cemetery.

Watertown — Timothy J. Randall, 67; Funeral Services Feb. 6, 2023 at D.L. Galarco Funeral Home, Inc.

West Chazy — Howard Chaunvin, 80; Mass of Christian Burial Feb. 4, 2023 at St. Joseph’s Church; burial parish cemetery.

West Chazy — Thomas E. Sanders, 76; Mass of Christian Burial Jan. 30, 2023 at St. Joseph’s Church; burial in Town of Plattsburgh Community Mausoleum.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

All about trust and choice

In Matthew’s Gospel, we are told that we will be the greatest in heaven if we adhere strictly to even the letter of the law. How very important it is for us to avoid anger against our brother? If we do so, we should go and ask forgiveness before we dare to bring our gift to the altar.

What follows in the Gospel narrates the great importance of eliminating anything that causes us to sin. Absolute honesty will make our “yes” mean “yes” and our “no” mean “no.” Only the exercise of great love can give us the strength to make these right choices.

This week is a good time for us to meditate on the power of these readings. Only God’s wisdom and grace will help us to make these right choices.

February 12

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READINGS

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

Today’s readings are all about the choices we make, whether good or bad.

In the first reading from Strach, we are told that if we choose to keep the commandments, they will save you. It’s all about trust and choice. We should choose anything but injustice or sin.

In 1st Corinthians, we are assured that if we make good choices, nothing we can imagine will match the joys of eternal life.

Matthew 5:29-48

In the Lord’s teaching on the Beatitudes, we choose to trust and choose. It’s all about faith and justice or sin. Absolute honesty is a symbolic fact which consoles the faithful and reminds them that our only refuge is the Lord.

“While we have the Lord with us, the faithful have confidence in Him and the fact that the chapel of adoration of the destroyed church was spared by the flames is a symbolic fact which consoles the faithful and reminds them that our only refuge is the Lord.”

— Article from FIDES missionary news service of the Pontifical Mission Societies.
Parish poll to measure engagement

LAKE PLACID – The parishioners at St. Agnes Catholic church may think they need their hearing checked this weekend when Father John Yonkovich asks them to take out their cell phones during his homily. The reason is that all regular parishioners will be taking part in a Gallup survey to measure parish engagement.

The Gallup company was founded in 1935 by George Gallup and has, for the past 87 years been known for conducting public opinion polls. They have built a strong reputation for excellence, reliability, the confidential nature of their polls, and their ability to measure the “unmeasurable.”

Gallup built its reputation by creating systems that accurately measure former intangibles such as customer and employee engagement, which are keys to the success of any organization. Through careful research, Gallup designed a census-style survey to gauge spiritual engagement and the spiritual health of faith communities.

The past months, St. Agnes has embarked on a process of “divine renovation” and will be using the Gallup ME25 survey as a tool to help measure, manage and maximize the engagement of their faith community. Gin Shaw, the parish renewal director at St. Agnes is a former educator and public-school administrator and knows the value of measurement tools firsthand. Just as a school system uses tests to assess student progress, Shaw knows that improvement can only be clearly defined with the use of a good assessment tool.

The ME25 survey will be accessed during Mass by a dedicated internet address and every regular parishioner 18 years or older will be asked to answer the 25 questions only once. Their responses will be completely confidential and will provide a baseline of data from which action plans for the future of the parish will be made.

Every faith community was greatly impacted by the pandemic years. Churchgoers got out of the habit of attending services each weekend and have been slow to reengage. The result has been an enormous increase in people feeling disconnected, lonely, depressed, and hopeless. Why? Because humans are wired for belonging and many felt that sense of belonging in our places of worship pre-pandemic.

When the cessation of large gatherings caused churches to shutter their doors, that sense of belonging was disrupted, and for many it has been difficult to reclaim. This has provided the Church with an opportunity for change, and Father John is optimistic.

“God has promised us a future full of hope,” he said.

Cardinal pans administration for contraception plan

By Matt McDonald
Catholic News Agency

The Biden administration’s proposal to force employers to offer contraception in their health insurance plans even if they have moral objections to it is “disheartening,” Cardinal Timothy Dolan said Wednesday.

On Monday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a proposed rule that would leave in place the current exemption for religious employers but take away the exemption based purely on moral grounds.

Dolan, reacting two days later, said the Trump-era rule issued in 2018 “provided appropriately clear and robust protections for the exercise of religious beliefs and moral convictions, free from government punishment,” but that the Biden administration’s new proposal wrongly removes at least some of those protections.

“While we are pleased that the proposed regulations appear, at this early stage of review, to retain the bulk of the existing religious exemption, their elimination of protections for moral convictions is disheartening,” said Dolan, the archbishop of New York and chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Religious Liberty, in a written statement.

“It is past time for HHS to leave well enough alone in this regard,” Dolan said.

A spokesman for Health and Human Services could not immediately be reached for comment Wednesday afternoon.

The dispute is over regulations connected to the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, commonly known as Obamacare.

When the law came into effect, the Obama administration sought to force employers to cover the full cost of contraception for their employees through their health insurance plans. Various religious organizations and companies filed suit, leading to a patchwork of court decisions exempting some from the requirement and not exempting others.

The Trump administration’s 2018 rule included carve-outs for religious employers and employers with moral objections to contraception.

Biden officials say women need free contraception.