

NEWS FROM The Inland See

December 21–27, 2019

FOR THE DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

St. Joseph — in the face of mystery

At one point in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program each year I ask participants: “Is it possible to know God?” There is usually discussion and then concern that it is an impossible question to answer.

In truth, it is meant as a trick question. On one hand, God is a God of self-revelation. If you read the Scriptures, God gives messages to Abraham and his descendants. God speaks through the burning bush or in the pillar of cloud. God’s presence is proclaimed powerfully through the words of the prophets. God is not unknown.

On the other hand, some members of the group come to a different response: To truly know God would require each of us to be equal to God. Therefore, God cannot be fully known. As in any loving relationship, the depth of God’s being can never fully be fathomed.

At this point our conversation addresses questions about how to know God more fully and how to respond to the unknown part. I introduce God as mystery. A fully faithful life is lived in the mystery of God even as the faithful come to know God more and more.

As the Church contemplates the role of Joseph in the Nativity event, encountering mystery is a great place to start.

Matthew’s Gospel provides the image of Joseph facing crucial questions but ultimately entrusting himself to the plan of God, which he totally and completely cannot understand. By faith, however, he allows himself to be drawn into the tremendous mystery of Incarnation.

Encountering God as mystery admits that God is beyond human ability to know fully. Yet God as mystery invited Joseph to accept what was happening, namely the ultimate revelation of God, God as human!

The use of dreams in Matthew’s Gospel is a great way to convey God’s plan that intercepts human understanding. Joseph surrenders himself to the mystery. He does not understand but he trusts.

That leads to another aspect of this account, one of discernment. This is the process by which humans attempt to understand God’s will in their lives.

Over the years I have known many people who spend a great



amount of time “discerning” a big decision that must be made.

Often they go into overdrive trying to find out God’s plan for them regarding vocation choice, use of personal wealth or even how to vote. These can be major decisions, but the real process of discernment must start way before one is confronted with big decisions.

Discernment, simply stated, is an awareness of God already active in our lives each day. As such, people become conscious of their strengths and weaknesses.

It is not simply what someone wants to do but also what that person is called to do. If a person is faithful to prayer of listening and is surrounded by honest support, God’s plan becomes clear much more easily.

Joseph simply could not have decided to accept pregnant Mary because of a dream alone. There was a context for this, and that context was that Joseph was already, according to Scripture, a just and compassionate man.

He had already been allowing God to direct his life. In the New Testament he proclaims no great canticles as Mary did in Luke’s Gospel. Instead, there is quiet certitude and commitment.

In Joseph’s own prayer life, there likely already had been some sense of trust in the mystery of God. He was well versed in the Torah and would have known God to be both immanent and transcendent.

His experience would have included daily prayer and a great expectation of the promise of salvation. For this to unfold in his own married life would have been beyond comprehension, but not beyond his sense of God’s commitment to the Israelites.

All this leads us the final meditation on Joseph and the Incarnation. Once he had accepted the power of this mystery, he had to face a life of great commitment. There would be challenges and misunderstandings (Lk 2:41-52), no doubt.

But in the face of all this, precisely because of his willingness to live in the mystery of God, his life became one of peacefulness and gentle humility. Those are gifts given to all who trust in the power of God working in their lives.

— **Father Herb Weber, Catholic News Service**

Father Weber is founding pastor of St. John XXIII Church in Perrysburg, Ohio. His weekly podcast can be found at 23.church.

UPCOMING EVENTS



12|22 SUNDAY
Advent Lessons and Carols
*Sacred Heart Saint Francis de Sales,
Bennington • 2 pm*

Friends of all faith traditions are warmly invited to gather for this solemn offering of Old Testament Scripture and music.



12|25 WEDNESDAY
Free Christmas Meal
St. Anthony, Bethel • 12:30 - 2:30 pm

Free Christmas meal for all. A beautiful tradition by the Catholic Daughters of the Americas — led by chef extraordinaire, Cathy Day—where we offer a free meal to one and all on Christmas Day.



12|29 SUNDAY
Messe en français
St. Joseph Cathedral, Burlington • 6 - 7 pm

Mass in French animated by the French-speaking African communities at St. Joseph Cathedral. Mass and homily in French celebrated by Fr. Lance W. Harlow, Rector. This is a great occasion for high school students to get some extra credit and for French speakers of all levels.



12|31 TUESDAY
Rosary New Year Celebration
Catholic Center at UVM, Burlington • 4 - 7 pm

Come and join for the New Year's Evening celebration with Mary, the Queen of Peace, hosted by the Lady's Blue Army Vermont. The Lady at Fatima requested that we pray the Rosary often for Peace, Hope, and Love. Mass will be celebrated at 4 pm. Light Procession and the Rosary begin at 5 pm. (The Fatima pilgrim statue will be at the Catholic Center from Dec. 28 to Jan. 4, 2020.)



01|01 WEDNESDAY
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Holy Day of Obligation in the United States.



01|12 SUNDAY
Burlington K of C Pancake Breakfast
St. Mark, Burlington • 8:30 - 11:30 am

Sponsored by the DeGoesbriand Council 279 Burlington,

supporting our seminarians and postulation in the diocese. Ages 6 to 89, Suggested \$7 maximum per family \$25.



01|18 SATURDAY
Diocesan Mass, VT Rally for Life
St. Augustine, Montpelier • 9:30 am - 12 pm
Join us for Mass at St. Augustine. Following Mass Vermont Right to Life will sponsor a prayerful walk to the Statehouse with a program to follow inside.



01|22 WEDNESDAY
VCP Networking Breakfast
Pomerleau Alumni Center, St. Michael's College, Colchester • 8 - 9:30 am

This free event will begin with networking and refreshments, followed by words from a professional development speaker, and followed by more networking and discussion. Our January guest speaker is Mike Smith — Interim president and CEO of the Vermont Information Technology Leaders, Inc / Secretary, Vermont Agency of Human Services.



01|23-26 THURSDAY-SUNDAY
Life is Precious Washington D.C. Trip 2020

Trip will include Rally for Life with thousands of other teens, March for Life with hundreds of thousands, National Mall Museums, National Basilica and more! Cost: \$175 — submit \$50 non-refundable deposit by November 1. Submit full deposit by January 1, 2020 (*non-refundable after January 1*).



01|31, 02|01, 02 FRI, SAT, SUN
Discernment in Daily Life
*Our Lady of Life Spiritual Center,
St-Paul-d'Abbotsford, QC*

Retreat for students and young professionals, 18-35 years old, with teaching given in French/English (*simultaneous translation as needed*) by a team of Our Lady of Life members.



02|02 SUNDAY
World Marriage Day Anniversary Mass
St. Joseph Cathedral, Burlington • 10 - 11 am

Join us as we celebrate World Marriage Day by honoring in a special way those celebrating a milestone wedding anniversary. Mass with Bishop Christopher Coyne.



02|26 WEDNESDAY
Ash Wednesday
Come to Mass and receive your ashes!



02|22 SATURDAY
Marriage Preparation Retreat
*Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales Parish Hall,
Bennington • 10 am - 5:30 pm*

Take a break from wedding preparation and spend time in prayer, sharing and fellowship with your fiancé and other engaged couples. Lunch and materials will be provided.



03|28 SATURDAY
Diocesan Catholic Men's Conference

St. Anthony, White River Jct. • 9 am - 3:15 pm
Diocesan Catholic Men's Conference featuring Guy Gruters

DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON CAREERS

Diocese: Finance Officer

Diocese: Respect Life Coordinator

Diocese: Senior Accountant

Diocese: Technical Support Specialist

The Loretto Home, Rutland:
Residential Care Positions

Our Lady of Seven Dolors, Fair Haven:
Organist or Keyboardist/Choir Director

St. Joseph Residential Care Home, Burlington:
LPN

Vermont Catholic Charities: Counselor

For More Info:

vermontcatholic.org/careers



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