



January 26, 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On Halloween, youngsters come to our homes clad in all sorts of creative costumes looking for treats. Once they have received their *goods*, should they forget, their parents often ask them the question: “*What do you say?*” and they respond: “*Thank you!*” I couldn’t help but think that these words seem to have been forgotten by many of us today. I am reminded that the psalmist cries out: *For it was you who created my being, knit me together in my mother’s womb. I thank you for the wonder of my being, for the wonders of all your creation. (Psalm 139: 13-14)*

We have, in so many ways, forgotten how to say ‘thank you’ because, perhaps, we no longer consider human life to be a *wonder-filled* gift. If I don’t embrace human life as a gift, then I need not treat it with any special respect, let alone a sense of gratitude. The body becomes merely an object that I can do with as I please. The philosophy that results: “My life is my life--period. I am not beholden to anyone for it. It’s my right to do with it as I see fit.”

Just a few verses further on, we hear the psalmist say: *O search me, God, and know my heart. O test me and know my thoughts. See that I follow not the wrong path and lead me in the path of life eternal.* The psalmist knows that he doesn’t have all the answers, but seeks the Lord’s constant guidance so that the wrong way is never taken. Sometimes we think we know better. The guidance and direction offered by God’s laws are ignored, even ridiculed.

For many, the teachings of Christ are unknown or irrelevant. A tragic result: the spread of the Culture of Death. Today, in too many ways, we find ourselves deeply imbedded in the Culture of Death where the very fabric of our family is coming unwoven. Issues of life mean everything to the family. If human life has no value, the family suffers immeasurably.

So, what do we do? Throw in the towel? Ours is an urgent moral challenge. We have been changed by our culture too much, and we have changed it not enough. We must be about the business of informing and forming our consciences based on the Gospel and Church teaching. It’s not a question of when the Church will “get with it” and change. It’s a question of when our culture will “get with it” and change, particularly when it comes to attitudes that continue to feed our culture of death and the destruction of the family.

The Church of the North Country continues to accept our responsibility to promote a Culture of Life in a resistant society. For the last several years, here in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, a special *Respect Life Collection* is taken up to support our diocesan Respect Life efforts. Colleen and John Miner, from our Diocesan Respect Office, faithfully coordinate the steps we need to take in promoting and protecting the dignity and worth of every human life.

As we begin this New Year, the Jubilee of Hope, I ask you to please consider supporting the efforts our diocese makes in promoting the Culture of Life. These include, most recently, helping five Gabriel Projects. Needed help was offered to Heart Well Homestead, Plattsburgh Pregnancy Center, *Walking with Moms in Need*, *Birthright*, *Liferight*, Light of Truth Radio and the diocesan Natural Family Planning and Family Life Office efforts.

Thank you for your prayers and generous support of the 2025 Respect Life Collection and for all your efforts to build a Culture of Life by changing hearts and minds.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terry R. LaValley".

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg