

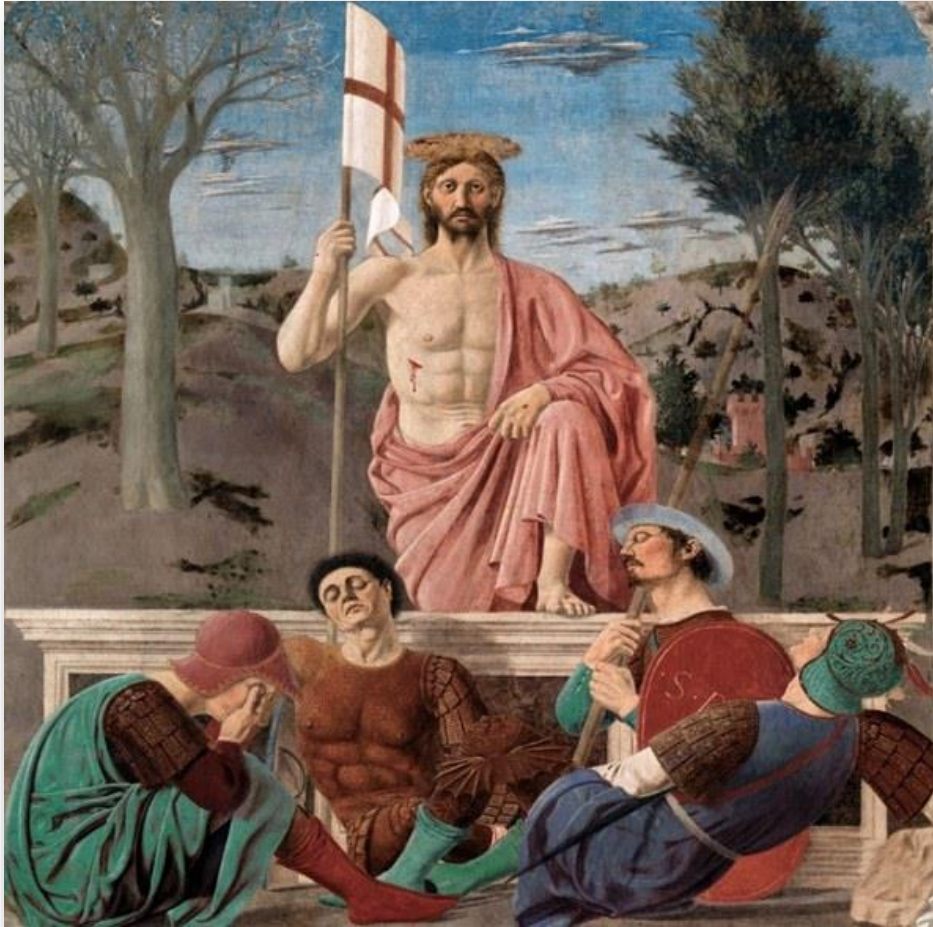


OLFF Newsletter--March 2023

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RCIA Afternoon of Lenten Reflection



"He loved His own in the world and He loved them to the end....fully aware that the Father had put everything into His power and that He had come from God and was returning to God, he rose (John 13:1, 3-4, 5)."

Georgette Dionne, the Coordinator for Children & Adult ministries for the Diocese of Portland and Fr. Jean Paul Labrie from St. John Vianney Parish in Fort Kent have teamed up to offer an afternoon of Lenten reflection for all the elect, candidates, godparents, sponsors and parish RCIA teams.

The details are as follows:

When: Palm Sunday, April 2, 2023, from 2-4pm

Where: Virtually from the comfort of your own home (Zoom link and guide will be emailed a week prior to the event).

What: Components of the afternoon will include prayer, theological reflections on scripture readings, exploration of the 'stories' of specific sacred art pieces relevant to Holy Week, individual and group reflection based on prepared prompts, chant, and a brief testimony from an Elect or candidate. A 10-minute offline break will be included halfway through. Bishop Deeley likes to come for a visit during our time together! Participants will be encouraged to use this experience and the ***Participant Reflection Guide*** to continue reflection during Holy Week/Triduum.

Who: Invited are RCIA Elect, candidates, sponsors/godparents, parish RCIA team members. Older children and teens are encouraged to participate.

Why: Each year during Lent, RCIA Elect and Candidates, their sponsors or godparents, and parish team members join together in our diocese, to deepen reflection as Holy Week approaches. Prior to the pandemic, there were typically three in-person regional gatherings in our state, hosted at a particular parish and facilitated by a clergy. This year is the 3rd virtual, diocesan-wide retreat. We hope to resume in-person retreats next year.

Rachel's Vineyard Retreat



Please print the following notice for the Spring 2023 Rachel's Vineyard Retreat in your parish bulletin as often as possible. It is wonderful how those who call about a retreat often say they saw a notice in their parish bulletin. What a gift that has been to them! Thank you so much for assisting in the diocesan healing ministry.

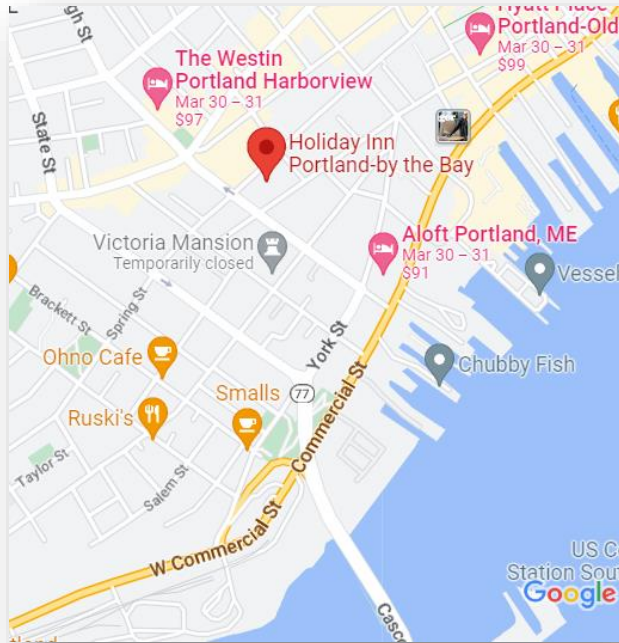
Feelings of hurt, emptiness, and regret often impact not only women who get abortions, but their spouses, parents, grandparents, and friends. Rachel's Vineyard retreats aim to offer solace, peace, and inner healing to any individual connected to an abortion, regardless of the role they played. The retreat provides a safe place to grieve the loss and to understand how abortion has affected them, so they can grow beyond it. The next Rachel's Vineyard retreat in Maine will be held on **April 14-16** in southern Maine **starting on Friday at 5 p.m. and concluding on Divine Mercy Sunday at 1:30 p.m.** The weekend will include Scripture meditations, the opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation, a memorial service, Mass, and sharing with others personally affected by abortion. While the retreat is organized by

the Catholic Church, participants do not need to be Catholic to register. **The registration deadline for the retreat is Wednesday, March 29.** To talk about attending a retreat, please leave a confidential message at (207) 321-7897; email projectrachel@portlanddiocese.org; or submit a confidential online form at www.portlanddiocese.org/form/contact-project-rachel. To learn more about the program or to hear from past participants, visit www.portlanddiocese.org/project-rachel.

Maine Catholic Women's Conference



Date & Venue



The Conference will be held on May 6th at the **Holiday Inn By the Bay in Portland from 9am-5pm.**

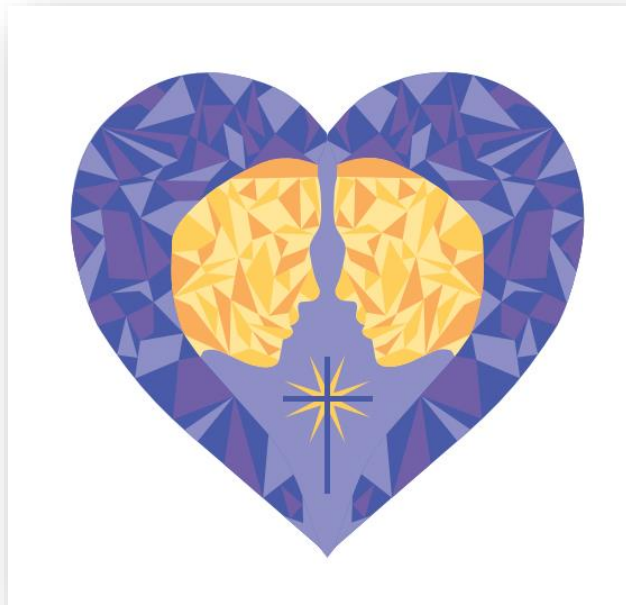
The address for the Holiday Inn By the Bay is:

Holiday Inn By the Bay

88 Spring St.

Portland, ME 04101

Theme: Holy Friendships



Community plays a crucial role in our life of faith. No woman is an island. We are not called to walk the Christian life alone. We all need someone who can laugh with us, celebrate the good times with us, and be a shoulder to cry on during the sorrowful times of our lives. We need someone who will listen to all God has done in our life and someone who will challenge us to grow in excellence, virtue, and faith. These types of friendships are considered holy friendships.

Keynote Speaker



The keynote speaker at the conference will be ValLimar Jansen. Known especially for her work in contemporary Christian music, Jansen has sung and toured professionally throughout the United States.

She has served as a college/university professor, as a leader of worship and prayer, and as an inspirational speaker and presenter at educational, liturgical, and pastoral conferences. She has also performed at numerous music and theater festivals.

Register Today!

[Online Registration](#) (\$85 + \$4 convenience fee)

[Paper Registration Form](#) (\$85/person)

Catholic Mobilizing Network Justice & Mercy Poetry Contest



The Catholic Mobilizing Network is hosting its second Justice & Mercy Poetry contest. Participants (ages 18-30) are invited to submit a poem on the injustice of capital punishment. **Submissions are being collected now through May 1st.** The winners could win up to \$1,000 cash. Click [here](#) for more information or to submit your poem.

Although Maine does not have a death penalty, it does sentence some to life without parole, which Pope Francis has equated with the death penalty. Either denies our Catholic concepts of repentance, conversion, forgiveness, and the sanctity of human life.

Highlights from LFFA: The Joy of Lent



On March 9th LFFA gathered for a Lenten reflection given by the lay Franciscans. The reflection was made up of four movements: receiving God's love, living unchosen penances, serving humbly, and stewardship.

Bob Thompson reflected on his experience of physical therapy and how his physical therapist encouraged him to stretch. It prompted him to think about the posture he took with God. He encouraged the group to stretch our arms wide open to God and like a little child allow God to pick you up and wrap you in His love. Acknowledging that stretching is good but can also sometimes be uncomfortable Bob tied in the Lenten practice of fasting. He reminded the group that when we are voluntarily fasting, we stand in solidarity and feel the ache of those who have no choice but to fast. Bob finished his portion of the presentation by asking those gathered what group of people does their Lenten promise have them standing in solidarity with and praying for.

Linda Freese shared a personal story about how an unchosen penance led her to understanding and ultimately to a deeper conversion. Along with prayer, fasting, and almsgiving we must not forget that

we are called to willingly accept our personal crosses, faithfully carry out our duties and responsibilities according to our state of life, and endure mortifications and humiliations.


Sandra Thompson drew inspiration from Ann Voskamp's book *One Thousand Gifts* as she spoke about the importance of service. During Lent we are called to give alms. Most of us think of giving monetarily, but giving alms could also mean serving others humbly. We must seek ways to serve others, but we are never have to go it alone. Service with Jesus fills us with joy, while service without Jesus just depletes us stated Sandra. On the night of the last supper Christ took a towel tied it around his waist and washed his apostle's feet. Christ is alive and still lives with a towel around his waist showing us how to serve like He did.

Finally, Joe Makley spoke about his own Lenten promise to be a better steward of the natural resources that God has given us. He gave the following resources which are worth looking into:

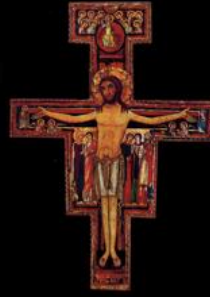
- [Populorum Progressio \(On the Development of Peoples\)](#) by Pope Paul VI
- [Laudato Si \(On Care for Our Common Home\)](#) by Pope Francis
- [Catholic Climate Covenant](#) by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- [Laudato Si Movement](#)
- [Laudato Si Action Platform](#)

He concluded with the following prayer inspired by the words of St. Francis:

Most high and glorious God,
Bring light to the darkness of
my heart.
Give me right faith, certain
hope, and perfect charity.
Lord give me insight and
wisdom,
So that I may always discern
Your holy and true will.



May I fall in love with you
again, in contemplation of
the stupendous miracle of
creation, in which your hand
is majestic and self-evident.



And may I never again take
for granted a grain of soil,
drop of water, or a single
breath of the precious and
fragile atmosphere of our
sister Mother Earth,
bequeathed to us in love...

Amen



Inspiration



As I (Hannah) was scrolling through Instagram reels I came across one that told an inspirational story. As I thought about the story, I realized it communicated a spiritual truth that I would like to share. The story goes like this:

A little boy and his father were walking along a rocky path. As they walk the little boy asks his father "daddy do you think I am strong?" The father responds, "yes son I do think you are strong." The little boy eyes a huge boulder along the path and asks his father "do you think that I can move this boulder?" The father responds, "yes if you use all your strength." The little boy wanting to prove his strength tries to move the boulder but to no avail. He goes back to his father and admits that he can't move it and needs help. They approach the boulder again and this time they are able to move the boulder. The little boy asks the father why it was easy to move the boulder this time and the father responds, "because you used all your strength." The little boy confused asks him to explain. The father wisely responded, "sometimes using all your strength means asking for help."

I find this story to be simple, yet also so profound. It makes me think about how many times I have been like the little boy trying to move this rock on his own. Trying to figure things out on my own, trying to do things on my own so I can be seen as strong and independent. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has done this. But the truth is we aren't meant to do it on our own and our Heavenly Father is waiting just a few steps away from us for us to ask for His help.

Society tries to convince us that asking for help is weak. But Scripture tells us that "when [we] are weak, then [we] are strong (2 Corinthians 12:10)." Scripture invites us to turn to the Lord and ask for help. For example:

- *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7)."*
- *"Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24)."*
- *"Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7)."*
- *"And this is the confidence we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will He hears us (1 John 5:14)"*

Not only does our Father want our hearts, He wants to help us.

The question is "will we be strong and humble enough to ask Him for His help?"

Prayer



Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month of March is for "those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; that they may find within the Church herself a response to their pain and suffering (USCCB)." Let us also pray also for their healing.

God of endless love,

ever caring, ever strong

always present, always just:

You gave your only Son

To save us by the blood of His cross

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,

join to your own suffering

the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them

Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
and the cries of those who love them
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
Steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Taken by: [Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse by the USCCB](#)