

# A Visit with Ogdensburg, NY Bishop Robert J. Cunningham

By Gene & Maggie Tokraks and Fr. John Dickie

Dear Lovers,

We would like to pass along this information about a meeting with a Bishop in Section 1.

Last month, Fr Joe Elliot, Dave & Fran Mount (the Local Area Exec for Vermont and Ogdensburg, NY, currently operating as part of Vermont WWME), and Randy & Michelle Poissant paid a visit to the new bishop, Robert J. Cunningham, of Ogdensburg NY, seeking his support for Worldwide Marriage Encounter. They did not expect a long reception, but the Bishop turned out to be quite supportive and interested in the work of WWME. He reported on the visit in his weekly web column. It points out (indirectly) how visiting our Bishops can help them to understand our mission within the Church and be more open to working together.

We are attaching a link to this page, as well as attaching a copy of his comments. It pays to knock on doors...

<http://www.dioogdensburg.org>

DQ: What are my feelings about meeting with our Bishop to share the mission of WWME?

God bless you,  
Gene & Maggie and Fr. John

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From the Web Site for the Diocese of Ogdensburg <http://www.dioogdensburg.org/>

## **October 25, 2006 edition of the *North Country Catholic***

On a recent Saturday afternoon, I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting with three couples active in Worldwide Marriage Encounter together with Father Joseph Elliott, Pastor of St. Alexander's in Morrisonville and St. Joseph's in Treadwell Mills and Dean of Clinton County, and Mrs. Gayle Frank, co-director with her husband, Deacon Gary Frank of our Diocesan Family Life Office. My visitors told me how much Worldwide Marriage Encounter had meant to them and to their marriage and asked for my continued support for and assistance to this special and important Church movement which has meant so much to so many. In a future column, I look forward to sharing with you more about Worldwide Marriage Encounter and to invite the participation of married couples of our diocese striving to deepen and strengthen the sacramental vows of their marriage.

Today however, I wish to speak about a project that is dear to the heart of Worldwide Marriage Encounter couples called Priesthood Sunday. Actually the celebration is one of

two sponsored by national groups – World Priest Day, sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, usually held in September, and Priesthood Sunday that takes place in October sponsored by the USA Council of Serra International. This occasion gives me an opportunity to share my admiration and appreciation and to thank the priests of our diocese once more for all that they do. Day in and day out, they are there for you, often in hidden and unappreciated ways. Let me tell you about our priests.

The Diocese of Ogdensburg has 124 diocesan priests: 86 are active and 38 are retired. Our retired priests whose health permits continue to serve in countless ways - filling in when priests are sick or on vacation, as counselors, and confessors and spiritual directors. Freed from the ministry of administration, they continue to bring the message of Christ to people throughout our diocese and they are most willing to continue to serve. At the present time, our 86 active priests serve in parishes, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, schools, and diocesan administration. They are responsible for 123 parishes and missions. The median age of our priests continues to rise; 35 are over seventy-five years of age and 9 are under forty. Priests are receiving more responsibilities at a younger age. All priests count on your continued support as they seek to serve your needs. As we look to the future we need to continue our work of encouraging vocations.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the young men of our diocese who responded to God's call and who are discerning a vocation at the present time in the seminary. Two students are in Theology, the Reverend Mr. Bernard Menard at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore and Adam Crowe at St. Charles Seminary in Philadelphia. Two seminarians are in a pre-theology program preparing them for entrance into the major seminary. They are Michael Fallon and Jon Dunham, who study at St. Vincent's in Latrobe. There are three students in College at St. Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, Thomas Higman, Nicholas Newtown, and Zachary Tate. In addition, Jeffrey Defayette of Plattsburgh is aspiring to enter seminary, along with three other potential candidates seriously considering entering the seminary next September.

The work of promoting vocations is a work incumbent on all of us -- priests and people. Vocations come from families and our families, which the Second Vatican Council calls the Domestic Church, have a special responsibility to provide solid and strong vocations for the future. Only the Holy Spirit can inspire those who have received a vocation to respond, but we can do our part by asking young men and women to consider being a laborer for the Lord. Please ask Mary, the Mother of the Church, who is a special patron of this Diocese, to permit minds and hearts to be open to serving her Son in the priesthood or religious life.

And as we do so, let's take the time to thank our priests for what they do. They preach the word, they celebrate the sacraments, and they serve our people. The priesthood is a gift to the whole Church and our priests are a gift to us. Let's cherish those gifts in the fullest possible way.

Bishop Robert J. Cunningham