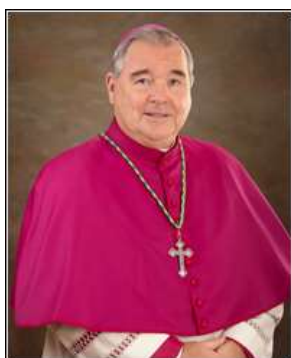


Deacons of Manitoba Newsletter

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Christmas Message 2024



At Christmas we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child-the day God was born into the world of humanity. But the Christ Child's birth is, in a certain sense, our spiritual birth as well. St. Leo the Great, Pope (died 461), stressed this truth in one of his Christmas homilies: *"For the birth of Christ is the origin of the Christian people; and the birthday of the head is also the birthday of the body."* When we realize that our spiritual birth in Baptism, links us to Christ as members of his body-the Mystical Body of Christ, this idea of our birth at Christmas becomes understandable, even though it remains a great mystery. When we say, "Mystical Body" we are speaking of a "mystery", and the word mystery in Latin is "sacrament"- we are living sacraments of Christ-other Christs if you will-meant to be bearers of Christ in our own lives. Our models are the shepherds who left the manger bursting with the mystery of the Child they encountered.

When one thinks in these terms, the true significance of Christmas comes home to us as something immensely beautiful and personal. The words, "Merry Christmas" take on a rather personal touch, Happy Birthday". The little baby lying in the manger, is the God who became Son of Man so that we would become sons of God - if he had not come down to us, none of us by our own merits could ever go up to him. We cannot save ourselves! God's favour is truly something very merry!

King Baudouin of Belgium (died in 1993) has been in the news lately, since Pope Francis declared that he has opened up King Baudouin's cause for Beatification. He lived an extraordinary Christian life even though a king of a modern country. He would sincerely seek to see the face of Christ in others, especially those on the peripheries of society. There are many stories about this. It is also notable that he and his wife, Queen Fabiola, could not bear children but in spite of this cross, relatives and friends noticed that as a couple, they *"shared a tenderness and a spiritual love, because they both wanted to serve Jesus, and both saw Jesus in the other. They were very aware that they had the mission of bringing Jesus to others as a couple, in their position."* King Baudouin often said that *"What we have to aspire to is to be saints."*

If St. Leo is right, and there is no doubt that he is, the Birth of the Christ Child is an event that sets in motion a movement towards holiness and salvation. Every saintly person, whether he or she be a martyr or an ordinary person seeking God, finds their origin in the hope present in that manger. The Christ is Emmanuel-God is with us, but we are also with him. ***Merry Christmas!***

+Richard Gagnon

Apostolic Administrator, Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Words from Deacon James



This past year of 2024 we lost three brother Deacons, Rev. Mr. Wayne Johnson, Rev. Mr. Lawrence Wakaruk, and Rev. Mr. Alphonse Tran, all good men that were committed to the work of God's kingdom on earth. My condolences are offered to their respected families and all who loved them, and to our deaconate community at large. Their contributions to God's work will be missed dearly. May they rest in peace.

The new year will bring challenges, as past years have. This year brings us to a Jubilee Year in the church and a special year. Our community retreat theme this year will be the Jubilee Year. I hope that you can all exercise your ministry of presence, save the date Feb. 21, 22, 23, and watch for further information coming your way.

May the Lord journey with you in this coming year.

God bless,
Deacon Jim

Words from Carol

Hello dear Deacons, Wives and Widows,

Some exciting events have occurred since the last newsletter.

Deacon Rudy and Margaret Le Maître celebrated their 65th anniversary of marriage in September, and were present at the Marriage Milestone Anniversary Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral on Sunday, October 27th.



On November 26th Deacon Rudy was one of four recipients of the University of Manitoba's 2024 Magis Award for Service to Others. Throughout his life, Rudy's experiences have shaped his worldview. His early exposure to religious and academic institutions gave him a strong foundation in intellectual and moral disciplines. He has navigated various roles and professions, always seeking to understand and contribute to the betterment of society. Deacon Rudy's life is a testament to his dedication to hard work, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to understanding and improving the world around him. He states: "Our lives are a journey to God, and God is all from the beginning of our lives to the end of our lives."

Congratulations, Deacon Rudy and Margaret, on these very special milestones in your lives of service. A congratulatory card has been sent to them on behalf of the deacon community.



Deacon Murray and Adrienne Teetaert had a special holiday this past fall with a 3-week trip to the Maritimes. Following is Murray's description of their 12-day bus tour of Newfoundland, beginning on September 4.

"We started in Corner Brook and went up the west coast, crossing the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Red Bay, Labrador. Red Bay was a major Basque whaling area between 1530 and early 17th century. Parks Canada has created an interactive center to reconstruct the settlement.

The next site we visited was L'Anse aux Meadows which is the historic site of the first known Viking settlement in North America. I never thought I would relive the memories of Leif the Lucky and Eric the Red which we learned in Canadian history.

On the west coast is located the Gros Morne National Park. The Park's main feature is The Tablelands which is a rock structure from the mantle of the Earth. There are only five locations in the world where you can experience these geological phenomena.

We then traveled east inland to Gander, NFLD. We happened to be there on the twenty third anniversary of 9/11. That evening we heard a presentation from an air traffic controller who was on duty that day, and he gave us some idea of the experience when the world dropped into Gander on 9/11. We will watch the musical Come from Away with a whole new light.

Our last stop was St. John's where the three main highlights were:

- Cape Spear (the most easterly point in North America);
- Signal Hill (site of early military defences of the city and where Marconi sent the first radio signal across to Europe). That was the beginning of radio communications that we take for granted today.
- Mile Zero where Terry Fox started his run across Canada in support of Cancer Research.

Our tour guide was a retired drama school teacher born and raised in Newfoundland. For two weeks she entertained us with Newfie stories and the Newfie language.

For those of you who have travelled to Newfoundland I hope this has renewed memories, and for those who have not been there, I would encourage you to take the opportunity to travel there.”



Thank you, Murray and Adrienne, for sharing this special trip with us.

We extend sympathies to Deacon Clarence Fisher and Jacqueline Nogier on the passing of Jacqueline’s uncle, Mitch Fast. A mass card was sent to them.

Breaking News: Clarence’s brother Chuck, recently passed on December 28, 2024. Our deepest condolences and prayers to his family.

We also extend sympathy to Carol MacKenzie on the passing of her nearly 99 year, 11 month old uncle in November.

A joyous Christmas season to you all, and blessings for the New Year!

Suggestions or comments:

Please do let us know how to do better with the newsletter through email: fraterjim218@gmail.com or michaelmartincordova@yahoo.com

Two Holy Families — A Christmas Meditation

by Greg Dunwoody

Step 1: The Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Recall some of the Holy Family and ponder a few of their life experiences, feelings, anxieties, changes in faith, hope and love.

Step 2: OUR Holy Family. Recall and ponder Our Own Holy Family's experiences, feelings, changes in faith, hope and love. (See Greg's Family example on page 2)

Step 3: Two Holy Families—Our Contemplation. Listen for connections, affirmations, "aha's", "oh-, no's" and invitations; what the Holy Spirit is offering.

Step 1: "The Holy Family"

Jesus, Mary and Joseph: For each period of the "Holy Family Story" name some experiences and emotions of the Holy Family (Mary, Joseph, Jesus)—in key words. Recall others who are also present.

The Holy Family in the EARLY Years:

—
—
—
—

The Holy Family in the MIDDLE Years:

—
—
—
—

The Holy Family in the Later Years:

—
—
—

=Jesus has been crucified, then apparitions of Jesus...

Step 2: "OUR" Holy Family

For each period of "YOUR OWN Holy Family Story" name some experiences and emotions in the life of "your" Holy Family—in key words. Recall others who are present.

Our Holy Family in the EARLY Years:

—
—
—
—

OUR Holy Family in the MIDDLE Years:

—
—
—
—

OUR Holy Family in the Later Years:

—
—
—

Grateful for 1. _____ and 2. _____

Step 3:

Two Holy Families—A Meditation

Contemplate what you have written on "The Holy

Family" (Step 1) and "OUR Holy Family" (Step 2).

What is rising within you?

Listen for insights, aha's, affirmations,
invitations *from the Spirit*:

—
—
—
—
—
—
—

*In what ways may you and your family
be a "gift for others"?*

What might be 2 GIFTS that God is
offering you and your family at this
time?

Step 2: an example:

Greg's Holy Family

*Some key moments and experiences in
our Holy family story.*

The EARLY Family Years—*young adults*:

-N. and I met in university...spent a year in Haiti—an eye opener... returned to university studies and married...

-felt called to ADULT Rel Ed..Fordham University, NYC...challenging, exciting, opened to the world...N. came with me

-graduated MA, no work...lived with in-laws, 1st child born...

-an Oblate in Labrador offers position in ARE...family joins me...

-year later worked in ARE in Archdiocese of Wpg...

The Middle Family Years—*family of seven*:

-ARE director RC Archdiocese of Winnipeg, salary was barely adequate...staff support was very good...

-live in supportive, active rural and active community, church, schools active and progressive...

-post-graduate studies...Univ. of Sask...

-major crisis: new bishop...now unemployed... OMI employed me on "flying team"...

-major crisis: N. leaves...the five children stay in with me...painful...affects me and the children...local community supportive...with time I've healed and understand...gain some wisdom...

The LATER Years—

-now Grandpa and Grandma...adult children having children...our grandchildren...supporting them in many ways...

-adults...accomplishments, stresses, disappointments as young adults.. some marry, some leave partners, some in blended families

-unemployed... or, more positively, self-employed...

-the deaths of generations before us...and some siblings

-I marry again in the Catholic Church...in second marriage 30 years...

Addendum

A sample "Biblical Text to Ponder" Mt 1:18-25

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah¹ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel" which means "God is with us." 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Other Holy Family texts to ponder may include:

Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 2 Visit of the Wise Men,

Escape to Egypt & Return from Egypt

Gospel of St. Luke

Chapter 1 Birth of Jesus foretold, Mary visits Elizabeth

Chapter 2 Birth of Jesus, Shepherds & Angels

Gospel of John

Chapter 2:1-11 Mary & the Wedding at Cana

Chapter 19:25b-27 At the cross: Jesus and his Mother

Acts of the Apostles

1:12-14 Mary & disciples after the Ascension