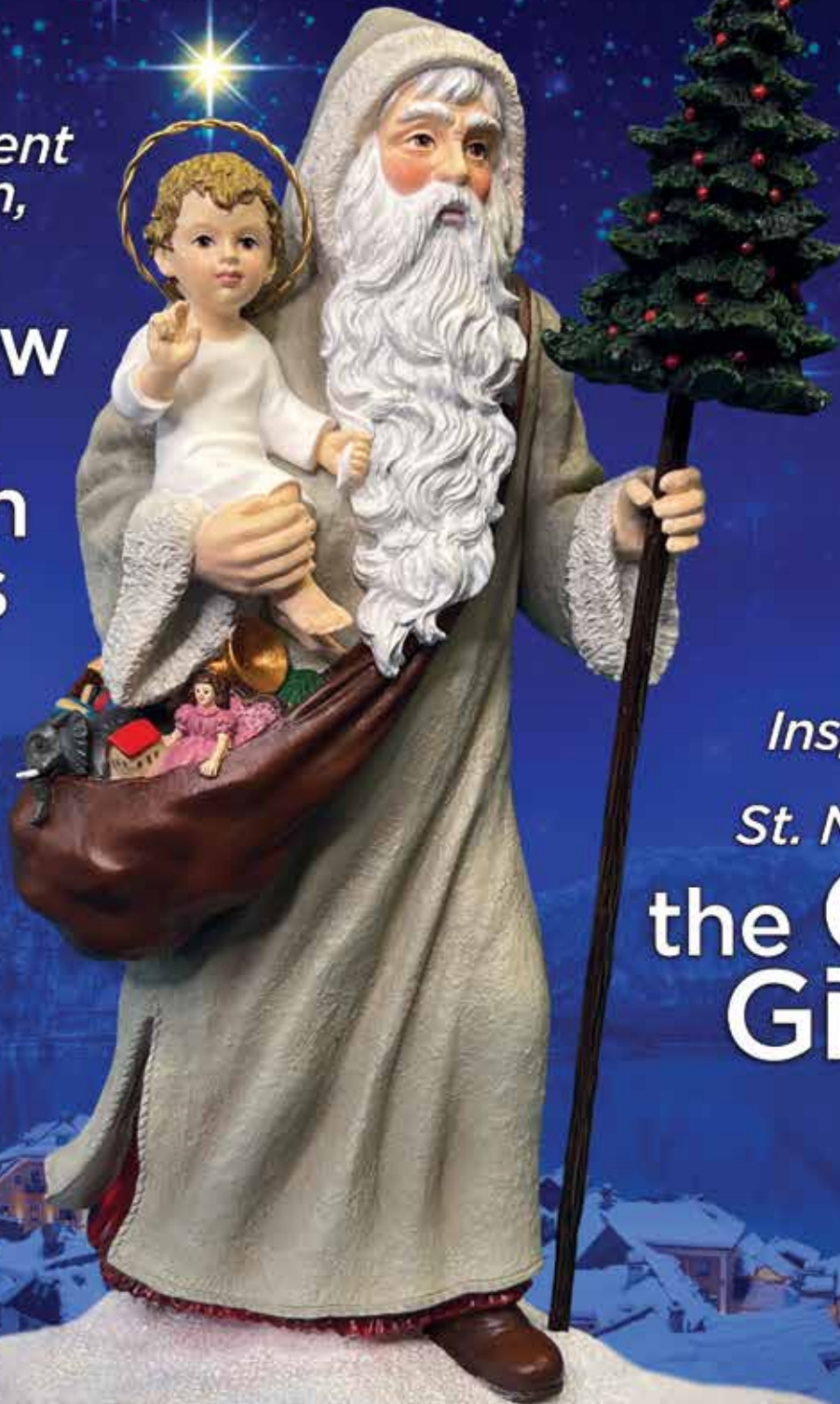


Symbols of Christmas THE CATHOLIC ACCENT+

VOLUME 62, No. 4, WINTER 2022

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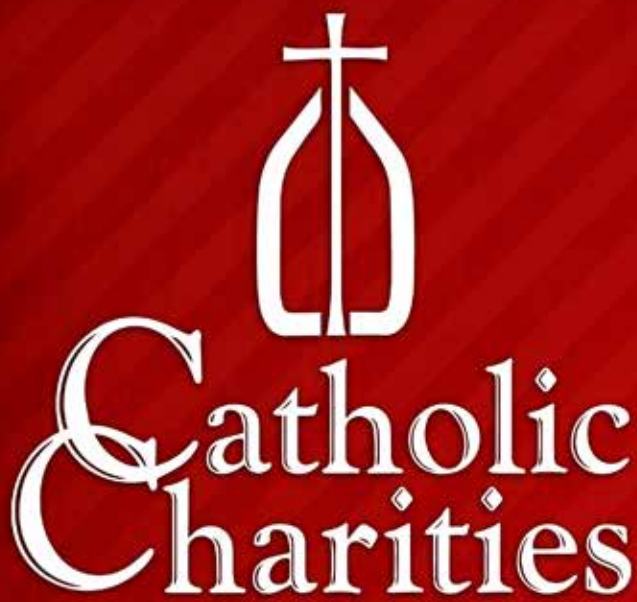
*On Assignment
in Bethlehem,
What
We Know
About
the Birth
of Jesus*



PLUS

*The
Inspiration
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the Gift Giver



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BISHOP KULICK

Advent

The season of Advent is one of preparation. We will spend the next several weeks directing our hearts and minds in preparation to celebrate our Lord's birth on Christmas. I know most of us are preparing our homes with the symbols of Christmas - the wreaths, the trees, the music and making those special purchases to be placed underneath the tree.

It's an exciting time of year, especially for the young people. But let us never forget the most important gift - the gift from God of an infant in a manger. The gift of the Word becoming flesh. God gave us His best gift, the gift of love - His only begotten Son. This year as we embark on our three year Eucharistic Revival, we are reminded that Christ is the living bread that came down from heaven. The gift of the Eucharist is the eternal gift of God given to us. That gift began historically in the manger more than 2,000 years ago and continues in every Mass.

This time of year also gives us an opportunity to reflect on our many gifts and blessings. One of the greatest gifts to our Diocese is you. You are a gift to your parishes, to our priests, deacons and clergy, and to all the faithful. The gifts of your time and talent and your generous financial support allow us to share the miracle of His birth and to continue to "proclaim the greatness of the Lord."

As you and your families gather in the warmth and love of this season, be assured that you will be in my prayers and intentions as we celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ.

+ Larry J. Kulick

The Most Reverend
Larry J. Kulick, J.C.L.
Bishop of Greensburg

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PHOTO: VATICAN MEDIA

Bishop meets with Pope Francis in Rome

When Bishop Larry J. Kulick visited Rome in September to attend orientation for newly ordained bishops, the highlight of the trip to the Vatican was celebrating Mass at St. Peter's Basilica. Following the Mass, the nearly 180 bishops from around the world venerated the relics of St. Peter beneath the Basilica, and were then greeted by His Holiness, Pope Francis, in the Clementine Chapel.

"The Holy Father was so generous with his time," Bishop Kulick said.

Pope Francis spent more than an hour and a half with the bishops, discussing the great priorities for the Church, allowing for comment and answering questions.

"The Holy Father stressed to us as Bishops is that we need to shepherd our dioceses and the people entrusted to our care," Bishop Kulick said. "I left that meeting feeling that we here in the Diocese are doing what is the desire of the Holy Father and will continue to do that. Building up the faith, reconciling people."

The Holy Father reminded them to be "bishops of humility" and shepherds who are out among the people.

"He also reminded us how important it is to show mercy and compassion, especially to those who have strayed from the church or who are feeling alienated from the church," Bishop Kulick said.

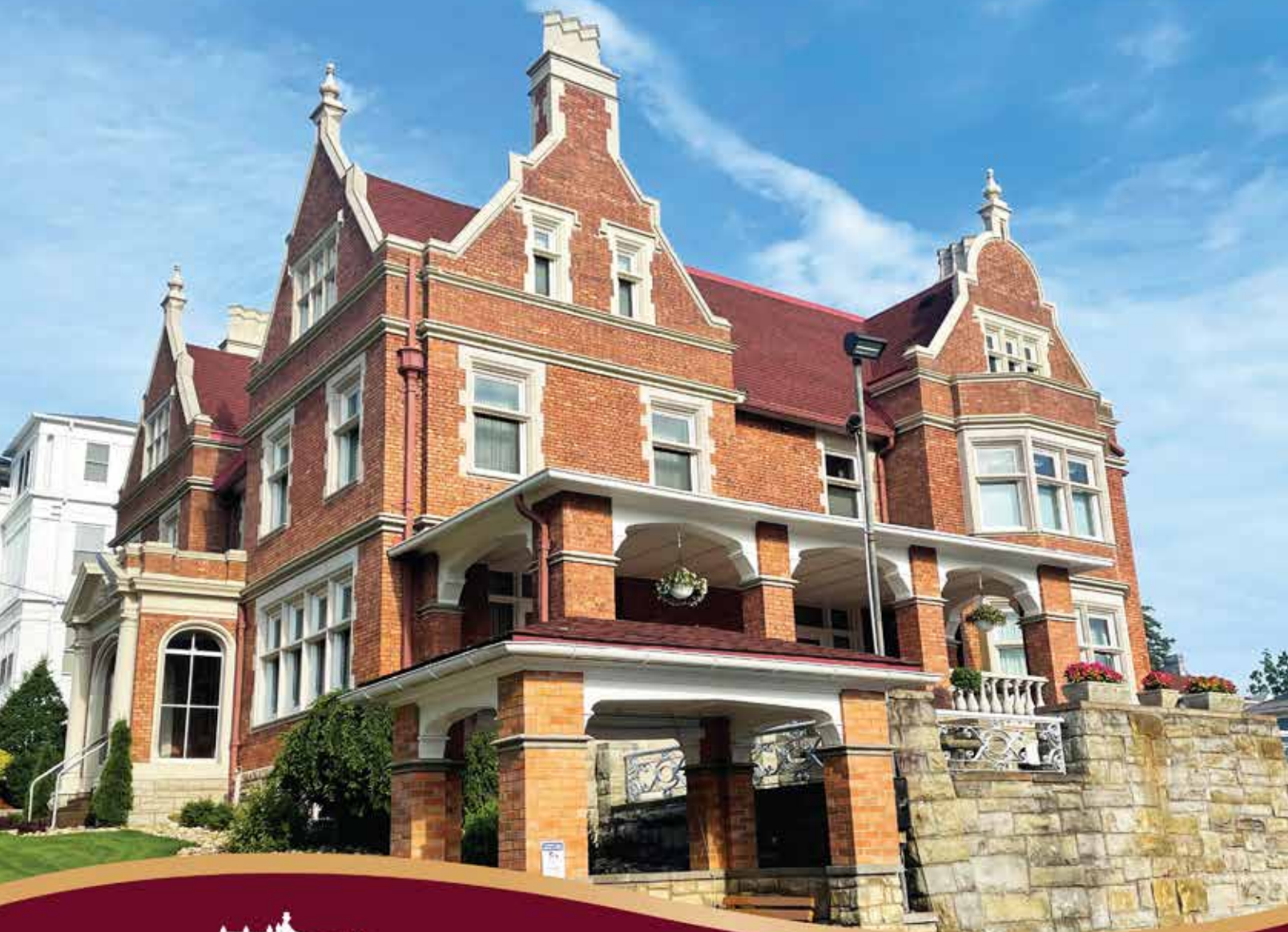
The experience, the fraternity and the message from Pope Francis was something Bishop Kulick was anxious to bring back to the Diocese of Greensburg.

"I feel both very affirmed in my vocation and blessed to have had the experience to hear the words of the Holy Father that we here in the Diocese, with the wonderful help of the clergy, our religious, our lay faithful with the cooperation of our parishes, the cooperation of the Curia, and all of the wonderful people that work on the Diocesan and parish levels, that we are very much in line with the vision of the Holy Father and will continue to do that in union with him and will continue to build up the Kingdom of God entrusted to us."

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St. Nicholas

'Following God's example'

BY JENNIFER MIELE

Christmastime can pose a tricky question for many faithful Catholics.

Should we enjoy the story of Santa with our children, or remain focused on what the Bible tells us about the Nativity and birth of Jesus?

Monsignor Raymond E. Riffle, Vicar General, says we really don't have to choose. While there certainly aren't Bible stories about a man in a red suit bringing toys to children around the world, Santa presents a wonderful

opportunity to teach young people about an important figure in the history of the church – St. Nicholas.

"It's not bad or wrong to talk about Santa, but it would be very important to tell children where that story came from," Monsignor Riffle says. "I would recommend sharing

has a passion for the St. Nicholas-inspired art designed by Pipka Ulvilden.

"I think one of my favorite images that Pipka created was from the year 2000, to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's birth," Bishop Kulick says. "You can see St. Nicholas with a bag stuffed full of goodies, the way we are used to seeing him. But this time he is accompanied by the Christ Child on a donkey.



Bishop Larry J. Kulick



It symbolizes that St. Nicholas is united to Christ and that the birth of Christ is the primary focus of the Christmas season. St. Nicholas is depicted in service to Christ."

St. Nicholas is the patron saint of children, and we celebrate his feast day each year on Dec. 6 – often with faithful children leaving their shoes out at night with hopes of discovering candy or small gifts inside when they wake.

With the history and imagery of St. Nicholas in mind, connections to the Santa Claus story that would emerge from his life are clear.

"The life of St. Nicholas was such an ingrained history among the faithful that, even after the Great Reformation, when veneration of saints was discouraged, St. Nick still had a good reputation," Monsignor Riffle says. "This was especially true in Holland, where he was called Sinterklaas, the shortened Dutch form of St. Nicholas."

Across the world, the story of St. Nicholas transformed into legends similar to Santa Claus, including Christkindl (meaning "Christ child") in Switzerland, Germany and other northern European countries, Father Christmas in England, or La Befana in Italy, Monsignor Riffle explains.

By 1823, these stories had become such a force that American poet Clement Clarke Moore wrote "A Visit from St. Nick" – more commonly known as "The Night Before Christmas" – solidifying the idea of Santa we see today.



Art by Pipka Ulvilden. Visit www.pipkas.com to see more of her art.

Monsignor Riffle says today's Santa provides an important segue. "We can reframe Santa as someone not apart from Jesus, but in imitation of Jesus," he says. "He was someone who was doing what God did. God gave His first, most important, best gift: His Son. St. Nick followed that example."

He also encourages parents to teach children how to follow in the example of St. Nicholas by giving to others.

"Have them go out with you to shop for a person in need," he says. "We want to pass on the idea that, although it's nice to get gifts at Christmas, the whole reality of our Christian belief is that we are to share what we have and gift it to each other, and particularly to those who are less fortunate."



PHOTOS:
JORDAN WHITEKO
MARY SEAMANS
JOHN ZYLKA



Breakfast with St. Nicholas
at St. Agnes Parish in North Huntingdon.



PHOTOS: JENNIFER MIELE

The Diocese of Greensburg provides many opportunities for giving during the Christmas season, including the annual Angel Tree at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Greensburg, which helps parishioners buy gifts for needy children, or during the Breakfast with St. Nicholas at St. Agnes

Parish in North Huntingdon. This annual event includes a visitation with a person portraying St. Nicholas, speaking to children about his life, taking pictures with them and – of course – sharing a gift. The event also collects donations for the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg baby closet, to support mothers in need.

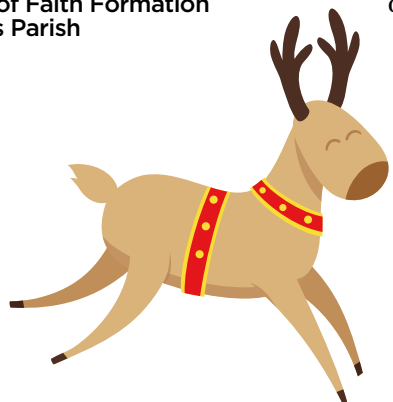
There are activities in support of organizations such as the Norwin Area Meals on Wheels, and children can receive Christmas stories and other books of our faith from the Legion of Mary.

Mary Blythe, Director of Faith Formation at St. Agnes Parish, says the event provides an important opportunity to place Christmastime within the framework of our faith.

“It’s a wonderful way to kick off Advent and the Christmas season because we are placing the foundation with God,” Blythe says.



Mary Blythe
Director of Faith Formation
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Christmas Wreath



ABOVE: Robin Mull (left) with Kim Duralia (right), parishioner of SS. Simon and Jude Parish, Blairsville, and owner of Cokeville Produce Market and Greenhouse, Blairsville, opens her store after hours and holds holiday wreath-making classes.



Father Salvatore R. Lamendola

BY ROBIN MULL

A wreath, bountiful and full, adds color and warmth to the front doors of homes throughout the year. For Christians, the Christmas wreath is more than a decoration; it's a symbol of eternal life through Christ our Savior. There is no beginning and no end.

The long-lasting evergreen wreaths connect us to the pagan holiday of Yule, marking the winter solstice. Long before the beginning of Christianity, the wreath was significant in Europe because its circular shape symbolized protection. To the Romans, the wreath symbolized power and honor. In Greece, a wreath was awarded as a prize to poets and Olympic winners.

"Likewise in Christianity, the idea or the belief in a God who is eternal was adopted by early Christians to show forth the Good News or the belief in the Resurrection of Christ," said Father Salvatore R. Lamendola, pastor of the partner parishes of St. Martin and St. Joseph, Derry. "And for many, we just think it's a very nice and appropriate decoration for Christmas."

Incorporating certain colors in a wreath, such as red and green, has always been intentional.

"Those two colors are not just stylistically nice, but they have a deeper spiritual meaning," Father Lamendola says. "However, if you really stop and look at the symbols that are in the wreath, it might make us think more about our faith. And I think that's the purpose, the reason behind the reason."

BELOW: Valerie Rodell (left) and Robin Mull (right) construct Christmas wreaths at a class held at Cokeville Produce Market and Greenhouse.



Circular shape - Traditional wreaths are in the form of a circle, which is a symbol of eternity. The spiritual meaning stands for divine perfection and God's never-ending love.

Evergreen - The evergreen represents the unending nature of God, a metaphor for life after death. Green is also the color of hope and life.

Holly leaves - Holly plants have strong leaves but also sharp thorns. Holly symbolizes the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head before he died on the cross. This serves as a reminder to Christians of the suffering He endured for us. Holly is known as "christdorn" in German, meaning "Christ thorn."

Holly berries - The bright and vivid red of the holly berries serves as a symbol of color and life during cold winter months. The color represents the blood of Christ, as well as his passion, death and resurrection.

PHOTOS: MARY SEAMANS

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Slovak Christmas Eve Mushroom Soup

Recipe from Bishop Larry J. Kulick

INGREDIENTS:

- ¼ lb. rehydrated dried mushrooms sliced
- 2 cups fresh white mushrooms sliced
- 2 cups wild mushrooms sliced
- 2 cups Yukon Gold potatoes cubed
- 3 tbsp diced garlic
- 2 cups celery
- 2 cups sweet onion
- 12 bay leaves
- 2 tbsp caraway seed
- 2 tbsp dill
- 2 tbsp parsley
- 1 bag of shredded sauerkraut juice
- Half full pot of water
- 1 stick of butter

INSTRUCTIONS:

Add all mushrooms, potatoes, celery, onion and seasonings to water and stir. Open bag of sauerkraut and remove handfuls at a time, squeezing only the juice into the pot. Heat on medium and add butter. Cook on low for 2-3 hours, stirring frequently. Add salt and pepper to taste.

In Western Pa, one of many ethnic traditions from Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Central and Eastern European heritage is having Kapustnica on the Christmas Eve dinner menu. For Bishop Larry Kulick, mushroom soup was a staple in his Slovak family on Stedry vecer.

"When you smell it, it brings back a lot of wonderful memories! The role of faith and its connection to food is so important in this recipe. The symbolism of this food carry beautiful scriptural imagery," Bishop Kulick said.

For example, the garlic is a bitter herb reminiscent of the bitterness of sin.

"Christ, by coming through the gift of the incarnation, has sweetened the bitterness of our human condition, and has taken away the bitterness of sin. So when we have garlic in our Christmas Eve meals, we are reminded with the incarnation of Christ, the Word becoming flesh, Christ has come to save us and that begins with his birth," Bishop Kulick said.

"I also love mushrooms," he continued. "They are a wonderful symbol of prosperity because they grow where they are not planted. They are a symbol of free bounty and God's goodness. They are harvested without having the work of being planted."

Mushrooms take on the taste of the other ingredients. The longer you cook this soup, the better it is!

PHOTOS: JENNIFER MIELE

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BETHLEHEM



Modern-day Bethlehem seen from the Shepherds' Field.

A note from the writer: Christians, including many well-known saints such as St. Nicholas and St. Francis of Assisi, have been making pilgrimages to the Holy Land for centuries. In 2018, I accompanied 100 pilgrims to physically walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to deepen our personal relationship with Him. Everyone enjoyed reading or listening to Bible passages in the places where they occurred and having time for prayer. Over the years, I have reflected on my visit there, especially to Bethlehem. I wanted to know more from theologians about the birth of Christ. Recently, I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Christopher McMahon, Department Chair and Professor of Theology at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, and Benedictine Father Matthew Lambert, who is currently working on a doctorate in the Old Testament from the University of Notre Dame and is living in the Holy Land while writing his dissertation.



A stained glass window in the Church of the Nativity depicts the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt.

What We Know About the Birth of Jesus

BY MARY SEAMANS

PHOTOS: MARY SEAMANS

The Significance of Bethlehem

King David was once a humble shepherd boy from Bethlehem who went on to become one of Israel's most important kings. He is written about throughout the Old Testament, noted for his love and commitment to God.

His legacy in Bethlehem had long since diminished by the time Jesus was born. According to both historians and theologians, Bethlehem was a mostly insignificant city at the time.

But Christian theology has linked this with the belief that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfills the Old Testament prophecy that Israel's future king would come from Bethlehem.

McMahon notes, "There is this hope, this expectation, that God will raise up a descendent of David, and that descendent will fulfill the promises made through the prophets, particularly through Micah. The association of this messianic figure with Bethlehem is strong in the minds and the hearts of first-century Palestinian Jews who have this hope for release, this hope for liberation, this hope for intimacy with God. And Jesus is the fulfillment of those hopes and expectations as presented in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew."

There were only about 300 people living in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Today, about 3 million visitors a year travel there to be closer to Christ.



Dr. Christopher McMahon, Department Chair and Professor of Theology at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe.



Multiple icons are seen in the Grotto of the Nativity above the spot where Jesus was born

The Manger Instead of the Inn

Most of us are familiar with the Nativity story: Baby Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes, then laid in a manger because there was no place for Him in the inn. Three times in just a few short verses, the Gospel of Luke mentions the manger, or a feeding trough for cattle, donkeys, horses and other animals.

The manger symbolizes the humble beginnings of Jesus, who would become the spiritual food for the world. But McMahon says the distinction between the manger and the inn as described in the Gospel of Luke is just as significant.

"What we have here is a fulfillment passage, that there is a symbolic value to wrapping Jesus in swaddling bands and laying Him in a manger," he says. "Jesus is laid in a manger because God is the food for Israel. God comes and presents himself in the manger so that the people of Israel can come to feed on his word, feed on his presence."

They can come to know Him and recognize His presence as nourishing. Jesus comes into the world in the usual way and doesn't stay in lodgings because He is in Israel where He belongs.

"He doesn't stay in an inn where travelers or foreigners stay; He is at home," McMahon says.

The Christ Child in the manger is one of the most recognizable symbols in the Nativity scene.

A painting featuring Jesus in the manger can be seen on the wall of the Shepherds' Field Chapel in Bethlehem.



A Church Marks the Spot

The Church of the Nativity is located on the spot believed to be the birthplace of Jesus more than 2,000 years ago. It was built by Constantine the Great and his mother Helena in A.D. 327 and has survived invasions, rebellions and earthquakes.

“St. Jerome confirmed this location in the 4th century. The church that Constantine built underwent some damage, and a new one was built in the 6th century by Emperor Justinian, and he wanted it to be a very impressive church. That church is still essentially what we have today. It has gone through a lot of changes, renovations, construction and looting, but it is still the frame of the 6th-century church,” Father Matthew says. “Interestingly, there are still traces of the 4th-century church: there are mosaics, and you can also see remnants of the original apse.”

“There is a very curious entrance to the church that dates back to the time of the Turkish Empire. You can see that the door was originally much bigger. There is an overhang that goes back to the 6th-century church, then you can see a Gothic arch entrance from the time of the crusaders, but that was filled in, and what we have is a little unimpressive and very small door that was put in at the time of the Turkish Empire. The theological justification is that it encourages you to be humble to enter, since you have to bow down. Another explanation is that the Turkish government put that door in place to prevent looters from riding in on horseback or bringing in a wagon.”

Pilgrims feel they are being transported back in time to the humble cave where it all began. The inside is dark and cool with no pews. On the walls are mosaics of saints and angels, and many icons. A set of steps leads down to the Grotto of the Nativity, which is said to be the actual birthplace of Jesus.

Marking the spot is a 14-point silver star on the marble floor under the Altar of the Nativity. Written in Latin, an engraving on the star reads: “Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born.” Fifteen to 20 lamps hang down over the star, showing the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church.

I was blessed to have visited this sacred place during my trip to the Holy Land with pilgrims from the Diocese of Greensburg. I hope it encourages you to learn more or make your own pilgrimage to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.



Benedictine Father Matthew Lambert



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The Lights of Christmas

BY CLIFF GORSKI

Throughout history, “light” has symbolized goodness, kindness and salvation. It is during Advent that we become keenly aware that our daylight hours are shorter. We know that with the celebration of the birth of our Savior, the light of Christ will enter our lives to dispel the darkness in our world.

It was the light from the Epiphany star that guided the three Wise Men to the manger where the baby Jesus lay. It is that light that continues to provide the radiance of hope for all humanity.

When preparing for the celebration of Jesus’ birth, many use light to provide warmth and peace in the home.

Tradition says that a type of luminaria, a lantern consisting of a votive candle set in a small paper bag weighted with sand, lit the way for Mary and Joseph in their search for lodging during their journey to Bethlehem.

Father Michael J. Crookston, Pastor of St. Sebastian Parish, Belle Vernon, and The Epiphany of Our Lord Parish, Monessen, says luminaria are used at Christmas for several reasons.

“When people light the luminaria, a lot of times, they light in memory of someone who has died in their life, parents, their grandparents,” Father Crookston says. “It brings those people back to them as the light is burning, reminding them

of Christmases past, celebrations in the past, bringing those people present to them in their minds and in their hearts.”

Father Crookston says the light gives us direction as a guiding star for our lives.

He thinks back to his own grandmother and how the family celebrated the light of Christ at Christmas.

“She always mentioned they didn’t have electricity,

so illumination was by candle or oil lamp. Whenever they would decorate their Christmas tree, they would bring in a sapling from out in the woods. They would wrap that sapling in cotton on the ends of the limbs, and they would put candles all over the tree,” he recalls. “The glow of that light made it almost a holy thing, and they felt peace from the warmth of the candles.”

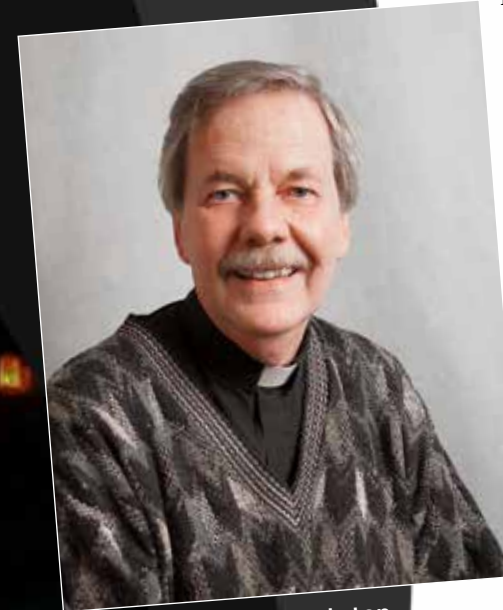
Father Crookston says thinking about the light in our lives can be difficult because, unlike centuries ago, today we are surrounded by light.

“When you think about total darkness, one tiny candle can bring so much light, hope and goodness,” he says.

Father Crookston says the lights of Christmas should signal to all of us that something special is about to happen.

“Lights bring a feeling of excitement,” he says. “Many people recognize why they are decorating and why they are putting so much preparation into the celebration of Christmas, just as they did when people were living in darkness.

“Light is a symbol of Christmas because Christmas is the ultimate gift of hope from God.”



Father Michael J. Crookston

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Christmas Tree Tradition

Symbolizes Family's History

BY ELISABETH SMITH

PHOTO: JORDAN WHITEKO

For the Davis family, a Christmas tree symbolizes more than just the holiday. It celebrates the history of their life together.

Ed and Carolyn Davis spent their first date 30 years ago planting a tiny blue spruce in the nursery owned by Ed's family since he was in high school, Davis Tree Farm, Blairsville.

"We planted it on the property not knowing we were going to be living here and raising a family," Ed says.

The couple continued cutting their trees from the nursery and decorating together through their marriage in 1999, the birth of their daughter Andrea in 2003, after they welcomed their next two children, Blake and Isabella, and until today.

And that small tree they planted 30 years ago? It's now nearly 30 feet tall.

"Tree time is family time," Carolyn says. "I think there is such a Christmas fulfillment in us always being together, and this tradition for our family."

Each year, all five of the Davis family members make it a point to be home for tree cutting and decorating, filling the house with music, snacks and laughter as they place ornaments and lights together.

"I don't know what it would be like without choosing the tree, bringing it in and decorating it," Carolyn says. "It just wouldn't be Christmas."

The Davis family's love of Christmas trees shows not only in their family room, but far beyond. Andrea, Blake and Isabella all have trees in their own rooms each year, as does every building for the nursery.

Family and friends have come over the decades to choose their own trees, and Ed says he loves "seeing the joy and fun they have" at their nursery.

Additionally, the family decorates a tree each year at Church of the Good Shepherd Parish in Kent, where they are parishioners.

"We really enjoy doing that, because (the parish) really is like a family," Ed says.

The family plans to continue their cherished tradition, with Blake taking over for the next generation when the time comes.

And, of course, they will always be able to see that blue spruce from their first date that helped spark all of this Christmastime magic.

"For us, it symbolizes so many good memories," Carolyn says.

SEATED IN BACK: Ed, Carolyn and Blake Davis, with Isabella (holding Evie the dog) and Andrea Davis.

Carolyn is the Director of Faith Formation, Church of the Good Shepherd, Kent

The meaning behind the tree

While different families may share their own unique traditions for decorating, the Christmas tree offers a true symbolism for Catholics.

Star

The two most common Christmas tree toppers are the star and the angel. In our Christian faith, the "Christmas star" symbolizes the star of Bethlehem, which according to the Bible, guided the three kings, or Wise Men, to the baby Jesus. The star is also the heavenly sign of a prophecy fulfilled long ago and the shining hope for humanity.

Angel

Some people prefer to put an angel on top of their Christmas tree, representing the role played by these messengers of God at the first Christmas. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of Christ and told St. Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt to escape Herod's plan to kill the Christ Child. Angels also appeared to the shepherds when Christ was born, singing and praising God and instructing the shepherds to hurry to Bethlehem to see the newborn king. Additionally, angels symbolize the host of angels that heralded the birth of Jesus to the shepherds who were in the fields watching their flocks.

Lights and Candles

Pope Francis explains that, "The Christmas tree with its lights reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world, the light of the soul that drives away the darkness of animosity and makes room for forgiveness." Candles and Christmas lights also remind us that we are to be light to others, to show them the way to Christ.

Evergreen Tree

The tradition of the Christmas tree was brought to the United States by German-speaking immigrants in the 1820s. The tree is an "evergreen" and is one of the few trees that does not die – in other words, lose its leaves – in winter. For this reason, it is a symbol of everlasting life and hope, the precious gifts from Jesus to all believers. Its needles and its narrow crest point upward, turning our thoughts to heaven. Because the tree is cut down and then erected again, it is a symbol of Christ's resurrection.

Ornaments

Red ornaments symbolize God's love and the love of Jesus, who died for us on the cross, while gold ornaments represent the kingship of Christ.

Tinsel

These thin, metallic strands often used on Christmas trees originate from the legend of a poor, faithful family who wished to decorate a Christmas tree in honor of the Christ Child, but had no money for decorations. In the night, spiders came and spun webs across the tree. Then the Christ Child, honoring the family's faith, turned the threads into silver.

Gifts

The gifts beneath the tree are rich with symbolism. They represent God gifting us his only son, Jesus. Additionally, the Wise Men who brought their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to honor the infant king in Bethlehem's manger inspired the concept of gift giving at Christmas. God also gives us the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which help us to follow His direction in our lives: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Piety, Fortitude and Fear of the Lord (Awe of God's Greatness and Power).

Sources:

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Catholic News Agency, 2018, "Pope Francis explains symbolism of Vatican Christmas tree and sand nativity"
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Does This Ring a Bell?

BY JENNIFER MIELE

PHOTO: JENNIFER MIELE

The Scottdale Area Association of Churches is hoping some literal bell ringing will have the figurative effect on many adults who remember walking into Mass with their own families as children to the sound of tolling chimes. Filling the pews is a priority for these volunteers, especially at Christmastime.

Edwin Zylka, chairman of the initiative and parishioner of St. John the Baptist Parish in Scottdale, gathers supporters each November and December, alongside Father Elmer Alforque, administrator of St. John the Baptist Parish, Scottdale, and St. Joseph Parish, Everson, to pray for a strong return of the faithful to Mass.

"We pray for all families in this part of the country, especially in the Diocese of Greensburg, that they will listen to the voice of Your call for prayer, and above all for unity," Father Alforque told the group.

After their prayer, each person takes a turn ringing the bells outside their church for five minutes. The booming sounds resonate deeply in the hearts of each parishioner in anticipation of the birth of Jesus.

"As an 8-year-old child going to Mass on Christmas, I remember snow falling and every church in the area ringing the bells to announce the birth of our savior Jesus Christ," Zylka says. "It was a message!"

"The idea of that is to make people aware that the most important thing in their lives is God, and if we have problems, no matter what the problems are, we should turn to God. He will help us. Sometimes it may take years to understand that what He has done for us is the best for us, but He will help us."

The ringing of bells is a call to come back to church. That is why many churches in the area are embracing the idea. You may hear bells ringing in your community at 6 p.m. on Thanksgiving eve, and New Year's Day.

"Hopefully we can send a message through the bells. So whether you're here at a church or at home, you can stop what you're doing at 6 p.m. and ring bells as a form of prayer and a message to God that you remember He is the most important thing in your life," Zylka says.



Father Elmer Alforque, Susan Zylka, Martha Opalinski, Chrissy Hitlan, Rich Hitlan and Santa Claus, invited by his friend Edwin Zylka, prepare to ring the bell at St. John the Baptist Parish, Scottdale.



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The Diocesan efforts will begin from the inside out, first offering formational and devotional opportunities for staff throughout 2023, culminating with a Eucharistic Congress next summer.

Bishop Kulick announced this to nearly 200 people representing every parish and diocesan department during regional gatherings at St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish in Indiana, St. Rita Parish in Connellsville and St. Bruno Parish in Greensburg on October 17. As the faces of Eucharistic Revival, they are often the first people to come into contact with the poor, the hurting and those who long to return to the Church. It is part of our baptismal calling to help them find the way!

After the Eucharistic Congress next summer, we hope we are all better prepared to help create a more Eucharistic Community, founding new and innovative ministries focused on re-connecting to the disenfranchised and creating experiential evangelization opportunities that interest and engage our young people.

WHAT IS EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL?

Eucharistic Revival is a three-year process initiated by the USCCB to invite the faithful to reflect upon the mystery and meaning of the sacrament of the Eucharist in our lives.

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

To create a more Eucharistic Community devoted to loving and serving one another, and forming Disciples of Christ.

WHY FOCUS ON THE EUCHARIST?

As Catholics, we are both blessed and broken. His Real Presence in the Eucharist can transform our hearts. Jesus left us this gift! In a world that is so hurried, we must all slow down, do a deep dive and reflect upon it.

YEAR 1

YEAR OF DIOCESAN REVIVAL

June 19, 2022 – June 11, 2023: The first year of the Revival invites Diocesan staff, bishops and priests to respond to the Lord's personal invitation and equips them to share His love with the faithful through Eucharistic Congresses and events.

DIOCESE OF GREENSBURG EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

May 8-11, 2022: An event designed specifically for Diocesan and Parish staff, preparing them to found new and innovative ministries focused on re-connecting to the disenfranchised and creating experiential evangelization opportunities that interest and engage our young people.

YEAR 2

YEAR OF PARISH REVIVAL

June 11, 2023 – July 17, 2024: The second phase will foster Eucharistic devotion at the parish level, strengthening our liturgical life through faithful celebration of the Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, missions, resources, preaching and organic movements of the Holy Spirit.

YEAR 3

DIOCESAN CELEBRATION IN PREPARATION FOR THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

The week of May 30, 2024: on or near the Feast of Corpus Christi.

NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

July 17 – 21, 2024: Indianapolis, Indiana at this historic event, more than 80,000 Catholics of all ages will gather to reconsecrate their hearts to the source and summit of our faith.

YEAR OF GOING OUT ON MISSION

July 21, 2024: Pentecost 2025: Having enkindled a missionary fire in the hearts of the American faithful, the Holy Spirit will send us out on mission to share the gift of our Eucharistic Lord.

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