



And may His love  
surround you always.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

*May peace, joy and hope be yours in 2021.*

*J. Bob*

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## CHRISTMAS 2020

2020 - what an extraordinary year! Due to the Covid pandemic, the election, and general worldwide turmoil, the year was filled with division, chaos and fear. But it also opened my eyes to the beauty of so many people in our society who for the most part work faithfully but unrecognized.

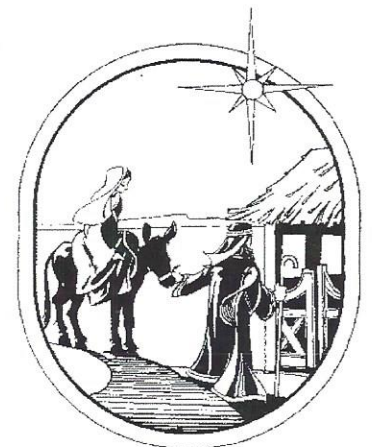
We can begin with the hospitals around our country where unity, generosity and compassion flourished. To the physicians, nurses, hospital personnel from janitors to CEOs, we owe immense gratitude. Our thanks needs to go out to all first responders and emergency medical personnel who put their lives on the line in responding to the needs of others, whether it was a rescue squad in New York City or volunteer fire fighters in Holiday Island, Arkansas.

But it doesn't stop there. We need to recognize and praise the work of grocery store personnel, janitors and maintenance workers, bus drivers and other transit employees, teachers who had to create new ways of teaching and parents who juggled jobs while home schooling their children, workers in meat processing plants, university students who created FarmLink to bring together farmers and food banks to get what would have been wasted food to the tables of those who needed it. It seems that, in spite of all the bad things that were happening, there was an incredible outpouring of goodness in our communities, in our country and throughout the world. I just hope that, when all of this is past, we will have not forgotten the wonderful lesson we learned and work to build a future bright with hope, joy and peace.

As for me? This has been a challenging year in many ways. As the year began, I was still aglow with the celebration of my 50<sup>th</sup> ordination anniversary on December 22, 2019. Many of you were there, and I will always remember the beautiful blessing all of you have been to me in my priestly life and ministry. In January I did a couple of funerals, a wedding and baptisms.

On February 1, Drenda Higdon died. Many of you have known Drenda over the years. She and my sister Mary shared a home, off and on, for about 50 years. Dren was a very special part of our family. She was at my ordination in Rome in December 1969. She and Mary taught together for many years, and she was an administrator in the Denver Public school system before she retired. She and Mary bought the home together in Arkansas where they have lived since 2002. She was diagnosed with a very rare form of cancer in 2018. I celebrated her funeral in Eureka Springs, AR in late February.

Then came March and the pandemic shut down. I had not expected to spend the final days of my active parish ministry saying Mass in a practically empty church with all parish activities cancelled, but that was the way things worked out. We had planned to have some kind of retirement celebration some time in June, but of course that was out of the question. So on July 7, 2020, I said Mass in the morning, said good-bye to the staff and a few parishioners who were around, walked





out the back door, got into my car and drove off into retirement.

So now what? That's the question retirement bring to the fore. I am living at the Prophet Elijah house on the grounds of the Archdiocesan pastoral center in south Denver. It's interesting that when I entered the seminary in September 1962, my address became 1300 S. Steele Street, Denver 80210. And now my address is 1300 S. Steele Street, Denver, CO 80210. And just as interesting, the home that I grew up in (my parents bought the house in 1942, my dad died in that house in October 1988 and my mother died there in February 1992) is seven minutes away from where I now live – same zip code (80210).

There are 12 apartments in this building, and currently we have nine priests living here. My apartment is about 600 sq. feet, with kitchen, living room, bedroom and bath. We have Mass every day at 8:30 a.m., and many of us gather every evening at 5:00 for evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours. There is a 1:00 meal every day (except Sundays) prepared by the seminary kitchen, and it's generally a very good meal. We certainly will not starve around here. It's good to be with my brother priests for conversation, prayer and fellowship.

I have done some ministry since retirement. In addition to several funerals and weddings back at Immaculate Conception in Lafayette, I have helped out with Masses and confessions in several parishes. I got a special deal on a year's subscription to ZOOM, and I have been using it every day, doing counseling, spiritual direction, and staying in touch with people. Between ZOOM and emails and doing research work on some projects I am involved with, my days move pretty quickly.

My contact information is at the end of this letter, so feel free to write, email, call or even request a zoom get together. I remember all of you in my thoughts and prayers daily, and I ask that the Lord bring to you and your loved ones the richest of his blessing throughout this coming new year.

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*In the joy of the Lord,  
Fr. Bob*

