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Peace

A Christmas Gift for You!
The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
will remember you in prayer during a
Christmas Novena of Masses at
Our Lady Queen of Apostles Chapel
Maryknoll, NY
beginning December 17th
and ending on Christmas Day.

May you have
the GIFT of Faith,
the BLESSING of Hope,
and the PEACE of His Love...
at CHRISTMAS and always.

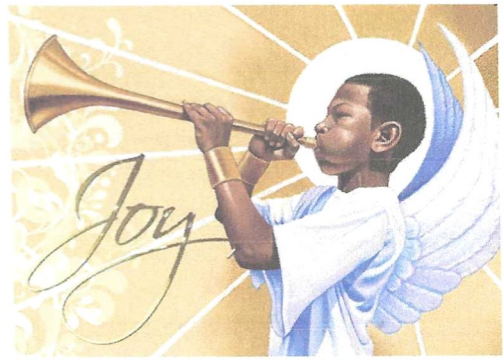
All the best for 2024,

Msgr. Robert L. Amundsen
1300 S Steele St
Denver, CO 80210-2526

Blessings,
Jr. Bob

CHRISTMAS 2023

I have been retired for 3 1/2 years, and I am now beginning to get more into it. I am slowing down a bit. A couple of times a month I say Monday morning Masses at Blessed Sacrament Church here in Denver; I have said Mass frequently for the 10:30 Catholic Community (also here in Denver), and I have heard confessions frequently at St. Michael's in Aurora. I have also done supply work, both Masses and confessions, at a few other parishes in the Archdiocese. I did three baptisms and 10 funerals during 2023. The most frustrating thing that happened to me this year is that I got hacked in January, had to change my email and continue to play catch up 11 months later. My new email is at the end of this letter.



I have not done any long range traveling this year, but In August, my son Steven and his daughter (my granddaughter) Evelyn came to visit, and we spent a few days in the mountains near Estes Park. I realized it's not easy for a 79 year old to keep up with a six year old. Evelyn is in first grade at St. Anthony of Padua school in Arlington, VA. Both of my boys hit significant age marks this year: Darin (lives in Vacaville, CA) turned 60 and Steven in Arlington turned 55. Darin has two children – Danielle is 17 and a senior at Davis High School; Elijah is 16 and a junior at Vacaville High School. Not sure what's happening after high school. I'm grateful that both of them stay in touch with me on a regular basis.

*No man ever steps in the same river twice for it's not the same river
and he's not the same man. (Heraclitus)*

My twin sister Mary, who lives about 5 minutes away from me, has chosen to give up driving, so I have taken over some of the driving for her. It's not bad and it gives us a chance to get together. It also gives me a travel companion because she accompanies me when I go off for one of the weekend Masses.

If you ask God to move a mountain, don't be surprised if he hands you a shovel.

I have eight people with whom I do spiritual direction, some of it in person and some by ZOOM. I've also been able to do more reading this year. I alternate my spiritual reading with mysteries and histories. Two books I found really intriguing were Hidden Valley Road by Robert Kolher and The 57 Bus by Dashka Slater. And if you'd like an interesting book on saints, seek out Pray for Us by Meg Hunter-Kilmer.

As I was getting ready to set up my nativity set for Christmas, I got to thinking about where was Jesus born. We know that he was born in Bethlehem. In Luke's gospel, Joseph and Mary journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of a census called for by the emperor Augustus. (Cf. Luke 2: 4-7). In Matthew's gospel there is no mention of a census or journey. (Matthew 1: 18-25) This account does not mention where Joseph's home was where he brought Mary. And Jesus birth is a succinct one liner.



When we think of the place where Jesus was born, we naturally picture a stable or barn or a cave because it says that Mary laid Jesus in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. I decided to look a little more deeply into this.

First let's look at the "inn." The Greek word that is sometimes translated "inn" is "kataluma". The word can also mean "guest room." In fact,

Luke uses the same word when referring to the guest room where Jesus and His disciples shared the Passover. In the past few centuries, first century homes in the Judean hill country have been excavated and studied. They were often built on caves, and many homes had levels or terraces. They often had an upper room that served as a guest chamber “inn” and a raised area in the lower level where the family lived and ate their meals. The lowest level of the home is where the animals would be brought in at night, perhaps four feet lower than the family room. In that lower level, and in fact in the family room itself, would have been a feeding trough (manger) along one of the walls.



Offering hospitality to visitors, and especially to a woman who was pregnant and about to give birth, was very important in the culture of Jesus time. Joseph and Mary sought shelter, maybe among relatives, but because the guest room (inn) was full because of the census, they may have slept in the family room, which was perfectly natural in that culture. In fact, many homes had only one room where everyone slept, and privacy was not valued like it is in our world.

Luke says, “While they were there, the time came for her to have her child.” (Luke 2:6). So, at some time during their stay (not on the night of their arrival in Bethlehem), Jesus was born—probably in a humble peasant home—and laid in a manger in the home.

In Matthew’s gospel, when he relates the visit of the Magi, he says “and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother.” My thought has always been that Mary and Joseph moved from the stable to a house which is where the Magi found them some time later. But now I see that they could have been in a house all the time. A number of scripture commentators support this idea, and it makes sense to me, although I will continue to put up my traditional nativity set that I’ve had for over 50 years.

Any one thinking of the Holy Child as born in December would mean by it exactly what we mean by it; that Christ is not merely a summer sun of the prosperous but a winter fire for the unfortunate.

Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

We are living in a difficult time in our world. I sometimes wish I could be a child again, with nothing more to worry about than whether or not I will get some interesting toys for Christmas. But I am aware that there are major conflicts going on in the Middle East, in Ukraine, in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Central African Republic and 25 other countries in the world; that each day brings reports of new mass shooting and unnecessary death and destruction, and more and more people living with stress, fear and anxiety. I could be very pessimistic about all this, but I trust that the Lord is still at work in the minds and hearts of people everywhere, and I have to keep praying that everyone will

awaken to and work toward establishing new hope for peace and civility between people and nations. If we could move beyond the self-centered self-righteous and selfish attitudes so prevalent in our society and world; if we could disagree without becoming enemies; if we could embrace each other as friends we need to get to know, we could be bridge builders instead of wall builders and create the kind of world that God intended us to be. May this new year move us in a new direction.

In the Lord’s joy,
Bob

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