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A donation has been given to assist the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in their mission work throughout the world.

My Christmas Gift for You!
The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
will remember you and your intentions
during the Christmas Octave of Masses -
December 25 to January 1.



May your heart be filled with
joy and wondering during
this Blessed Season

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In the Lord's joy.
J. Bob

CHRISTMAS 2024



I'm starting my Christmas letter a little bit differently this year. To the left is LUCE, the official mascot of the Church's 2025 Jubilee Year. Luce means "light" in Italian. She has blue hair and wears a yellow rain jacket, which is colored in reference to the flag of the Vatican City as well as a symbol for "journeying through life's storms". She carries a pilgrim's staff, which represents "the pilgrimage toward eternity", and wears mud-stained boots to represent "a long and difficult journey". Her eyes have highlights in the shape of a scallop shell, a traditional symbol of Catholic pilgrimage; her shining eyes were described as "a symbol of the hope of the heart". She also wears a rosary. It is hoped that Luce can represent the sentiments that resonate in the hearts of the younger generations.

A Jubilee Year is celebrated by the Church every 25 years. This has been the case since 1470, when Pope Paul II changed it from every 50 years. The theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year is Pilgrims of Hope. Pope Francis has invited Catholics to renew our hope and discover a vision that can "restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone". We are also invited to rediscover a spirituality of God's creation in which we understand ourselves as "pilgrims on the earth" rather than masters of the world. The 2025 Jubilee Year begins on Christmas Eve 2024 and concludes on 6 January 2026.

As to my personal journey, 2024 has been a stay-at-home year. I suppose the most significant event of the year was that my twin sister Mary and I celebrated our 80th birthday in September. And on December 19, I celebrate my 55th anniversary of priestly ordination. I have been able to do a lot more reading this year which was one of my retirement goals. I have not yet gotten into painting, nor have I gotten very far in the writing of books. Health-wise I'm doing pretty well. I have some balance problems, but I find that using a cane has been beneficial. I still play the piano and accordion, but not as often as I used to.

I like to listen to old time radio shows (readily available online), and I have more time to read. Two books that I found particularly interesting this year were All My Eyes See by Fr. Bill McNichols and Over Ruled by Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. Both the McNichols family and the Gorsuch family were parishioners at Christ the King parish in Denver where I was pastor for over 11 years. I did some work with Marjory and Steve McNichols when I was pastor, and Neil was a student in our school during my time as pastor.

I frequently say one of the weekday Masses at Blessed Sacrament (here in Denver) and on Sundays for the 10:30 Catholic Community (also here in Denver). I have also been able to return to Immaculate Conception in Lafayette for Masses and confessions. I hear 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 of Denver and in the Diocese of Colorado Springs.

As most of you know, I have two foster sons: Darin who lives in Vacaville, California and Steven who lives in Arlington, Virginia. In August,





Steven and his daughter Evelyn (my granddaughter) came to visit, and we spent a few days in Colorado Springs, hitting all the tourist sites. Evelyn is in second grade at St. Anthony of Padua school in Arlington, VA. Darin has two kids, Danielle and Elijah. Danielle graduated from high school this year. She is enrolled in a local community college, and she will be doing a six month stint as a missionary with YWAM (Youth With A Mission) in Japan this coming year. Elijah is a senior at Vacaville High School but has not yet decided where to go after graduation.

This was a disheartening year in many ways. First there was the political scene. As the year progressed we saw more and more division in our country and incivility becoming a normal way of communicating. But now the elections are over, and what is, is. We will no doubt begin to see change happening in our country and in our world.

But regardless of our political persuasions, we need to engage all the more in the work of unity and break down the walls which have been built up to separate us from one another. In the words of a Quaker pastor, Philip Gulley, we need to adorn ourselves in the "garments of decency, ready to stand by the side of justice..... determined all the more to include the excluded, to welcome the stranger, to defend the weak, to work for good until the bad is exhausted, to speak without fear, to love without limit. To connect, not disconnect."

Then there are the continuing wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, with thousands of people, many of them women and children, getting killed. The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law monitors more than 110 armed conflicts in the world today. We need to be peacemakers in our families, communities, country and world. And with the grace given us by the Prince of Peace whose birth we celebrate each year, we can make a difference.

In conclusion I invite you to reflect on Christmas as given us in the words of Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and mystic.

"The mystery of Christmas lays upon us all a debt and an obligation to the rest of the human race and to the whole created universe. We who have seen the light of Christ are obliged by the greatness of the grace that has been given us to make known the presence of the Savior to the ends of the earth. This we will do not only by preaching the glad tidings of his coming, but above all by revealing him in our lives. Christ is born to us in order that he may appear to the whole world through us."

May the Lord bless you abundantly during this holy season and throughout the coming year. And may God's peace and joy rest deep within you.

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*In the Lord's joy,
Bob*

