



And may His love  
surround you always.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

*In the Lord's joy,  
Fr. Bob*

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# CHRISTMAS 2025



“Remembering the facts and events of the past year can bring back moments of joy and sorrow, and help us perceive the presence of God who renews and sustains all things with his help... Many days have been marked with violence, death, the unspeakable suffering of innocent people. Yet, many great gestures of goodness, love, and solidarity have filled the days of this year... Goodness always wins, even if in certain moments it seems weaker and obscure.” Pope Francis

Like many of you, I miss Pope Francis who was for me the embodiment of hope and joy. His message will live long in the hearts of millions and not just Catholics. His death was probably the most significant event in my life this past year. On May 1, before the papal conclave began, I spoke to a group of priests meeting here at Elijah House. I told them about Cardinal Robert Prevost (none of them knew of him.) There has never been a U.S. Cardinal named Robert (cool name, huh?). So I said: “Guys, I want to tell you about Cardinal Prevost because I feel very strongly that he will be our next pope.” One week later, my prediction came true when Prevost was elected pope and took the name of Leo XIV.

For the most part, this was a fairly uneventful year for me. I did not do any traveling out of state this year. I did Masses, confessions and services in Lafayette, Boulder, Kiowa, Johnstown, Mead, Flagler, Ft. Collins and the extended Denver area. On a regular schedule I do Mass with the 10:30 Catholic Community, a Vatican II intentional community that has been meeting now for over 50 years. I do spiritual counseling here at Elijah House and on Zoom, and I gave a couple of one day retreats. I did one wedding, one baptism and the funerals of many of my friends and former parishioners. My health has been good, but I still have not gotten into “retirement”, although I am saying “no” more often and doing more reading and writing. I have been studying and writing about what I consider some destructive elements in our society, among them racism, white supremacy and Christian nationalism. I do toss in some mystery books so as to lighten what would otherwise be pretty heavy topics.

My sister Mary who lives about 5 minutes away from me at the University Park Brookdale Senior Apartments, is doing pretty well and very involved in activities where she lives. Since she gave up driving, I’ve become her uber driver. We spend almost every Sunday together, and she is able to be with me many times as I travel to various assignments.

As many of you know, I have two foster sons and three grandchildren. My two sons have made it through a difficult year so far. Darin lives in Vacaville California. Last year he was rear ended by a FedEx truck and has had several back and neck surgeries. Then he found out that he had to have a heart valve replaced and an aortic aneurysm repaired. His heart surgery was on September 11, and he is doing very well considering all the physical struggles he’s had. His daughter Danielle returned recently from doing mission work in Japan, and his son Elijah is in his first year at California State University San Marcos near San Diego.





Steven, who lives in Arlington, VA and works at the Pentagon, has seen a lot of challenges with the change of administration this year, but he keeps plugging along. My granddaughter, his daughter Evelyn, is 8 years old, in third grade at St. Anthony of Padua School in Arlington and made her first communion this year. That was an important event! She is also a winning medalist in state and international martial arts competition. And she doesn't fail to remind me: "Grandpa, your jokes are really bad!"

Did you know that there are around 300 references in the New Testament to joy, gladness, merriment, rejoicing, laughing, etc.? And when we review the Hebrew Scriptures, we note that the people of Israel were looking for a messiah who would bring gladness and joy and hope and light into their lives. Jesus himself, at Nazareth, quoted Isaiah the prophet in defining his own mission: "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God, to comfort all who mourn.....They will be called oaks of justice, planted by the LORD to show his glory." (Is. 61:1-3).

And in the Talmud we read: "Everyone will be called to account for the legitimate pleasures which he or she has failed to enjoy." How often I hear people confess of impatience, anxiety, anger, frustration, dull spirits, unhappiness. If we who are immersed in Christ, the source of joy, do not reflect that same joy in our lives, how will the world ever know the dynamic life-changing presence of Christ?

Although joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it does not just happen. We have to unwrap the gift, put it together and give it a home. This holiday season invites us to choose joy as a way of life and to offer it to the world as a sign of hope. And not just for a season. Through the positive power of our joyful hearts we can divide the dark clouds of violence, hatred, separation and despair and bring the reality of divine optimism into our world. St. Pope Paul VI said: "If you want peace, work for justice." Let us all be the "oaks of justice" and end the divisiveness that separates our country, our Church and our world.

Over the years, I have thrown in a little fun trivia. My favorite Christmas movie is "Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street" (the 1947 black and white version) with Edmund Gwenn, Maureen O'Hara, John Payne and Natalie Wood. One interesting fact about the movie that most people don't know. The Macy's Thanksgiving parade scene was completely real. Edmund Gwenn made thousands of people happy when he appeared as Santa in the real 1946 Macy's parade, and the studio had cameras set up all along the route to film the parade.

And finally, in the words of Mother Teresa: "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving.

*May God bless you and your loved ones abundantly.*

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