

Dear St. Columbkille Family

When everything around us screams "Christmas is upon us!" something in our heart whispers, "No, not yet. I have work to do, and God will not be fooled."

But who among us would intentionally delay God coming into the world, to dwell as one of us as an overwhelming symbol of his abiding love? And yet, the Church sets apart this season of Advent that is coming to an end this 4th Sunday of Advent, December 20th: a season of preparation, of reflection.

It can be puzzling to hear the cry of John the Baptist to fill every valley, and make all mountains low, itself an echo from the prophet Isaiah who first foretold the Christmas miracle. Yes, we do want to work to prepare, but it seems like such a symbolic effort and a show of hard work, to turn over every shovelful of earth. But to what end?

Throughout much of the Old Testament, God was known to dwell on mountaintops. Down in the valley was where humanity dwelled, longing for their creator. Over 500 times, the Scripture speaks of mountains — where the prophets ascended toward the Heavens to seek the voice of God. And this is certainly reflected in many other ancient cultures.

When Scripture speaks of flattening mountains and filling valleys, we come to realize... what is it calling us to do? It is calling us to make *all the world* a fitting place for God to dwell, a place where we all can live in peace and harmony.

Here at St. Columbkille Parish this is what we try to accomplish and demonstrate to you. It is incredible to say, but with the support and solidarity of compassion of St Columbkille parishioners, mountains have fallen, valleys have been filled in many different ways, especially this very difficult year 2020. Through your prayers and support, the Kingdom of God is revealed for many who were away from God, blind and asleep.

We have a lot to do as a congregation of faith, and as a pastor I do have to share my joy for what we have accomplished throughout this year. First, the safety in our sanctuary during services has brought peace to parishioners coming to church, the Holy Communion, anointing of the sick and Confessions under the Portico, the masses outside in the Grotto. The distribution of this weekly e-news and e-bulletin keeping the congregation updated. In addition, the permanent support of local food pantries, the solidarity with poor parishes of our diocese, the thanksgiving frozen turkey collection, the annual Giving Tree, the annual shoes and socks for homeless veterans' collection, our support to armed forces, prisons and hospitals, our assistance to local neighbors with bills. Furthermore, all diocesan special collections, our yearly diocesan assessment collected, our parish debt paid off, our support to local nonprofit organizations involved in social justice and the great effort to maintain all church facilities and campus. Thanks to your generosity we have been able to pay all our

financial responsibilities. A Special thank you to our staff for their dedication and love to St. Columbkille Parish Community.

We have missed our social events and activities this 2020 but we have not lost our hope and joy. Through this e-news I would like to remind all of you the incomparable Joy that Christmas brings to us where ever we may be at this time of the year, even if we are not be able to see our family and love ones; it is Christ the Savior the author of joy and life even during pandemic who makes us Joyful and grateful. We can welcome the vaccine but our joy does not depend on it, but from Jesus who wishes to be born, or wishes to remain alive in us.

Since the dispensation from obligation to attend mass has been extended until the New Year, I will continue to give **Communion under the Portico** (driveway) to those that prefer to watch the mass on TV, on Sundays Dec. 20th; Dec. 27th and January 3rd from 12noon to 12:30pm. No need to exit your car. **There will be NO communion on Christmas and New Year under the portico.**

To avoid the crowd, you also have the option to attend weekday Mass at **8:00am, Monday to Friday**. The church will remain open until noon.

I invite you to our **Communal Rosary and Marian Novena, on Saturdays at 8:00am.**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is taking place under the Portico on Saturdays from 8:30am to 9:30am, and by appointment contacting one of the Priests at 239-489-3973.

We are providing **the Eucharist to Homebound**, if you or someone you know wishes to receive our pastoral care and the sacraments, let us know. We are not yet going to nursing homes and Hospital visits are very limited.

Youth Group 2020-2021 Confirmation Preparation / Faith Formation for Children / Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) Classes via Zoom, for additional information contact the Parish office.

The **2021 Offertory Envelopes** are available in the narthex (entrance of the church) If you prefer, we can mail them to you, please contact the parish office at 239-489-3973. We are open every day from 8:30am to 1:30pm from Monday to Friday.

Our schedule for Christmas will be as follows:

Christmas Eve: 3:00pm, 5:00pm, 7:00pm and 9:00pm.

Christmas Day: 7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am, 1:00pm & 5:30pm.

Also, I would like to share information regarding the new members of the music ministry who will be permanently serving our Parish Community. Below is the Christmas schedule for the Music Ministry:

*Christmas Eve: 3pm & 5pm Robert Kirchner; 7pm & 9pm Lee Van Asten
Christmas Day: 7am & 9am Suzi Johnson; 11am & 1pm Lee Van Asten;
5:30pm Paul Todd (Billy and Dawn Birch)*

We are having a Virtual Giving Tree this year! We are asking for donations of gift cards from any store of your choice for Farmworkers, Food for the Poor and Toys for Children. We suggest \$25.00, but any amount gift card is acceptable. The cards can be put in the Donation Boxes throughout the church or brought to the Parish Office. Please note the recipient on the envelope. Thank you so much for your continued support!

One more opportunity: **An Invitation to Support Christians of the Holy Land**
Please pray “for the little town of Bethlehem where Jesus was born, that our Christian Palestinian brothers and sisters living there remain steadfast in their faith and get relief as they endure a tremendous economic hardship due to Covid-19.”

This year devastated Bethlehem. The main source of income to Bethlehem is derived from pilgrim related activities. There has NOT been one pilgrim since the middle of March, 2020.

You can write a check to Christians of the Holy Land (at the address below) or to St. Columbkille indicating “Christians of the Holy Land” in the memo.

The address is:
Christians of the Holy Land
301 Camino Gardens Blvd.
Suite # 103
Boca Raton, FL 33432

On behalf of the Clergy and staff I wish you all a peaceful and joyful Merry Christmas.

Fr. Lorenzo