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NOVEMBER 2015 *Newsletter*

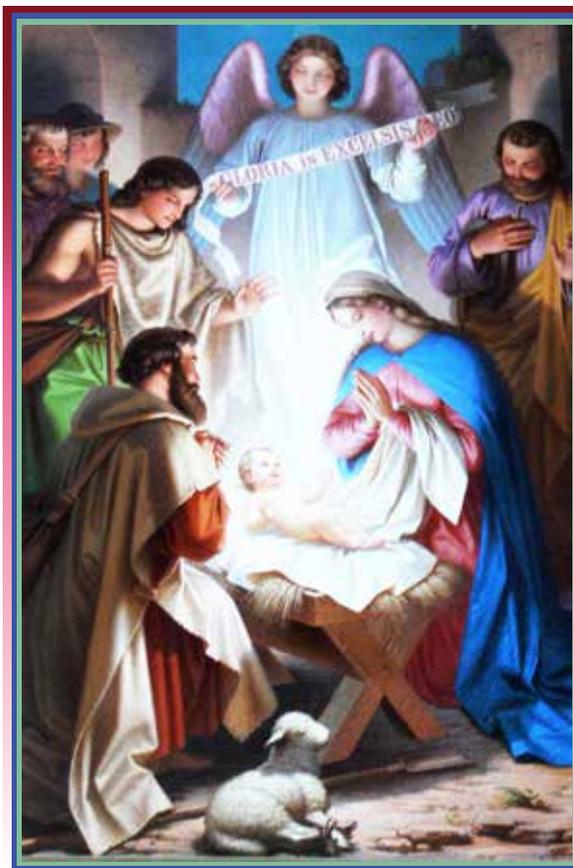
The Baby In The Manger: Inspiration for the ‘New Evangelization’?

By Christine Corbett Conklin

As a newborn baby in a manger, Jesus Christ didn't do anything "extravagant" to share the Good News with others, observes Oscar Rivera, a speaker and musician who focuses on the New Evangelization. Yet, just by BEING, that tiny baby had a powerful influence on others, drawing shepherds and Magi alike who were attracted to the promise He represented, and transforming their lives.

Now, within this Christmas season – and, in fact, all year long – we, too, can be a beacon of light to others. We can draw people to the Gospel message by being who we are, by shining forth with that same spirit of faith, Rivera said in a telephone interview prior to his appearance at the Yakima Diocese Youth Convention, November 6-8 at Holy Family Church in Yakima.

"Teens – and sometimes adults, too – tend to overcomplicate what evangelization is," said Rivera, who serves as Director of Religious Education and Youth Minister for St. Matthew Catholic Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia, in addition to speaking and performing faith-based rap music throughout the U.S.



Painting by Max Bentele courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

"The New Evangelization is simply a new approach to bringing the Good

News. It means utilizing our unique talents in the promoting of our Faith," he explained. "Get the Gospel message to people who haven't heard it, to a world that's extremely distracted. Be that witness, sharing the missionary mandate to 'make disciples of all nations.'"

This could begin with something as basic as a personal conversation or a social media message. The key idea is to "be who you are...live that Christian message. Live as Christ lived. It's a very strong dynamic of the Catholic Faith," Rivera said.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Pope Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel 'to those regions awaiting the first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularization.'"

However, that doesn't mean that any one of us is supposed to take on the whole world, Rivera says.

"Living our Faith can be as simple as showing mercy to someone, lending a helping hand, offering friendly words,

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Symbols of Christmas Point To the True Meaning of the Season

In the midst of the "Christmas chaos" -- the shopping, decorating, party frenzy that can seem all-consuming -- there are many symbols that point to the true meaning of Christmas.

Even in the colors of the season and the advertisements we see all around us, we can find the signs that point us to Jesus Christ and the hope of everlasting life, suggest local priests.

The Christmas color of **green**, for example, is symbolic of life and hope, says Father Bill Shaw, pastor of St. Mary Parish in White Swan. So, in everything from garland to the Christmas tree and

holly, we are reminded of the hope that the Baby Jesus brought to earth. Some believe that the prickly leaves of **holly** represent the crown of thorns that was part of Jesus' suffering, and the **red** berries stand for the blood He shed for our redemption, Father Shaw continued.

A simple, circular Christmas **wreath** is symbolic of "life eternal and that God is eternal," he said. Adding the **candles** we use to mark the passing weeks of Advent, we bring to mind that Christ is the "light of the world."

The **bells** we see in decorations and on wrapping paper are a reminder of



Poinsettia photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

the "joyful message of Christ's birth," Father Shaw added. And of course, the **star** – another common seasonal symbol –

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A Message from Bishop Tyson...

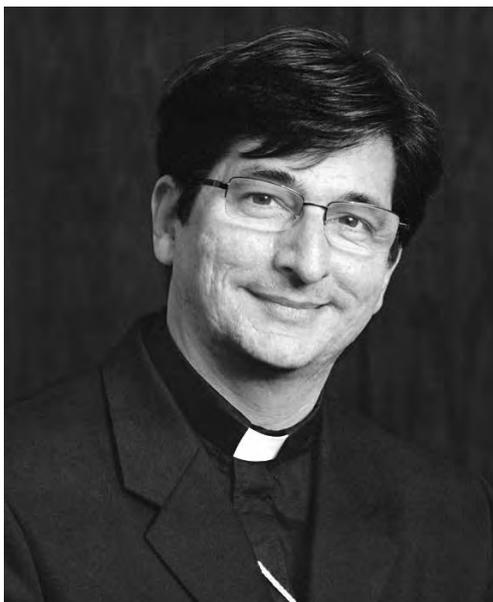
Dear Friends,

How do we keep Christ in Christmas? Precisely by infusing Christ into our daily lives and sharing Christ with those around us. That was the gist of the message shared by Oscar Rivera at the last Diocese of Yakima Youth Convention.

In many ways, here in the Diocese of Yakima, we live in the golden age with so many of our first-generation immigrants coming to Church Sunday after Sunday. In a new land, the newest among us don't want to be alone. They want the feel of an extended family, so they bring children into the world and they bring their children into the life of the parish, making the parish a family of families.

For the sons and daughters of immigrants, it's a bit different. They run the same risk of becoming de-churched as can happen to our youth. God becomes one relationship among many and the Church one more activity in a broad selection of after-school options.

This means the key to a "new



Bishop Joseph Tyson

evangelization" is prayer. In prayer we come to know God personally as the ground of our very existence. Christmas becomes the feast of seeing God's very face in the birth of Jesus Christ. No longer are we "searchers" attempting to

find meaning to our lives. Rather, in Jesus Christ, we learn that – even as we search – we are already found by God. Jesus as God brings us God. "It is only because of our smallness of heart that we think that this is too little," notes our Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

Has God "become too little" in our lives? Not in the lives of our youth participating in the Diocese of Yakima's recent youth convention. Oscar Rivera drew youth from a variety of racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds precisely because our youth desire to see the face of Christ anew.

As you read this month's *Central Washington Catholic*, you will discover how large God is in the lives of so many across the Diocese of Yakima. I hope this issue inspires you to find new ways to put Christ into your Christmas season, too.

With every best wish and blessing!

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Symbols of Christmas Point To the True Meaning of the Season *Continued from page 1*

harkens back to the star of Bethlehem and the very first Christmas.

There is also much symbolism attached to the poinsettia, especially the red poinsettia seen so often in Christmas decorating. There is a Mexican tradition that a child was looking for a gift to present to the Christ Child, and leaves -- or even weeds -- turned to red to form beautiful flowers, Father Shaw said.

The poinsettia is sometimes referred to as the "flower of the Good Night," added Father Felipe Pulido, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Yakima.

Another popular symbol of Hispanic celebrations is the **piñata**, Father Pulido said. Although children tend to think only of the candy that will spill forth when the "papier mache" piñata is broken with a stick, there is also a religious significance, he said. For example, the traditional piñata which has seven points or "cones" sticking out from it represents the "seven capital sins" (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride). Breaking the piñata is symbolic of striking down these sins.

"The stick we hit with is the free will that we have," Father Pulido explained. "When we use our free will, the right way, we get graces – that is the candy."

And speaking of candy, even the simple **candy cane** has a religious story attached to it, Father Shaw said. The legend is that a candy maker created the treat in the shape of the letter "J" to stand for "Jesus." The shape also resembles a shepherd's staff. The white stripes stand for Jesus' purity, while the red stripes represent His suffering, His scourging on our behalf.

Within the Catholic Church during Advent season, you'll also notice liturgical colors which have meaning for our lives. The **purple** color of vestments, church decorations and candles on the Advent wreath reminds us that this is a time "of prayer and reflection, of making room in our hearts for Jesus," Father Shaw said. The **rose** color, which is used during the third Sunday of Advent – or "Gaudete" Sunday, taken from the Latin word for "rejoice" – sets a lighter mood "because we will be welcoming Jesus very soon" at Christmas.

"This is the darkest time of the year," Father Shaw observed. "Yet, Jesus removes the darkness... There is life and hope in the middle of Winter. It's all about the coming of Jesus as our Savior. Jesus is the 'reason for the season.'"

If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy, please believe in the possibility for hope and help and healing. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Yakima Diocese has a sexual abuse hotline for those who wish to report some incident concerning that issue as regards a bishop, priest, deacon or diocesan employee or volunteer. (888) 276-4490

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The 'New Evangelization' *Continued from page 1*

helping out a kid who's left out at school," he suggested. "Kids can be obedient to parents, not wait to be asked to serve the family in some way. Little actions can pack the most punch."

During this Christmas season, we have special opportunities to reach out to others in faith, Rivera noted. Through food drives, "giving trees," toy collections and the many other community projects underway, it's "a nice gesture of faith to do something to remember someone who may not have all that we have."

And you don't necessarily need to rely upon an organized holiday drive, Rivera says.

"Reach outside of yourself. Bring someone in for Christmas dinner. Instead of anticipating the 'getting' aspect, actively give to a shelter, for example."

Parents have a key role to play in teaching their children the power – and beauty – of evangelization, he suggests. Rivera and his wife, Pamela, who have a two-year-old daughter and one-year-old son, already have begun the lessons in their home.

"They don't understand (yet) what they're doing, but give them something to model," he said. "I'll tell my daughter, 'Give the lady a smile.' Get them involved at a young age."

It's also important to help your kids to become "more accountable," Rivera says.

"It helps them to feel a part of a community in which they're invested. Teach them to 'take ownership' of that pew (at church), the same way they would identify with a sports team. They don't know how to make their identity the Catholic Church."

And never, never forget the need to shine forth with the same joy that permeated the manger of Bethlehem.

In a dark and often discouraging world, "joy seems like such a far-fetched concept," Rivera observed. "Yet, people are longing to see the real message of hope. It's an active choice of one's will. You don't downplay the suffering that exists. You understand that there was a Cross, but there was also a Resurrection."

We believe in the hope that is to come, he stressed.

"Our hope is in the Lord...Be who you are and point people in His direction."

Rivera quotes Jeremiah 1:5-10, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you came to birth, I consecrated you; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."



Oscar Rivera spoke to attendees after morning Mass at Holy Family Church.
-Photo courtesy of Mary Seidler

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NEWS

From Around the Diocese

Mass to Recognize Medical Professionals—

All health care professionals are invited to attend a White Mass at 7 p.m., Wednesday, December 2, at St. Paul Cathedral in Yakima. The celebrant will be Bishop Joseph Tyson.

This is a special Mass held to recognize the dedication of Catholic health care personnel within the Diocese of Yakima. This includes medical professionals, office staff, men and women religious, and other laypersons who help to provide health care through their faith and work. Family members and any parishioners who wish to participate in this celebration also are invited.

Following the White Mass, all are welcome at a reception in the Assembly Place next to the Cathedral.

Holy Day Honors Our Lady —

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a holy day of obligation on which attendance at Mass is required, will be celebrated Tuesday, December 8.

This day also marks the beginning of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. As a sign of God's mercy, and in view of the great devotion many of our people have for Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Joseph Tyson has dispensed the obligation to attend Mass December 8 for those who attend a Guadalupe Mass December 12.

For more information on the Mass schedule for your area, check your parish bulletin or website.

Come Have Breakfast With Santa —

Children of all ages can enjoy a special Christmas breakfast with Santa planned for 8:30 to 11 a.m., Saturday, December 12, in the Gathering Hall of Holy Family Church in Yakima.

The event, which will include raffles and the chance to shop in a Country Store, is sponsored by the Catholic Daughters of America.

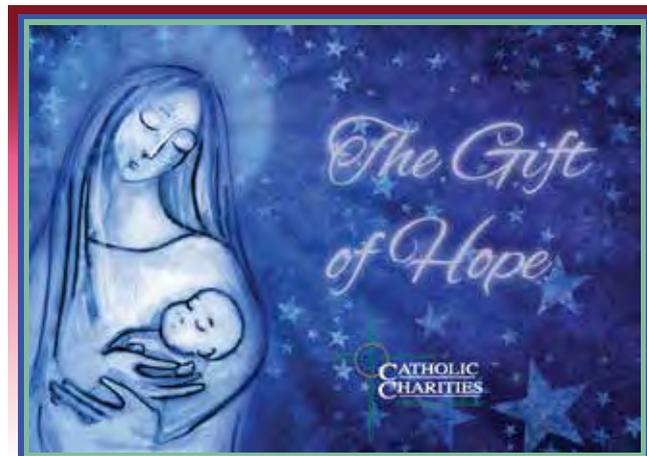
The cost is \$4 for children age 3-12, and \$7 for those age 13 and over. Holy Family Church is located at 5315 Tieton Drive. For more information, call 509-910-1691 or 509-833-4076.

Catholic Charities Announces Christmas Collection

"In switching on the light of the Nativity scene, we wish for the light of Christ to be in us. A Christmas without light is not Christmas. Let there be light in the soul, in the heart; let there be forgiveness to others; let there be no hostilities, which are dark. Let there be the beautiful light of Jesus. This is my wish for all of you, when you turn on the light of the crib."

- Pope Francis, December 7, 2014

It is again time to prepare for the Annual Christmas Collection for Catholic Charities. The collection will be taken up in the 41 Catholic parishes throughout the Diocese during Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses. The collection will be used to support local services and programs throughout Catholic Charities' service areas to provide food, shelter, clothing, counseling, child care, senior outreach, foster care, teen outreach, housing and advocacy support.



The Annual Christmas Collection for Catholic Charities is the best opportunity each year for local Catholics to financially support the social needs of the people within the Diocese of Yakima. In 2014, those generous donations brought in \$210,000. Through the funds given to this important collection, Catholic Charities can provide solutions and relief to even some of the most overwhelming problems facing individuals and families.

In his Christmas letter to all Catholics throughout the Diocese of Yakima, Bishop Joseph Tyson reminds us: "Just as Christ's light comes to us during the darkest time of year, Catholic Charities, our diocesan expression of the same light of Christ, brings hope to so many of our neighbors during what is often their very darkest hour. Whether their darkness comes about because of lack of an affordable place to live, an unplanned pregnancy, want of food to make it to the end of the month or the despair that results from mental illness, our network of Catholic Charities Housing Services, Catholic Family & Child Service and St. Vincent Centers will be there for them, and will do so in our name."

The Bishop continues, "As you have done each year, please be as generous as you can in supporting this annual effort with your contributions on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, knowing that you've played an important part in this good work."



Reunion attendees shown in the back row, left to right, are Vince Leadon, Betty Leadon, Rick Schlosstein, Ed Rush, Scott McDonald, Ed Labissoniere and Jerry Kroum. In the middle row are Larry Gamache, Susan Richardson Miller, Mary Miller Lefebvre (CA), Jody Sullivan McDonald, Paula Dufault Hull, Bev Cullier Lambert, Mary Jo Coan Schmidt (CA), and Dan Sevigny. The front row includes Jo Marie Linders Hansen, Bishop Joseph Tyson, Bernie Estoesta Gerhardt, Sharon O'Neill Tebb (OR), Marilyn Voelker Kelly, Arlene Lentz Zehm and Barbara Champoux Meyer.

St. Joseph Academy and Marquette Celebrate 50th Reunion—

Alumni from the 1965 graduating classes of St. Joseph Academy and Marquette High School, both in Yakima, met recently for their combined, 50-year reunion celebration.

The fall event included a luncheon at El Mirador, plus a dinner and retrospective of the high school years recalling everything from games at Squire Field to "draggin' the ave" and meeting at the Academy fence. Highlights of the final day of the reunion were attendance at a Mass at St. Joseph Church in Yakima, celebrated by Bishop Joseph Tyson, and a picnic at Sarg Hubbard Park.