



# CENTRAL WASHINGTON CATHOLIC

*El Católico de Washington Central*

Pāchu Washintin Chmuk Tātpas

NOVEMBER 2019 *Letter*

## The Christmas Miracle Is Even Greater When You Consider The Human Side

By Christine Corbett Conklin

Consider the typical Christmas-card image of the Holy Family in Bethlehem. Everyone is beautifully dressed, serene, even smiling. All of the shepherds and animals, angels and kings are perfectly placed. There may even be a few stars twinkling in the sky.

The deep religious significance of this scene and the beauty of the event are real. However, the human side of what actually transpired is often overlooked.

Rather than “romanticizing” the setting, it’s good to remember “the simplicity of the whole thing, the poverty in which the Child was born,” suggested Very Rev. Michael J. Ibach, who serves as Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Yakima. “That’s the splendor of it: in the midst of poverty, God brings glory.”

Think of the faith-filled acceptance that led Mary and Joseph to this scene. Mary would have been a teenager, “somewhere in the 13- to 15-year-old range,” Father observed. Consider how remarkable it was that this young woman agreed to carry her miraculous child, despite the surprise,



the uncertainties and the inevitable judgments of those around her. Joseph is only described as “older” – although, realistically, he may just have been in his mid-20s, Father said, noting that “the life expectancy of people at the time of Christ ... was about 40 years of age.” Joseph, too, demonstrated deep faith to accept this miraculous conception.

Then, there is that journey to Bethlehem so that Joseph could register for a Roman census. This could not have been an easy trip. Depending upon the exact route they followed, it was a trek of some

80 to 120 miles, with Mary very pregnant. We’re not even sure that she had the luxury of riding on a donkey. To own a donkey, the couple would have needed enough money to feed and care for the animal, Father pointed out.

“My suspicion is that they walked all of that way,” he said.

The journey also would have had potential dangers. “Bandits, pirates of the desert and robbers were ... common hazards along the major trade routes like the one Joseph and Mary would have traveled,” according to Rev. Peter Vasco, a priest and director of the Holy Land Foundation, as reported in the Los Angeles Times in 1995.

Unable to find lodging, Mary and Joseph reportedly settled in a cave where Mary gave birth to Jesus. “The setting of His birth was not a nice, sanitary hospital room,” Father Ibach observed. “It would have been a very dirty place, a cave where they sheltered animals.” For a bed, the Child is believed to have slept in a rough manger which was a feeding trough for animals.

*Continued on page 3*

## Christmas Collection Helps Serve People Throughout the Diocese

From supporting expectant parents to helping the elderly remain in their own homes, Catholic Charities brings hope to life in the Diocese of Yakima by serving people throughout the lifecycle.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Catholics across the Diocese will have the opportunity to answer Christ’s call to serve one another by supporting the work of Catholic Charities Serving Central Washington with donations to the Christmas Collection.

Catholic Charities brings hope to life by...

**Strengthening Families** – Offering therapeutic childcare and support to families struggling with a child’s out-of-control behavior.

**Embracing People** – Keeping the elderly in their own homes by matching them with volunteers to help with housework, provide transportation, and supply the

companionship they need to feel valued and loved.

**Empowering to Thrive** – Integrating primary care with behavioral health to remove barriers and give those suffering from mental illnesses access to much-needed health care services.

Since 1949, programs have evolved to meet the changing needs in the communities served, but the agency has remained focused on serving children, adults and families in the areas of counseling and behavioral health, basic needs, childcare and early learning, affordable housing, and elder services. With primary offices in Yakima, Wenatchee, and Richland, Catholic Charities operates out of more than 30 service locations and serves 50,000 people each year.

An outreach effort of the Diocese of Yakima, Catholic Charities is a separate 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The agency is funded in part by state and federal

contracts and fees for service, but relies on the generosity of donors to serve all clients regardless of their ability to pay.

“The support we receive through the Christmas Collection is essential because it allows us to help those who are most in need,” said Darlene Darnell, Catholic Charities president and CEO. “We are grateful to parishioners throughout the Diocese for supporting our mission.”

Information on Catholic Charities and donation envelopes will be available in parishes preceding the collection.



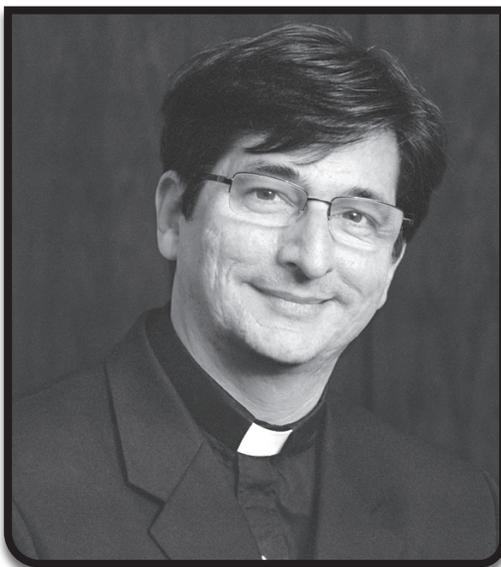
## A Message from Bishop Tyson...

Dear Friends:

Our feature interview with Father Michael Ibach on the human side of Jesus speaks to the central reality of Christmas. In Jesus we see the face of God. God comes to us in the person of Jesus. Because God takes on our humanity, we know of our dignity as humans and our hoped-for destination in heaven.

In so many ways, the smaller stories and features all reenforce this conviction about the dignity of the human person because of Jesus. Our Christmas collection for Catholic Charities Serving Central Washington uplifts the dignity of those who come to us seeking help. A portion of this collection supports our PREPARES ministry to young moms, their children both born and unborn, the fathers and their families. We have launched a Spanish-language Retrouvaille to help marriages enhance and regain their God-given dignity. The practical advice from Maryknoll missionaries can help us better place Christ as the center of Christmas and thus remember the dignity in which each of us is created.

Permit me to add that there is a direct liturgical link between the Feast of Christ the King that closes the liturgical year and the Feast of Christmas that marks the birth of infant-king Jesus Christ. On this 75th anniversary of the founding of Christ the King parish in Richland, it might be helpful to remember that this feast was introduced rather late into the Church's liturgical calendar. When Pius XI established the feast in 1925, it was with an eye to the recent Russian revolution. Even more, he had a keen eye on the revolution taking place in Mexico. This revolution resulted in the persecution of the Catholic Church. With their cry "Viva Cristo Rey," those resisting the persecution in Mexico proclaimed Christ as king – not the secular revolutionary leaders. Usually, encyclicals are written in Latin,



**Bishop Joseph Tyson**

but Pius XI wrote three different encyclicals for the entire Church in Spanish because of the situation in Mexico.

This message of Christ as our King leads straight to the unusual way Jesus assumes his kingship as Christ. Christ comes as King – not in a royal palace – but in an animal stable. Christ holds court – not with the high classes of the ancient middle east – but with the lowly shepherds of the field. Christ comes – not with a military army – but in the words of St. Luke's Gospel – an army of angels. We hear the word "host" of angels in the Gospel, but the original Greek text is "strata," which is the word for "army"

The Church in every age takes its cue from this unusual king whose crown is one of thorns and whose royal city is Bethlehem, the place of the bread – where we find Jesus in a manger, literally an animal feed box. It is easy to see Jesus in the lovely commercial crèche displays. It might be harder to see Jesus in the children separated from their parents at the border, the

migrants fulfilling their natural law obligation to come here to the United States in order to support their families, the refugees fleeing the violence of their homeland. It might be harder for us to see our direct responsibility for supporting women and their children born and unborn to ensure that legalized abortion becomes an obsolete option.

As Americans we love team sports and we love rooting for our favorites. Oftentimes we carry this attitude into public policy, expecting our leaders to support our race, our language, our culture and our interests. But an honest and authentic look at the human face of God in the person of Jesus ought to challenge us about our social assumptions regardless of whether we identify with "red" states or "blue" states.

Our recent time with Father Robert Spitzer, S.J., and his help in bringing faith and science together in our catechesis should remind us that we have a smart and rich tradition. As a Church we have much to offer the world. We need to help deliver the newborn Jesus anew to the world.

My thanks to so many of you who do so much to carry out Christ's mission not only as volunteers, benefactors and supporters of the Church across Central Washington, but for living this mission among your friends, and with your families – no matter how large or small or how distant or near your parents, siblings or children may be.

May the blessings of the Christ-child be upon all of you during this high and holy season!

With every best wish and blessing,

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson  
Bishop of Yakima

## Numerous Holy Days Are Near

The coming weeks give us numerous special opportunities to celebrate our Catholic Faith. Several of these days are Holy Days of Obligation. This means that everyone age 7 and above is required to attend Mass, unless there is an issue with health, work requirements or transportation which makes it impossible or inadvisable to go.

**December 8** is the celebration of the Immaculate Conception, the day on which we honor Mary who was conceived without sin. Because the Holy Day falls on a Sunday this year, the celebration is transferred to Monday, December 9, and attendance at Mass is not obligatory on this day.

**December 12** is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, marking the 1531 appearance of

Blessed Mother to Juan Diego on Tepeyac hill, near Mexico City. This is a lovely occasion to celebrate. In years when the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is obligatory, attendance at this Mass satisfies that obligation.

**December 25** is Christmas, the day set aside to honor Christ's birth, although we do not know for sure that He was born at this time of year. This Holy Day is a celebration of light in the darkest time of the year.

**January 1** is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. This Holy Day commemorates how a young Mary trustingly said "yes" to God, becoming the Mother of Jesus Christ.

May you be richly blessed during this wonderful time of year.

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Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson

MODERATOR

Monsignor Robert M. Siler

EDITOR

Christine Corbett Conklin

TRANSLATIONS

Indiana Blandón

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Email: robert.siler@yakimadiocese.org

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

# The Christmas Miracle Is Even Greater When You Consider The Human Side *Continued from page 1*

No one is certain about the exact time of year when Jesus was born. It could even have been Spring, Father said. Another estimate suggests September. However, if it was in fact December, according to current weather averages, the temperature could have dropped into the lower 40s or below at night and the days may have been cloudy and gray, with heavy rain.

Keep in mind that there was no attending physician and no anesthetic to ease this young woman's childbirth process.

"We don't even know if there was a midwife," Father said. "They were strangers

in a strange town. She may have done it all on her own."

It's also interesting to note that, in modern times, December 30 is identified as perhaps the clearest night of the season in the Bethlehem/Palestine region. If, by some chance, the birth really did occur in December, this could have been an ideal time to see a star or other bright presence in the sky!

And the journey did not end there. After spending perhaps two years in Bethlehem, and being warned that they were in danger due to King Herod's

massacre of young male children, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt, another long trek with a small child in tow. Later, they also traveled from Egypt to Nazareth, estimated at more than 100 miles.

No matter the precise details, it is an amazing story.

"It wasn't the pristine holy card that we see," Father Ibach emphasized. "I think it's nice to know that these were just lowly people, struggling to make ends meet, and yet God used them to bring forth the Savior of the World!"

Merry Christmas!

# The Theological Virtue of Charity: Love Always Wins

*Courtesy of Virtus*

Telling people we love something – a song, music, color, phone app or TV series – is something we easily and readily do. Telling people we love them is a bit more complicated. It is easy for most, challenging for others and almost paralyzing for some. Why, we wonder, does it take so long for people to be moved to say the words? Many novels and movies are built on this theme, and when, at the end we find ourselves moved to tears, the words come – liberating us all, making us promise to tell everyone that we love, that we,

indeed love them. And then we forget... Until the next time.

The Catechism puts it all beautifully: "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God." Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own "to the end," He makes manifest the Father's love which He receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Jesus says:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I

loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (1822; 1823) We all know the words, we all love to love them, but practicing takes just that – practice.

To be loved,



and to love, are the best and greatest things we can do and experience. The message here is simple: start with love, don't end with it. When you find yourself in a situation where forgiveness is needed and the hurt is unbearable, start with love. Don't wait to come to it at the end. Skip all the vengeance, hateful and destructive thoughts and words – start with love. It is where you ultimately want to end up and rightfully should. Love always wins.

## Join us for A Celtic Christmas

Featuring Affiniti and  
Howard Crosby

**December 17, 2019**  
**7:00 PM**

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# NEWS

## From Around the Diocese

### Magnificat Classes Planned

It's not too soon to begin planning to attend Magnificat classes in the New Year. This program of faith formation, leadership and lay ministry now incorporates a vital new component of teaching about how science supports and reinforces our Catholic beliefs.

The next session of English classes will begin on Saturday, February 15 in Kennewick at Holy Spirit Church, 7409 West Clearwater. There, Father Peter Steele and Father Daniel Steele will discuss "Dante's World Today: Hell, Purgatory and Heaven" followed by a presentation on "Anchoring Science in Our Faith: Scientific Evidence of a Soul."

The same program by the Fathers Steele will be repeated February 22 in Wenatchee at St. Joseph School, 600 St. Joseph Place, and February 29 in Yakima at the St. Paul Cathedral Building, 1214 West Chestnut.

All classes are presented between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Additional information is available on the Diocese of Yakima website at [yakimadiocese.org](http://yakimadiocese.org).

### Retrouvaille Weekends Scheduled

Do you feel frustrated or angry in your marriage? Many find that talking about it only makes it worse. Some couples experience coldness and simply shut down. Other couples have angry arguments. Most don't know how to change the situation.

Inland Northwest Retrouvaille will be providing two weekends in early 2020, to help couples bring new joy to marriage. The English weekend will be held February 14-16 at the Immaculate Heart Retreat Center in Spokane. The Spanish Weekend will be held March 13-15 at the Best Western Plus in Richland.

*Retrouvaille* (pronounced *retro-vi* with a long i) has helped thousands of couples experiencing marital difficulty at all levels of distress. The program is designed to provide the tools to help get marriages back on track.

For more information, visit our website at [www.helpourmarriage.com](http://www.helpourmarriage.com) or [ayudanuestromatrimonio.org](http://ayudanuestromatrimonio.org) or, for confidential information, call (800) 470-2230 English or (800) 966-7981 Spanish.

### Spiritual Journey Set for Spring

There is still time to join "A Spiritual Journey to Mexico," planned for next Spring, to include the first Mass of newly ordained Father Edgar Quiroga.

The eight-day journey, from May 27 to June 3, will be under the spiritual direction of Bishop Joseph Tyson and Fathers Felipe Pulido and Cesar Vega.

Highlights of the trip will include the Martyrs' Sanctuary, near Guadalajara; the Basilica of Our Lady of Zapopan; Tecalitlan, Jalisco for Father Quiroga's Mass; Tulpetlac, where Juan Diego's uncle was cured; and Mexico City, including the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

For more information, contact Father Pulido through the diocesan number, (509) 965-7117, or email [fpulido1@gmail.com](mailto:fpulido1@gmail.com).

## Here Are Practical Ways to Keep Christ In Christmas

The following (edited) ideas for helping to keep the focus of the Christmas season on Christ have been reprinted with permission of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers:

1. Use postage stamps that feature a religious theme.
2. Hang an Advent calendar and open a window each day.
3. Display your nativity set in a window or on the lawn where others can see it.
4. Place a candle in the window to symbolize the light of Christ. *NOTE: Never leave candles burning unattended; electric candles are safer than real wax candles.*
5. Listen to traditional Christmas carols that honor Christ's birth.
6. Call radio stations and television channels requesting Christmas carols and stories.
7. Ask stores for religious Christmas wrapping paper and decorations.
8. Read Christmas scripture and stories to children.
9. Purchase a gift, wrap it, and give it to the poor – and encourage a child to do the same.
10. Research and then explain the tradition of the original Christmas tree.
11. During the Christmas season, share daily Catholic Advent reflections with your loved ones. (One source is [Facebook.com/Maryknoll.MEP.West](https://www.facebook.com/Maryknoll.MEP.West))
12. Use decorations with "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays."
13. Have a child place a straw in the crèche for each good deed done as a gift to the Baby Jesus during Advent.
14. Pray for the young so that when they become adults they will not regard Christmas as just another holiday free from work.



## PREPARES Starts Support Group in Wapato



The youngest mothers have challenges older, more experienced women do not face. This fall, PREPARES started a support group for teen mothers in Wapato. In addition to painting pumpkins, they discuss parenting challenges, and support each other at weekly meetings. They like the group, and are telling other pregnant young women about it.