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NOVEMBER 2022

Diocesan Priests Recall Memories From Christmas Past

By Christine Corbett Conklin

The Christmas season can be an especially nostalgic time, thinking back to the people, places and events that shaped our childhood and beyond. It's no different for the clergy of the Diocese of Yakima, many of whom now live far from the area or even the country in which they were raised. Recently, some of our priests shared memories of their own experiences from Christmas past.

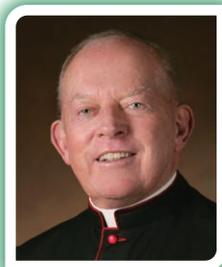
For **Fathers Bill and John Shaw**, who are retired and living in Yakima, notable Christmas memories go back to the Great Depression in the United



Fathers Bill and John Shaw

States, which ended around 1939. "We had 'Santy Claus' come in the middle of the night with some refurbished toys," said Father Bill. The family Christmas tree often came from a vacant lot next to their home, with a shining star placed on top and a Nativity scene nestled at the base of the tree. During World War II, the family needed to observe blackout regulations, living as they did near to Boeing Field and an aircraft factory. So, alas, there could be no midnight Mass for Christmas, with its glowing lights, Father Bill said. Instead, "we went to morning Mass."

In contrast, growing up in Boston, "My big thing was going to midnight Mass," recalled **Monsignor John Ecker**, pastor of St. Paul Cathedral and vicar general of the Diocese. "It was my big celebration of Christmas – God coming to earth."



Monsignor John Ecker

Monsignor Ecker especially remembers the "grandeur" of the Mass and serving as an acolyte. "The parish pulled out all of the stops," he said.

For **Father Felipe Pulido**, pastor



Preparing the church for midnight Mass.

of St. Joseph Church in Kennewick, the "Posadas" were a special part of the Christmas season, as he was growing up in Dos Aguas, southwest of Mexico City. "During the second part of the Christmas season, beginning December 16 or 17, (we would) concentrate on the coming of Christ," he remembered. "We would get together at different homes and recreate what Mary and Joseph did as they asked for shelter, pray the rosary, then children got treats and a pinata." He compared the nine days of celebration to being "like a novena."



Father Felipe Pulido

Father David Jimenez, pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church in Chelan, also recalls Posadas and pinatas, as he was growing up in Panama. However, what really impressed him, during his time as a seminarian in Colombia, was the "Dia de las velitas" or "Day of the Little Candles."



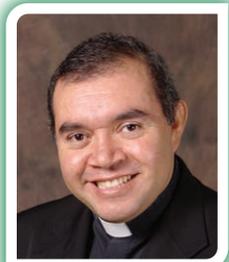
Father David Jimenez

On December 7, the eve of the feast day of the Immaculate Conception, people would light candles and place them on the sidewalks. "There were miles and miles of candles," he recalled, ranging from votives to plastic lanterns, in "all kinds of

colors and sizes." Some also were placed on porches or balconies. Father said that he used to take the bus "just to see the candles. The whole city was like a Nativity."

Some of the traditions of priests' younger lives continue on into the present day.

For **Father Alex Trejo**, pastor of St. Andrew Church in Ellensburg, this is the case with the "Pastorela,"



Father Alex Trejo

a Christmas folk play. Father Trejo remembers, growing up in Mexico, how his family and church would perform this play "that is the story of the shepherds who follow the star to see Baby Jesus." The Devil did not want them to see the Baby, however, so temptations based on the seven capital sins arose to distract them from their goal. One shepherd might be tempted to eat too much while another is lured by a beautiful woman and a third is led to be angry. This Christmas, Father Trejo is planning to have the Pastorela performed at the children's Mass on December 24 at St. Andrew.

Other traditions benefited the entire community. **Monsignor Robert Siler**, chancellor and episcopal vicar of the Diocese, recalls how his father, inspired by St. Nicholas' legendary gift-giving, "gave something back to the community: a beautiful tree with a star that reminded us of the Star of Bethlehem and the birth of the greatest



Monsignor Robert Siler

gift of all, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." For many years, in the 1970s and 1980s, Monsignor and his brothers would help their Father "string Christmas lights and (place) a giant star on a 60-foot-tall Norway spruce tree in our front yard. It could be seen for miles around in the

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A Message from Bishop Tyson...

Dear Friends:

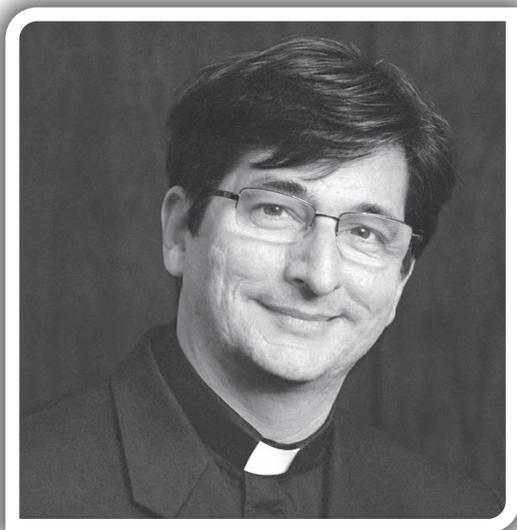
Welcome to the Christmas edition of our *Central Washington Catholic*. Christmas can be a time filled with memories that point us to Christ. I know one strong memory was coming to St. Paul Cathedral for Christmas Mass with my grandparents and then coming home to open gifts.

One particular year, Santa arrived. I was about five or six at the time. He seemed to know my grandparents' house on South 14th between Tieton and Maclaren. He seemed to know I wanted Tonka trucks! There he was, a fat jolly man all dressed in red. I was a bit afraid at the time. I hadn't expected to meet Santa live and close up. He was far bigger than I imagined. But I was happy for the Tonka truck he brought!

What was even more surprising is that Santa started speaking our family's German dialect. It was only later that I put together the German of Santa with the German of my Uncle Balzar. My grandmother came from a family of 15. All girls! Except for the "three kings": my uncle Balzar (short for Balthazar) Kaspar and – I know you are thinking – Melchior. But nope. Frank. I don't know what happened there!

My uncle Balzar was the fattest man I ever met. He ran two sausage stores in Yakima at the time. He lost out to Snyder's Sausage. Snyder's is still around in Yakima. And Snyder's sausage is better than anything my Uncle Balzar ever did!

Food, family and faith are often all wound together during Christmas. I hope the short memories of Christmas can bring back Christmas memories for you that – and this is key – point



Bishop Joseph Tyson

you more deeply to the mystery of Christ who unites the human family and allows it to become a family of faith.

I often reflect on how unusual the family tree of Jesus really is. The Gospel of Matthew names four women before naming the Blessed Virgin Mary: Tamar, Rahab, Uriah's wife and Ruth. I will spare you the details of these four women but they could be casted straight from today's soap operas or reality TV. God seems to choose the most unusual people to build his kingdom.

That is what God does with us, too. We all have family memories. Some are wonderful. Some not so much. Some are crazy. But God uses all of it to build bonds of faith with each of us. The genealogy of St. Matthew best tells this story. Read it carefully. Study it carefully. It tells the story of a true incarnation of how much God takes on our broken humanity both then and

today!

Allow me to pivot and make a note about our youth convention. I am grateful to Father Paul Heric as well as the network of clergy and youth ministers who managed to pull this off in the busy month of December. Out of the six priority areas identified in our Diocese of Yakima synodal process, "youth" emerged as the top priority. This is why we invest in an annual youth convention.

At the same time, I also want to uplift and note the depth of outreach with our Arco Iris movement. Think "Cursillo" and think "De Colores." The Arco Iris movement animated by Father Tomas Vidal in Granger is a kind of "first cousin" to Cursillo. But in place of a men's Cursillo and a women's Cursillo, Arco Iris holds a "parent" Cursillo and a "youth" Cursillo.

This Christmas season, we can rejoice that gifts of the Spirit abound with our many ways of reaching out to parents, to youth and to families through our conferences and spiritual offerings in the Diocese of Yakima. So many thanks for your gifts to the Annual Catholic Appeal. You make my ministry as bishop possible. You make so many of our catechetical and spiritual offerings possible, too!

Merry Christmas! Blessing on your New Year, too!

With every best wish and blessing,

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Celebrate Mary in December

Thursday, December 8, is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is the patronal feast of the United States and a holy day of obligation. In view of the great devotion many of our people have for Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Joseph Tyson is dispensing the obligation to attend Mass December 8 for those who attend a Guadalupe Mass on Monday, December 12.

As is already the case, Catholics

who are unable to attend Mass on a holy day of obligation may seek a dispensation from a priest or deacon of the Diocese, who can either excuse the person from the obligation completely, or commute it to another pious work, such as praying the Rosary. Those who are unable to attend Mass due to old age or illness are already dispensed by church from the obligation to attend, and we are grateful for their prayers at home.

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.

Central Washington Catholic

NOVEMBER 2022 • Volume 63 • Issue 11

PUBLISHER

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The Central Washington Catholic (ISSN 0195-1831) is published monthly by the Diocese of Yakima, 5301-A Tieton Drive, Yakima, WA 98908-3493.

Submission schedule: Deadline for the submission of material is at noon on the first day of the month of publication.

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Christmas Collection to Support Programs Across Diocese

From supporting expectant parents to helping the elderly remain in their own homes, Catholic Charities brings hope to life in the Diocese 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 with donations to the Christmas Collection.

"I am very grateful for the many ways our parishioners become Christ for others



each year through the Christmas collection," said Bishop Joseph Tyson. "In advance, I thank you all for your generosity."

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 serves more than 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. For more information on the mission of Catholic Charities, visit www.hopetolife.org.

How Well Do You Know the 'Facts of Your Faith'?

See how well you can do in testing yourself on some basics of the Catholic Faith. Here are seven questions to challenge you. Answers follow at the end.

1. Which Apostle is known for his writings to various settlements of people?

- a) Thomas
- b) Paul
- c) Matthias
- d) Andrew

2. What is the meaning of the word, "Catholic"?

- a) Holy
- b) Christian
- c) Universal
- d) True

3. Is Jesus fully divine or fully human?

- a) Divine
- b) Human
- c) Both
- d) Neither

4. In the Bible, how many books are in the Pentateuch?

- a) 32
- b) 41
- c) 10
- d) 5

5. The Church teaches that souls still needing purification from minor sins, at death, go to:

- a) Purgatory
- b) Limbo

c) Hell

d) A transcendental state

6. Could a Roman Catholic priest be married?

- a) Never
- b) With special permission
- c) If he is already married before Ordination
- d) If he was married and his wife died, or marriage was annulled

7. What do you remind yourself of when you make the sign of the cross with holy water?

- a) Your Baptism
- b) Jesus is the true water of life
- c) Jesus' tears during His passion
- d) That one day you will be "dust"

Answers:

7. a) Your Baptism.
 6. d) If he was married and his wife died or if a previous marriage was annulled by the Church.
 5. a) Purgatory; b) Limbo.
 4. d) Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Bible which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
 3. c) Both; 4. d) The
 2. c) Universal; 3. c) Both; 4. d) The
 1. b) Paul; 2. c) Universal; 3. c) Both; 4. d) The

Information for this quiz has been adapted from sources including, "Are You Smarter Than a Catholic School Kid?" by Jouviane Alexandre on zoo.com; funtrivia.com; and Diocese of Westminster Youth Ministry website, dowym.com.



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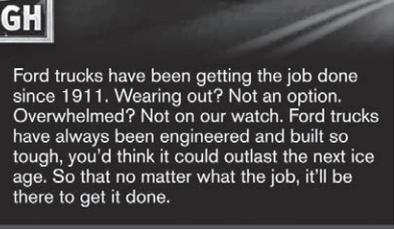
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**The more things change,
 the more they stay the same.**









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The 60-foot-tall Norway spruce tree from Monsignor Siler's family home.

Wenatchee Valley,” he recalled. The Siler siblings also talked their generous parents into letting them open one Christmas present on the Feast of St. Nicholas, December 6.

However, not every tradition revolves around Santa Claus. Growing up in Pajacuaran, Mexico, **Father Lalo Barragan**, now pastor of Our Lady of the Desert Church in Mattawa, noted that his family

“didn’t celebrate Santa Claus.” Instead, they “celebrated the Three Magi.” The way this worked, the children wrote letters to the Magi, asking for particular gifts. Then, they would each place a letter

in a shoe under their bed, January 5 or 6. In the morning when they awoke, presents would be under the bed or next to the bed. How did the Magi manage to sneak in without waking the children? “Our parents kept us up really late so we were exhausted, and the gifts came about 3 a.m.,” Father said. He was especially thankful one year when his first soccer ball appeared beside his bed.

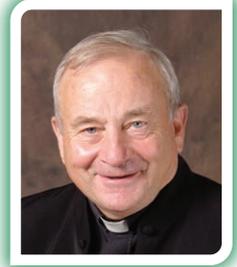
Father Richard Sedlacek, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Selah, noted that “as a priest, you begin to realize



Father Lalo Barragan

how important Christmas really is.” In childhood, “we were poor,” he recalled, and Christmas “was a simple thing but beautiful.” As a priest, however, he has come to appreciate the powerful message of Christmas: “God became a human to fix this life. What’s lost in the Garden is restored through Jesus and Mary.... He comes to save the whole human race....He comes to give meaning and purpose to life, especially to suffering.”

Please remember to thank your parish priest and diocesan officials this Christmas season for the journey of life which has led them to us. May all of our clergy and religious be richly blessed now and forever. Read on (page 2) for a Christmas reflection from Bishop Tyson...



Father Richard Sedlacek

You’re Invited to Magnificat Zoom Sessions

The Magnificat Adult Faith Formation program continues through December and January with an **online only** format. These Zoom sessions will take place through the winter months.

Presenters on the agenda in December and early January include:

Saturday, Dec. 10: Anchoring Science in our Faith: “Why Would God Allow Suffering?”

Following an opening prayer, Father Jaime Chacon and Becky Cates will present in English from 9 to 11 a.m. at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84116935317>

Tuesday, Dec. 13: Anthropology.

Father Dan Steele will present in English from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84116935317>

Thursday, Dec. 15: Anchoring Science in our Faith: “Scientific Evidence of a Soul.”

Father Jaime Chacon will present in Spanish from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the

following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89090870889>

Saturday, Dec. 17: Anchoring Science in our Faith: “Scientific Evidence of a Soul.”

Following an opening prayer, Father Jaime Chacon and Becky Cates will present in English from 9 to 11 a.m. at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84116935317>

Wednesday, Jan. 4: Virtual Reunion with Catechists.

During this Zoom reunion, Bishop Joseph Tyson, Father Edgar Quiroga and Valeria Flores will discuss Confirmation Liturgy Training, in English, from 6 to 7 p.m., at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82656274445>

The same topic will be discussed in Spanish from 7 to 8 p.m., at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89886347060>

Saturday, Jan. 7: Marian Class (Spanish)

Sandra Barros will present in Spanish

from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the following link (passcode 198438): <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86570287108>

Tuesday, Jan. 10: Spirituality.

Father Dan Steele will present in English from 7 to 8:30 p.m., at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84116935317>

Thursday, Jan. 12: Anchoring Science in our Faith: “Why Be Catholic?”

Father Jaime Chacón will present in Spanish from 7 to 8:30 p.m., at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89090870889>

Saturday, Jan. 14: Anchoring Science in our Faith: “Why Be Catholic?”

Father Jaime Chacon and Becky Cates will present in English from 9 to 11 a.m., at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84116935317>

Check next month’s newsletter, as well as the diocesan website, www.yakimadiocese.org, for more information. For details about the Magnificat program, contact Valeria Flores at (509) 759-7791 or valeria.flores@yakimadiocese.net.

Thank You for Your ACA Gift

We wish to thank everyone who made a pledge to the Diocesan Annual Catholic Appeal. Your generosity each year helps Bishop Joseph Tyson and the Diocese of Yakima to continue to provide the ministries and administrative help that support our 39 parishes and three missions in our seven counties.

If you have not already made a pledge, we ask that you please consider doing so today. To learn more, and to make a donation online, visit www.yakimadiocese.org and click on “Annual Catholic Appeal” at the top of the page. Our theme this year is “Walking Together in Christ.” Thank you again for walking with us in prayer, service and generosity.

