

# You are invited to Christmas at Christ the King!

#### DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve

Capitol Center for the Arts 44 South Main Street 4:00 pm

St. John the Evangelist Church 60 South Main Street 12:00 am (Midnight)

#### DECEMBER 25 Christmas Day

St. John the Evangelist Church 9:00 am & 11:00 am



Christmas is a holy day of obligation fulfilled by attending Mass on Christmas Eve or Day. However, it does not fulfill your Sunday obligation. On Sunday, December 26, there will be three Masses: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, and 11:00 am. (There will be no 4:00 pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, December 25.)

### Dear Friends,

When we started this new venture of a monthly magazine over the summer, we dreamed that twice each year we would send it out to every registered household in the parish. This issue is the first step in making that dream a reality. We are so grateful to all who share their talents, financial support, and most of all their stories of how Jesus has changed their life so that *Proclaim* may be available.

Our mission with *Proclaim* is to tell the stories of Jesus alive and working in and through others. It is important that we share these stories with each other. Sharing our stories is a way to encourage others in their faith, reminding them of their own encounters with the divine, as well as sharing the Gospel message with those who may not yet know Jesus. To that end, we hope that you will read this copy of the magazine and then pass it on. Help us to spread the love of Jesus. Please also support the advertisers who have chosen to advertise with us and make *Proclaim* a self-supporting publication.

We are once again holding our 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Mass at the Capitol Center for the Arts. This will allow us to welcome all visitors, without requiring reservations, and be able to focus on a celebration of Jesus' birth together as a community. Celebrations in the church will take place at midnight and on Christmas morning. We hope that you are able to join us together with your whole family. Through the generosity of a parishioner, we have a special gift to give out this year: Chris Stefanick's book, *Living Joy*. Make sure to pick up your copy!

Please know that if this season brings mourning or loneliness to your heart, I am praying for you intentionally. If it feels overwhelming, reach out. We have people who would love to visit with you over the phone or in person. Just call the parish office, 603.224.2328, and ask for a little Christmas joy to be brought your way. While our celebrations may not always reflect the warmth of family and friends that we see portrayed all around us in society, the miracle that God became human so that we may be in communion with Him should bring comfort and joy.

On behalf of the parish staff, I wish you all a wonderful holy season of Advent and a very merry Christmas. May God bless you and your families abundantly and may you experience the peace, joy, and power of the Incarnation in your lives.

Yours in Christ,

## Father Rich

Father Richard Roberge, Pastor of Christ the King Parish



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JESUS!

Here we are in Advent, the beautiful, hopeful season of anticipating the Lord's coming. I trust you have your Advent wreaths and calendars all set out and you're calmly and quietly preparing for Christ's birth! Oh... wait...no? There's nothing quiet or calm about your Christmas preparations? Well, join the club, I'm right there with you.

As much as Andrew, my boys, and I try to "prepare the way of the Lord," in a reverent and calm fashion, we tend to get sucked into the vortex of secular culture and lose sight of what the Advent Season and Christmas Season are all about. But, even when we lose sight or get distracted with the hustle and bustle that this season inevitably brings, we always have little ways in our home that bring us right back to Jesus.

On our Christmas tree hangs a little cupcake ornament that, when a button is pushed, it sings "Happy Birthday, Jesus." (Depending on the size and age of your children, you might want to strategically place this ornament. There's only so many times you can hear the

Happy Birthday song before your eye starts twitching and through gritted teeth you threaten to hide the ornament.) We have several other non-singing ornaments and visual pieces that depict the real Christmas story in some way and pull our hearts and minds to that miraculous night in Bethlehem.

Four years ago, a movie titled *The Star* was released and it quickly became a family tradition that we would watch this movie as much as humanly possible during the Advent and Christmas seasons. *The Star* tells the Christmas story from the point of view of the animals involved and my boys and I absolutely love it. There's humor for folks young and old, the soundtrack is fun, and (not to spoil it for you guys) at the end a baby is born who changed the whole world.

Depending on how much is going on the day of Christmas Eve, I'll either bake or pick up a birthday cake and have "Happy Birthday, Jesus!" written on it. After we go to Christmas Eve Mass, we go home, sing happy birthday to Jesus and enjoy a meal and some cake with family and friends. On Christmas Day, we do the usual opening of gifts, but we pray prior to that and we sing "Happy Birthday, Jesus" periodically through the day.

It's these little ways that make it easy and fun for us to keep Jesus at the center of this sometimes distracting and chaotic season. I encourage you to invite Him into that chaos and I pray His peace, light, and love are the greatest gifts for you this season. God Bless you and Merry Christmas from my family to yours! ◆



Jen Albee is the Coordinator of Young Disciples at Christ the King Parish.

# Why Do We Celebrate Come ALIVE Christmas on December 25?

Do you hear "Christians stole December 25!" or "Jesus wasn't even born in December!" around this time, sometimes even from television and movies? It is an argument meant to diminish the holiday as a Christian celebration today and to increase the day's secular nature. However, it is a statement that many Christians seem to have accepted, that December 25 as the day of Jesus' birth was simply made up!

I went searching for a definitive answer to this month's question. What I found was two opposing points of view. One side argues that December 25 existed as a celebration of Christ's birth independent of all pagan celebrations. The other side states that Christmas was added to December 25 to indoctrinate pagans, or perhaps to help pagans feel comfortable with the new Christian religion.

In my opinion, the evidence for the birth of Christ being tied to December 25 independent of pagan celebrations is quite compelling. Before we get into this evidence, however, it is important to understand that the arguments against this point of view stem from two central facts.

First, as Father Francis X. Weiser says in *History & Origin*: Feast of the Nativity, "No official reason has been handed down in ecclesiastical documents for the choice of this date." Second, the official institution of December 25 as the Feast of the Nativity came in the 300s A.D. While skeptics find this date suspiciously late because it falls after the institution in the 200s A.D. of several important pagan celebrations on

or around December 25, we as Catholics understand this was not necessarily "the invention of a new teaching but the formal articulation of something that was believed from the beginning," in the words of the *Denver* Catholic staff, the writers for the Archdiocese of Denver's Catholic publication.

While the formal institution of Christmas came later, there is a quote from Hippolytus of Rome, Church theologian, in his Commentary on the Book of Daniel from 204 A.D. which states: "For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was December 25." Here we find proof that this date was special to Christians prior to the institution of the pagan celebrations from which they supposedly stole it.

But why December 25 when Jesus' birth date is not mentioned in the Scriptures? There was a celebration in the ancient world, before the time of Jesus, called Anno Mundi, the Creation of the World, observed on March 25 because of its proximity to the spring equinox. The annunciation of Mary's pregnancy with Jesus also came to be celebrated by early Christians on March 25 as "both dates celebrate events when God entered the world: first through the act of creation and again through the incarnation," according to the Denver Catholic staff. Nine months later, on December 25, Jesus is

Finally, there simply are not writings in existence that imply that Christians intended to establish December 25 as a Christian holiday for the purpose

of indoctrination. I leave the choice to you to decide if this evidence compels you. Either way, I would like to end by proposing that we share a common struggle with the early Christians – balancing our religious holiday with the secular celebrations all around us.

On the topic of Christmas, Kendra Tierney writes in The Catholic All Year Compendium, "I do want to leave room for just enough hedonism and excess to make the holiday memorable to my children... but without, you know, turning them into greedy, consumerist, secularists." This time of year, while some may bemoan the presents, elves, and ornaments of it all, I challenge us to see it as an opportunity to practice being in the world, but not of it – in the words of the birthday boy. Can we give and receive gifts while remembering it all pales in comparison to the gift we were given in the coming of Jesus? Can we prepare our homes for family while internally preparing our hearts for the Lord? Let us celebrate, be merry, and cling to the reason for this season!



Haley Judd is the Coordinator of Adult Discipleship at Christ the King Parish.



#### by Emily Planchet | Photos Courtesy of Epilogos Charities, Inc.

It all began with an invitation – though not necessarily a welcome one at the time.

Ignatius MacLellan, a longtime parishioner of Christ the King Parish, had already been volunteering at the parish's Food Pantry when he heard about Epilogos Charities, Inc. The nonprofit, founded by Mike and Susie Jenkins, also parishioners, seeks to improve the lives of the Salvadoran people by bringing groups of volunteers from the United States on trips to do community development projects in El Salvador, specifically the village of San José Villanueva (Christ the King Parish's sister parish).

Ignatius loved the idea and had offered a financial donation from the Food Pantry to continue the work. Mike, however, had something different in mind. "He said, 'Why don't you come and see it, and experience it, and smell it," Ignatius recalls. "As soon as he said, 'smell it,' I said, 'I'm never going to go to El Salvador." Of course, sometimes God has other plans.

Eventually convinced to join a trip in 2006, the experience touched Ignatius deeply. Since then, the man who said he would never go to El Salvador has been there 23 times over the last 16 years. Now he goes as a leader, helping to guide the group over the course of the week, keep the schedule, and navigating the culture in a country so foreign in so many different ways.

Such a dramatic reversal can only spark the question: Why such a change of heart? What transformed Ignatius from refusing the initial invitation to becoming the "Pied Piper" (as some now call him) of the Epilogos trips? The change, Ignatius would say, is due in a large part to the Salvadorans themselves. The beauty and openness of the people and their seemingly innate joy seemed to contrast so much with the culture of North America.

The experience helped shift Ignatius' perspective. Though the trip is meant to help those who live in immense structural poverty, Ignatius finds that in some ways it's just the opposite. "At some point you realize that you're the one who needs help," he says. That's why, when talking about trips to El Salvador, Ignatius hesitates to use the words "mission trip." "I would call it a 'mutual mission' or a 'mutual service trip," he says. "The reality is that we need the Salvadorans. We need the Salvadorans in a really deep way."

Another reason Ignatius finds the trips so enriching is the diversity of the people who make up the group's participants. What had started out as a mainly student-based trip has now morphed into an experience where people of all ages, religions, and circumstances work together for a common purpose. "To have people from all sorts of faiths and backgrounds come and interact with this experience is an incredible thing," Ignatius says. The motto for the trips is Todos Somos Iguales ("We Are All Equal") and the respect the people show each other, regardless of differences, is evident as they complete their work over the week.

And there is definitely work involved. Over the course of the weeklong trip, the group completes the main portion of a house for one Salvadoran family. They also do community projects around the village of San José Villanueva,

#### **COVER PROFILE**

including painting murals, going into schools, and even visiting hospices. Ignatius says it can be grueling at times, but it's worth it when, at the end of the week, you get grateful hugs from the family and a simple thank you note from a child who now has a home.

While the physical labor can be a challenge, Ignatius finds that it's not the most difficult thing people will experience on the trip. It's not just structural poverty that the people of San José Villanueva live with, but also the threat of gang violence. Some of the people who have received houses from Epilogos were driven out from a previous residence by gangs. But oftentimes there's very little that can be done. "The people are told 'Ver, oir, callar,' which means, 'See, hear, shut up," explains Ignatius. The people know that if they report gang activity, they could be killed.

So, as part of their service, the group offers the opportunity for the Salvadorans to speak about their experiences with the gangs. "It's a sad but powerful experience," Ignatius says. "Building a house in 90-degree heat is physically hard, but it is nothing compared to what it is to sit still and listen to our brothers and sisters, members of our Body of Christ, tell the impact that gang violence has in their lives." The group builds a "circle of security," where people feel physically safe and emotionally able to open up.

And while there are moments of sorrow, there are so many more beautifully happy moments, moments that people going on the trip don't necessarily expect. "We have our expectations about why we're there, but we have to let God use the trip and use us for whatever the real purpose of the trip is," says Ignatius. Sometimes, it's not about building a house

at all. In one instance he recalls meeting a mother with three children – two of whom had special needs. He had taken a picture of their family before he had left to go home. Before the next trip he had learned that one of children with special needs had died. Realizing that he had the last picture of the whole family together, Ignatius was able to get it framed and presented it to the mother as a special gift at the end of their next trip. "I told her, 'I will never forget you, and I will never forget your son," Ignatius says and he hasn't. Now Ignatius knows that in a little house in El Salvador is a photo of a family that provides a little comfort to a grieving mother.

In the end, even though the trip lasts only a week, many of the people have trouble leaving. "The real challenge is coming home," Ignatius says. The bond between the members who have this shared experience is powerful and can be hard to let go of. Though the bond isn't just between the group participants, it's between the group leaders as well. Ignatius is quick to emphasize that it's the efforts of the whole team, and the support of Christ the King Parish, that makes Epilogos trips so successful.

So, even if you've never thought of going on a "mutual mission" trip before, Ignatius invites you to reconsider. This experience is meant for everyone, no matter who you are. "Everyone brings their own unique gifts, and I ask them to bring them," he says. His experience of the beauty of the people of San José Villanueva has changed him forever, helping him even more to see Jesus in everybody. And that's what Ignatius knows everyone will experience if they journey with him. "I want people to understand the beauty and the power of the Catholic faith in action." •

Top: Susan and Mike Jenkins, founders of Epilogos Charities Middle: Ignatius with Valentina, third generation of a family who has been assisted by Epilogos. Bottom: Mission Trip 2015







#### OUR SISTER PARISH

To find out more about San José Villanueva, visit www. christhekingnh.org/oursister-parish. The next trip to El Salvador is in February 2022. Sign up today!



#### By Michael Clark | Photography by Will Judd

"You're never done growing in your relationship with Christ," says Kathy Planchet as she reflects upon her faith journey and her work as parish secretary at Christ the King Parish. Luckily, we do get guidance along the way. Indeed, sometimes that guidance can come in very surprising forms. Kathy relates just such an experience: "One day, when I was 22, I was coming out of church and I got pinned between two cars in the parking lot." Where many would see this as simply an unfortunate accident, Kathy

identifies a purpose behind it.

"It was rather providential," she says, because the time of hospitalization and recovery was to prove crucial to the course of her life. "It made me stop and think," she says. Throughout this period of reflection, she was able to assess her life and contemplate where it ought to go. "God was probably giving me little hints along the way but I wasn't taking them, so therefore I had to get hit by a car to start listening to him."

One of the results of the accident

was that she became closer to Gus, whom she would later marry. "I've learned a lot through him, and his spirituality has had a great deal of influence on mine," she says.

Another person who had a major influence on Kathy's faith was her grandmother. Kathy recalls the time when her grandmother received the news that her son had died. "I went into her bedroom to see her. Over her bed hung a needlework image of the Sacred Heart," she says. "Despite the great grief she felt over the loss of her son, she looked at the image of the Sacred Heart, and through her tears she pointed at it and she said 'Thy will be done." No longer than a half-hour later, Kathy's grandmother was in her living room, sitting on her couch, saying the rosary. Kathy says, "Seeing such a powerful display of faith in the face of grief made such an impact on my own faith."

Kathy regards her work as parish secretary for Christ the King Parish as a way of bringing her own unique gifts to the work of the Church. "Everybody's gifted with something and we're all contributing to bringing forward the Kingdom of Heaven on earth," she says. The gifts she brings to her work as our Parish Secretary are her ability to interact well with people, to remember their names, and to be a kind, helpful, and welcoming presence to others, whether they are contacting the parish for a routine inquiry or are contacting the parish in the midst of a difficult life event.

Kathy is often the first person many talk to when they call or visit the parish office. When they do call or visit, especially if under difficult circumstances, Kathy sees it as essential to be there with a listening ear and a compassionate presence. ◆

#### DECEMBER 2021

#### **December 1: Adoration**

Men's Ministry hosts monthly adoration on the first Wednesday of the month from 7:00-8:00 pm. Come join us on Wednesday, December 1. All are welcome!

#### **December 2: Potluck Supper**

Thursdays after the 5:30 pm Mass, there is a potluck to get to know other parishioners in Barry Hall (the building behind the church). Everyone is welcome!

#### **December 2: Jam Sessions**

For those interested in singing or learning a musical instrument, we meet on Thursdays at 7:00 pm in Barry Hall. For more information, email Greg Malette at regalmalette@gmail.com.

#### **December 2: Parish Choir**

The parish choir meets every Thursday in the choir loft from 6:30-8:00 pm. All singers and musicans are welcome! For more information, contact Michelle Dokka at michelled@christthekingnh.org.

#### **December 5: Youth Group**

All high school-aged teens are welcome to Encounter! Encounter is a teen-led discussion group where we can learn about the Catholic faith. We meet every Sunday from 12:30-2:00 pm in Barry Hall. Connect with us at encounter@christthekingnh.org.

#### December 6: Miraculous Medal Novena

Join us every Monday night at 7:00 pm in the church for the Miraculous Medal Novena.

#### **December 7: Respect Life**

Come join the Respect Life Ministry Prayer Cell based at Our Lady of Fatima Parish. We meet in the church on Tuesdays at 9:30 am and every first Saturday at 2:00 pm. For more information, contact Beth Gaby at concord40dfl@gmail. com.

#### December 8: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Today, we celebrate Mary's conception without sin. This is a holy day of obligation and Mass will be available at 9:00 am, 12:10 pm, and 7:00 pm.

#### December 10 & 12: Emmaus

Emmaus is a place where every disciple of Christ of every age can come and grow deeper in their Catholic faith and deeper in fellowship with their church community. The theme for the year is "We Believe: Understanding the Nicene Creed." This month, we will be discussing "Incarnate: God Became Man." For more information and to register, visit christthekingnh.org/emmaus.

#### **December 11: Men's Ministry**

All men are welcome to come together for coffee and conversation! We meet in Barry Hall on the 2nd & 4th Saturday of the month at 8:00 am. For more information, contact Ken Roth at menofctk@gmail.com.

#### **December 24: Christmas Eve**

We will gather tonight at the Capitol Center for the Arts, 44 South Main Street, for Mass at 4:00 pm. Midnight Mass will be available at 12:00 am in the church. (There will be no 12:10 pm daily Mass today.)

#### **December 25: Christmas Day**

Join us for Mass in the church at 9:00 am or 11:00 am. Christmas is a holy day of obligation fulfilled by attending Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. However, it does not fulfill your Sunday obligation.

#### December 25 & 26: Weekend Mass Times

On Sunday, December 26, there will be three Masses: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, and 11:00 am. (There will be no 4:00 pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, December 25.)

#### **JANUARY 2022**

# January 1: Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Today, we celebrate the Mary as mother of Jesus Christ. Today is a holy day of obligation. Mass will be available on Friday, December 31, at 4:00 pm and Saturday, January 1, at 10:00 am.

#### January 11: Alpha

Alpha meets every
Tuesday evening
for 12 weeks.
All are welcome
to attend and no questions are off
the table. For more information,
visit christthekingnh.org/alpha.

#### January 18: Youth Alpha

Explore the basics of faith with other teens in a relaxed way – faith, fun, food, and friends. Youth Alpha is for all teens including those with no Christian or church background and also those with a lot of experience. For more information, visit christthekingnh. org/alpha.

#### SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

#### **December 4 & 5:**

Christmas Flowers (Parish) Food Pantry (Parish)

#### **December 8:**

Immaculate Conception (Parish)

#### **December 11 & 12:**

Fuel & Utilities (Parish) Retired Religious (National)

#### **December 18 & 19:**

Maintenance (Parish)

#### **December 25 & 26:**

Christmas (Parish)

#### **CONTACT INFO**

#### **Christ the King Parish**

72 South Main Street Concord, NH 03301 603.224.2328 www.christthekingnh.org







#### **Weekend Masses**

Saturday: 4:00 pm Sunday: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:00 am

#### **Weekday Masses**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 12:10 pm Thursday: 5:30 pm

#### **Reconciliation Times**

Thursday: 4:45-5:15 pm Saturday: 2:30-3:30 pm

#### **Pastor**

Father Rich Roberge frrich@christthekingnh.org

#### **Deacon**

Deacon Winton DeRosia deaconwinton@christthekingnh.org

#### **Director of Parish Life**

Angie Glendinning angie@christthekingnh.org

#### **Business Manager**

Charlie Burr charlie@christthekingnh.org

#### **Bookkeeper**

Liz Geary liz@christthekingnh.org

#### **Parish Secretary**

Kathy Planchet kathy@christthekingnh.org

#### Communications Coordinator

Sarah Jane Roth sarahjane@christthekingnh.org

#### Coordinator of Adult Discipleship

Haley Judd haley@christthekingnh.org

# Coordinator of Young Disciples

Jen Albee jen@christthekingnh.org

#### **Director of Music Ministry**

Michelle Dokka michelled@christthekingnh.org

#### Facilitator of Community Engagement

Jeff Litchfield jeff@christthekingnh.org

#### MONTHLY OFFERTORY REPORT

	10/17/21	10/24/21	10/31/21
Offertory	\$9,408.00	\$11,299.86	\$6,536.33
Online	\$8,375.83	\$6,138.00	\$5,501.95
Total	\$17,783.83	\$17,437.86	\$12,038.28

#### SACRIFICAL GIVING

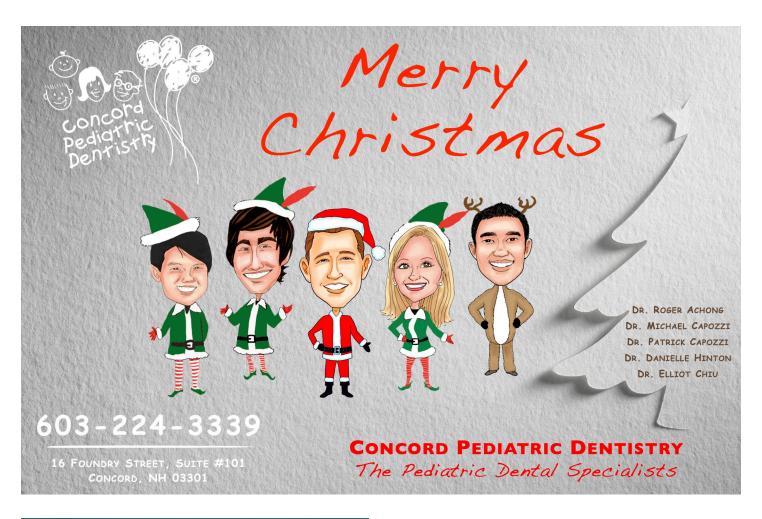
For more information on the parish's online giving program, visit **christthekingnh.org/ give** or call Liz Geary at the parish office, **603.224.2328** To request monthly parish envelopes in the mail, call Kathy Planchet at **603.224.2328**.



Call or email us today!

30 Terrill Park Dr p: 603.226.4300 Concord, NH 03301 e: info@nhprintmail.com www.nhprintmail.com Questions about life?
Let's talk.

christthekingnh.org/alpha









You are receiving *Proclaim* as a gift from Christ the King Parish. If you would like to update your information, please contact the parish office at 603.224.2328 or parish@christthekingnh.org.

