



THE PASTOR'S POST

TAKE A STEP

Dear Parish Family:

We are blessed to have Deacon Nick Waldron with us in the days of Christmas! A true Christmas gift for us these days. I was taking time the past few days of the many things that then-Seminarian, now Deacon Nick, worked on when he was here. There were many!

One of the last things he did was help us to design the stairwells in our school. When you come there, we have a stairwell with theological virtues, another with the names of significant saints, and another with titles of the Blessed Mother, mostly from the Litany of Loreto. Our hope is that each time kids and teachers and parishioners take a step up the stairs, they will be reminded of something greater, the power of our faith, as they move in the right direction.

That's the point of a Catholic school. It is not just the mission of a Catholic school though. It's the mission for each one of us. Each day, we should try to take a step in the right direction. Never on our own or in the ways of the world but always in the direction of Jesus Christ.

Think of the Gospels today. Each person we hear about - Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and angels - all take a step in the right direction. Because of those steps, God enters the world and transforms it. While you and I are not Jesus Christ, we are called to do the same. Move each moment in the right direction, so we can draw closer to Christ and to follow his example.

Christmas is a good opportunity for you and me to work on taking a step in the right direction. This is a personal journey for us. Are there parts in our lives where we are heading in the wrong direction? Is there more we can do to move in the direction of the Gospel? Do we need to step away from certain things in our lives? Create some more space for God to dwell? Do not get overwhelmed. Try to take one step in the right direction. Another step will follow.

One of the good things about being Catholic is that we do not walk alone, we walk together in the right direction. We have seen that over the past year as we have prayed, advocated for and supported our immigrant brothers and sisters as they face horrendous times. At the same time we have challenged the steps of others that are not in line with the Gospel. Everyday, though, we see it in how we come together to form our kids, care for those in need, and carry out so much of the work here that needs to be done. We are not perfect, for sure. At the same time, we are trying to move a step at a time in the direction the Gospel leads us.

I hope this Christmas can be a good time for you to take a step, particularly in the life of our parish. If you are coming back to Church today, we are so glad you're here. If you pray with us all of the time, how great that you are here too! Whether returning or a regular, a saint or a little skeptical about the whole thing, you have a place here at St. Brigid's...and we need you! You can see some ways to get involved here but most important, please come and pray with us. Your presence makes an incredible difference. Today is a great example of this.



This year, I took a step back in the classroom. I teach 5th and 6th grade religion in our incredible Catholic school (these are some of our wonderful - and little crazy -sixth graders on the steps!). It has been a big step and a lot of work, to be honest. But it has been a good step for me and I hope for the students I teach. These steps we take are not always easy. They were not easy for Mary and Joseph. They were a challenge for the Magi and missionary shepherds and messaging angels and others. Because they took a step, Jesus entered into the world and transformed it.

Let's take a step and try to do the same. Please pray for me. I promise the same.

Featherston



A MESSAGE FROM ~~SEMINARIAN~~ DEACON NICK!

Dear Friends,

Wow is it great to be back! Coming home after all these months has been nothing short of exciting for many reasons. First, being in a place like St. Brigid's with you all for Christmas will certainly be an incredible source of joy. Also, it's the first time I've been able to travel home for Christmas since the beginning of my four years in Rome. The song lyric "I'll be home for Christmas" has had a different ring to it this year for me.

Since I left the parish in July, the months have flown by! I returned to Rome in late August to keep chipping away at more studies while making my final preparations for priestly ordination in June. On October 2nd, I was ordained a deacon in St. Peter's Basilica with my classmates (With some St. Brigid's celebrities in attendance). What a day that was! I'm often amazed by what the Lord has given me in this ministry and I'm so glad I get to share it with you all during this season. It's also just nice to be away from the hustle and bustle that life in Rome can often bring.

There's a lot of words you could use to describe Rome: Beautiful, historical, vibrant. But one word I certainly would not use is quiet. To put it short: the place has been mobbed. It goes without saying, Christmas is a busy time for Rome. Shortly before leaving for New York, I woke up early one morning to beat the crowds and spend some time in St. Peter's Basilica. It was a nice morning to just roam around and see the Basilica mostly empty before the rush of visitors and pilgrims. It's a place that never gets old no matter how many times you visit, with all its towering marble columns and mosaics. But as with many places like St. Peter's, there are some stories and parts that go unnoticed and are easy to miss amidst the crowds.

One of these places that I stumbled across on my visit was a small, tattered painting in the back corner of the Basilica. It's a classic image of Mary holding the child Jesus titled "Mother of Pilgrims." One thing that you notice immediately about the



painting is that, unlike most of the artwork around it, it's in pretty rough shape. Most of the image is bruised and faded beyond repair after years of neglect. The painting, though old, is actually the newest addition to the Basilica. Pope Francis, noticing the beaten painting on a trip to a small town in Italy in 2020, asked that the painting be brought to Saint Peter's and displayed prominently among the rest of the mosaics and statues.

Certainly, the many nativity scenes, decorations, and movies we see during this season tell the beauty of the Christmas story well. You know the scene: the baby Jesus laying in a crib with Mary and Joseph adoring him. However, this bruised painting of Mary and Jesus shows a side of the Christmas story we often don't hear: the circumstances of Jesus' birth were messy. In fact, Jesus was born while Mary and Joseph were far away from home struggling to find a place to stay for the night. Needless to say, the image of Christmas that Mary and Joseph may have had quickly became bruised and tattered.

That might be the image of Christmas we know better. The Christmas season is often a time of trying to keep it all together. Things can feel "off." The image of Christmas we often see in commercials, newspapers, or magazines is different from the one we experience. Our experience can seem far more bruised and tattered. And yet, amidst the bruised and tattered image, is Jesus. It is Jesus who comes to identify with our weakness and our messiness, and it is Jesus who comes to rescue us from the peril we so often find ourselves in. May this season of Christmas be one where we find

Jesus, or perhaps *re-find* him. Perhaps we won't find him in a perfect crib of gold, but as a rescuer and a savior in the bruised and tattered moments that our lives so often can bring.

I pray that, in finding the child Jesus, this season would be for you all a season of joy and peace. May God bless you and your families this Christmas and always.



Merry Christmas,
Deacon Nick

