



# OLFF Newsletter--December 2022

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## A Christmas Greeting & Carol for You.....



Come, O Radiant Dawn (Isaiah 9:1)

Praising Jesus with this O Antiphon on December 21st seems fitting in the northern hemisphere. From this first day of winter and the day in the year with the least daylight we get sensible cues to the shift from darkness dominating our waking hours to the brightening of our days, even when that comes in 1 more second of daylight on December 22.

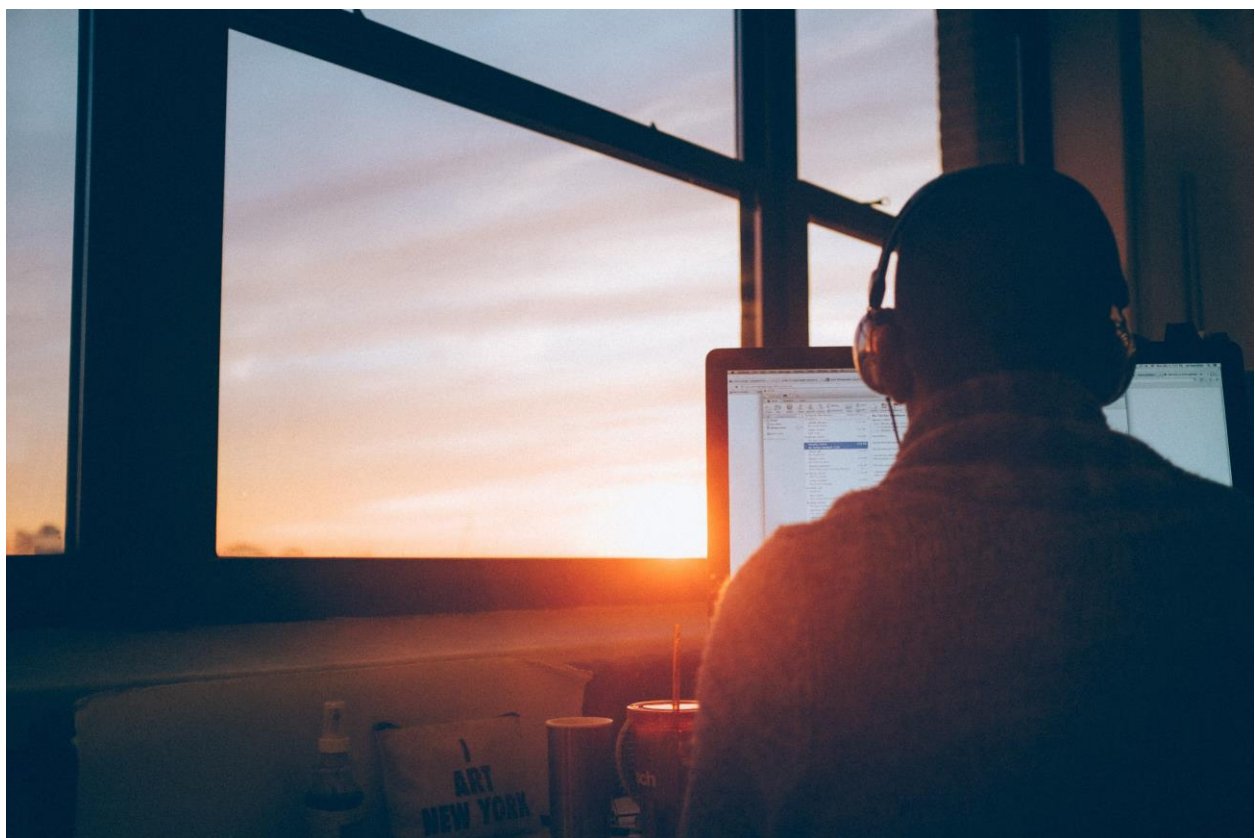
On behalf of the staff in the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation, I thank you for reflecting Christ, Radiant Dawn, in your witness of faith and your service to the local parish community. We rejoice with you in the pin-prick holes to the wide-flung openings the Holy Spirit has made in people's hearts and minds through your efforts as a catechetical leader. We offer you this Christmas carol as our shared wish that you experience the radical welcome of the Christ child as we await his second coming.

Merry Christmas and many blessings in 2023,

Lori, Georgette, Hannah, and Shawn



## NCCL Upcoming Events



Beginning in 2023 the National Community of Catechetical Leaders (NCCL) will be hosting several webinars and workshops to help leaders hone and develop their professional skills, assess their parish landscape and plan for the future. **[Click here for more information.](#)**

### **Digital Ministry & Leadership in Today's Church**

January 10, 2023 at 1pm

*Goals of the webinar:*

*The Digital Ministry and Leadership book and webinar will provide you with practical ways to (1) bring digital approaches, tools, methods, and media into church ministries (worship, faith formation and learning, prayer, spiritual formation)*

*(2) extend the ministry of the local church into online spaces and communities where more and more people gather to nurture, explore, and share their faith today.*

### **NCCL Conference--What's Working In Parent & Family Faith Formation**

February 15, 2023

***Made up of three--75 minute--workshops:***

#### **12pm (noon)--Family Faith Formation in the Parish**

- Dr. Kathie Amidei (St. Anthony on the Lake Parish, Pewaukee, WI)
- Patrice Spirou (Archdiocese of Atlanta)

#### **2pm--Family Faith Formation at Home**

- Catherine LaVecchia (Church of the Presentation, Upper Saddle River, NJ)

#### **4pm--Parent Faith Formation**

- Denise Utter (Family Living Faith, Chicago)

### **NCCL Conference--What's Working in Adult Faith Formation?**

February 16, 2023

***Made up of three--75 minute--workshops:***

#### **12pm (noon)--Faith Formation with Young Adults (20-30s)**

- Dr. Tracey Lamont (Loyola University Institute for Ministry, New Orleans)
- Cassie Schutzer (Young Adult Initiative, St. Meinrad Seminary)

#### **2pm--Faith Formation with Adults (40s-80s)**

- Sr. Ruth Bolarte (Villanova University and RENEW International)

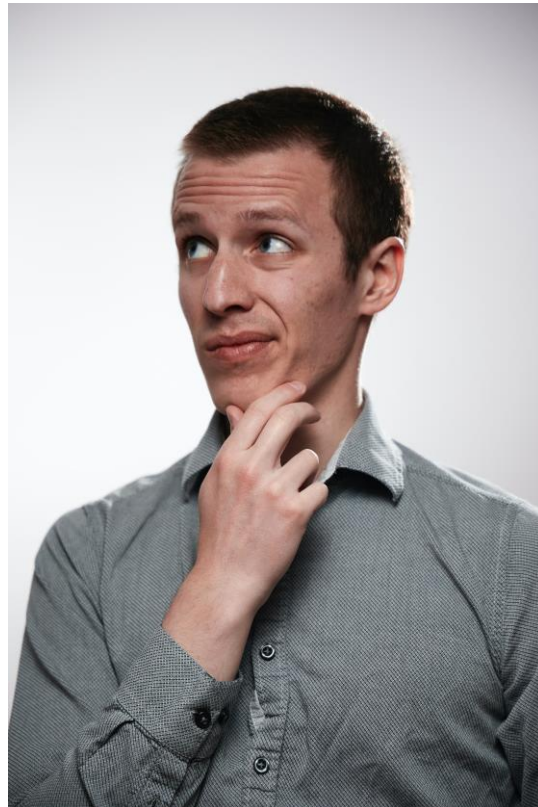


- Sr. Janet Schaeffler (Author, Adult Faith Formation Consultant)

#### **4pm--Adult Faith Formation Programming**

- John Roberto (NCCL Executive Director)

## **Five Inquiry Questions that will Shape Your Seekers Journey of Faith Webinar by Team RCIA**



Check out the [recording](#) of the latest Team RCIA webinar, and learn how to transform your adult initiation process with these five simple questions

TeamRCIA works to empower their members to become more confident, Holy-Spirit filled, and joyful catechumenate leaders by building on the four cornerstones of catechumenate ministry; foundation, evangelization, catechesis, and liturgy. To view more TeamRCIA content click [here](#).

## Highlights from LFFA: Hope--A Plan for True Happiness



**December 1, 2022**--LFFA was honored to have Erin O' Leary from the Church of the Holy Name in Minneapolis, Minnesota, present an Advent reflection on hope. Erin has spent years not only studying hope, but also living hope. In her presentation she gave a definition for hope, identified the importance of having hope, the effects that hope (or lack of hope) have on our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Erin encouraged the group to take the hope barometer test in order to gage their current level of hope. Far from leaving us where we were Erin shared some tips on how to increase our level of hope. Finally, she left the group with a faith plan for hope....

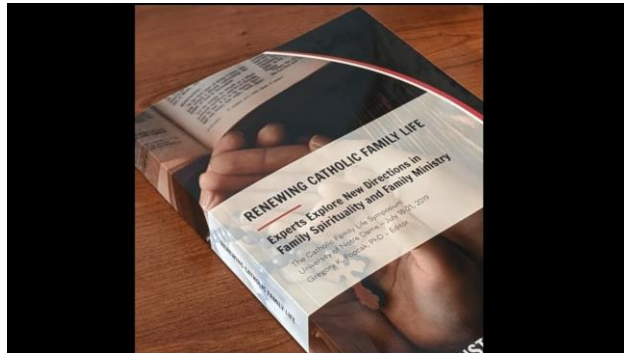
Happiness

Openness

Prayerfulness

Enthusiasm

## Next at LFFA Meeting: January 12



Next LFFA meeting we will be discussing Chapter 4 from the *Renewing Catholic Family Life* book. The chapter is entitled *The Nearest Hospital*. We will be discussing the discussion questions at the end of the chapter.

If you need a book, please contact Hannah Gonnevillle and she will get one to you. Paid LFFA members get a complimentary copy of the book (not including shipping cost if it needs to be mailed). Those who are not paid LFFA members can purchase the book for \$15 (plus shipping costs if it needs to be mailed). Supplies is limited.

## Christmas Season Discernment Retreat for Men



All Catholic, college-aged (18+ or older) men who are striving to live out their faith and follow God's will are encouraged to gather with Fr. Greg Dube, director of vocations and seminarians for the Diocese of Portland, and other priests from the diocese for a Christmas Season Discernment Retreat being held at the beautiful Marie Joseph Spiritual Center in Biddeford from **Friday, January 6, to Sunday, January 8.**

**This retreat will invite the men to ponder the following questions:**

1. What does it mean for me to fully follow Christ?
2. How does Jesus' call to Matthew inspire us to be more like Matthew in our everyday lives and in our discernment of where God is leading me?

If you would like more information or if you would like to attend, email Fr. Greg at [greg.dube@portlanddiocese.org](mailto:greg.dube@portlanddiocese.org).



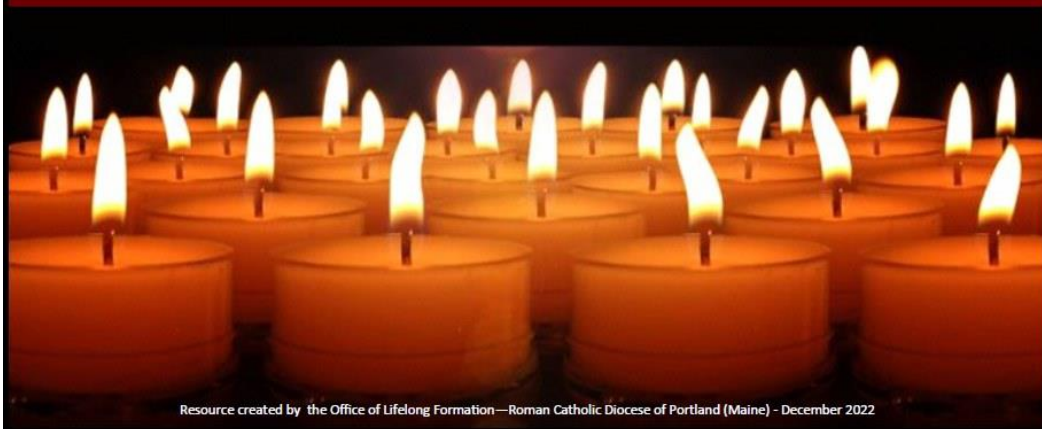
## Seasonal Household Blessings Resource



### *BLESSINGS FOR CATHOLIC FAMILY HOMES* *Christmas . Epiphany . Ordinary Time*

It is invigorating to create new family traditions and to continue to practice some of our time-honored Catholic traditions in creative ways. When we gather in celebration, we invite God to join our family in prayer, rituals of blessing, conversation, and playfulness. We recall that we are part of Christ's family - united with our spiritual ancestors and our sisters and brothers around the globe as imitators of Jesus. Christ is with us. He waits for us at the center of our home, our sanctuary. May the following blessings & prayers bring us ever closer to our Lord and to each other, in peace and love.

**"I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me". (Philippians 4:13)**



Resource created by the Office of Lifelong Formation—Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland (Maine) - December 2022

### Blessing of a Christmas Tree

(from Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers,  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pgs. 78-81)

When the tree has been prepared and decorated, the household gathers around it. A blessing can take place prior to lighting the tree for the first time.

**All:** (make the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** Let us glorify Christ, our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders, Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

**Reader:** Listen to the words of St. Paul in his letter to Titus (3:4-7):  
But when the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in the hope of eternal life.

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God. (brief silence)

**Leader:** Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

**All:** Lord, give light to our hearts.

**Leader:** That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.

**All:** Lord, give light to our hearts.

**Leader:** Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

*Time to light the Christmas tree!*



### Blessing of a Christmas Manger or Nativity Scene

(from Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers,  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pgs. 82-84)

In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi. He made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time. When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.



**All:** (make the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**All:** Who made heaven and earth.

**Reader:** Listen to God's Word from the holy Gospel according to Luke, Chapter 2 verses 1 through 8:

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So, all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives He brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to Him, who is 'God with us' and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

**All:** Amen

## CHRISTMAS Christ, our Savior, is born!

### FESTIVE CHRISTMAS MEAL PRAYER

On Christmas eve or morning, there is a traditional ritual of lighting and placing a white candle in our home. The candle is often placed in the center of the Advent wreath. The white candle is a visible sign which celebrates **Jesus as the Light of the World**. Lighting the candle and offering a brief prayer before our Christmas meal will focus our family on Christmas as a special day of gratitude and celebration. For Catholics, the Christmas meal is an extension of the celebration of the Catholic Mass. We welcome all who gather at our table, our home altar, where God is always present.

**All:** (make the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** God of love, we gather around this table on this Christmas day to thank you for the Word of God and the Holy Communion which nourish us. We thank you, Light of the World, for your message of hope. Out of Love, Your Son was born as an infant in a poor manger. As the angels announced his birth to the shepherds, we also, the church, the people of God, proclaim his birth to the world as a reminder that you became one of us so that we could become more like you. We receive your gift of peace as we ask you to bless this food, and all of us, in our celebration. We ask this in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.



Crèche photo compliments of the Hebert Family

### Feast of the Holy Family December 26, 2021

The Feast Day of the Holy Family falls on the Sunday after Christmas. On this day, we consecrate our family to the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary & Joseph. Each family is diverse, and the one element which is sacred to all families is the **call to love**. Strong and faith-filled families are the foundation for a healthy and holy community. May we all model ourselves after the **love of the Holy Family** and ask for their intercession for holiness.



### Family Prayer

Heavenly Father,  
We come before You to praise You and to thank You for the great gift of the family. Sustain all families and make them aware of the path to holiness upon which You call them, so that they might experience Your infinite mercy and find new ways to grow in love and service to the world. Amen.

Adapted from the official prayer for the  
[X World Meeting of Families](#), June 22-26, 2022



## The EPIPHANY : January 8, 2023—Sunday celebration; January 6—feast day

“...for today, I must stay at your house...” (Luke 19:5)

### Blessing of the Home and Household on the Epiphany

(from *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops –USCCB)

Whether or not a nativity scene is still displayed after Christmas day, display the 3 wise men, or magi, as they “come for a visit” in our home. The Magi represent all of us, God’s diverse peoples, who seek, in wonder and hope, to discover the presence of Christ on earth. The Magi represent each of us:

\* **bearer** of gifts that we give in our own time and in our own ways;

\* **receiver** of the most treasured gift we receive from God: Himself!

Gathering around the figures of the three kings and open a bible to Luke 19:1-9 to read from during the prayer.

**Leader:** Let us praise God, who fills our hearts and homes with peace.

**All:** Blessed be God forever.

**Leader:** The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us. It is Christ who enlightens our hearts and homes with his love. May all who enter this home find Christ’s life and love.

**Reader:** Listen to the words of the holy Gospel according to Luke 19:1-9:

He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone, I shall repay it four times over.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. The word of the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus Christ, the three kings presented their gifts to you in praise and adoration: grant that those living in this home may use their talents and abilities to your greater glory. May Christ dwell with us, keep us from all harm, and make us one in mind and spirit, now and forever. **All:** Amen.



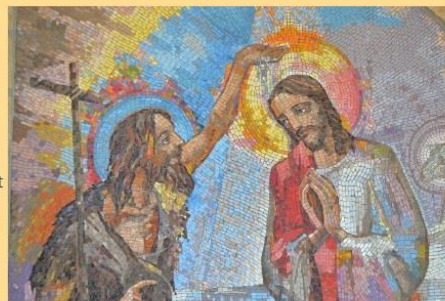
Star of Bethlehem (1887-1891—Sir Edward Burne-Jones)

## BAPTISM OF OUR LORD: January 9, 2023

Gospel Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

**THE BAPTISM OF JESUS** is another manifestation of Christ, another epiphany. Christ’s Baptism marks the beginning of his adult mission on earth. We are reminded that our own Baptism was the beginning of our mission as Christians.

In our Catholic church, this day marks a transition from the Christmas season to Ordinary Time. In a way, today’s feast is the high point of the Christmas season. Before Jesus’ birth, angels announced to Mary and to Joseph who Jesus would be. At his birth, the shepherds and the Magi recognize Jesus as the Messiah. At his Baptism, Jesus accepts that he is God’s son and he inaugurates the mission of fulfilling his Father’s will.



### FAMILY TOGETHER



**We share conversation:** As baptized Christians, what do we learn from Jesus about our own mission on earth?

**We act with love:** Place each family member’s name on a slip of paper and put the names in a bowl. Invite each person in the family to choose another family member’s name and to prepare a spoken or written message for that person, affirming their importance in God’s eyes and in your family life. Pray together that your family will continue to support one another in your baptismal promises to be disciples of Jesus and then invite each person to read or speak aloud the message they prepared.

**We pray:** Conclude by praying together the Lord’s Prayer.

(Text adaptation from Loyola Press resource; free images—unsplash.com, pixabay.com)

## SPIRITUAL WARMTH & LIGHT

### CANDLEMAS (February 2, 2023) Receiving Blessed Candles at Home

On February 2, forty days after Christmas, the Church celebrates the *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord* (see the Gospel of Luke 2:22-40). Because it echoes the Christmas festival, this day is a celebration of light in darkness. It's Gospel tells of the old man Simeon's calling the infant Jesus a "*light to the Gentiles and the glory of your people, Israel*".

For centuries, the Church has blessed candles on this day. Because of its simplicity and beauty, candles are used when the Church gathers for prayer, both in public places and in the home. One or more of the candles is lighted; others are placed nearby. These candles are lighted at ordinary times (at dinner, for example) and special times such as during the Anointing of the Sick or when Holy communion is brought to a member of the family.

Holy scripture may be read: Gospel of Luke 2:25, 27-32

All make the sign of the cross and share a prayer:

**Leader:** Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, a light no darkness can overpower. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

**All:** Now and forever.

**Leader:** In the beauty of these candles, keep us in quiet and in peace, keep us safe and turn our hearts to you that we may ourselves be light for our world. All praise be yours, through Christ, the light of the nations, the glory of Israel, forever and ever.

**All:** Amen



(USCCB Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers)

## SPIRITUAL WARMTH & LIGHT Catholic Home Blessing

Winter is a beautiful time to gather loved ones for a warm blessing of our home, apartment, condo, or dorm room. In the absence of a priest or deacon, our church encourages us to bless our living sanctuary. Obtain holy water from your local parish church and place it, along with a crucifix in the room you will first gather in. At your discretion, dim the lights and light one or more candles, or use flameless candles. Plan a special celebration after the blessing.

All make the sign of the cross.

**Leader:** Peace be with this home and with all who live here. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the house blessing:**

Be our shelter, Lord, when we are at home; our companion, when we are away; and our welcome guest, when we return. And at last, receive us into the dwelling place you have prepared for us in your Father's house, where you live for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen. (All make the sign of the cross)

**Scripture Reading:** A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians 3:15-17.

**Leader:** The word of the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

All recite the Lord's Prayer. All make the sign of the cross. Participants may bless each other with holy water.

\*If desired, all go from room to room, offering prayers of intercession and sprinkling holy water, using some of the following prayers.

**At the entrance:** O God, protect our going out and our coming in; Let us share the hospitality of this home with all who visit us, that those who enter here may know your love and peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**In the living room:** O God, give your blessings to all who share this room, that we may be knit together in companionship. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**In the kitchen:** O God, you fill the hungry with good things. Send your blessing on us, as we work in this kitchen, and make us ever thankful for our daily bread. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**In the dining room:** Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, for you give us food and drink to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad. Help us to be grateful for all your mercies, and mindful of the needs of others. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**In the bedrooms:** Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake; watch over us as we sleep, that awake we may keep watch with Christ, and asleep, we may rest in his peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Adapted from [Catholic House Blessing - Charismatic Renewal - The Catholic Diocese of Raleigh \(weebly.com\)](https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-liturgy/prayers/catholic-house-blessing-charismatic-renewal-the-catholic-diocese-of-raleigh-weebly-com)




## Save the Date: Maine Catholic Men's Conference Set for March 18, 2023



*Theme: BE STRONG IN THE LORD! (Eph 6:10)*

**Deacon**



**Matt Halbach**

**MAINE CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE**

**March 18, 2023 from 9am-5pm**  
St. John's Community Center,  
Brunswick  
\$65/person (including lunch)

The day will be a time to gather as catholic men to pray, to listen to keynotes and witnesses, and to be nourished by the sacraments to go out and love and serve God and his children



**Save the Date: Maine Catholic Women's Conference Set for May 6th, 2023**



*Save the Date*  
**Maine Catholic Women's Conference**  
Holiday Inn by the Bay-Portland  
**May 6, 2023**  
Theme: **Holy Friendship** 8:30-5PM  
Keynote Speaker: **ValLimar Jansen**



Scan the QR code to learn more about ValLimar,  
our inspirational, internationally acclaimed presenter

## Fruits from the Vineyard



*1 - Holy Cross School--South Portland, Maine*

A 15-year tradition of hanging a wreath outside of Holy Cross school has expanded to hanging candles made out of strings of purple and rose-colored lights to represent the 4 weeks of Advent. It started out with just the wreath being hung outside of the school and in the hallway of the school and with special morning prayers being said during Advent. Wanting to share a more external sign of our Catholic faith the students at Holy Cross made the Advent candles out of posterboard and taped them to the windows. Realizing that these posterboard Advent candles could only be seen during the day Holy Cross searched for a solution that would allow people passing by to see these candles that represent hope, faith, joy, and peace. About 8 years ago Holy Cross found the solution as they began hanging purple and

rose-colored lights in the shape of candles in the windows each week leading up to Christmas. As is tradition the lights will change from purple and rose to white on Christmas day.

These lights sure have produced a joy and enthusiasm from those in the community. "My favorite response was from a woman who counted down the weeks until her family came to town for Christmas by watching the windows light each week," stated Bill Ridge, 8th grade teacher at Holy Cross school.

Ridge also shared that having the candles in the windows are a way to evangelize others. "Our classes discuss the outward sign of Advent that we are sharing with the community. For those who know what the lights are and what they mean, we are sharing the anticipation of Christmas with them. It makes the school a part of the parish celebration of the season. For those who do not know of Advent or the tradition of the candles, we hope that they ask or do their own research to learn about Advent. My students know that if just one person seeks to learn about what we are doing, it is a wonderful thing."



## Inspiration



I (Hannah) am really into podcasts. I listen to a podcast called "[The Daily Nothings](#)." The hosts are two beautiful, faithful, millennial women who want to accompany their audience on the path to sainthood and to invite them to ponder how "every daily sip, bite, walk, song, prayer, chat, and snooze amounts to eternity. "

The most recent episode was entitled "Are You Hosting a Dinner Party or a Pity Party?" The episode discusses how when things don't go the way we plan we should not despair and throw a pity party, rather we should do something that brings joy to ourselves and others. The host, Courtney, talks about how she wanted to throw a pity party over being sick for a couple days, but instead she decided to plan a dinner party for when she recovered. I was inspired by this because instead of looking at what she missed out on, she decided to find something to look forward to and a way to gather with the people she loves.

Sometimes (and I know I'm not the only one) I find it hard to find the things to look forward to and find it easier to dwell on what I've missed out on. For example, this past weekend my old college roommate threw an amazing Christmas party, but I wasn't able to attend because I was sick. I was tempted to throw a pity party because I had been so excited to attend the party earlier. Then I heard this podcast, and I was inspired to find something to look forward to. I texted my old college roommate and then made some plans (for when I felt better) to spend time with her and some of my other friends who were at the party.

So, I issue you the same challenge. Throw a dinner party, not a pity party. Give in to joy and get rid of the despair or the fear of missing out.



## Prayer



God of power and mercy open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy so that we may share His wisdom and become one with Him when He comes in glory, for He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Taken from: [jesuitresource.org](https://jesuitresource.org)