This will be my second celebration of Christmas as the bishop of the Diocese of Burlington. I feel very much at home here. Over the past two years, I have met a lot of very wonderful and good people, some who share our Catholic faith, others who do not. There is a large network of men and women in our state who are dedicated to doing good works, whether it is helping the neediest and most vulnerable in our midst, striving for affordable housing, feeding the hungry and the homeless, providing resources for people and families who are finding it difficult to make ends meet or working tirelessly to protect our water and our environment. Much of this is reported in the 2016 winter issue of Vermont Catholic in which we acknowledge the good deeds and works that are being carried out by faithful Catholics here in Vermont.

This is what we Catholics do. We feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, comfort the sorrowing, welcome the stranger, visit the prisoner and clothe the needy. We do it because we know the meaning of Christmas: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son...” (Jn 3:16). The conception of Jesus in Mary’s womb and His later birth in the manger which we celebrate at Christmas remind us that God was born among us to bring reconciliation between God and man and reconciliation between all of us as brothers and sisters. Jesus’ later preaching of the Kingdom of God was a call to communion with Him and with one another. That communion calls us to be merciful, doing unto others as we would have done to ourselves.

So, I wish you all a merry Christmas as we contemplate the merciful love of God for each of us, and I wish you all a new year of faith in which we renew our call to serve God through loving acts of mercy for others.

On another note, I invite you to join with me in celebrating 2017 as a “Year of Creation” in our diocese. On May 24, 2015, Pope Francis published his encyclical on the environment entitled “Laudato Si’” subtitled, “On care for our common home.” In this encyclical, he states that concern for the natural world is no longer “optional” but is an integral part of Church teaching on social justice. While it has been nearly two years since its publication, I think it is time for the Church here in Vermont to study, ponder and begin to implement much of what the pope calls for in “Laudato Si’.” As such, a number of resources, events and programs have been created for both parish and diocesan venues to help us do so. More will follow over the next few months, but I hope you will join me in this endeavor.

Yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Christopher J. Coyne
Bishop of Burlington

“For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son...”
— Jn 3:16
UPCOMING EVENTS

12|25
Christmas Day!
The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, this year, on Jan. 10. During this season, we celebrate the birth of Christ into our world and into our hearts, and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with him. FOR MORE ON THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS: goo.gl/vQCeks

12|27
Senior Meals
St. Jude, Hinesburg
12 - 2 pm
St. Jude Parish offers lunches to area seniors on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The next senior meal is scheduled for Dec. 27 from noon to 2 p.m. Serving begins at noon. All seniors and caretakers welcome.

01|01|2017
World Day of Peace
The theme for Pope Francis' annual World Day of Peace message for 2017 is: “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace.” In his 2017 Message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis urges us to practice active nonviolence and work to prevent conflict by addressing its causes, building relationships, and facilitating healing and restoration. FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/jzJVmx

01|03, 10, 17, 24, 02|03
Catholicism Series
10 DVD Series
St. Jude, Hinesburg • 7 pm
St. Jude the Apostle Church is hosting a movie series about Catholicism. The series began Nov. 15 and ran the 22, 29, Dec. 6 the remaining dates are Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, and concludes on Feb. 3. All are welcome. FOR MORE INFO: (802) 482-2290

01|07
First Saturday Mass
St. John the Evangelist, St. Johnsbury
8:30 am
“First Saturday” Mass will be celebrated on the first Saturday of every month. The “First Five Saturday” devotion has been popular for many years. It originates with a message received from Our Lady by Sister Lucia dos Santos, one of the three children of Fatima. The practice includes Mass, Confession and Holy Communion. FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/81mQ4V or (802) 658-6110 x1130

01|09
Steubenville East
Sign-Up Deadline
Join YOUTH from the Diocese of Burlington as they travel to the 2017 ELEVATE Steubenville East Conference. Sign-up for this weekend filled with great presentations, music and spiritual enrichment with teens from around the NorthEast. Over 3,000 were in attendance during last year’s conference, 130 from our diocese! FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/81mQ4V or (802) 658-6110 x1130

01|08-14
National Migration Week
The theme for the 2017 National Migration Week is “Creating a Culture of Encounter.” FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/wPohU0

01|21
Rally for Life Mass
St. Augustine Church, Montpelier
9:30 am
The Annual Rally for Life Mass will be celebrated at 9:30 a.m., not 9 a.m. as previously advertised. The Mass will be celebrated by Burlington Bishop Christopher Coyne and will be followed by the march down State Street and the Rally for Life at the Statehouse, sponsored by the Vermont Right to Life Committee and featuring the theme of “Women’s Voices.” Speakers will include Jewels Green of Philadelphia, Sarah Zagurski of Colorado and Amy Cochran of Vermont.

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02|22
Domestic Violence Workshop
Holy Family Parish Center, Essex Junction
10 am - 2 pm
The Diocese of Burlington is hosting a free workshop titled, “Responding to Domestic Violence in Our Communities”. The event is directed to priests, parish secretaries, parish staff, directors of religious education, youth ministers, lay people and the wider counseling and medical community. Lunch will be included. FOR MORE INFO: (802) 658-6110 x1453

THE DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON CAREERS:
- Immigration Specialist and Executive Assistant for the Chancery, Vocations & Finance Departments
- Development Donor Systems Professional
FOR MORE INFO: vermontcatholic.org/careers

Merry Christmas
From the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington and Vermont Catholic. We wish you and yours a blessed Christmas and new year.