God first loved us

I hope this last edition of *The Inland See* for 2021 finds you and your loved ones healthy and growing in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This edition leads us through the celebration of Christmas and into the new year, a year that I have designated as a year of “Communion: Creed, worship and life.” As we celebrate Christmas, I see an opportunity for us to reflect upon the Incarnation as the greatest moment of communion between God and humanity. Consider if you will that God did not have to choose to be born through the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, but He did in the person of Jesus who later revealed why: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

Think about that for a moment, “for God so loved the world.” As such, this primary love for us, as revealed to us, calls forth a response from us to either love or not love Him in return. When we do choose to love God, we are called do so as the great commandment says, “with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul.” St. Augustine of Hippo offered great encouragement for us when he wrote, “To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement.”

Now out of God’s love, comes the crux of what we celebrate at Christmas, that God “gave his only Son … so that we might have eternal life.” God did so by incarnating Himself as “true God and true man” in Jesus Christ: The Incarnation was the greatest communion because it was the primal communion, it is what began the whole great plan of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. All other communion flows from that moment. Notice as well that this moment is Trinitarian: God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, became man in the person of Jesus. Subsequently, that communion becomes manifested in each of us at the moment of baptism, when we are born again and take on the new person of Christ.

During this time of Christmas and the beginning of the Year of Communion, my encouragement is for all of us to begin by praying and meditating on the fact that God first loved us and how we love Him in return. As baptized members of the Church, we share in its communion as community and as ones in communion through the sacraments. I offer the words of Pope Leo the Great (c.400-461) from one of his Christmas homilies for your prayerful reflection:

“Our Saviour, dearly-beloved, was born today: let us be glad. For there is no proper place for sadness, when we keep the birthday of the Life, which destroys the fear of mortality and brings to us the joy of promised eternity. No one is kept from sharing in this happiness. There is for all one common measure of joy, because as our Lord the destroyer of sin and death finds none free from charge, so is He come to free us all. Let the saint exult in that he draws near to victory. Let the sinner be glad in that he is invited to pardon. Let the gentile take courage in that he is called to life. …”

God bless.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Christopher J. Coyne
Bishop of Burlington
Upcoming Events

12|28, 01|04, 11, 18, 25 TUESDAYS
Courageous Women Bible Study
St. John Vianney, S. Burlington • 9 am or 6:30 pm
For this study we will use, “Courageous Women: A Study on the Heroines of Biblical History” by Stacy Mitch, written with a female audience in mind yet it is equally approachable for men. There are 8 sessions; participants are welcome to attend as many or as few as they can. FOR MORE INFO: Connie McDonald (802) 864-4166 x204 or SJVGoodNews@gmail.com

12|30 THURSDAY
More than the Magi: Celebrating the Riches of Epiphany 2022
Holy Family, Essex Junction • 7-8:30 pm
A reflection on the history, liturgy, and spirituality of a feast of feasts, with Fr. Richard Berube, SSE.

01|05, 01|19, 01|22, 01|02, 01|16, 01|03, 02|02 WEDNESDAYS
Resisting Happiness Book Club
Online • 7 pm
Come explore with us Matthew Kelly’s book Resisting Happiness at 7-8 pm every other Wednesday for six weeks. Free book and study guide, contact ptturnley@aol.com.

01|07, 01|21, 02|04, 18 FRIDAYS
The Challenge Club for Catholic Girls
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Williston • 6 - 8 pm
Challenge is a club for girls to grow in virtue, friendship and their Catholic faith. FOR MORE INFO: contact Mary Niekrzewicz, mary.of.vt@gmail.com, (802) 878-5538 or Audrey Walko, audreygcsvt@gmail.com, (802) 373-9564.

01|16 SUNDAY
DeGoesbriand Council 279
Burlington Pancake Breakfast
Cathedral of St. Joseph, Burlington • 8:30 - 11:30 am
Sponsored by Knights of Columbus DeGoesbriand Council 279. By donation, the suggested donation is $8.

01|25 TUESDAY
Saints & Sinners
Online • 7 pm
Join us in November when Deacon Phil Lawson presents on Saints Philip, Athanasius and Lawrence. For more info: vermontcatholic.org/saints-and-sinners.

02|05 SATURDAY
Our Lady of Fatima Devotions
Holy Family, Essex Junction • 8 am
Rosary, Confessions, and Mass at 8:30 am.

02|12 SATURDAY
Adoration Mini-Mission with Holy Hour
St. John Vianney, S. Burlington
10:30 am - 12:30 pm
Not sure what adoration is all about? Or maybe you’ve not been to adoration for awhile and could use a refresher course? In anticipation of a 40 Hours of Adoration event coming this Lent, Josh Perry, the diocesan Director of Worship, will be offering a mini-mission with instruction about adoration, followed by a holy hour.

02|16 SATURDAY
Our Lady of Fatima Devotions
Holy Family, Essex Junction • 8 am
Rosary, Confessions, and Mass at 8:30 am.

02|25 TUESDAY
Saints and Sinners
Online • 7 pm
Join us in February when Fr. Robery Murphy presents on Saints Therese of Lisieux. There will be time for prayer, small group and large group discussion. For more info: vermontcatholic.org/saints-and-sinners.

Love one another
DEC. 26, 2021 – JAN. 1, 2022

CHALLENGES TO GROW YOUR MARRIAGE

Feast of the Holy Family
We hear how Jesus goes “missing” this week, but in truth he is in his Father’s house. The fear of Mary and Joseph was real, as was their joy. This week make time to share an experience from this year when each of you experienced fear and joy. Listen to what each family member is saying to understand the situation. End with the Our Father in gratitude for your family.

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vermontcatholic.org/marriagechallenge

DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON CAREERS

Diocesan Central Offices, South Burlington:
Diocesan Catechetical Leader
Diocesan Youth & Young Adult Minister
Human Resources Generalist

St. Joseph’s Residential Care Home, Burlington:
Director of Nursing (DON) Up to $7,500 Sign-On Bonus

St. Joseph’s Residential Care Home, Burlington:
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) — $1,000 Sign-On Bonus

St. Mark Parish, Burlington:
Coordinator of Evangelization & Catechesis

Our Lady of the Valley Parish, Randolph, Bethel: Accompanist

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BISHOP’S ANNUAL APPEAL 2021 UPDATE

As of Dec. 14, 2021: $1,875,133
To learn more or make a gift visit:
vermontcatholic.org/giveonline