



# The MESSAGE

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## Christmas 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*“And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us . . .” (John 1:14)*

Each year, we celebrate the mystery of God becoming man, the wondrous joining of divinity and humanity. As well, we are reminded that this event is not merely a historical event of a far-off past. Rather, the blessings of the first Christmas of some 2,000 years ago are just as present to us today as they were to Mary and Joseph in the stable of Bethlehem. Christ has forever united Himself to human nature and, in turn, has made it holy. Through baptism, we are sanctified as members of His Mystical Body, and we carry within us the grace that was poured upon human nature in the Incarnation.

This season offers us much hope. Just as God became man in the Incarnation, so we have the potential of soaring to the heights of sanctity through the grace of Jesus Christ, God-made-Man, especially through the Eucharist and the other sacraments. In a privileged way, as we begin this Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope, there are many opportunities offered to us to deepen our relationship with Christ and to feel and share the renewed hope of His merciful love. As Pope Francis has reminded us, “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!” In the infant Jesus, God invites us to be messengers of hope.”

See **BISHOP**, page 5



The Message photo by Megan Erbacher

This photo shows the stained-glass depiction of the Nativity at St. Joseph Parish in Jasper.

## Navidad 2024

Queridos Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo,

*“Y la Palabra se hizo carne y habitó entre nosotros . . .” (Juan 1:14)*

Cada año celebramos el misterio de Dios hecho hombre, la asombrosa unión de la divinidad y la humanidad. Además, se nos recuerda que este evento no es meramente un evento histórico de un pasado lejano. Más bien, las bendiciones de la primera Navidad de hace unos 2.000 años están tan presentes para nosotros hoy como lo estuvieron para María y José en el establo de Belén. Cristo se han unido para siempre a la naturaleza humana y, a su vez, la ha hecho santa. Por el bautismo, somos santificados como miembros de Su Cuerpo Místico, y llevamos dentro de nosotros la gracia que fue derramada sobre la naturaleza humana en la Encarnación.

Esta temporada nos ofrece mucha esperanza. Así como Dios se hizo hombre en la Encarnación, así nosotros tenemos la potencialidad de elevarnos a las alturas de la santidad por la gracia de Jesucristo, Dios-hecho-Hombre, especialmente a través de la Eucaristía y los demás sacramentos. De manera privilegiada, al comenzar este Año Jubilar como Peregrinos de la Esperanza, se nos ofrecen muchas oportunidades para profundizar nuestra relación con Cristo y sentir y compartir la esperanza renovada de Su amor misericordioso. Como nos ha recordado el Papa Francisco, “¡No tengas miedo!

See **OBISPO**, page 5

## Three diocesan priests reflect on priesthood

By **JOHN ROHLF**

The Message assistant editor

There are currently 13 active diocesan priests with at least 20 years of priestly ministry to the Diocese of Evansville.

Three of those 13 active priests are

Father Zach Etienne, Father Tony Ernst and Father Paul Ferguson. All three priests are currently pastors at their respective parishes.

Father Zach Etienne is currently the pastor at Good Shepherd Parish in Evansville, a role he has held since 2010. He was ordained in June 2004

and his other assignments included stops at St. Joseph Parish in Jasper and St. Mary Parish in Ireland. He is also the Dean of the South Deanery.

Father Etienne grew up in Tell City, which is close to St. Meinrad Seminary. He said his mother grew up in a family of nine kids, with two of her siblings

choosing religious life. He said growing up, they constantly had priests and nuns around, which allowed them to know not just the holy life they were supposed to lead but also the down to earth kind of people they were.

See **PRIESTHOOD**, page 11

The Most Reverend  
Joseph M. Siegel, D.D., STL  
Bishop of the Diocese of Evansville

Is pleased to personally invite you to  
**the Solemn Opening Mass  
for the Jubilee Year 2025**

**Sunday, December 29, 2024  
10:30 a.m. CST**

St. Benedict Cathedral  
1328 Lincoln Avenue • Evansville, Indiana 47714

If you, your family and friends have never participated in a Solemn Opening Mass for a Jubilee Year, this is a unique opportunity for you. Please join us. All are welcome!

## Jubilee 2025 — Pilgrims of Hope

By **MATT MILLER**  
Diocesan Director of Worship

### Pilgrimage Churches and the Jubilee Indulgence

As Bishop Joseph M. Siegel mentioned in his column last month, one of the primary gifts of the Jubilee are the Jubilee Indulgences offered by the Church. There are several different ways to receive this indulgence once the local celebration of the Jubilee begins on Dec. 29.

### What Are Indulgences?

The “Catechism of the Catholic Church” defines an indulgence as “a remission

before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven” (No. 1471). Through indulgences, the infinite merits of Christ, as well as the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints, are applied to our purification in this life or the life to come. An indulgence may be either plenary (full or complete), removing all of the temporal punishment due to sins, or they may be partial. Those obtaining an indulgence can choose to apply it either to themselves or to the souls of deceased persons. In the case of the Jubilee Indulgence, if it is being applied to the deceased,

See **JUBILEE**, page 2

The Message will not publish issues on Dec. 27 or Jan. 3 — See page 3