



LAY WITNESS

December 25, 2020

Christmastide

Vol. 38, No. 6

*to unite the faithful from all walks of life in order to
support, defend and advance the efforts of the teaching Church*

A Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

“Grace to you and peace from Him Who is, Who was, and Who is to come” (Rev. 1:4).

Have you ever been outside during a clear night when there was no moon and little or no light pollution? When you look up at the sky, the stars are countless. The constellations are more easily visible. The Milky Way actually looks like someone spilled a glass of milk across the center of the sky. Someone once told me that ancient accounts claim the stars were so bright during a New Moon that people could read by starlight. Whether it is true or not, I don’t know; but I believe it.

I do know that long before the Magi, man found his way at night by his knowledge of the stars. Whether a man believed the Earth was flat and the firmament swirled around it, or that the Earth was round and rotated within the dome of the sky, it did not matter. From the position of the man standing on earth, the dance of the stars was familiar and unchanging. If he watched the stars, he could navigate by them. They not only give light, they lead.

And, on a dark night, the vision of stars elicits a sense of wonder, awe, and hope. For all our scientific knowledge of the stars, we know so little about them. No one this side of Heaven has ever been to one. Perhaps that’s why they elicit hope in our hearts, because they draw us to something unknown but beautiful and true. For me, seeing a star-lit night with little light pollution gives new meaning to the Scripture passage, *“Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them”* (Gen. 15:5 RSVCE). Or again, *“I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore”* (Gen. 22:17).

We all know that as light in the sky grows while the sun is rising each day, the stars disappear. And, as the sun sets and its light is extinguished, the stars come out. The brightest ones appear even while the sky is still blue and the colors of the sunset are at their finest. And, these bright ones are the last to give way to the brightness of the sun. We also know that it is the light of the sun reflecting on the moon that brightens the night sky. When the moon is full, fewer stars can be seen; only the brighter ones. When the moon is new, all the stars shine. It’s as though the stars give honor and precedence to the light of the sun, even as his light is reflected by the moon. For all of us—except mushrooms—the rising sun and his brightness bring cheer to a gloomy heart. After days of dark clouds and starless nights, the appearance

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Prayer of Catholics United for the Faith

O God our Father, who sent Your only-begotten Son to suffer and to give His life for the life of His Church, rule, protect, and nourish her continually, we beseech You. Teach us of Catholics United for the Faith to direct our zeal first of all to the renewal of our own hearts. Then, if it be Your holy will to allow us to be in any way Your instruments in the wider renewal of Your Church, give us the grace to know what services, small or great, You ask of us, and let the Holy Spirit teach us to perform them in obedience, patience, and charity, leaving entirely to You what fruits they may bear. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,
have mercy on us.
Holy Mary, Mother of the Church,
intercede for us.
St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family
and Patron of the Universal Church,
pray for us.

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of the sun breaking through a storm has brought many a smile. The same is true of the moon. When she is full and reflecting the light of the sun as brightly as she can, she inspires poems, songs, and a quiet joy in all of us.

Aside from sunlight, only one other thing diminishes the brightness of the stars: the artificial lights of man. I recognize that artificial lights can serve a useful purpose, but there is no disputing the fact that artificial light dilutes the night sky and makes stargazing more difficult. Try finding the Little Dipper from the center of Indianapolis or Chicago. You may see one or two of the stars, but not all of them. Artificial lights have little or no effect on the light of the sun, but they do affect the light reflecting from a full moon. Watching a full moon from the center of a big city is not nearly as inspiring as when you see it rise over a mountain range, rolling hills, or the prairie.

These are the thoughts I had some weeks ago as I sat outside on my porch watching the stars. It was a night of the New Moon, and things were particularly difficult with concerns pressing on my mind. My wife and daughter were away, and my son was at work. Being alone with my thoughts, I was encouraged by just sitting and watching the stars and reflecting on their beauty and virtue. Many passages from Sacred Scripture came to mind. I used the opportunity to pray, thank God for His blessings, and accept the Hope He offered me on that starlit night.

In the Book of Daniel, God gives the Prophet a vision of the End Time. That vision ends with these words: “*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and **those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever***” (Dan. 12:2-3; added emphasis). In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul wrote, “*Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **in which you shine like stars in the world***” (Phil. 2:14-15; added emphasis). And, in the Book of Revelation, Saint John has a vision of Jesus in glory “[a]nd in His right hand He held seven stars...**the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches**” (Rev. 1:16, 20; emphasis added).

These and many other passages in the Bible liken virtuous men to stars in the sky. Following the lead of Sacred Scripture, writers from ancient times have used the sun, moon and stars for spiritual analogies. Of course, the sun usually refers to Jesus Christ. Nothing is concealed from Him (c.f. Psalm 19) and He is brighter

than any other light. The moon in her phases refers to man. The waxing moon, growing in light reflected from the sun resembles the Christian who grows in the Light of Christ. The waning moon, losing light, is analogous to the one who rejects God and abandons His Word. He loses the Light of Christ. The full moon symbolizes Our Blessed Mother, the Mother of God, who perfectly and completely reflects the Light of Christ. We can see and walk by His Light shining from her. The stars themselves represent the souls of the righteous.

*The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with Me. **I have said this to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!*** (Jn. 16:32-33; added emphasis).

By your endurance you will gain your souls (Lk. 21:19).

As Thou [Father] didst send Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me (Jn. 17:18-21).

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39).

Darkness allows the stars to shine bright. We are not baptized into a life of fear, but a life of love. “*Perfect love casts out all fear*” (1 Jn. 4:16). If we are bound to the Son, then we are bound to the Father. And, if we are bound to Jesus, then we are bound to one another. Time and space do not separate us; fear and turmoil do not separate us; pandemics and death do not separate us; riots and scandals do not separate us. Though we are beset with evils, we are given Hope from God. We should look to the stars and remember that in darkness, stars shine brighter.

There are many men and women of righteousness alive and well in our Church. We may be a remnant, but we have a presence. We must look for each other in the darkness, and lead by our light. We must not be deceived by the artificial lights of man, made in the Culture of Death and advanced by the Father of Lies. Wherever the light of virtue, grace, and beauty is diminished, there is an artificial light present that must be avoided. It does not matter who the artificial light comes from. If virtue,

grace, and beauty are diminished, the words spoken are an entrapment and the light given is a deception. A prudent man will discern in patience and win his soul.

Advent and Christmastide are my favorite seasons of the year. They are seasons of Light and Hope. Advent begins with the lighting of a single candle in a wreath whose light will grow as we advance to Christmas. And Christmastide ends with Candlemas, when traditionally all candles to be used throughout the year are blessed. From the lighting of the first Advent candle to the blessing of Candlemas, the focus is the Birth of Jesus; the True Light that shines in the valley of the shadow of death.

My prayer for each of you is that you will look for the stars that shine in whatever darkness you suffer. And,

following the lead of those stars, that you will endure the darkness patiently until the moon waxes full and the sun rises. May the love of Christ cast out all fear in your hearts and embolden you to be stars leading others through the darkness of our times. Be united to Jesus Christ and His Father and know that so many others are as well. We may not know each other in time and space, but we know each other in the Heart of the Father. We know that no matter how dark things become, the Light of Christ shining through the hearts of His people cannot be extinguished. With that knowledge, cling to Hope and let your Faith be renewed.

A blessed Christmas to you all!

Peace,

Philip C. L. Gray

The Christmas Proclamation

The Twenty-fifth Day of December,
when ages beyond number had run their course
from the creation of the world,
when God in the beginning created Heaven and Earth,
and formed man in His own likeness;
when century upon century had passed
since the Almighty set His bow in the clouds
after the Great Flood,
as a sign of covenant and peace;
in the twenty-first century since Abraham,
our Father in Faith,
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;
in the thirteenth century since the People of Israel
were led by Moses
in the Exodus from Egypt;
around the thousandth year since David was anointed King;
in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;
in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;
in the year seven hundred and fifty-two
since the foundation of the City of Rome;
in the forty-second year of the reign
of Caesar Octavian Augustus,
the whole world being at peace,
JESUS CHRIST, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
desiring to consecrate the world by His most loving presence,
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and when nine months had passed since His conception,
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah, and was made man:
The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.



Lighting a Path Through Darkness

By: Philip C. L. Gray,

Adapted from the FAITH FACT: “Hope, a Pilgrim’s Virtue”

It was a dark time for Israel. After centuries of political coups and harassment by Syria and other neighbors, the Northern Kingdom and its capital city, Samaria, fell to Shalmaneser, King of the Assyrians. Shalmaneser led the people of Samaria away to captivity “in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 17:6; RSVCE) and settled people from other lands in their stead. The Northern Kingdom and its Ten Tribes were lost.

And this was so, because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs which the kings of Israel had introduced. And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right.... And they forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves molten images of two calves; and they made an Ashe'rah, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Ba'al. And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings, and used divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah only (2 Kings 17:7-9; 16-18).

The Southern Kingdom of Judah was not much better off. With the Northern Kingdom out of the way, the Assyrians under King Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem and threatened to take its people into exile. Judah also was squeezed by Egypt and Philistia to the south, and Moab and Ammon to the east. Sacred Scripture attests that Judah also had rebelled against God (2 Kings 17:19), though it is also true that it had many good kings who enacted reforms throughout its history (c.f. 1 and 2 Kings; 1 and 2 Chronicles).

King Hezekiah ruled Judah when Samaria fell. He was a good king, and faithful to God. Yet, he suffered the negative effects of the political turmoil plaguing Judah when he became king. That turmoil culminated in the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians. They had no friends. They were alone. It was a very dark time in Israel.

Yet, there was Light. It was during this horrible time that God commissioned the Prophet Isaiah. Some modern scholars say he was a priest, while Hebrew tradition

places him in the royal family of David's house. Perhaps, like Jesus, he was both. Whether a priest, prince or both, he would have been raised within the political structures of his day and fully aware of the rebellion and intrigue engaged by the priests and princes of his day. Perhaps he engaged in them, and so the need for his purging by God (c.f. Is. 6:1-7). Because of his fidelity to God, Isaiah would be martyred in his old age by King Manasseh, the son and heir of Hezekiah.

During this horrible time in Judah's history, the Prophet Isaiah had his visions of the Messiah. The words are familiar to us. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse.... In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious” (Is. 11:1, 10). It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills... O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Is. 2:2, 5). “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined” (Is. 9:2). While the rest of the world was plunged in darkness, Isaiah saw Light, and he spoke of it, encouraging the King not to fear.

Hezekiah and his people trusted in the Lord, and a great miracle happened. Sennacherib's army was destroyed in a single night by an Angel (2 Kings 19:35).

Though Hezekiah was a good king, he was succeeded by the worst king in the history of Judah, his son Manasseh. Adding to the darkness, his son was one of the longest reigning kings. Yet, toward the end of his life, King Manasseh would repent and make amends the best he could before his death (c.f. 2 Chronicles 33:12-20).

Hope, a Virtue of Light

It is a dark time for us. I do not have to provide explicit details about the political, social and religious turmoil we suffer today. There are many parallels between the events during Isaiah's life and what is unfolding in ours. Members of Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) know the reasons that led to our founding, and the circumstances that demand we continue our apostolic work. Members also know that our work is tiring and often seems fruitless. Yet, it is a vision of Light that encourages us; a vision of things yet to come. We are moved by Hope.

Theologically, the Virtue of Hope is the confident expectation of divine blessing and eternal life with God (cf. Catechism, no. 2090). As a theological virtue, Hope is

infused in man at Baptism and enables the Christian, as an heir of heaven, to endure turmoil and darkness by looking past the present moment with a vision of Heaven (c.f.: Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; Tit. 3:6-72; Tim. 2:12). To understand how this virtue works, we must recognize that this world is not our home.

The Fathers of Vatican II reminds us that we are a “pilgrim Church” on Earth (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 48). As members of this pilgrim Church, each of us are pilgrims making our way to Heaven. We journey in a foreign land until we arrive in Heaven. As pilgrims, we are “on the way” rather than already at home. Like Abraham and his descendants, we are foreigners travelling in a foreign land, seeking a land of our own (c.f. Heb. 11:8-10, *et al.*).

This journey is not only a trek through time and space but involves becoming who we were made to be; adopted children of God fully enveloped in the life of the Trinity (c.f. Jn. 17). St. Paul acknowledges this truth when he recognizes that he has not laid hold of it already, but rather he presses on toward the goal, the “*prize of God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:13-14). We were made for fulfillment—to be one with God and each other for all eternity. However, this original unity was damaged by the sin of Adam, such that we were lost and could not find our way (cf. Eph. 2:12), even though we retained an innate desire for happiness (Catechism, no. 1718). Our rebirth in Christ at Baptism restores us to grace and orients us to our final resting place in Heaven. In Christ Jesus, we know who we are and where we are going and have the grace to arrive at our destination. This is precisely the “not yet” experience of the Church militant. The virtue that teaches us to live this reality is Hope, the virtue of the pilgrim. This virtue will only be fulfilled in Heaven when Love engulfs us.

Naturally Speaking

On a natural level, hope refers to a quest for a difficult, future good (*bonum arduum futurum*). In this definition, “difficult” refers to the fact that attainment of the good is uncertain at a natural level and not entirely within our control, even subject to conflicting forces. For example, when we say, “I hope it rains tomorrow,” our statement implies the recognition that it might *not* rain tomorrow and the forces determining this are certainly not within our control.

Hope clearly refers to a “future” good. By its nature, the object of hope is always a future good. It makes no sense to hope for something that has already happened (e.g., “I hope it rains yesterday”).

At a natural level, we only hope for that which is perceived as good by the one “hoping”. This “good” need not be a good in reality (e.g., the murderer who “hopes” that his efforts are successful) and can even be in conflict with

someone else’s “good” (e.g., a farmer may hope it rains while a picnicker may hope it doesn’t).

Finally, for hope at a natural level to be sustained, its object must be more than a dream. Rather, the attainment must be something that the hoping person actually perceives as real and possible. When the “real and possible” become “unreal and impossible”, hope disappears.

Supernaturally...

In the case of the Theological Virtue of Hope, the object is God Himself and the fullness of eternal life with Him in Heaven. We hold Eternal Life as our supreme good and recognize it as something we are pressing towards in the future. Though it is not something tangible, we know this goal with the assurance of Faith, and with that same assurance we know it is real and possible by the work of grace within us (Heb. 11, *et al.*).

The object of a Christian’s Hope is not only difficult but, humanly speaking, impossible. Yet those who are justified by grace in Baptism can be confident that God will bring this gift to fruition (cf. Rom. 5:9). God is entirely true to His promises. Fortunately for us, Hope is not based on human strength or ability, but on the mercy and goodness of God that is poured out upon us by the Holy Spirit at Baptism (cf. Rom. 5:5; Catechism, no. 1817).

The “difficulty” and “uncertainty” involve our cooperation with the grace that makes our salvation possible. Scripture provides several cases of Christians who have fallen away through sin (e.g.: 2 Kings 17; 2 Chron. 33; 1 Tim. 5:8; Heb. 6:4-6; Jas. 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:20-21). That is why St. Paul, who had one of the most dramatic and profound conversions in 2,000 years of Christianity, writes, “*I pummel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27). He further advises those who are already Christians to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12). In other words, God entirely respects human freedom, which is still reeling from the effects of the Fall, in bestowing His grace. By our free will, we have the ability to turn away from God at any point during our journey, just as a traveler with impeccable directions remains free to change course and go somewhere else before his journey ends.

Past, Present, and Future

Jesus Christ is the foundation of our Hope (Col. 1:27). He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14:6). In other words, He provides the way and means for us to safely travel this Vale of Tears. Practically speaking, He does this by coming to us in and through the sacraments. They are given to help us *now* during our difficult journey as we struggle with sin. We need grace each day to remain

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faithful to our Baptism and pursue God's purpose for our lives. That is why in the definitive expression of Christian hope, the *Our Father*, we ask that He give us "our daily bread" (cf. Catechism, no. 2837).

Despair and Presumption

The two principal sins against Hope are *despair* and *presumption* (cf. Catechism, nos. 2091-92). Because Hope is a striving toward a future and difficult but possible good, we understand despair as the rejection of that good; namely, Eternal Life. Despair removes the perception of the good as real or possible. While the subjective responsibility of a person in such a state is known to God alone, it can nonetheless be said that despair is a most pernicious sin, because it cuts off the very means of forgiveness. The truth of "not yet attained" is distorted into the lie of "not ever."

While despair distorts the perception of a good being real or possible, presumption distorts the perception of either the future or the difficult aspect of our pilgrimage. Three principal types of presumption can be identified as Pelagianism, Universalism, and Fundamentalism.

The ancient heresy of Pelagianism is the belief that Eternal Life is attainable by mere human effort without the necessity of grace. As a result, it removes the necessity of having a personal and intimate relationship with God, particularly as nourished through participation in the sacraments. In effect, Pelagianism removes the object of Eternal Life; that is, personal union with God.

The error of Universalism is the view that God will forgive everyone irrespective of their cooperation with grace. The logical end to this distortion is that Eternal Life is merely an inevitable sequel to this life. Practically speaking, this removes any personal responsibility from our actions and renders the free will non-essential.

Fundamentalism is closely related to Universalism in that it removes personal responsibility for sins but is distinct in that it claims this recognition only for those who are "saved through faith." Christian fundamentalists deny that a life of grace can be lost by one who deliberately rejects God's gift through sin after having been saved. Such a view denies the reality of human freedom and presumes upon God's almighty power and mercy irrespective of post-conversion sins.

In rejecting the fundamentalist idea of "once saved, always saved," we must not go to the other extreme of doubting God's mercy, goodness, and fidelity to His promises. That is why the Virtue of Hope is necessary for salvation (cf. Catechism, nos. 1817-21). It is the virtue that helps us on our pilgrimage to our eternal home prepared from

all eternity for us by Our Father in heaven (cf. Jn. 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:1-10).

The Catechism reminds us that hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Lord's Prayer, which summarizes the aspirations of all Christians (cf. Catechism, nos. 2759-2865). Prayer focuses us on our goal and inclines us to reject anything that would keep us from God. In addition to the Our Father, a frequent Act of Hope is an important prayer of the pilgrim. When prayed with devotion, an Act of Hope is also an Act of Faith in the mercy of God and an Act of Love to seeking union with the God Who made us; Whom we seek as our final end.

O my God, trusting in Your infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Redeemer. Amen.

While this short prayer can be beneficial, even as a long ejaculatory prayer, my favorite Act of Hope is the Apostle's Creed. St. Augustine urged his catechumens to begin and end each day by praying the Our Father and the Apostle's Creed. The first is the prayer given by Jesus Himself when He taught us to pray. The second is a proclamation of Truth. As a proclamation of Truth, the Apostle's Creed helps focus spiritual distortions that cause despair and presumption. It reminds us of our beginning and final end, and how to obtain Eternal Life. It is an Act of Faith, but it is also an Act of Hope because it reminds us to look beyond the present toward the good promised by God.

A Season of Light

This season of Christmastide is a Season of Light, a Season of Hope. It was a dark time for Israel when Isaiah prophesied the coming of the Messiah and became an instrument of Hope to the People of God. It may be a dark time in our world, but we have something that Hezekiah and his people did not have. The prophecies given by Isaiah are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, the Son of God. The revelation foreseen by the prophets is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We know this, and we can experience this every day through our participation in Baptism and all the sacraments. When we participate in the sacraments given through the Church, we light lamps in our souls and place them on lampstands for all to see. Like Isaiah, we become lights for others walking in the valley of the shadow of death. We become inspirations of Hope, always ready to give witness to the cause of our Hope: Jesus Christ and the Eternal Life He promises with the Father.

A message from our founder, at Christmas 1971

Dear Friends In CUF,

It is a joy to be able to share with so many of you the happiness of these days which bring us the fulfillment of the *Angelus*. How beautifully that loving prayer brings together so many truths of our holy religion! The Angel brings the message from the Father in heaven to the Holy Virgin on earth, and submits to her the plan of the Lord for the Redemption of the world. At the instant of her inner assent, totally and eagerly submissive to the will of the Father, Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit. She declares her assent in those words which should be lovingly on the lips of all of us, all day long, everyday: "Be it done to me according to Thy word!" And with that assent, the Word is made flesh and dwells among us: we are saved from our enemies through the forgiveness of sins, in the merciful heart of our God, Light of Light, Who enlightens us who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and Who guides our feet into the way of peace.

The angels and saints, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption of all mankind from the prison in which we have locked ourselves: they are all there. The heavens drop down dew from above, and the clouds rain the Just One; the earth opens in response and buds forth the Savior, our King and Lawgiver, the Desired of the nations. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

How important it is for us – especially for all members of CUF – to keep all these things in our hearts, to meditate on them day and night. Today it is so easy to be filled with fear of the great darkness in which we sit; today the whole Church cries out, begging her Lord to show His mercy and come, to stir up His power and come with all His saints, to renew the glory of Jerusalem. And we know that He will hear us and will come. And in the morning we shall see His glory.

The holy Liturgy teaches that it is good for us to know our weakness – our helplessness – by ourselves; it is good for us to know who it is in whom we must put our entire trust; it is good for those in the shadow of death to cry out and beg for rescue. And it is good to have confidence, such confidence as to make us rejoice in the midst of tribulation, and be jubilant because we know that He will come with power; indeed, that He is here.

This longing on our part is something that we can command, and therefore something that is required of us. And if the longing is really there, it will make us take to heart the further word addressed to us in the Advent Liturgy; "Brethren, it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep."



It is one of the missions of CUF to be a little alarm clock. The thief comes in the night, when the household is asleep. We have been sleeping for a long time, we of the Catholic laity; and the thief has come; and it sometimes seems as though he had taken away our

Lord and we know not where he has laid Him. But he has *not* taken Him away; we *do* know where He is. He is where He has always been: in His holy Church built on the Rock of Peter.

Our sleepiness confuses us. But now is the hour for us to rise from sleep; the night is far advanced; the day is at hand. Let us put on the armor of light and go forth to meet Him with banners, for great is He Who is in our midst, the Holy One of Israel. He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, and shatter them as a potter's vessel. Blessed are all who trust in Him.

May our merciful God bestow that blessing on us all this Christmas!

H. Lynne Fether

CUF LINKS

Chapter News

Out of an abundance of caution, most chapter events continue to be postponed, but we are grateful Our Lady of Peace Chapter in Newark, Delaware was able to participate in a Pro-Life prayer event on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadeloupe. Protectress of the Unborn, Pray for us!

Help other chapters by sharing how yours has continued to pursue CUF's mission in these difficult times.

Send updates and pictures to administrativeassistant@cuf.org

If you would like to foster a thriving Catholic culture in your parish and diocese, contact our office to learn more about how you can charter a CUF chapter or visit cuf.org to find the chapter nearest you!

Information Services

One of the FAITH FACTS most frequently requested from Information Services lately is *Male and Female He Created Them: The Church and "Same-Sex Marriages."* It addresses the Church's response to the attempts to legalize "Same-Sex Unions" and the truth about the Sacrament of Matrimony.

We also have several FAITH FACTS that you might find interesting during the Advent and Christmas Seasons. *The Historicity of the Infancy Narratives* discusses the Biblical truth of Christ's birth as told in the Gospels and contains answers to common objections about them. *Is Christmas a Pagan Feast?* explores the origin of

December 25th as the date for Christmas and its evangelical purpose. On a fun and interactive topic, *Catholic Traditions for Advent and Christmas* list some common Catholic practices for the seasons, some of which you may not have heard of yet. Maybe this FAITH FACT could serve as inspiration for new Holiday customs for this year or in the future.

As always, we are happy to provide our services and research to anyone who requests it. If you would like to request a copy of these FAITH FACTS or if you have any question about the Catholic Faith, please do not hesitate to contact us at 1-800 MY FAITH (693-2482).

St. Joseph Foundation

The Saint Joseph Foundation's office traditionally closes between Christmas and New Year's Day. With this being the case, the Foundation is particularly busy at the moment. We have several cases whose canonical timelines require the filing of appeal or *remonstratio* during

the Octave of Christmas, and we are working diligently to ensure every case is properly situated *before* the holidays begin. Thank you for your prayers and well wishes. Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas from the staff of the Foundation!

Yakin' About

A priest who is suffering requests a 54-day rosary novena for his intentions, but any prayers and sacrifices would be greatly appreciated.

If you are looking for a paperless, hassle-free way to give to CUF, please consider setting up an automatic, recurring credit card donation. To participate, call our office at 740.937.2054. Those donors who are able to step up and say, "you can count on me today, and tomorrow" allow us to plan for the apostolate's future with more certainty. We are so grateful for your past, present, and future generosity. Thank you.

We want to showcase the spiritual life of our members in *Lay Witness*! Submit your original prayers, meditations, and articles with your reply card or email

administrativeassistant@cuf.org. Thank you for sharing!

Now there is a way to support CUF with every phone call you make! Charity Mobile customers can designate Catholics United for the Faith as their charity of choice using the Charity ID#1198, and Charity Mobile will donate 5% of their monthly plan's price to Catholics United for the Faith. Charity Mobile is the Pro-Life mobile phone company and has been supporting the Pro-Life, Pro-Family movement for almost 25 years! You can learn more at CharityMobile.com.

Have you invited a family member or friend to become a CUF member? Let's grow the ranks!

Got an announcement? If your event is CUF friendly, and we have space to spare, we will gladly post it here!