

Merry Christmas 2020

In journalism, students are taught to answer the questions: who, what, where, when and why? In a news-blitz society, fueled by constant internet access, we can answer most of these questions in a blink of an eye or a click on our phone. The final question, “*why*” is the one that often goes without answer, or at least without an answer that leaves us feeling satisfied.

“Why” is the question that many people find themselves asking to the universe-at-large this year. “Why has this terrible pandemic been unleashed on the world populations? Why can’t we rectify the economic upheaval that we now are facing as a result of the pandemic? Why can’t the political parties work together to help foster healing for our nation? Why are we suffering from catastrophic wildfires, not just in our state and our country, but across the entire globe?” The questions are valid and disturbing. It is difficult to find the peace and hope of Christmas in the midst of our current circumstances. Yet, there are glimmers of hope. There are blessings and stories of love that shine through the trauma. There are helpers.

Pastoral Council
Mission San Antonio de Padua
Fourth Quarter, 2020

We live in a dark, fallen world. We don't have to leave our living room couch to learn that life is hard. It is the human condition. But we were formed in the image of our God, the same God that created a perfect world and who created a totally unique "you" and "me". He has not left the world on its own. Thank God. He is right here with us, in the thick of things. He is in the hospitals, with the exhausted doctors and nurses, as well as with the ill and their anguished family members. He is on the front lines with our brave first responders, whether fighting a California wildfire, or trying to protect a group of protesters. He is in the halls of our political representatives, patiently waiting to be noticed and invited to participate.

We live in a dark, fallen world. What a wonderful place for our Savior to be born! What a perfect place for the Light of the World to shine! We need Jesus this year - maybe even more than we ever realized before!

Let's give up the question of "why?" for the New Year. Let's begin at the cradle this Christmas Eve, asking, "Where, What and How?" "Where would you like me to be, Lord? Where would you like me to serve?" We may be surprised to find that God isn't asking you to become a missionary in a faraway land, but rather, to become a missionary right here in our own backyard, beginning in our own homes.

Do we dare ask "What would you have me do, Lord?" The little Lord Jesus was born into a small-town family. He understands the trials and tribulations of rural community living. Although the threat to baby Jesus was named Herod and not COVID, he understands the anxiety caused by fear. He longs to offer us the peace of heart and mind that we so desperately seek; but he needs us to stop, *be still and know that He is God.*

As we meet to celebrate our Christmas Eve Mass this year, outside, in the cold, let us ponder the birth of our Savior on a cold winter night many, many years ago. Perhaps we can understand a little better, this year, about the plight of the Holy Family on that first Christmas night so long ago.

As we face the new year, let us join together in asking, "How? How can we help? How would our Savior want us to bear *Him into our world this year?* How would He want us to carry His Light to a dark world?"

We are the body of Christ on earth . . . the universal church. How can the world know of Christ unless we, as his hands and feet, do our job?

Jesus is the heart of Christmas. Jesus is the reason for the season. Jesus is the hope of Christmas. Jesus is the light in the darkness. When all of us work together to help one another, the light of Jesus that we carry burns brightly and the darkness is overcome!

Christmas - **Who?** Jesus.

What? He is with us! Emmanuel!

Where? Right where you are.

When? Right now.

Why? Okay, you can ask. Because God so loved the world, That He gave His own beloved Son, so that they who Believe in Him may have eternal life - with Him!

It's a great story! It has a great ending! It's a dark, cold night, but don't give up hope. There is abundant evidence of God's goodness all over our lives. Hope hasn't given up on you!

Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Safe and Blessed New Year. Joan

The Hope of Christmas

Matthew West

Take me back to eight years old
The little church on a dead-end road
With a candle flicker in one hand and Dad's hand in the other

Take me back to Silent Night
My heart was full and the world was right
'Cause right now the world looks nothing like those innocent
Decembers

These days peace on earth is hard to find
And I need you to remind me one more time

You're still the hope of Christmas
You're still the light when the world looks dark
You're still the hope of Christmas
And You're still the hope of my heart

Watch the snowflakes falling down
Like a blanket on this town
For a moment we can hardly see the pain this year has brought
us

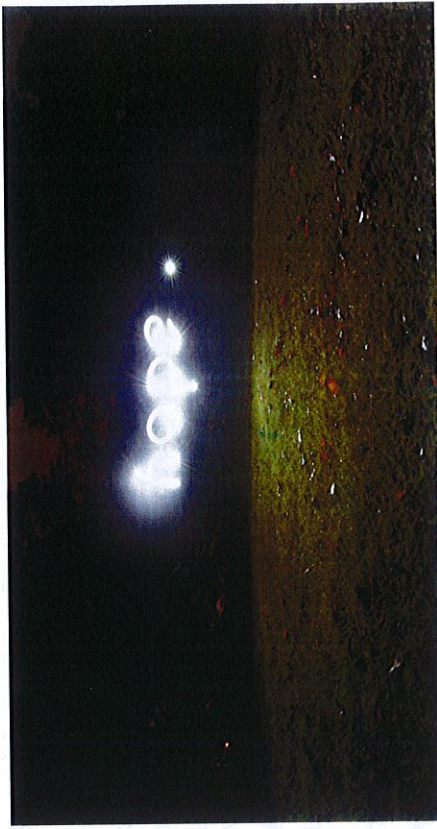
May the sick find healing's touch
May hatred's fight be won with love
And may every heart make room for You, the One who came to
save us

You're still the hope of Christmas
You're still the light when the world looks dark
You're still the hope of Christmas
And You're still the hope of my heart

I bowed my head to pray tonight
Felt my little girl by my side
She slipped her tiny hand in mine
And we both talked to You

And it took me back to eight years old
My daddy's hand and a story told
About Heaven's love in a manger low
And a promise that's still true

You're still the hope of Christmas
You're still the light when the world looks dark
You're still the hope of Christmas
And You're still the hope of my heart



Hope

It is said that hope springs eternal. This particular expression was coined by the poet Alexander Pope in An Essay on Man (1732), "**Hope springs eternal** in the human breast."

According to Wikipedia, Hope "is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."

We *hope* for so many things. We *pray* that our hopes will be satisfied.

As Catholics we are taught to put our hope in God. Why? Because where else could we find the confidence to hope.

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with **hope**." Jeremiah 29:11

Psalms 62:5 "For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my **hope** is from him."

"... **hope** does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." Romans 5:5

Hope is a light that glows always at the back of our thoughts. We hope for things in our lives. We hope for things in the lives of those we love. We hope for important things – health and security. The end of the pandemic,

The end of the pandemic, social injustice, social division and poverty. We hope for rain and the end of destructive fires and storms and floods. We hope for trivial things that would make us happy and get us through the day. How many times today have you held out hope?

Hope. Eternal. Promised. Fulfilled.

I hope that you all have a very blessed and safe Christmas and that 2021 brings new hopes for less distanced, 'mask less' smiles and hugs. Georgia Cordle, Parishioner

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." ~Desmond Tutu

"Hope is the thing with feathers, that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all". ~Emily Dickinson

"Once you choose hope, everything's possible."
~Christopher Reeve

"We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope." ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13

Outreach Ministry

Mission San Antonio de Padua supports several outreach programs. We are looking for someone to help us grow this ministry. It won't take a lot of time; you do not need any training and you will be answering God's call to minister to your brothers and sisters.

Programs:

Communion Service for the Homebound: Please let us know if you need communion brought to you. Receiving the Eucharist is fundamental to our Catholic beliefs.

Prayer Circle: Are you willing to pray for those in need? Do you need special prayer? The prayer circle is a great way to reach out and reach up! You don't need to be able to travel; prayer requests can be shared within the group via the telephone or email. A scheduled prayer time of 8 a.m., 12 noon and 8 p.m. unites those offered prayers. Join in any time or all times to add your united voice of prayer for those in our parish family who are in need.

Meals during a family illness/hospitalization: Would you be able to provide a meal for someone who is in need? Are you in need of some help while you deal with health issues?

Carpooling services for Mass: If you need a ride to Mass or if you can provide a ride, this might be the ministry for you.

If you are interested in lending a hand or would like to be remembered in any of these ministries, please contact Joan at the office.

Mission San Antonio

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