



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

Christmas 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

During this Advent Season on more than one occasion, I have found myself singing aloud the words of the Christmas carol, "O Holy Night." As its tune plays on my car radio, I find myself crooning:



O Holy Night
The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and e'er pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees O hear the angels voices.
O night divine O night when Christ was born
O night divine, O night, O night divine.

It is into the night of life that our God comes to announce a new dawn in the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! It is into a weary and sinful world that "the grace of God has appeared, saving all" (Titus 2:11). A thrill of hope and rejoicing envelops all of humanity as "the kindness and generous love of God our Savior" (Titus 3:4) is made manifest to the nations!

Like shepherds and kings, I feel the need to bend the knee in awe as I contemplate all this night means for our human family. A memory I carry with me from years ago is when at a monastery away from city lights I lay on the grass gazing up into the night sky and over me was a mass canopy of twinkling stars seemingly blanketing me. I remember both the majesty and intimacy of the moment – and in it I felt the embrace and nearness of God.

That is my prayer for our diocesan family and for all the people that on earth do dwell – that this Christmas 2022 all will know God's care for and closeness to each one of us. It is no exaggeration to say that for some people night can be long and fearful, but the Incarnation of our God announces to one and all that in the night we are not alone! God comes to light our way!

Yes, O night divine! That is what we celebrate when it seems darkest in our world. It is the precursor to the ultimate message that the child born to us brings to a world fraught with sin and death: "Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, a light no darkness can extinguish!"

Be assured of my prayers for you and your loved ones in this sacred season and throughout the coming new year that all will come to know their worth in God's eyes. Merry Christmas and a Blessed 2023 to all!

In the Peace of Christ,

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse

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