



COVENANT NEWS



BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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A Message from the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey

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America has always been a light to the world – a land of hope, freedom and prosperity. So why should we be surprised that poor neighbors, and persecuted refugees would want to come to America? Since the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock, since the potato famine struck Ireland, and even until today – poor immigrants and suffering refugees have crossed the ocean and walked through deserts to reach our great land. Some were welcomed; however, many others met discrimination.

This Christmas season, choirs across the world will sing out Peace on Earth - Good Will to Men. Yet, as those choirs sing, some 60 million people worldwide will have been displaced – representing the largest number of displaced men, women and children since World War II. From the Syrian conflict alone, millions of families have fled their homeland.

This year, as we retell the Christmas story, let us remember that Jesus, Mary and Joseph fled the violence of Herod as refugees seeking a safe haven in Egypt; and let us recognize that millions of today's refugees share the same plight faced by the Holy Family.

In recent years, millions of our neighbors from Latin America – suffering from poverty and violence - have been seeking safe haven in America. We need to ask: how are they being met? Any analysis would indicate that we the people have not met the Scriptural standard for welcoming these strangers. Scriptural standards are high. The Hebrew Scriptures call on the people of God to have compassion for the stranger:

You shall not oppress a stranger; you well know how a stranger feels, since you were once strangers yourselves in the land of Egypt. Exodus 23:9

Our Gospels continue the Hebrew theme of welcoming the stranger: *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison* ...Continued on page 2



“As we contemplate the Crib, let us gaze on the open arms of Jesus, which show us the merciful embrace of God, as we hear the cries of the Child who whispers to us: “for my brethren and companions’ sake, I will say: Peace be within you” (Ps 122:8).”

Staff Reporter | Dec 28 | ZENIT.org | Pope and Holy See | Vatican City |

Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Christmas!

Christ is born for us, let us rejoice in the day of our salvation!

Let us open our hearts to receive the grace of this day, which is Christ himself. Jesus is the radiant “day” which has dawned on the horizon of humanity. A day of mercy, in which God our Father has revealed his great tenderness to the entire world. A day of light, which dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety. A day of peace, which makes for encounter, dialogue and, above all, reconciliation. A day of joy: a “great joy” for the poor, the lowly and for all the people (cf. Lk 2:10).

On this day, Jesus, the Saviour is born of the Virgin Mary. The Crib makes us see the “sign” which God has given us: “a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Lk 2:12). Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, may we too set out ...Continued on page 2

Promise of the Week

“Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall throb and overflow. For the riches of the sea shall be poured out before you, the wealth of nations shall come to you.” (Is 60:5)

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and you visited me.” (Mt 25:35-36)

Welcoming strangers can be risky and inconvenient, and our national leaders always must act with regard for the safety and wellbeing of the citizens of this great land. But safe and convenient lives are not the narrow gate to which Jesus calls us. Jesus calls us to go beyond our comfort zone, and when we do, he always will provide for us. Recall when his apostles were caught in a storm at sea: they feared for their lives. As the Apostles were filled with fear, Jesus approached their boat and said **“Be not afraid.”** And he calmed the sea.

Today, many see the world swirling in a storm far worse than the storm the Apostles faced on the Sea of Galilee. So, how can we **Be not afraid?** Just a short while ago in Kenya, Pope Francis told us the way:

...we see ever more clearly the need for inter-religious understanding, friendship and collaboration in defending the God-given dignity of individuals and peoples, and their right to live in freedom and happiness ... the God whom we seek to serve is a God of peace. His holy Name must never be used to justify hatred and violence ... we must be peacemakers who invite others to live in peace, harmony and mutual respect! - Pope Francis, November 2015

By calling us to live in peace, harmony and mutual respect, Pope Francis challenges us to move from feel good thoughts to real action - action that has the potential to show our nation how to welcome strangers, while still protecting our families and communities.

In this season of peace, joy and new beginnings, we, the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, call on the faithful and all people of good will to join us in renewing our commitment to caring for and assisting immigrants, refugees and the poor. So many immigrants are just refugees; like Jesus, Mary and Joseph – they are fleeing persecution, suffering and death.

On New Year’s Day 2016, many of us will make Resolutions. This year, let each of us resolve to do our personal part to help our communities to live in peace, harmony and mutual respect.

This year, let each of us echo the words of Jesus by telling our families and friends: **“Be not afraid.”**

This year, in the face of international violence and hatred, let us be heralds of hope and peace. Together, in prayer, let us call for an end of the harsh rhetoric that spawns hatred and fear. If we do so, we will be able to sing out:

**Peace on Earth -
Good Will to All**

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to see this sign, This event which is renewed yearly in the Church. Christmas is an event which is renewed in every family, parish and community which receives the love of God made incarnate in Jesus Christ. Like Mary, the Church shows to everyone the “sign” of God: the Child whom she bore in her womb and to whom she gave birth, yet who is the Son of the Most High, since he “is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20). He is truly the Saviour, for he is the Lamb of God who takes upon himself the sin of the world (cf. Jn 1:29). With the shepherds, let us bow down before the Lamb, let us worship God’s goodness made flesh, and let us allow tears of repentance to fill our eyes and cleanse our hearts. This is something we all need!

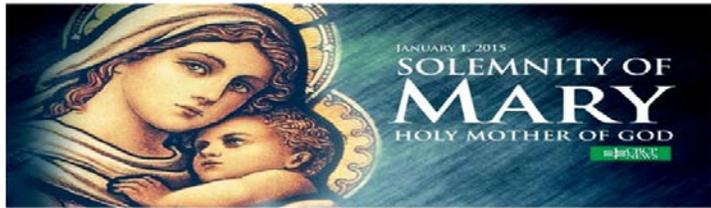
He alone, he alone can save us. Only God’s mercy can free humanity from the many forms of evil, at times monstrous evil, which selfishness spawns in our midst. The grace of God can convert hearts and offer mankind a way out of humanly insoluble situations.

Where God is born, hope is born. He brings hope. Where God is born, peace is born. And where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war. Yet precisely where the incarnate Son of God came into the world, tensions and violence persist, and peace remains a gift to be implored and built. May Israelis and Palestinians resume direct dialogue and reach an agreement which will enable the two peoples to live together in harmony, ending a conflict which has long set them at odds, with grave repercussions for the entire region.

We pray to the Lord that the agreement reached in the United Nations may succeed in halting as quickly as possible the clash of arms in Syria and in remedying the extremely grave humanitarian situation of its suffering people. It is likewise urgent that the agreement on Libya be supported by all, so as to overcome the grave divisions and violence afflicting the country. May the attention of the international community be unanimously directed to ending the atrocities which in those countries, as well as in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and sub-Saharan Africa, even now reap numerous victims, cause immense suffering and do not even spare the historical and cultural patrimony of entire peoples. My thoughts also turn to those affected by brutal acts of terrorism, particularly the recent massacres which took place in Egyptian airspace, in Beirut, Paris, Bamako and Tunis.

To our brothers and sisters who in many parts of the world are being persecuted for their faith, may the Child Jesus grant consolation and strength. They are our martyrs of today.

We also pray for peace and concord among the peoples of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and South Sudan, that dialogue may lead to ...*Continued on page 3*



“Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

Looking back some years ago, as I was reciting the prayer for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I unexpectedly stopped since I was perplexed when a series of questions clouded my mind. I was not exactly sure why I was praying the Hail Mary and wondered what the purpose of this prayer was. I am almost sure that most of us, sometimes wonder this too.

As I journeyed to deepen my faith, I realized though, that it is inconceivable not to appreciate the life of Mary when one surmises the life of Jesus Christ. To understand Christology is to understand Mariology. Through her the essence of intercession is amplified at its very best - making the Church a community of friendship and family.

Salvation history has given Mary a very special role, as the Mother of God. In the first council of Ephesus in response to the heresy of Nestorius, it was asserted that Jesus is God, thus making Mary the Mother of God, a dogmatic title given to her. During the ecumenical progress (Pope Pius XII), the dogma of Mary's Assumption was instituted and is now traditionally celebrated on August 15.

The fulfillment of the promise - the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was made possible by the cooperation of Mary. Luke 1:38 ***“Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.”*** If we ponder upon these words and the passages from verses 26 to 38, we can gather significant lessons from Mary's predicament - TRUST and OBEDIENCE.

Her unconditional trust and obedience to God allowed grace to come upon us. We must instill in our thoughts and hearts the gratitude for her saying ***“YES”*** to unfold the summit of salvation history. It is through her words ***“May it be done to me according to your word”*** that heaven was brought down to us through her beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The celebration of the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the octave of the nativity of Baby Jesus, January 1, reminds all of us that Mary our mother, is the Mother of God, who with her trust, obedience, joy and sorrow helped facilitate grace to come down from heaven.

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a strengthened common commitment to the building of civil societies animated by a sincere spirit of reconciliation and of mutual understanding.

May Christmas also bring true peace to Ukraine, offer comfort to those suffering from the effects of the conflict, and inspire willingness to carry out the agreements made to restore concord in the entire country.

May the joy of this day illumine the efforts of the Colombian people so that, inspired by hope, they may continue their commitment to working for the desired peace.

Where God is born, hope is born; and where hope is born, persons regain their dignity. Yet even today great numbers of men and woman are deprived of their human dignity and, like the child Jesus, suffer cold, poverty, and rejection. May our closeness today be felt by those who are most vulnerable, especially child soldiers, women who suffer violence, and the victims of human trafficking and the drug trade.

Nor may our encouragement be lacking to all those fleeing extreme poverty or war, travelling all too often in inhumane conditions and not infrequently at the risk of their lives. May God repay all those, both individuals and states, who generously work to provide assistance and welcome to the numerous migrants and refugees, helping them to build a dignified future for themselves and for their dear ones, and to be integrated in the societies which receive them.

On this festal day may the Lord grant renewed hope to all those who lack employment – and they are so many!; may he sustain the commitment of those with public responsibilities in political and economic life, that they may work to pursue the common good and to protect the dignity of every human life.

Where God is born, mercy flourishes. Mercy is the most precious gift which God gives us, especially during this Jubilee year in which we are called to discover that tender love of our heavenly Father for each of us. May the Lord enable prisoners in particular to experience his merciful love, which heals wounds and triumphs over evil.

Today, then, let us together rejoice in the day of our salvation. As we contemplate the Crib, let us gaze on the open arms of Jesus, which show us the merciful embrace of God, as we hear the cries of the Child who whispers to us: ***“for my brethren and companions’ sake, I will say: Peace be within you”*** (Ps 122:8).



2015 Year in Review

It's that time of year again, when many of us look back at the events of the past 12 months. For BLD Newark, 2015 has been, not only event filled, but also truly fruitful. Listed below are some, but by no means all, of the events this past year...

Always, All for the Greater Glory of God!

Jan - Mar March for Life
 Disciples' Assembly
 Emergence Med Mission
 YLSS 20 TDP
 Teachings / Reunions / Parties /Outings / Fridays

Apr - Jun LSS44 Project I Do
 TDP SE 34
 Community Teaching
 Mark 10 - May Crowning of Mother Mary
 Fr Paul - 61st Sacerdotal Anniversary
 ME 45 SPM Annual Retreat
 Aspirants' Retreat
 Prayer Healing SPE 17
 Teachings / Reunions / Parties /Outings / Fridays

Jul - Sep YE22 FE 22
 Community Day 23rd anniversary
 SPM - 2000 Hail Mary's
Hollywood Dinner Dance
 SPM Philadelphia Pilgrimage
Archbishop Lagdameo visit
Pope Francis US visit
 Teachings / Reunions / Parties /Outings / Fridays

Oct - Dec LSS 45 JC 16
 2nd SP Interdistrict Conference
 BLD assisted DMP event - Blessed Charles
 Disciples' Assembly SE 35
 Mark 10 Parade of Saints ME 46
Archbishop Hebda @ BLD AIG/WOF
 Project I do Allentown LSS
 Youth AIG/WOF
Jubilee of Mercy
 Community Worship Family Worship
 Christmas Presentations
 Divine Mercy Holy Door
 Teachings / Reunions / Christmas Parties /Outings



January Fire

In the cold of January
 Christmas now seems so long ago
 But it's the time
 When what's most needed
 Is to turn December's glow
 Into a blaze of Faith

Renew that fire this January

It's really nice, isn't it?
 That we don't have to have
 The post-holiday blues?

Cause at BLD, Christ... We will continue to celebrate!

So let's mark the date
 And try not to be late
 The first BLD in 2016
 Is on **Friday, January 8**

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Eucharistic Celebration - Friday, Jan 8, 2016 Celebrant will be Fr. Joe Valle

- recently ordained priest and former member of the BLD Youth Ministry (Crossings 1 / YE 10 / YLSS 11)

Medical Mission

February 22-25, 2016

Tagbilaran, Bohol, Philippines

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Friday, January 22, 2016

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TEACHING CALENDAR

Teachings resume on **Friday, January 8** with:
 a **CDFP Overview** (for ME 46; after Worship); and,
 on **Saturday, January 16**:
Prayer Leadership, CMP II - Part 1 & Encounter with Jesus

Marshaling	Date	Apostolate
	Jan 8	Formation
	Jan 15	Management
	Jan 22	Mission
	Jan 29	Pastoral