



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 30, 2021

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Greetings of peace and joy as we continue our celebration of the Octave of Christmas. Our Catholic liturgical tradition places such a celebratory emphasis on the birth of Christ our Savior that we celebrate this for eight days concluding on January 1 with the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. New Year's Day may seem a day for fireworks and resolutions rather than celebrating the Mother of God. But there's a heartwarming spiritual importance in commemorating Mary during the pinnacle of the Christmas season. Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (1974), referred to the Solemnity of Mary as: ***a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (Luke 2:14), and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace.***

My prayer and hope is that you were able to share some time with family and friends, either in your home or through phone or internet technology. The past year has brought some great challenges in many aspects of our society with the ongoing impact of COVID. I have heard some incredible stories telling of reconnecting, renewing friendships and reconciliations that happened within families. Sadly, some of the procedures that became part of the pandemic mitigation—like lockdowns and stay at home orders—have led to some increased challenges in families and even to a significant increase of domestic violence. In turn, the exposure of those turbulent relationships has led to an elevated risk of abuse with children as well. We are in great need of that “supreme gift of peace,” that Pope Paul VI urged us to ask for through Mary's intercession now—more than ever.

The angels announced to the shepherds on Christmas night the birth of our Savior. Isaiah the prophet called him Father Forever, God-Hero, Prince of Peace! This infant child entered our world and in his “littleness” He announced the greatness of each person created in the image and likeness of the Prince of Peace. He comes as savior, friend, and brother. The newborn Prince of Peace bares a mission for each of us, and that is to join him in ushering in a new era of peace. Our world is hungering for peace. We have so many opportunities to promote authentic justice—to ensure that every child, especially the unborn, and every person of every nation are provided the opportunity to live out the gift of their divine dignity.

May we turn to Mary, the Mother of God, the Queen of Peace by adding our “yes” to her “yes” that brought us the gift of the Prince of Peace. I pray each of you experiences a re-birth of peace in your hearts, your homes, and in your communities.

As we travel closer to Epiphany, the three magi offer a reflection on peace as well. These non-Jewish men sought out and adored Jesus—their recognition of Him as king brought with it an inclusion in the salvific work of God, hope, revelation, and an invitation. As they followed the star of the newborn Prince of Peace and did him homage, this encounter changed them forever. Warned through a dream—instead of returning to Herod—they returned home by a different route.

Together, may we join people of all races, creeds, and nations while we choose a new path—following our Savior into a new era of peace in this New Year, 2022.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad W. Zielinski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
Diocese of Fairbanks

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