



# Around Our Diocese

Issue #133

The Diocese of Northern Indiana

December 2011

*A Passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
A Willingness to do Whatever it Takes*

*A Heart for the Lost  
A Commitment to One Another*

## A Letter from the Bishop

Dear brothers and sisters,

“O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.” Oh really? Was it *ever* “still”?

Last winter, our diocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land included a visit to the modern-day city of Bethlehem. It’s a chaotic place – crowded, run-down, busloads of tourists wandering from shop to shop. Many of the shops are themselves a little . . . well, tacky. (Note the photo. Was John the Baptist the original owner of this shop?) Despite its association with Jesus’ birth, Bethlehem is no longer a Christian city. Christians, in fact, represent only a tiny minority of the population. A huge minaret dominates Manger Square in front of the Church of the Nativity, and the Muslim call to prayer pierces the air and provides a five-times-per-day reminder that Islam, not Christianity, is the primary faith of the community.



And yet the chaos of modern Bethlehem may be a fitting reminder that Jesus himself was born in the most disturbing of circumstances. “A decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. . . All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. . . . And [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Luke 2:1, 3-4, 7). Bethlehem was no less chaotic two thousand years ago than it is in our own day. It was, and is, far from being a “still” place. The chaos surrounding the descent of crowds into Bethlehem at Augustus’ command has its parallel in the hubbub around Manger Square today. I find myself wondering of a crowded shopping mall on December 23 may be more like the “real thing” than the quiet scene we imagine.

Here’s the miracle. “The Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14): God himself took human flesh, and was born – not in a “still” place, not in a contemplative setting, but in Bethlehem. In chaos. In the hurly-burly of an overcrowded city. When Christians talk about the Incarnation, the “enfleshment” of God, we’re not simply presenting a sophisticated theological concept. On the contrary, the Incarnation means that God doesn’t distance himself from the chaos of our lives. He enters that chaos, becomes a part of it, knows life at its most glorious and its most disordered. There is nothing in your life or in mine that is beyond the experience of the Word Made Flesh. Jesus comes to Bethlehem.



On our Holy Land pilgrimage last winter, we spent time in the Church of the Nativity, an oasis in the midst of the city. Descending some steps, the pilgrims were shown an underground room that houses (according) the very spot where Jesus was born. Inset in one of the walls is a niche that reminded me of a fireplace; and on the floor of the niche, a star carved into the ground. (See the photo.) Scholars and archeologists will forever debate whether this star marks the actual spot. In the end, it’s not important. If Jesus wasn’t born *there*, after all, he was born somewhere quite nearby! In chaos. In the hurly-burly of an overcrowded city. And he comes to us in the chaos – sometimes joyful, sometimes stressful – of our own lives.

“Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing.” That’s an invitation not only for the Twelve Days of Christmas, but year-‘round. May our Christmas, and our walk with Jesus into the new year, be filled with his presence!

Yours in Christ,

## Congratulations, Ordinands

The Rev. Deacon Terri L. Bays and The Rev. Deacon Dustin M. Fecht were ordained at the Cathedral of St. James on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Deacon Terri will be finishing her studies at Berkely Divinity School at Yale and Deacon Dusty will be finishing his at Anglican Studies Program at Duke University this coming semester. Both are seeking ordination to the priesthood later in 2012.

## Golden Parochial Anniversary

Come Celebrate with us!

St. Alban's Church in Fort Wayne will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of God's call to become a church on February 3, 2012. We began our life together as a mission of Trinity Church in Fort Wayne in a reception hall known as Bojrab's Clubhouse. After clearing out the smell of beer and smoke from the party the night before, we were ready to celebrate our first Holy Eucharist on February 4, 1962.

We completed our first church in May of 1963 with the nave seating 170. The procession from the clubhouse to the new church was led by Fr. John Hills in his Volkswagen, with the cross protruding from its sunroof. What a glorious sight it was! The growth over a ten-year period required us to seek a larger facility and so we moved into our present church in September of 1974.

This brief history does not express the joy of being a part of such a wonderful story. God continues to bless us each and every day with His presence. We would love to share those blessings with you on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please call the church office at (260) 485-8022 for any questions or reservations.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

*Marilyn McClure*  
St. Alban's Episcopal Church

## In the News

St. Michael & All Angels, South Bend was recently covered by a local TV station for its "Saturdays of Service" outreach program. A link to a clip of the broadcast is on the diocesan website.

## Ministry Focus: Wellspring

Trinity, Fort Wayne supports the work of Wellspring Interfaith Social Services, which serves the core city of that town. Wellspring offers a food bank, an after school program which includes hot dinners twice a week, a summer day camp program for over 500 children, an older adult program year-round, and a parent club which offers mentoring in basic life skills as well as personal growth opportunities. For more information, visit [www.wellspringinterfaith.org](http://www.wellspringinterfaith.org) or call (260) 422-6618.

## Bishop & Diocesan Calendar for January

### January 4

Youth Advisory Board

### January 6

12:05 PM (EST) Holy Eucharist at the Cathedral

### January 7

9:00 AM (CST) Planned Giving Seminar at St. Paul's, Munster

### January 8

Visitation to St. Francis, Chesterton

### January 10

12:00 PM (EST) Deans' Meeting

### January 11

6:00 PM (EST) Newcomers Ministry Workshop at St. Anne's, Warsaw

### January 14

Formation Group

### January 15

Visitation to Grace, Fort Wayne

### January 16

Office closed

### January 17-18

Province V Bishops' Meeting

### January 20-22

Youth Winter Retreat at Wawasee

### January 21

Commission on Ministry

### January 22

Visitation to St. Barnabas-in-the-Dunes, Gary

### January 24

12:00 PM (EST) Standing Committee

### January 29

Visitation to St. Paul's, Gas City

*Around Our Diocese is published monthly. Please send stories, articles, and images by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month to:*

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*The editor reserves the right to edit all articles. Please visit [www.ednin.org](http://www.ednin.org) for regular updates and more news from around our diocese. A diocesan Facebook group is also available.*