



ECC NEWS

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An Advent Message from our Presiding Bishop Peter J. Hickman

The Mystery of Christmas

Saint Athanasius of Alexandria wrote in the fourth century concerning the mystery of the Incarnation that “God became human in order that humanity might become divine.” As we approach the celebration of yet another Christmas we are again reminded of one of the central mysteries of the Christian Faith, the mystery of God’s appearance in human flesh for indeed that is the literal meaning of the Latin expression, “incarnation” or, rather, the “en-fleshment” of God.

In the person of Jesus of Nazareth God becomes for us a human being. As it is written by the first century writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, “He was made like us in all things save sin.” This early Christian belief is not something that was made up by later generations of Christians or an idea that gradually evolved over the passing decades following the first century, but was something at the very heart of the Christian witness from the very beginning. “Beloved, I am not writing you an innovative instruction but the same instruction that you have had from the very beginning (1 John 3:7 translation mine).

In the earliest written material of the New Testament documents, material written less than twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, we encounter this startling belief.

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Image of Saint Athanasius

Upcoming Events

**2009
National ECC
Retreat
All Are Welcome!**

**June 24th – 27th
YMCA Retreat
Center
Estes Park, CO**

The Mystery of Christmas

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Startling because it was a belief embraced by Jews whose transcendent monotheism would have made it very improbable for them to be inclined to invent such a notion as God becoming a living and breathing human being just like one of us. Yet this is precisely what we find coming from the testimony proclaimed (kerygma) by the friends and eyewitnesses of Jesus.

And just what exactly were they saying? Paul, a learned rabbi, quoting a very early hymn from the Christian liturgy, wrote that Jesus the Messiah "is the image (Greek: εικων, icon) of the invisible God; that in Jesus "all the divine fullness was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1: 15, 19). And in another hymn that Paul quotes, "though Jesus was in the very form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, coming in human likeness, and found in human appearance" (Philippians 2). Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews asserts that Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory, the very imprint of God's being" in human flesh. But it is in the Gospel of John that we find the classic expression that the eternal Word, who is God, "became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory, the splendor of the unique one of God."

This, then, is what we are celebrating and bearing witness to at Christmas. But this is only a part of the mystery that we celebrate. Remember what Saint Athanasius said at the beginning of this reflection? "God became human in order that humanity might become divine." Herein is the meaning of the divine action of God in the incarnation. It is nothing less than the full identification of human life with that of the divine life.

This is the whole point. This is the Divine purpose behind this incredible mystery of incarnation. In the person of Jesus God partook of our humanity with all our frailty and limitations, even the dreaded limitation of mortality. In the person of Jesus humanity becomes a partaker of the divine nature with all its endless wonder and unlimited potentiality, even the potentiality of endless life.

What we are presently, are earthen vessels holding a hidden treasure of divine life ready to be given birth. As the Apostle wrote, "what we shall be has not yet been revealed. But we do know that when Christ appears we shall be like Him, and we shall see Him just as He is." And as Paul says, "At present we see dimly as through a clouded glass, but then we shall see face to face. At present we know only partially; then we shall know fully, even as we are fully known." This, my brothers and sisters, is

the mystery that we are about to celebrate this Christmas.

This is the essence of the mystery of Holy Christmas: In the birth of Jesus divinity becomes human and in our new birth in Christ we, in our common humanity, become Divine! This is not only the mystery we celebrate in the Feast of Christmas; it is the mystery that we live out each day of our lives. May the Life of Christ be manifest in you this Christmas and always!

+Peter



Rocky Mountain Delegates called to discernment.

Rocky Mountain Regional Day of Discernment

by Fr. Scott L. Jenkins
Rocky Mountain Vicar - Pastor
Church of the Holy family
Aurora, CO

The weather outside reminded us how beautiful Fall days can be in Colorado. Inside the fellowship hall of St. Augustine's parish, located on the sacred grounds of Fairmount Cemetery in Denver, CO, another but related kind of warmth and beauty was manifesting Herself among us. A "gathering" was taking place. We came from four different parishes, yet all from one Church. We came with our baggage, we entered with our availability. Prayers were offered in words, readings, silence and reflections. We opened our hearts to discern, to get out of Spirit's way. We did our best.

At the end of the day, eight people were selected to form the First Rocky Mountain Regional Council of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. On November 8, 2008 many were still celebrating the election results within our country. For others it was taking care of their laundry list on just another Saturday. For those of us who were blessed to be present for this meeting we witnessed another step forward. One more advance for those of us who are called both Ecumenical and Catholic. Clergy and Laity were there praying, discerning, and working in concert. Was the music perfect? No. We simply did our best.

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Rocky Mountain Regional Day of Discernment (Continued from 2)

I am happy and privileged to introduce the members of our Rocky Mountain Regional Council:

- ✦ **Father Scott Jenkins** – Regional Vicar and Pastor of Church of the Holy Family (House of Pastors)
- ✦ **Father Stan Manickam** – Church of St. Augustine (House of Pastors)
- ✦ **Deacon Sheila Dierks** – Light of Christ (House of Pastors)
- ✦ **Deacon Kathleen Gorman** – Church of the Holy Family (House of Pastors)
- ✦ **Jude Biggs** – Light of Christ (House of Laity)
- ✦ **Chuck Howard** – Light of Christ (House of Laity)
- ✦ **Laura Strom** – Church of St. Augustine (House of Laity)
- ✦ **Tom Stumpf** – Light of Christ (House of Laity)

Now these individuals, from different parishes would come together, chosen, to listen together to the One voice that brought them here in the first place. Now they would weave their voices into one fabric for the good of the whole.

On December 10th, 2008 we held our first Regional meeting. There we were, praying, listening, wondering, and kind of walking as a toddler. Which way to go? What to do? There was no shortage of questions on this night. There was no shortage of Spirit either! Ideas were shared, minutes were gathered, broken, and shared with the communities who sent these wonder-full people. An agenda was created for our next meeting. Hope began to grow on this night. We are asking our 4 parishes to help with the National Retreat in June of 2009. We will listen to an expert on group organizational process, next month and determine how we will work together. We will continue to get to know each other and pray together.

This is the stuff dreams are made out of...our dreams...God's dreams.

Update on ECC Relationships with Other Jurisdictions

by George von Stamwitz,
ECC Chancellor
Sts. Clare & Francis
St. Louis, MO

Over the past three years Bishop Peter, in consultation with many of you, has entered into Interim Communion or Full Communion Agreements on behalf of the ECC with the Apostolic Catholic Church, which has parishes and ministries mostly in the East and Southeast; the Ecumenical Anglican Communion, which has a parish in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and, the American Catholic Church Diocese of California, which has parishes and ministries based in San Diego. Links to each organization are posted on the ECC website:

<http://www.ecumenical-catholic-commuion.org/html/links.html>

The agreements signed so far have involved a spirit of "walking alongside" one another. Recently, the ECC and the Apostolic Catholic Church (ACC)

signed a non-binding Letter of Intent to more fully integrate by mid 2009.

The ACC believes that the ECC Canon, adopted at the 2007 Synod, that sets forth the creation of regions and the election of Bishops fits the next stage of the ECC/ACC relationship. The idea is that the ACC would create a non-geographic region in the ECC and elect a Bishop according to the Canon's procedures. The parishes and ministries of the ACC would join the ECC under normal procedures.

Obviously, more due diligence and relationship building needs to occur before any final recommendation is offered. In the meantime, representatives of these organizations continue to attend ECC retreats and Synods and are becoming familiar to many of you. Similarly, ECC folks attend meetings hosted by these organizations and visit some of their parishes. This newsletter features them as they walk with us.

Parish Church of St. Jerome

by Bishop Rick Hollingsworth
Ecumenical Anglican Church
Tulsa, OK



Deacon Kathleen Gorman, Holy Family, CO & Bishop Rick Hollingsworth, Ecumenical Anglican Church

The Parish Church of St. Jerome was founded in 1995 to ensure that **ALL PEOPLE**, regardless of gender, marital status, disability, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or age, are embraced and affirmed as full members of Christ's Church. In November 1997, St. Jerome purchased the previous home of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, located in Tulsa's historic Brady Heights.

The commitment to diversity among the Brady Heights neighborhood provided the perfect setting for a church that mirrored the historic community's views. Built in 1920, the church structure is a significant piece of Tulsa heritage. Our parish members are diligently working to preserve and restore one of Tulsa's oldest church structures. In keeping with its ministry, the 15,000 square-foot historic building is often used for meetings by neighborhood organizations and other nonprofit organizations offering direct services across Tulsa as well as to the surrounding low-income communities.

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Parish Church of St. Jerome

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Meals on Wheels food preparation, Brady Heights Neighborhood Association, the NAMES Project, professional counseling services and grief recovery support groups meet here. Regardless of one's religious beliefs, this beautiful, historic church stands as a symbol of hope for all who see it.

Our parish includes about 100 members. Our primary outreach to the community is the Garden Grocery Food Pantry through which we served more than 1,400 individuals this year.

We are a part of the Northeastern Oklahoma Food Bank and are the only food pantry that allows people to shop for their groceries.

We have an amazing Choir and installed a new Rodgers Trillium organ in 2003. We have a 30 Niche Columbarium located in All Saints Chapel. In this chapel, on the Feast of All Saints, we installed and blessed two new stained glass windows that depict St. Jerome and the Eucharistic Meal.

The Ecumenical Anglican Church is life giving, affirming, and inclusive, believing that God's grace is given without partiality to all those who seek it. Therefore, all persons, without regard to race, ethnicity, nationality, social or economic status, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical ability are welcome to receive all the sacraments of the church. The Church acknowledges and encourages the development of parishes as a means of supporting the Body of believers; promoting the priesthood of all believers through lay ministry; and providing a community in which all may receive the sacraments and love of God.

News Bites

Holy Family, CO

Kyler Corby, Chelsie Thompson, Amanda Britt, Emily Britt, Bishop Chuck Leigh & Free Hug Team



Bishop Chuck Leigh of the ACC visits Church of the Holy Family in Aurora, CO. While in town Bishop Chuck shared

worship, fellowship and offered a homily at Holy Family. He spent a day and joined in an urban plunge with the middle school teenagers and shared first hand his experience of what an outreach mission looks like.

Sts Clare & Francis ECC Community, MO



Congratulations to Rev. Jessica and Joe Rowley on the birth of their first child. Finn Michael Rowley, born November 20, 2008, 8 pounds, 11 ounces, 21 inches long!

ECC Deacons Ordained around the country.



Celebrated October 24th at Eden Seminary, St. Louis, MO where ECC Bishop Peter Hickman presided to ordain; Catherine Schmitt, St. Louis, MO Rosa Buffone, Holy Spirit ECC-MA, Tom Altepeter, Oshkosh, WI and Verona Mazzei, Holy Spirit -MA



Deacon Mike Weil, Bishop Rick Hollingsworth, Deacon Teri Herrun, Deacon Kathleen Gorman

Celebrated, September 17th, at Light Of Christ, Longmont Co where Bishop Rick Hollingsworth of the Ecumenical Anglican Communion presided to ordain; Teri Harroun, Light Of Christ, CO, Kathleen Gorman, Church of the Holy Family, CO



Deacon Kathleen Gorman, Holy Family, CO
Deacon Teri Harroun, Light of Christ, CO
Deacon Sheila Dierks, Light of Christ, CO
Mother Kae Madden, Church of the Beloved, CO

The Sophia Spirit Community, California



Bishop Peter Hickman, Presiding Bishop, ECC
Sheila Gilmore, Sophia Spirit, CA
Deacon Tony Bomkamp, St. Matthew, CA
Fr. Jim Farris, St. Matthew, CA

Tony's Story...here from the beginning

by Bishop Peter Hickman
Presiding Bishop ECC – Pastor
St Mathew, Orange, CA

Tony Bomkamp is a man of strong faith. He became interested in the dialog between science, philosophy, and theology. In the early 1980s, he joined an ecumenical theological discussion group in Orange County called Dialog. It was there that he first met a newly ordained priest of the Old Catholic Church, Peter Hickman, who had just started a new mission church called Saint Matthew.

Four years later Tony came back to his Catholic roots when he became a member of the Saint Matthew Community in the spring of 1990.

Over the past eighteen years Tony has become an important lay leader not only at Saint Matthew's, but also in the emergence of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion where he serves as a delegate to the House of Laity representing St Matthew.

Increasingly, the people of Saint Matthew Church recognized in Tony an example of committed discipleship to Jesus Christ along with an ability to teach scripture and theology and whose effectiveness was demonstrated in the many classes and discussion groups he has taught and led over the years. After getting a Masters in pastoral studies, it became apparent not only to Tony and his wife, Kate, but to the whole community of Saint Matthew that Tony had a special call to ordained ministry.

After a period of prayerful discernment, the community became convinced that the Holy Spirit was directing them to call Tony forth for ordination as a deacon. On November 23, Tony was ordained by Bishop Peter in the presence of the sisters, brothers, and friends of Saint Matthew Church.



Sophia Spirit was very involved in the Marriage Equality movement in California in preparation for the November election. During what was affectionately called "The Summer of Love," Sophia Spirit joyfully celebrated the legal marriages of three GLBT couples in their Community and joyfully welcomed GLTB couples from around the ECC who came to California to be married.

To ensure equal rights for all members the community participated in education, phone banking, community outreach. Following the election they marched in protest of the elimination of civil rights. Sophia Spirit provided pastoral care to the GLBT Community and organized an Interfaith Service and candlelight vigil entitled "Marching In the Light" where parishioner Sheila Gilmore was a featured speaker. In her address to more than 250 people, Sheila said, "... peacefully and persistently ... we dissolve our fears and realize what is normative is not defined by our sexual orientation, race, gender, faith or any other human trait, but only that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. A more inclusive love no human being can comprehend and ... we are called to no less than this." Congratulations to Sheila and her spouse Anita and to all the couples who were married this summer in California!

See the link below for a related story where ABC news interviews Rev Giovanna Piazza, Sophia Spirit Pastor on President-Elect Obama's selection of Pastor Rick Warren to give the invocation at the inauguration.
<http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/video?id=6563606&rss=rss-cs-kabc-video-6563606>.

1st ECC Pastors Retreat

by Rev. Zilvinas Jakstas
Ramove Catholic Church
Roseville, MN

A few weeks I was asked to write a short evaluation of the retreat. I hesitated for a while, maybe because it was hard to be objective, as I was one of the three who worked on the program.

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1st ECC Pastors Retreat

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Originally I was called by Father Frank Krebbs and asked to be a part of the retreat team. It surprised me and for a moment I felt that he was kidding or that God had some special purpose. "Bad idea" I said to myself, "to invite me, Giovanna and Frank to work on the retreat program". "Better be good," I thought! But from the very beginning we clicked, and clicked very well!!!

I am guessing that all of you know that balance is very important. Somehow it happened with us. Frank by his nature added brain nourishment, Giovanna healing eucharist, and I'm colors, music and action. There you go! So week after week we shared our thoughts and ideas which we later put down on paper.

I had never felt that good, blessed and bonded. For the first time in my life I felt that my opinion was important too. I was like a kid impatiently waiting for the next conference call to talk with my friends as I had never talked before. And we talked, we questioned each other and more important we were being heard!

I enjoyed the retreat. God like a spider took us and wove into His web what we called „Being Together“. I think His plan went well. I was happy that we didn't fight, and that was our biggest achievement. Later we all shared our own evaluations and when I read them I found only healthy arguments. What a gift!

Hey guys, remember those seminary hallways, the dorms, the classrooms -- what a feeling! I felt like I was captured by a good spirit, such a friendly peace in those walls, ah? I saw in the eyes of people that they weren't afraid to be themselves. I saw who was counting the clouds, who was praying, reading, walking, or drinking wine. We were happy. It seems we all sincerely tried to do something together, something new, something for each other. Thank you my friends for your beings.

"Nourishing, joyful and inspiring...truly, the presence of God is in this place" ...Rosa Buffone, Holy Spirit Catholic Community, MA



Rev. Bjorn Marcussen, Rev. Will Myers, American Catholic Church, Bishop Rafe Adams, American Catholic Church
Rosa Buffone & Don Pachuta, Holy Spirit, MA

"It was inspiring to spend a few days getting to know people at a much more intimate level than is possible at a busy function like a synod. A most valuable and rewarding experience. I would come again in a heartbeat."...Don Pachuta, Holy Spirit Catholic Community, MA

"The retreat was one of the most spiritually nourishing ECC events I have attended. Bjorn Marcussen presented Old Catholic theology in words that I, non-theologically trained, could easily understand. My favorite part was the liturgy prepared and presented by the ECC women ministers.....the inclusive words, readings, music, liturgical dance.....I felt the soothing balm of the divine being poured over my soul "

.....Marlene Gunganig, Holy Family ECC, NM

"What fun and what great friendships developed as we lost our "critical-eye glasses" ... Rev. Kathy McCarthy, Pathfinder Community of the Risen Christ, CA

"I like the fact that we want to come together in the spirit of trust that what we are doing, and what we are becoming, is thru shared love centered in the Trinity."

...Rev. Kathleen Jess, CA

"The retreat was...inspirational, relaxing, enjoyable, and I received communion from a pregnant priest. Top that!"...Fr. Scott L. Jenkins, Church of the Holy Family, CO



Rev. Canon Janine C. Stock, American Catholic Church, CA
Fr. Greg Singleton Community of St. Francis, IL
Bp. Thomas Abel, American Catholic Church, CA
Rev. Deacon Jeannine Singleton, Community of St. Francis, IL
Florentino (Anjun) Factor, American Catholic Church

"The retreat was a wonderful experience for me. As a newcomer to the ECC it was great to talk with so many of the clergy and learn about the diversity and unity of the communion. It's been a long time since I've met so many people in a brief period of time that I am looking forward to seeing again. Bjorn Marcussen gave us excellent food for thought and everyone from the Community of St. Francis (Chicago) reported to each other that his leavening yielded excellent results in our three different break-out groups. This was something of a sacred pilgrimage for me. My seminary Professor of Christianity and Society, Reinhold Niebuhr, was a graduate of Eden's Theological Seminary, and his brother, H. Richard Niebuhr, was also a graduate of our host institution. These two had a profound influence in my formation both as a mature Christian and as an academic. Being at Eden's was being on holy ground for me."...Gregory Holmes Singleton, Ph.D., CSF, Community of Saint Francis, IL