

in a

# Word™

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**Christmas is a time to  
celebrate God and family**

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

# MERRY CHRISTMAS CAN HAVE A HOLLOW RING

by Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD

Ferguson, Missouri has become a name that is branded into the awareness of a nation and indeed the world. For better or for worse, virtually everyone is doing a take on the rotten situation that has polarized, divided and tarred the local environs as well as the atmosphere of an entire country. Not surprisingly, people are coming out with opinions according to rabid political ideology/activism, racial and ethnic biases reaching back to slavery and Ku Klux Klan lynchings.

Well-meaning people of goodwill from opposite sides of the gut-wrenching upheaval feel that only their prism through which they view the facts is the sole true, reasonable and moral one. So convinced are they of being on the side of truth that they hawk their view with passion and even with a fury that belies their conviction that cool reason is motivating their conduct.

Very few are taking the time and the pains to chill with a dispassionate resolve to ferret out the truth wherever it may fall. To the contrary, there is nothing dispassionate about the frenzied drive to tailor the truth not according to hard facts, but according to the passions, emotions and fury of most who are dipping into the fray. While we have a right to get at the facts, we do not have a right to invent our own set of facts. All facts must lead to the truth.

"What is truth?" The words of Pontius Pilate to Jesus were anything but an idle question that still haunts us today. Seeking truth through witnesses is at best a dicey proposition that has failed in many critical cases where we know that innocent people have been executed by the verdict of a supposedly informed and reasonable jury. Sadly, DNA tests tell this story often. But I realize that many people will be upset, even angry at me for daring to say these things.

The nearest we can come to objectivity is forensic evidence like DNA, fingerprints and autopsies, after which we can try to use witnesses as corroboration. To this day in Ferguson, people at large are continuing to ignore objective forensic evidence, as if what they keep repeating will change the scientific finding of experts who have no dog in the hunt. Rather than by reason, they are driven by emotions that, as we well know, often create more heat than light.

Many are sure that, the deeper their feeling and fury, the more true and righteous their cause.

It is obvious that many of the protesters are not well-meaning people of goodwill, but rather opportunists who are taking advantage of the crisis by promoting their own agenda. Some, even men of the cloth, are simply race-baiters and race-hustlers, while the worst of them are anarchists and other merchants of chaos eager to loosen the underpinnings of our country.

This may come as a shock to you that we have five major political parties: Democratic party, Republican Party,

Libertarian Party, Green Party, Constitution Party. If that did not shake your tree, note that we have 29 minor political parties, of which Communist Party USA and Socialist Party USA should be enough to grab your attention and send you to online research. It is easy to picture anarchist and chaotic representatives from these blending in with the protesters. Even ISIS or Al-Qaeda sleepers can easily slip in with the noise, fires, destruction and confusion.

Combine this with some warped thinking of an unknown number of protesters and you have a dangerous mix brewing. One young black male was asked to weigh in on the destruction of businesses of innocent people. His response was, "So was Michael Brown innocent?" With that kind of logic, neither the truth nor morality stands a fighting chance to survive. Neither the innocence nor guilt of Michael Brown warrants the destruction of legal businesses.

If you took the time to say "Merry Christmas!" to the sundry crowd, you would get an entire gamut of bewildered reactions, few of which would have the remotest connection with the spirit of Christmas. How many Christmases, years and life careers have been ruined for owners and workers of Ferguson businesses, as well as their families and families of neighbors? For many of those business owners, their neighborhood and their family, their future is behind them.

Of course, everyone has a right to protest, but no one has a right to intimidate or terrify the innocent, let alone harm their person or destroy their property. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. set the standard and template for peaceful protest that can be both orderly and amazingly effective. But how many protesters are willing to follow and abide by the tone set by Dr. King?

To you devastated business owners of Ferguson and sundry cities around the country, a Blessed, Merry Christmas to you and your family members! To you neighbors, especially the elderly, who found shopping in the now destroyed businesses convenient and people-friendly, a Blessed, Merry Christmas to you and your family members! May you recover your losses.

Are there any happy campers within or without the circle of demonstrators? None! There are no winners here. God bless those protesters for whom "Merry Christmas" does not have asawdust taste and hollow ring, because they do find hope over which to make merry. To them all, we wish intimate communal meetings and reconciliation with police and all the neighbors!

There are no problems anywhere on earth that cannot be solved by Godly people of goodwill.

*"God is love, and all who abide in love abide in God and God in them." (1 John 4:16)*

# Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church

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## IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH RECEIVES AWARD FOR “I AM” PROGRAM

On Friday, November 14, 2014, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Lafayette, was recognized by the State of Louisiana’s Department of Children and Family Services at the “16<sup>th</sup> Annual Adoption Celebration” at the Governor’s Mansion in Baton Rouge.

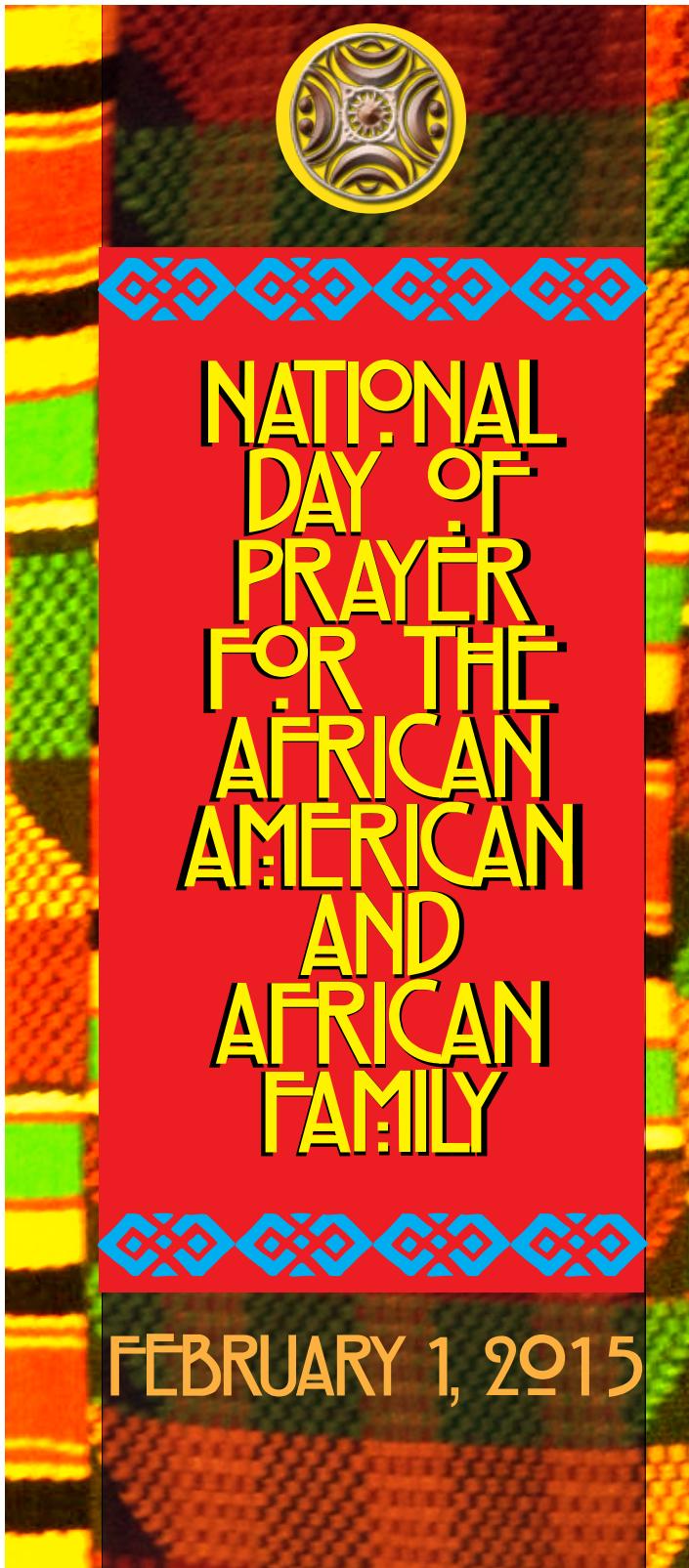
IHM was presented with the “Community Advocate Award” for their “I AM” Program (“Increasing Adoptive Measures”). This program aims to increase public awareness of the needs of foster and adoptive families. Each week, children legally freed for adoption are featured in the church’s bulletin. In addition, Immaculate Heart of Mary has hosted numerous events for recruitment and informational efforts, and even created a video about becoming a foster or adoptive parent. Father Thomas James, SVD, Pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary, stated that the work of the “I AM” Program will continue as long as there are children in need.

The “I AM” Program began as a vision in the heart of Father James to find adoptive and foster families for children in need. The goal of the “I AM” Program is to increase public awareness about the need for adoptive and foster families.

For more information about the “I AM” Program at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, or for anyone interested in fostering or adoption, please call 337-235-4618. Your contact information will be forwarded to a representative from the State of Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services for additional information.



# in a word or two



National Day of Prayer for African American and African family will be celebrated on February 1, 2015.. January issue of IN A WORD will have more details.



Merry Christmas  
and  
Happy New Year!  
*from the staff of  
IN A WORD*

**Divine Word Missionaries** is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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