

what is your **WORD** for 2020?

HOW DOES IT **CONNECT** WITH THE NATIVITY?

PERSISTENCE by: Jarrel Watkins

I look at how so many people persist in trying to live their life as normally as possible by doing things in a different way whether it's redesigning their business model to not only serve others, but also keep their family's livelihood intact or figuring out ways to connect with loved ones virtually or through other means. Just as Mary and Joseph persisted over a long hard journey only to be turned away. To persist still and find the manger for the birth of our Lord. Was it ideal, no, but through their persistence, and God's love, we celebrate the birth of Jesus our Lord and Savior.



FEAR by Jim Mathews

This is my one-word story about the year 2020 and its linkage to the Nativity.

Fear is my best single word to describe 2020. The emotion of fear is twice as powerful as the emotion of security. Fear makes us cling to anything to save ourselves while peace gives us rest. The year 2020 was a year of fear from the pandemic and deep political division. The pandemic tore up the normal peace we take for granted. The pandemic sickened and killed many. We could not hug our adult children. We could not visit our friends without fear of the virus. We could not worship together in a normal way. We could not do routine things like grocery shopping, eating at a restaurant or taking a vacation. The pandemic destroyed many small businesses and took away many people's financial means to support their families.

The year 2020 was a year of fear due to political division. We feared the "other" side whose views are different. Our perceived differences disrupted our norms making us feel threatened. Our distrust of the "other" made us fearful of what could happen to our normal lives when norms are changed.

The Nativity – Christmas is familiar. We look forward every year to the Nativity scene, midnight mass, singing Christmas carols, Christmas trees, outside decorations, family meals, visits with friends, and many, many other repeated familiar Christmas things. We feel at ease, safe, happy, at rest when we experience repeated safe situations. The Nativity gives us rest and a sense of peace in an otherwise hostile and dangerous world.

I hope that the Nativity will always give us enough courage that our souls fear not and find rest with Christ despite this dangerous world that can make us cling to worldly things.



WAITING by: Donna Gorline

I sit in the surgical waiting room on Christmas Day for my dad to come out of surgery I watched Christmas mass. Father Gerry asked us to think of one word to describe the Christmas mystery and coronavirus pandemic I instantly thought of “waiting”. The Bible is filled with stories of people who wait for the fulfillment of a promise or who wait for their prayers to be heard. For example, Abraham waited many years for the fulfillment of God’s promise... To be father of a great nation... He and his wife Sara’s miraculous birth of Isaac; Zachariah and Elizabeth’s birth of John the Baptist; and our holy mother Mary, the birth of Jesus Christ.

“ is there anything too marvelous for the Lord to do? (Genesis 18:14)

If we trust and have faith in God’s unfailing love and wait patiently for his response, he will give us more than we ever could imagine possible!

“ with the Lord one day is like 1000 years and 1000 years like one day (2 Peter 3:8)

With the coronavirus sweeping across the world and reaching our shores, we don’t know how treacherous it’s going to be. We find ourselves “waiting” once again. The anxieties each one of us endure; overreactions and reinforced unhelpful panic in our hearts; waiting for a vaccine with the hopes of settling our anxieties.

God is calling us to continue forward in love of neighbor and service to his kingdom. Just as the people of Israel when they left Egypt to the promised land; they faced obstacles entering the Jordan River; as well as, the miraculous deliverance their parents experienced a generation earlier at the Red Sea. God often calls us to wait in the presence of our enemies... God knows we need to be reminded of our dependent on him over and over again for as long as we shall live.

Pour out your anxieties to your father in heaven...when you are afraid turn to him.

Let handwashing or rubbing on hand sanitizer become a moment in which you consciously entrust yourself and the future of everyone you care about into His hands.

Though I lost my dad two days after the birth of Jesus on 12/27/20 at 12:26 am, I know God is with me. I have never swayed my faith in him to carry me through the darkness of this world into the light of his love and warmth from the history of our ancestors, the Christmas mysteries, or the coronavirus pandemic.

Praise the Lord my soul. (Palms 146)



CHAOS by: Mary Alford

My name is Mary Alford. I am responding to Fr. Gerry’s invitation to share my word that describes 2020 and connects my experiences with the Nativity story.

My word is **chaos**, meaning complete disorder and confusion. My chaos started when the pandemic caused everything to shut down. As a classroom teacher for 3-4 year old special needs children, this caused quite a bit of chaos in my life. All of a sudden we were having to make several weeks’ worth of lesson plans, copies of worksheets, art projects (and all the pieces to make them) to give out packets to our students, all while practicing Covid safety guidelines. Then we met daily with out student for virtual lessons. It is difficult to keep the attention of a 3-4 year old special needs child virtually, even with their mother beside them.

Just as that started to calm down, the chaos started at my house. One day I flushed the toilet in our master bathroom and water started pouring out of the bottom of our toilet. We turned off the water and called a plumber. He told us that we were holding water under our foundation and that we had to have the foundation repaired before the plumbing can be fixed. We proceeded to get the loan approved, and the foundation repair took place over a five day period. We then contacted the plumbers that they recommended to follow up for repairs.

The plumber said he would need to drill 3 holes through the foundation to make repairs and could finish it in 3 days. That's where the chaos worsened. The repairs were not completed until 6 weeks later. They kept finding more breaks and putting off our repairs and ended up drilling 6 holes through the foundation in 3 different rooms and cut two huge holes in the walls of the house. Our bedroom furniture was relocated throughout the house, concrete dust was covering everything (despite the plastic sheeting) and we were down to one bathroom for the whole family for at least 2 months while all sheltering at home. The plumber went over the estimate by \$2,000.00. We were anxious and worried about how to cover the extra cost and pay college tuition for our middle child. If that wasn't enough, we also had our microwave go out, I broke my middle toe and the heat quit working in our house (right after the first really cold snap) and we were told we had to have a new furnace 2 weeks before Christmas. Next, the heat went out in my car. After finishing repairs on the floors that they drilled through, we discovered that water was still leaking out from under our house. Turns out, after going back and forth with the plumbers for several weeks, that they tied all of the new pipe they ran into the old broken pipe instead of the new pipe. We are still waiting for that repair to take place. It just seemed like a never ending chain of stressful events kept happening.

Throughout all of this, there was a lot of anxiety and worry, but I kept telling myself that God is in control and that He always provides for us. He helped us navigate all of the chaos and came out okay.

I thought about how this relates to the Nativity story. Mary and Joseph certainly had to deal with a lot of chaos in their life. Mary had an unplanned pregnancy and Joseph had to decide what to do about that. Then they had to have the baby in a stable and become refugees in a strange place with a newborn. That kind of makes my home repairs pale in comparison. However, because of their faith in God, they were able to handle the chaos. They knew God had a plan and trusted in Him.

Due to the pandemic and the political issues we have been having, our world is in chaos right now. I think we all have to remember to trust that God has a plan and trust that He will get us through the chaos. I will leave you with this verse from the bible.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding