

# TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese

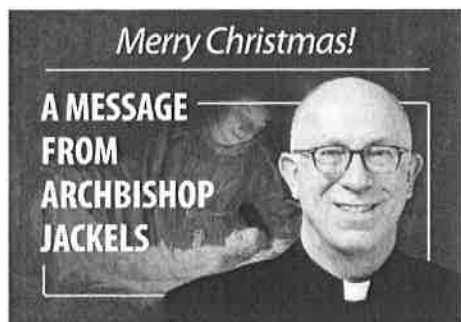


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14 December 2021

When I was about 9-years old, I gave a neighbor girl a gift and then asked her: Do you love me? expecting the gift would force her to say yes; she said no. Why do I remember that?

And when my mom had to punish a naughty 9-year-old, I was sure I had fallen from her good graces, so I asked her: Do you love me? She said yes, but I didn't believe her.

Why do I remember that? Indeed! I remember because it's a thing, you know; we're born with the question, and we're nagged by the answer, or the lack, or our doubts thereof.

As a result, we remember people and events that make us ask, and wonder if we can trust the answer, and somehow learn that we have to earn love, or that we can lose it.

As long as love is tied to human calculation – owe, deserve; earn, lose – it'll be a strings-attached, conditional love, making us ask if we're loved, and wondering about the answer.

That's why I have 9-year-old-Mike memories of asking and wondering. But I also have memories of when and how I first experienced a no-strings-attached, unconditional love.

I was 33-years old, an intentional Catholic for 14 years, ordained for 6 years, in Rome, studying towards a doctorate in theology, focused on the writings of St. Catherine of Siena.

God to Catherine in prayer: I fixed my eyes on what is eternally beautiful about you, and so fell in love with the very idea of you, creating, saving, providing for you in spite of your sins.

Catherine reflecting on the pierced heart of Christ crucified: The wound reveals the secret of the heart, that Divine Love can't ever be exhausted, not even by death; there's no end to it.

And Catherine commenting on the commandment to love your neighbor: Remember that you yourself are your closest neighbor to whom you owe kindness, care, forgiveness.

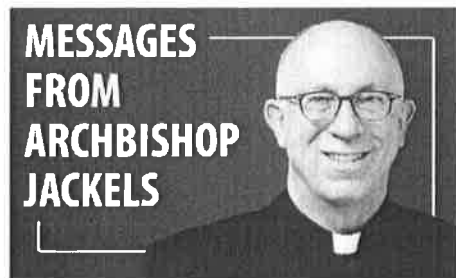
I remember that because unconditional love gives serenity no storm can shake. I came late to the knowing, but that should tell others it's not too late for them; they can know it too...

By looking to Jesus: His birth as man put skin on Divine Love, as if saying: I'm here. I love you. You can neither earn nor lose my love. I will protect you forever – remember that!

That's what we celebrate at Christmas. That's all we need for it to be a merry Christmas. That's all we need for it to be a happy New Year.

May both be so for you and yours. Amen.

**Michael O. Jackels**  
Archbishop of Dubuque



14 December 2021

Follow the science. Who hasn't heard that said more than once during this pandemic, often by the Catholic Church, about vaccinations, vaccines, and public safety measures?

But before the pandemic, it was said to the Catholic Church, by people who regard us to be anti-science; funny, that, when many branches of modern science were pioneered by Catholic priests, for example: astronomy, genetics, and the big bang theory.

Funny too given how we do indeed follow the science, when we teach that, if you have sex, don't be surprised if in nine months you're rocking the results in a cradle; if you're not open to the possibility of a baby, don't have sex. Science. Simple.

The doctrinal office of the Catholic Church has taught that modern genetic science recognizes that a fertilized ovum is a new human identity, which is neither that of the father nor of the mother (Donum vitae, 1987).

That's why abortion is an unparalleled tragedy: an indefensible act against a defenseless unborn human person.

There are efforts, all the way to the Supreme Court, to outlaw abortion after when a heartbeat can be detected, or when the child in the womb can feel pain. Nevertheless, even before those markers, it's still a human being.

Abortion advocates will defend themselves by claiming: my body, my choice. In response, I would say to them: but it's not just about you; there's someone else affected; the child in utero has rights that compete with the mother's.

Out of respect for human life and dignity, we pray and work to protect life from womb to tomb; the right to life is called the first and most important human right.

But we also pray and work for issues like protecting the earth and providing shelter. These issues aren't any less eminent or important; where else will the babies saved from abortion live?

Life is sacred, in and of itself, but also because of God's plan for each person, for how the fabric of each person's life will enrich the tapestry of world events. For example...

I heard a rabbi at a pro-life rally say that child saved from abortion could be the Messiah. He quoted the Talmud against abortion: save one life, and you save the entire world. The idea is that, when we defend the rights and dignity of people on the periphery, like the poor or the unborn, all people are lifted up as a result.

Follow the science. Follow too the star that led shepherds and kings to the stable in Bethlehem, to bend the knee before Jesus, Son of God, the Messiah who saved the world.

**Michael O. Jackels**  
Archbishop of Dubuque



## A Follower of Jesus in His Holy Catholic Church

This is the sixth entry in a document by Archbishop Michael Jackels titled, "A Follower of Jesus In His Holy Catholic Church" which was published online in April of 2021.

### WHAT IS THE WAY OF LIFE JESUS SHOWS HIS FOLLOWERS ? (Part 2)

#### CELEBRATE THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

We believe Jesus started seven sacraments, which use outward signs (like water, or oil) to give us grace, a share in the very life of God, putting us in relationship to God and other believers. The sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony (Marriage), and Holy Orders.

**Baptism** takes away original sin and any other sins for which we are guilty. Also, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we become the adopted children of God, as well as the brothers and sisters of all in the family of God.

The sign of Baptism is pouring water over a person's head three times, while saying "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." We are baptized only once.

*"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)*

**Confirmation** strengthens the gifts of the Holy Spirit received at Baptism, especially for the purpose of continuing the mission of Jesus in the ministries of the Church. We are chosen by God for a special work: to share the Gospel with others by our words and by our service of the poor.

Confirmation is normally celebrated by a bishop, who lays hands on the person, and anoints the forehead with the Oil of Sacred Chrism, while saying "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." We are confirmed only once.

*"[The Samaritans] had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then [Peter and John] laid hands on them and they received the*

*Holy Spirit." (Acts of the Apostles 8:16-17)*

**The Eucharist** is spiritual food that nourishes our life in Christ. Receiving the Eucharist is the most intimate union we can have with God this side of Heaven. It also deepens the bond of spiritual friendship with the others who receive it.

The Eucharist is celebrated at Mass (called the Liturgy of the Eucharist), and received in Holy Communion, and worshipped in Adoration. The signs of the sacrament are bread and wine, which, when a priest invokes the Holy Spirit and repeats Jesus' words from the Last Supper, become the Body and Blood of Christ. We are required to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, during the Easter season, but we can receive it daily.

*"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you... [Jesus] took bread... and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)*

In **Penance or Confession**, our sins are forgiven when we are sorry (which includes intending to avoid sin in the future), confess to a priest, and the priest says "I absolve you of your sins." Sin can weaken, and even destroy our relationship with God and the community of believers; Confession restores it. Phew!

The priest gives us a penance to perform in order to repair the spiritual damage from our sins: prayer, self-denial, or charity to the poor. We must confess our mortal sins at least once a year, but it's a good practice to go to Confession once a month.

*"Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." (John 20:23)*

**Anointing of the Sick** can bring healing, forgiveness of sins, and the strength to walk with Jesus under the weight of suffering. This sacrament brings the hand of God to heal us, or the passionate presence of Jesus to suffer with us.

Anointing is celebrated when a priest lays his hands on the sick person, prays over her/him, and anoints her/him with the Oil of the Sick. It can be received as often as needed when we are sick, suffering, or in danger of death.

*Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be*

*forgiven." (James 5:14-15)*

A baptized man and a baptized woman enter **Holy Matrimony or Marriage** when they freely intend to stay together until death, to be faithful to each other, willing to welcome children, and say "I do" in the presence of a clergyman and two witnesses.

Marriage is like God at the Creation, saying let there be light, and there was. In Marriage, a man and woman say I do, and something new is created; they become one flesh. People can only be married once, unless one of the spouses die, or unless the Church grants a decree of nullity.

*"Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." (Matthew 19:4-6)*

In **Holy Orders** a baptized man is ordained a deacon, priest, or bishop to preach, celebrate sacraments, and to exercise servant leadership in the Church. The man is more closely identified, or conformed to Christ as teacher, or as one who brings others into contact with Divinity, or as the Good Shepherd of souls.

Ordination is celebrated by a bishop, by the laying on of hands and anointing with the Oil of Sacred Chrism (except for a deacon). A man is ordained a deacon only once, but a deacon can be ordained again as a priest, and a priest can be ordained again as a bishop.

*"Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us... become with us a witness to [Jesus'] resurrection." (Acts of the Apostles 1:21-22)*

*"Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom... They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them." (Acts of the Apostles 6:3-6)*

*This section will continue with a focus on our worship at Holy Mass. The entire series can be found online at [www.dbqarch.org/foj-intro](http://www.dbqarch.org/foj-intro).*

The November issue of *Together* included the mailing addresses of our retired priests who would love to hear from you.

The list can be found online at [www.dbqarch.org/together](http://www.dbqarch.org/together).